

Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium

"MAKING A DIFFERENCE"



Strengthening our families through
education, empowerment, and knowledge.

2025-2026

Parent Handbook

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Dear Parents,

As we begin the new school year I would like to welcome all of you to the Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium. For some, this is a new experience and, for others, it is a return to a positive and rewarding relationship. Our goal with you is one of partnerships, based on mutual respect and trust, and geared towards assisting you in meeting the needs of your child and strengthening the family.

Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium (The Consortium) program is a quality program designed to help your child become Kindergarten ready and help him/her on the road to a lifetime of learning. Your child is our future and we will do all we can to ensure that the children in our program receive the highest quality of services. Your involvement in Consortium's programs will enable us to continue to realize the possibilities of how we can best serve the children and families of Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties.

This handbook is intended to provide helpful information about the program, its operating policies and scheduled monthly events. We encourage you to keep it available for future use when questions arise about the Consortium's programs policies and to know some of the events already scheduled for your child and/or your family. The staff are readily available to answer any questions that you may have about the program.

The Consortium reserves the right to make any changes to this Parent Handbook when deemed appropriate.

THIS HANDBOOK WAS CREATED IN ORDER TO BETTER PREPARE YOUR CHILD/FAMILY FOR THE CONSORTIUM'S EXPERIENCE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO BRING THIS HANDBOOK TO THE FIRST TWO SITE MEETINGS WHERE WE WILL DISCUSS AND LEARN ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE, GROW AND EVENTUALLY TAKE SOME OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THESE MEETINGS.

Sincerely,

Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium
Dr. Kathy L. Guajardo, Executive Director

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A FAMILY DOCTOR OR DENTIST THAT WAS ASSIGNED TO YOU (BY MEDICAID) AND NEED ONE, CALL YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SPECIALIST WHO WILL HELP YOU.

The Consortium emphasizes the importance of early identification of health problems. The goal of the health services is to improve and maintain the health of the child and his/her family. **Prior to the start of school** arrange for your child to receive a physical and dental exam by your family doctor/dentist. **All Exams must be completed and submitted by the child's home visit and prior to school entrance.**

If you are a Medicaid recipient, Medicaid will pay the bill. If your family is covered by other insurance (either medical or dental), please use that. If you do not have Medicaid or insurance, you must apply for Hoosier Healthwise. Your child should have his/her physical and dental exam completed **BEFORE ENTERING THE CLASSROOM**: The Consortium's forms which the doctor and dentist sign at the time of the exam must be returned to the Consortium's Family and Community Specialist. **REMEMBER: All Exams must be current, up-to-date and completed prior to school entrance.**

All children enrolled in the Consortium will need to have their routine physical/well-child exams completed at the following ages and prior to entry: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, 36 months and then yearly. A dental exam needs to be completed between 18- 24 months of age (the actual time should be after the eruption of the first tooth) and every six months or more frequently as recommended by dentist for follow-up. After the eruption off the first tooth.

The Consortium requires that all children are up to date with state/federal immunization guidelines to attend Head Start. A copy of immunization records are required at time of application.

Due to federally mandated standards, every child is required to be tested for lead and hemoglobin, between 9-12 months, 24 months, and between ages 3 to 5 years old if not previously tested. Your doctor may perform these tests at the time of a well child exam, at their WIC (Women, Infant and Children's) or Healthy Beginnings appointment. If they are not completed by your doctor, a Head Start Nurse or Health Care Partner will complete the lead and hemoglobin by age requirement deadlines. **Consent form for Head Start Nurses to complete these tests are signed by parents/guardians at the time of application.**

If you think your child is ill or suspect a possible communicable disease, please do not send your child to school. These signs and symptoms included by not limited to: **fever of 100.4 degrees or greater, unusual rash, vomiting, diarrhea (loose stool 2-3 times per hour), and unusual behavior (not acting themselves).** See "When is sick too sick for school" handout.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS (continued)

If your child has a diagnosed health concern (asthma, seizure disorder, food allergy); a health care plan must be completed with a Head Start Nurse prior to the start of school

If medication is prescribed for the diagnosed health concern; a “parent permission to administer” form must be completed prior to your child attending school. The parent permission form must be signed by the parent/guardian and prescribing physician. The medication can only be accepted in its original box from the pharmacy. The box must contain the pharmacy label including child’s name and instructions.

