



OFFICE OF HEAD START

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Health and Safety Screener: Policies and Procedures for Head Start Programs

Introduction

Organizations that serve young children have an obligation to ensure that children in their care are in healthy and safe environments, and that policies and procedures that protect children are in place.

This screener will help organizations to identify where they need to make changes and build capacity in order to ensure children are healthy and safe while in their care. It contains best practices as well as requirements found in the Head Start Program Performance Standards.*

Suggestions for Use

1. Complete a health and safety screening for each site where children receive services.
2. Mark each item in the screening form “yes” or “no.” Provide descriptions for items marked “no.”
3. Determine issues, priorities, and staff responsible for actions and improvements within each site and across the program.
4. Follow up to assure improvements are made in a timely fashion.

** This screener does not include all applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards, nor does it cover every possible health and safety concern or replace each grantee’s responsibility to ensure ongoing compliance with local, state, and federal health and safety requirements. Requirements related to healthy and safe environments can be found throughout the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Programs should also consult [Caring for Our Children Basics](#), for additional information to develop and implement adequate safety policies and practices.*

Date: _____

Completed by: _____

Health/Safety Factors	Yes	No	Description of Conditions
Facilities			
All areas are safe, clean, and free from pests.			
Exits are clearly marked, and emergency evacuation routes and other safety procedures are posted in the classroom and in appropriate locations throughout the site.			
Lighting is sufficient and adequate for all classroom activities.			
Emergency lighting is available in case of a power failure.			
Fire extinguishers are available, accessible, tested, and serviced regularly.			
Smoke, carbon monoxide, and as necessary, radon detectors are installed, properly located, and tested regularly.			
Current child care, health, fire, and other applicable licenses and inspection certificates are present on site.			
All indoor and outdoor spaces meet minimum square footage requirements per local, state, tribal, and Head Start regulations, whichever is more stringent.			
All playground areas are visible to supervising adults.			
Necessary accommodations and modifications are made to ensure the safety, comfort, and full participation of all children including those with disabilities.			
Children are protected from potential hazards including choking, strangulation, electrical and drowning hazards, contagious diseases, and those presented by windows and glass doors, including falls and breakage.			



Health/Safety Factors	Yes	No	Description of Conditions
Toilets and hand washing facilities are clean, in good repair, and easily accessible for children's use. Supplies including toilet paper, hand soap, and towels are available and accessible.			
Toileting and diapering areas are separated from areas used for food preparation, service and eating, and equipped with sanitizing supplies for exclusive use in the area.			
Garbage is stored in a safe and sanitary manner to prevent contamination.			
Children and staff are protected from potential injuries from heating and cooling systems, including burns from hot water (water should not exceed 120 degrees).			
Indoor and outdoor environments are free of mold and pollutants, including smoke, lead, pesticides, and herbicides, as well as soil and water pollutants.			
Child-accessible electrical outlets have covers, are tamper-resistant, or have safety plugs.			
Sleeping arrangements for infants follow safe practices as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and are free of soft bedding materials (e.g., soft mattress, crib bumpers, pillows, stuffed animals, fluffy blankets, and comforters). No drop-side cribs are in use.			
Age-appropriate rest and nap opportunities are available for preschool age children if the program operates six hours or longer.			
Children are protected from any hazards posed by classroom or family child care pets.			
Clean, sanitary drinking water should be readily accessible in indoor and outdoor areas throughout the day.			



Health/Safety Factors	Yes	No	Description of Conditions
Equipment and Materials			
Equipment, toys, materials, supplies, and furniture are safe, age, and developmentally appropriate.			
Medication is properly stored and labeled and is not accessible to children.			
Cleaning supplies and other potentially dangerous materials and toxins are not accessible to children.			
All indoor and outdoor equipment, materials and furnishings meet standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or the American Society for Testing and Materials, International (ASTM).			
Emergency supplies, including parent and emergency contact information, first aid kits, and fire safety supplies are readily accessible to staff.			
No firearms or other weapons are accessible to children.			
Policies and Procedures			
A sign-in/sign-out system is used to track those who enter and exit the facility.			
Policies and procedures ensure children are released only to authorized adults.			
Procedures are in place to ensure children are safe when they are unexpectedly absent and the parent has not contacted the program.			
Agency policies and procedures protect children with allergies from known allergens.			
Agency has all-hazards emergency management/disaster preparedness and response plans for events including natural and man-made disasters and emergencies, and violence in or near programs.			
Agency maintains current parent or guardian and emergency contact list. Staff carry list on field trips and during evacuations.			