To help us maintain the health and safety of your child, please ensure the following requirements are completed before the first day of school:

- √ **Health Care Plan with Head Start Nurse.**
- √ **Parent permission form signed by parent/guardian and physician.**
- √ **Medication received by Head Start Nurse in its original container/box**

If medication is required for school; an individual med bag may be required for emergency medications. Individual med bags must be transported daily to/from school and handed off from adult to adult.

Too sick for school? Here's how to tell...

When your child is not feeling well, deciding whether to send them to school or keep them home can be difficult. Here are some simple guidelines to help make that decision a little easier.
If you have more questions, don't hesitate to contact your physician.

In most cases, your child should not be at school if they have the following symptoms:



I have a cough and other cold symptoms

Sore throat, cough, fever, congestion, runny nose

To return to school: The fever returns to normal for 24 hours without medication to lower it.



I have a rash

Unknown rashes or skin lesions, with oozing, drainage, or fever

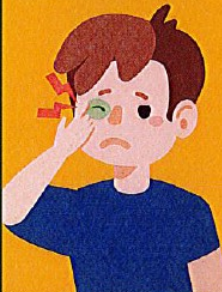
To return to school: Your child must be free from rash or fever and have been evaluated by a physician if needed.



I have a fever

Temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher within the last 24 hours

To return to school: Your child must be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of a fever reducing medicine (i.e., Tylenol, Motrin, Advil).



I have an eye infection

Thick mucus or pus draining from the eye or pink eye (conjunctivitis)

To return to school: Your child must be free from drainage and/or have been evaluated by a physician if needed.



I have a sore throat

Sudden high fever, redness in throat with white patches, pain when swallowing, or doctor diagnosis strep throat

To return to school: 24 hours after 1st dose of antibiotics and normal temperature 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit.



I have head-lice

Excessive, distracting itching of scalp, a tickling sensation of something moving in the hair, irritability, and head sores as a result of scratching

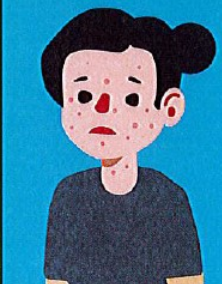
To return to school: Your child may return if treated with the appropriate lice treatment at home or referred to their health care provider for further treatment recommendations if needed.



I have a stomachache

Several episodes (2 or more) of vomiting and diarrhea within the last 24 hours period

To return to school: Your child must be free from vomiting and Diarrhea free for 24 hours without medication to control it.



I have chicken pox

Itchy rash or blisters, fever, headache, and feeling tired

To return to school: Your child may return after there are no new blisters or spots appear, and all the spots have scabbed over and are dry.



I have COVID

Fever, chills, new cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea

To return to school: No nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever for at least 24 hours without the use of a fever reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving.

* Your child must remain out for at least 5 days after symptoms start if they do not get a negative COVID-19 test or alternative diagnosis.*

- + It's OK to have a runny nose and/or small cough.
- + We encourage you to seek medical attention when your child is sick and to follow your health care provider's recommendation about returning to school and other activities.



Need to know how to report an absence? Look for this icon on your school's website or CMS homepage.

QUICK GUIDE: ISOLATION | COVID-19 |

What to do when a child in your early care and education (ECE) program might have COVID-19.

DAY 0

Child is sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or has a positive COVID-19 test.

Isolation

**DAY
1–5**

Child stays home and **isolates** away from other people to the extent possible.

**DAY
6**

Is the child **fever-free** for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication?

AND

Is the child **free of symptoms** or **have symptoms improved**?

AND

Is the child 2 years of age or older and **able to consistently wear a mask** in the ECE program? **OR:** Did the child have two negative antigen tests 48 hours apart?

YES

NO

**DAY
6–10**

It is **safest** to continue isolation until the end of day 10¹.

For children who have symptoms, continue isolation until the child is **fever-free** for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved.

If ECE is using a test-based strategy, a child who has two negative antigen tests 48 hours apart can return to the ECE program without needing to wear a mask.

YES

(After day 10)

**After
Day
10**

Return to the ECE program. For children who were severely ill, or whose fever persists past day 10, or who continue to test positive using an antigen test, consult a healthcare professional before returning to the ECE program.

Return to ECE Program

All children returning must comply with the most recent regulations of the CDC and the local Health Department.

Whenever possible, keep children from isolation or quarantine before day 11 away from people who are at high risk, and 6 feet apart when masks are not worn.

Return to the ECE program

Children returning from isolation should wear a high-quality mask around others through day 10. If the ECE program is using a test-based strategy, children who have two negative antigen tests 48 hours apart after ending isolation may remove their mask sooner than day 10. Whenever possible, keep distance between children who are returning from isolation before day 11 and others, especially people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.

¹ **For program administrators:** When you determine isolation policies, you should consider multiple factors: The impact of the loss of access to education and care on the well-being of children and families, [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), presence of other people who are at high risk for severe illness, and the ability to use additional prevention strategies.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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HEAD START CONSORTIUM'S MISSION:

The mission of the Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium is to create seamless delivery system of education and child development for underserved infants, toddlers and preschool children, providing a nurturing, learning environment to prepare them for Head Start and/or kindergarten.

We recognize the holistic approach to the child's development is essential. Therefore, in addition to the interdisciplinary educational component, the program will have a comprehensive health component...strong family and community component. We believe that we must strengthen and empower our children and families to overcome these obstacles and create a solid, secure foundation upon which to build.

WHAT IS EARLY HEAD START / HEAD START?

Early Head Start/Early Head Start Community Program is a federally funded comprehensive interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education program for infants and toddlers, serves 60 infants and toddlers, 20 pregnant women and 128 additional infants through Community Partnership.

Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive interdisciplinary, preschool Child Development Program for eligible children and their family members. Currently, St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties are funded to serve 852 children in classrooms located in area schools. Additional funds allows us to provide services to children who qualify for On My Way PreK, CCDF, ~~and Title 1.~~ **(review)**

THE CONSORTIUM'S GOALS

- Allow opportunity for children and families to assimilate into the culture of school by establishing relationships through the transition process from Early Head Start to Head Start.
- A journey of life-long learning can begin in a child who begins at a school based Head Start program.
- Create a holistic approach by supporting the need of implementing health, social services, and/or special services as part of the educational process.
- Create a secure, solid foundation using available community systems of coordinated care.
- Allows children and families to develop rich relationships with teachers and staff and to be proactive in approaching educational development.
- Allow opportunity for children and families to assimilate into the culture of school by establishing relationships through the transition process from Head Start to Kindergarten.

PARENTS' COMMITMENT TO THE CONSORTIUM

- Parents/guardians must make every effort to treat other parents, the Consortium guests, and staff with dignity and respect. This includes any **AUTHORIZED PERSON(S)** who a parent/guardian has designated to drop off or receive a child.
- Parents/guardians must provide accurate up-to-date contact and health information throughout the school year. (i.e. Immunizations, Physical, Well-Child Check-Up, dental exam)
- Parents must set aside time to meet with their assigned Family and Community Specialist to create a family partnership agreement.
- Parents must make every effort to follow attendance guidelines by sending their child to school every day he/she is not ill and call Head Start staff immediately or within the hour to let them know of their absence and give a reason. (see page 19 for further explanation)
- Parents will receive training about the leadership and community advisory opportunities through Policy Council and site meetings, as well as in healthy relationships (i.e., marital and parent/child relationships) through the Love and Logic series, and Fatherhood trainings.
- Parents are expected to enter the buildings of each school according to their local school policies. **Must have driver license or photo ID to run through the Raptor System.** Parents are also expected to enter respectfully, absence of drugs/alcohol, and wearing appropriate clothing free of offensive apparel and language.
- **Children must arrive and be picked up on time and stay for the entire session unless there's an emergency or a doctor's appointment.**
- Parents are expected to attend, four times a year, scheduled home visits and parent/teacher conferences.
- Parents are encouraged to volunteer and/or participate in their child's classroom or activities, **following the school corporations policies.** Licensed facility volunteers must have finger print paperwork on file.
- Parents are encouraged to attend site meetings, parent trainings as often as possible.
- Parents are encouraged to assist in making decisions concerning improvements to the classroom and/or the overall Consortium's Programs.
- **The safety of children is our most important concern. We must restrict food prepared off site due to health considerations, including allergies, food sensitivities, choking.**
- **Do not allow outside food to be given to the children. Please do not bring any food or "treats" for birthday or holiday parties.**
- **Indiana State licensing prohibits children wearing jewelry except, pierced studded earrings, because of several risks. Potential risks are choking, scratching and simple loss of the item. Failure of the Consortium to comply will place our program at risk of losing our license to serve families in our community.**

HEAD START TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

~~(see addendum below)~~, parents or guardians will be contacted shortly before school starts to inform them of the times for pick-up, drop-off, and specific locations where this will occur. Head Start Transportation department will contact parents regarding pick up and drop off points. Buses will pick-up and drop-off in front of the address or cluster stops that is supplied to The Consortium. Parents who are participating in transportation should be aware of the procedures that are established for the safety of your child noted below.