Health/Safety Factors	Yes	No	Description of Conditions
Infectious disease policies and procedures are in place and include contacting parents and communicating with the local health department as necessary.			
Staff are trained and implement policies that ensure children are released only to a parent, legal guardian, or other formally designated individual.			
Policies for health emergencies that require rapid response or immediate medical attention are shared with parents.			
Staff notify parents when children are sick or injured.			
Premises are kept free of undesirable and hazardous materials and conditions. Indoor and outdoor premises are inspected prior to each use by children.			
A routine schedule of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting is followed. Infant toys are cleaned and sanitized by staff as needed between each use by individual children.			
Procedures are in place to protect the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information in child records, including references to (a) disclosure with parental consent, (b) disclosure without parental consent but with parental notice and opportunity to refuse, and (C) disclosure without parental consent.			
Active Supervision			
Children, including sleeping children, are supervised by staff at all times and never left alone with volunteers.			
Children in outdoor areas do not have access to unsafe or unsupervised areas (e.g. body of water, roads or parking lots, or other hazards).			



Health/Safety Factors	Yes	No	Description of Conditions
Constant and active supervision is maintained when any child is in or around water.			
Redundant procedures are in place to ensure that no child is left alone, i.e. a second staff person is designated to check classroom, outdoor play areas, sleeping areas, and vehicles during transitions and prior to departure.			
Required staff to child ratios are maintained at all times per local, state, and Head Start regulations, whichever is more stringent.			
Required group sizes are maintained at all times per local, state, and Head Start regulations, whichever is more stringent.			
Human Resources			
All staff abide by the program’s standards of conduct which must support children’s well-being, prevent and address challenging behaviors, and prevent maltreatment of children or endangerment to children’s health or safety.			
All staff have background checks, sex offender registry checks, criminal history checks including fingerprint checks, and initial health exams.			
Complete background checks are conducted for all staff at least once every five years unless there is a more stringent system to ensure child safety; health exams must be periodically completed as recommended and required by state, tribal, or local requirements.			
All regular volunteers have been screened for appropriate communicable diseases as required by law, or in absence of a related law, as recommended by the Health Services Advisory Committee.			
All staff are trained in mandated reporter responsibilities, including recognizing suspected child abuse and neglect and following mandated reporting requirements.			



Health/Safety Factors	Yes	No	Description of Conditions
Direct service staff are trained in first aid, CPR, prevention and control of infection diseases, use of safe sleeping practices, preventing and identifying Shaken Baby Syndrome, abusive head trauma, sun safety and medication administration (including the special needs of children with health issues), and to respond to specific medical emergencies, including asthma and allergies.			
All staff are trained in and implement hygiene practices related to toileting, hand washing, diapering, safe food preparation, and exposure to blood and body fluids.			
Transportation (if applicable)			
Program vehicles are properly equipped (e.g. two-way communication system, labeled and charged fire extinguisher, labeled first aid kit, seat belt cutter, reverse beeper, adaptations for children with disabilities as needed).			
Program carries out systematic preventive maintenance and each driver implements daily pre-trip vehicle inspections to ensure that vehicles used to transport children are in safe operating condition.			
Vehicles used for child transportation are inspected annually by an inspection program licensed or operated by the state.			
All auxiliary seating is built into the vehicle by the manufacturer, maintained, and included in the annual inspection.			
Children are seated using age, height and weight appropriate child passenger safety systems.			
Vehicle aisles and exits remain unobstructed at all times, and items in the passenger compartment are properly stored and secured.			



Health/Safety Factors	Yes	No	Description of Conditions
Drivers receive training prior to transporting any enrolled child, and refresher training each year. Topics include first aid, emergency response, operation of any special equipment, routine maintenance and vehicle safety checks, and recordkeeping.			
Bus monitors participate in annual training including child boarding and exiting procedures, use of child passenger safety systems, emergency response, evacuation procedures, pre- and post-trip vehicle checks, and child pick-up and release procedures.			
Trip routing minimizes the time a child is in transit, prevents vehicles from exceeding maximum passenger capacity, and assures child safety during pick-up and drop-off.			
Bus monitors and drivers have current information about individuals authorized to pick up the children.			
Bus monitors and drivers complete pre- and post-trip vehicle checks, including second or third complete interior inspections to ensure no child is ever left on a vehicle.			
Children receiving transportation services are taught safety procedures and participate in an initial emergency evacuation drill and at least two additional evacuation drills during the program year.			