Pick-up Procedures:

Please have your child ready in the morning 15 minutes before the bus arrives in order for the child to quickly and safely board the bus. Persons receiving a child must be home 15 before the designated time the child is to be picked up. The bus monitor will assist the child(ren) on and off the bus. The bus will not wait longer than one (1) minute for the child (ren). If your child(ren) misses the bus, you may bring your child to the school. You must report to the front office to receive sign in information. Winter months parents must be standing in doorway with door open. Summer months parents must be outside 10-15 minutes prior. **Parents must walk the child(ren) to the bus and follow all procedures for on-boarding a child.**

Drop-off Procedures:

The transportation department expects that a parent or guardian will be at home at the designated time to receive the child. If no one is available, a phone call will be made to your preferred phone number, emergency contact name, and the child will be returned to the school. If no contact is made by all contacts listed in child's file, the local police will be called **AFTER 1 HOUR (from assigned drop-off time, if bus transported and AFTER 1 HOUR from dismissal time if self-transported)** and the child will be turned over to them as undeliverable. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that parents and guardians take seriously the responsibility of being home for their child.

~~ADDENDUM OF DISTRICTS PROVIDING BUS TRANSPORTATION~~

~~Lafayette Head Start
Walkerton
Hawthorne~~

ARRIVALS AND DISMISSALS—PICKUPS AND DROPOFFS

Whether your child(ren) ride a bus or you self-transport the Consortium must have accurate information about them. This information is to be kept up-to-date throughout the school year. The following guidelines apply in all cases whether riding a bus or not.

NAME/ADDRESS/PHONE CHANGES:

- Once a change is requested the Consortium can no longer guarantee your services, session, site, or placement. Changes such as; emergency contacts, phone numbers authorized persons should be changed as often as necessary. Families requesting multiple address changes will receive additional follow-up to see if any assistance or other referrals will be helpful in providing unbroken services.
- Children will only be released to the authorized person whose name has been listed on the child's emergency form. **To make changes or additions to this list you must make an appointment with the Family and Community Specialist to complete a COS (Change of Status) form in person.**
- **Any PARENTS/GUARDIANS AUTHORIZED ADULT PERSON who is responsible for either getting child off the bus or picking child up from a site will be expected to show their picture ID (a hard original copy, no ID saved on an electronic device, i.e. cell phone or tablet may be used.) Parents also must be prepared to show the Photo I.D. at any given day in the event there is a substitute staff member filling in for the day.**
- All Children must wear a wristband to enter the bus the first 30 days of the program. Anytime a child change site or classroom, they must wear a wrist band for 30 more days. No child will be permitted on the bus without a wristband during the 30-day period.
- If a child has a scheduled doctor/dentist appointment, accompanied by a note from that office, requiring them to be late or need a early pickup, the child does not need to stay home, or be considered too late to attend school.
- Children are asked to leave all toys, candy, and any other snacks at home.
- No smoking allowed within 50 feet of Head Start Facility or bus stops.

SPECIFIC RULES FOR BUS RIDERS:

- Parents/guardians who request a transportation change will be responsible for transporting their child until notified by transportation or Head Start.
- At the bus stop, for safety purpose, no animals of any kind or size are to be within 50 feet of the bus stop.
- Parents/guardian please refrain from using your cell phone when putting your child on or getting them off the bus. Please be respectful and patient with your driver/monitor/staff. Remember there will be other children on the bus. If you have a concern with the driver/monitor/Head Start staff, please contact your Site Supervisor.
- Head Start parents must ensure that their child is signed in and/or out by an authorized person when riding the bus. Parents/guardians and authorized persons must use hand to hand contact when escorting children to and from the bus. The custody of a child must be transferred with hand to hand contact to/from Head Start staff, by signing in/out, upon arrival/dismissal.
- Parents/guardians and authorized person must use hand to hand contact with the bus monitor when children are boarding or being retrieve from the bus.
- Should a child have a medication(s) with a health care plan, the medication bag must be logged in on the transportation bus manifest form with the bus monitor/driver. No child may board the bus without their medication bag. If a child has a medication bag they must wear a red wristband the first 30 days of the program.
- If your child is not riding the bus on any particular day, Please contact your Transportation Dept. and your teaching team within the first (1st) hour of School or as soon as possible.
- Children are expected to respectfully follow bus rules and be respectful of adults and other students.
- Child Safety Seats and/or harnesses must be used by all children riding the bus. Seats are provided by the transportation department.
- Bus drivers/monitors will complete a Head Start Incident Report on misbehavior and inform Head Start staff within 24 hours of the incident.

ARRIVALS AND DISMISSALS—PICKUPS AND DROPOFFS (Continued)

- Bus misconduct will be addressed according to Head Start policies and a SAT meeting will be held between parent/guardian, FACS and a Head Start Manager.

Undeliverable or Late pick-up Children Policy

- In the event that a child is returned to the school on the bus or not picked up by transporting parents/guardians, the Family and Community Specialist (FACS) will call parents/guardians with a reminder message about being present at home at the scheduled drop off time. If necessary, Contact Sheet will be updated.
- The Family and Community Specialists (FACS) will follow-up with the family to determine if a SAT meeting should be scheduled to develop a different action plan for receiving their child.

SPECIFIC RULES FOR SELF TRANSPORT:

- Parents/guardians must be on time for pick up and drop off.
- Children are not to be brought to school later than 5 minutes after their local school bell rings for class at the beginning of their day. Any child with a written doctor's note or similar necessary appointment are exempt from this rule.
- Parents/guardians must use hand to hand contact from the car to the classroom and from classroom to the car. No children are to be left in the car unattended.
- **Cars are not to be left with engines running or illegally parked.**
- Each site location has specific rules for where to park and enter their building. Parents must respect and obey all local guidelines.
- **Please do not drop your child off more than 5 minutes before school is designated to begin.**
- **You must sign your child in when arriving and sign your child out when departing.**
- **The sign in/out sheet will be available at the designated spot at each site.**
- **Parents may not leave children in the car while bringing an Early Head Start/Head Start child into the building, if this happens CPS will be notified.**

ARRIVALS AND DISMISSALS—PICKUPS AND DROPOFFS (Continued)

EARLY HEAD START Additional Policies, Merit and SAMP:

Parents of infants participating in the Community Partnership portion of the Head Start program must provide their own transportation.

Pick-up:

- Parents must submit height and weight of their child to the EHS Manager or FACS prior to receiving transportation services.
- The parent and child must be present when the bus arrives.
- A parent must ride with the child on the bus.
- All children must be strapped into a child car seat before the bus move.

Drop-off:

- Infant/toddlers will only be transported by bus with the parent present and on the bus with the child.
- Parents and children will only be dropped off at the pick-up address.
- All children must be strapped into a child car seat before the bus can leave the school.

Conduct and Misconduct on the Bus

- Children are asked to leave all toys, candy, and any other snacks at home.
- Children are expected to respectfully follow bus rules and be respectful of adults and other students.
- Child Safety Seats and/or harnesses must be used by all children riding the bus. Seats are provided by the transportation department.
- Bus drivers/monitors will complete a Head Start Incident Report on the misbehavior and inform Head Start staff within 24 hours of the incident.
- Bus misconduct will be addressed according to Head Start policies and a SAT meeting will be held between parent/guardian, FACS and a Head Start Manager.

Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider/Esta institución es un proveedor de igualdad de oportunidades

Transportation Policies and Procedures Checklist / Lista de verificación de información de contacto autorizada / padre 2025-2026	Parent/Guardian Initial Por Favor Initial
1. Parent/Guardian or Emergency contacts must show their I.D. to the bus driver (original I.D. only) We cannot accept copies (i.e. electronic devices, cell phone or tablet). Parents also must be prepared to show the Photo I.D. at any given time in the event there is a substitute staff member filling in for the day. Los padres/tutores o contactos de emergencia debe mostrar una identificación (identificación original) al conductor del autobús. No podemos aceptar copias (es decir no se aceptan copias ya sea en papel o en dispositivos electrónicos como teléfonos celulares o tabletas). Los padres también deben estar preparados para mostrar la identificación en cualquier momento si hay un miembro del personal que sea sustituto que este remplazando ese día.	
2. Parent/Guardian must have child ready 15 minutes before bus arrives. During the winter months Parents/Guardian must be standing in doorway with door open./Su hijo debe estar listo 15 minutos antes de que llegue el autobus. Page 13 in Parent Handbook	
3. Parent/Guardian must be home 15 minutes before the designated time to receive the child./Usted debe estar en casa 15 minutos antes de el momento designado para recibir el niño. Page 13 in Parent Handbook	
4. If a Parent/Guardian uses a child care service for pick up and drop off, then the authorized person name should read "the staff of (Daycare Center), service they have chosen"/Si un padre / guardián usa un servicio de cuidado de niños para recoger y dejar, entonces el nombre de la persona autorizada debe leer "el personal de (guardería), el servicio que han elegido".	
5. All Daycare centers must sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) and have a Head Start made ID when getting children off the bus or getting them from a Head Start classroom./ Todas las guarderías deben firmar un Memorando de Acuerdo (MOU) y tener una identificación hecha por Head Start al bajar a los niños del autobús o sacarlos de un salón de clases de Head Start.	
6. Children are expected to respectfully follow bus rules and be respectful of adults and other students. Bus misconduct will be addressed according to Head Start policies./Se espera que los niños respeten el conductor, las reglas de el autobus, y otros adultos y niños en este autobus. La mala conducta del autobús se tratará de acuerdo con las políticas de Head Start. Page 11 in Parent Handbook	
7. No adults are allowed onto a school bus without the permission from the driver./No se permiten adultos en el autobus sin el permiso de conductor.	
8. I understand if I do enter a bus without permission, I am trespassing and it is a Federal offense subjected to fines and or jail time./Entiendo como padre o guardián que si entro en el autobús sin permiso del conductor, estoy invadiendo y puedo estar sujeto a multas federales o tiempo de cárcel.	
9. Adults must have hand to hand contact with bus monitor, when given or receiving their child./Adultos deben a tener contacto mano-a-mano con el conductor cuando dan o reciben a su hijo. Page 11 in Parent Handbook	
10. Parents/guardians and authorized person must use hand to hand contact when escorting children to and from the bus./Adultos deben a tener contacto mano-a-mano con su hijo cuando estan llegando y dejando la clase. Page 11 in Parent Handbook	
11. Wristband must be worn for the first 30 days of school and 30 days ever time the child change school. Children without wristband will not be permitted to enter the bus./Las pulseras deben ser usadas durante los primeros 30 días de escuela. A los niños sin pulseras no se les permitira entrar el autobus. Page 11 in Parent Handbook	
12. If your child is not riding the bus on any particular day, please contact your Transportation Dept.or your teaching team within the first (1st) hour of school or as soon as possible./ Si su hijo va a estar ausente de la escuela, por favor comuníquese al departamento de transportacion y la maestra durante la primera hora de escuela o lo mas pronto posible .	

13.	Parent/Guardian are required to keep address, emergency contact and/or phone numbers up-dated at all times. Any change , please contact your FACS (Family and Community Specialist) to complete a COS (Change of Status) form./Usted debe tener su direccion, contacto de emergencia y numero de telefono preciso en todo momento. Si usted tiene que cambiar el informacion, pregunta a su FACs por una carta a cambio de estado. Page 11 in Parent Handbook	
14.	When the bus arrives at the end of the day only contact names listed on the emergency contact (1520) can received the child /Cuando el autobus llege a su casa al final del día de escuela solament las personas en la lista de emergencia (1520) pueden recibir al niño.	
15.	For safety purpose, no animals of any kind or size are to be within 50 feet of the bus stop. Page 11 in Parent Handbook. Por razones de seguridad, ningún animal de ningún tipo o tamaño debe de estar a menos de 50 pies de la parada de autobús.	
16.	Parents /Guardian please refrain from using your cell phone when putting your child on or getting them off the bus. Please be respectful and patient with your driver/monitor/staff. Remember there will be other children on the bus . If you have a concern with the driver / monitor /Head Start staff , please contact your Site Supervisor. Page 11 in Parent Handbook . Padres / tutores por favor absténgase de usar su teléfono celular cuando ponga a su hijo o lo baje del autobús . Por favor, sea respetuoso y paciente con su conductor/ monitor/ personal. Recuerde que habrá otros niños en el autobús. Si tiene alguna inquietud con el conductor / monitor / personal de Head Start , comuníquese con su Administrador del Programa.	
17.	All primary adults must insure all designated persons for drop-off or pick-up will observe all the appropriate policies and procedures. Todos los padres/guardián deben de asegurarse que todas las personas designadas para dejar o recoger revisen todas las políticas y procedimientos de transporte	
18.	No smoking allowed within 50 feet of Head Start Facility or bus stops. Page 11 in Parent Handbook. No se permite fumar a menos de 50 pies de las instalaciones de Head Start o de las paradas de autobús	

I have received the Flip Chart information and information about the Community Resource and I understand that it outlines: Parent Involvement, Health and Nutrition, Education, and Transportation information.

He recibido el Rotafolio de informacion, y informacion de los Recursos en la Comunidad, y entiendo que resume: La Participación del Padre, Salud y Nutrición, Educación e información de Transporte.

As a parent/guardian you are responsible to review this with your emergency contacts and have it signed and returned to Head Start.

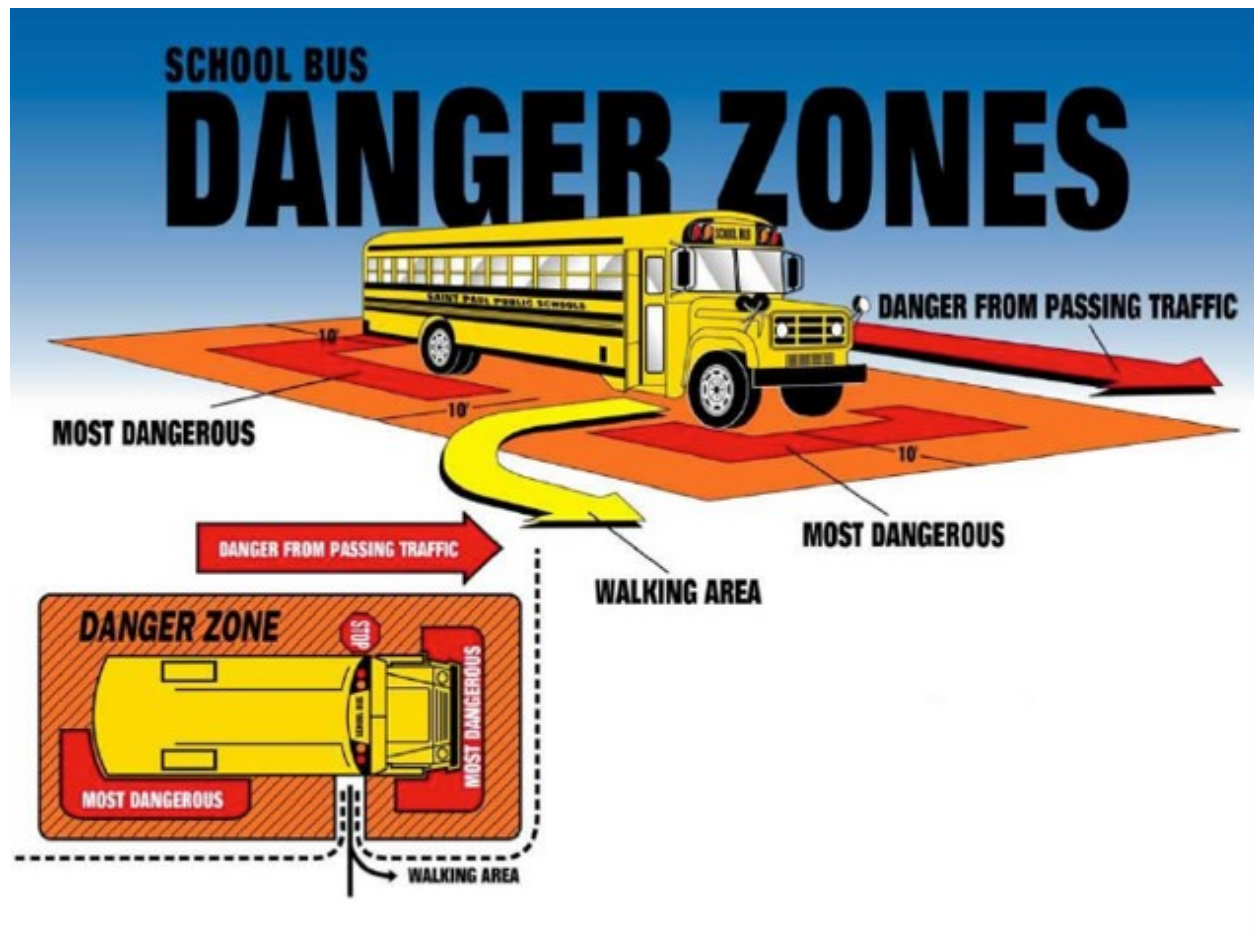
Como padre / tutor, usted es responsable de revisar esto con sus contactos de emergencia y hacer que se firme y regrese a Head Start.

Child Name / Nombre de nino(a) : _____

Site and Room Number / Nombre de Sitio y Numero de Classe: _____

Parent Signature / Firma del padre: _____ Date / Fecha: _____

Head Start Staff Signature / Firma: _____ Date / Fecha: _____



10 FEET AWAY

Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium
Weather Delays Schedule
2025-2026

Be sure to check local news channels for school closings and delays

Baugo	Head Start: 2-hour delay EHS CC: 2-hour delay
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Concord	2-hour delay
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Elkhart:	2-hour delay
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Goshen	2-hour delay Merit—2 hour delay
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John Glenn	2-hour delay
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Middlebury	2-hour delay
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Penn Harris	2-hour delay
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Mishawaka	2-hour delay
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South Bend	2-hour delay
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Union North	2 –hour delay
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Wa-Nee	2 –hour delay
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Consortium's Attendance Policy

Federal law requires Head Start employees to inquire on a child's well-being within the first hour of school.

If your child is not able to attend school for any reason, families are to contact the Head Start staff **within the first hour of school**. For families who do not make contact the staff, will contact families to find out reason for absence.

If a child is **absent for two consecutive days without communication from a parent/guardian, a Home Visit , by the FACS, will be conducted**. A Home Visit or a SAT with a child's parent/guardian will occur if a child has chronic absences to develop an action plan.

Head Start staff will use individual child data to determine if a SAT meeting should occur. **Per Head Start Federal guidelines, a child with patterns of absences of 10% or higher put them at risk of missing critical learning and skill development**. This is based on program days. Head Start staff will meet with child's family to develop strategies to improve child's attendance and assist in eliminating barriers. If you foresee you child's attendance being impacted for a particular reason or circumstance, you should work with your FACS to create an action plan.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium program staff will guarantee confidentiality and privacy in regard to services, records and discussions of or about any person or child served by the program. All confidential information regarding an individual or family served by this organization must be kept confidential. Any disclosure of confidential information must be carried out within the guidelines specified in this policy. The practice of confidentiality must be maintained in all Head Start programs, departments, function and activities of the Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium.

Part of protecting the confidentiality of Head Start children and families requires that staff can only communicate with parents and/or legal guardians. Information to communicate with any third party requires the express written permission of the parent and/or guardian.

SMOKING POLICY

Smoking Policy:

Parents or volunteers who smoke must adhere to the following policy:

- Smoking will only be allowed off the school premises.

Head Start Schools are SMOKE FREE: There is no smoking allowed on the grounds at any of the Head Start facilities. This includes other tobacco products such as vaping or other electronic devices. Smoking is also not permitted while standing within 50 feet at the bus stops before or after the pick-up or drop-off times.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Parents/ Guardians should adhere to each individual school's safety protocol. Sites may require a show of ID or run a background check at the school office so you should always carry a picture ID. Please see your FACS if you have any questions about your child's site.

Parents are prohibited from bringing firearms, weapons (including tasers) or ammunition on the property of the Consortium or any other School Corporation, or possessing any firearm, weapon (including tasers) or ammunition while attending Consortium trainings.

All parents are expected to be free of alcohol and illegal drugs and not to sell, distribute, dispense, possess, or use or conspire to sell, distribute, dispense, possess, or use an illegal drug or alcohol on the Consortium's premises, or when engaged in the Consortium's business or an activity sponsored by the Consortium. In the event this should occur, the child will not be released to the adult and police will be notified.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN THE CONSORTIUM'S PROGRAMS

Parent Involvement

Parents are an essential part of our program. We rely on parents for support in a number of areas. We welcome parents to take advantage of the opportunity to help plan and shape our Consortium Programs by participating in the classroom, on committees, Policy Council, Parent Trainings, and Parent Site meetings.

Parents will receive training about the leadership and community service opportunities through Policy Council and site meetings, as well as in healthy relationships (i.e., marital and parent/child relationships), the Love and Logic , Fatherhood trainings, Nutrition Workshop, Substance Abuse Prevention (Tobacco), Kindergarten Transition., and Financial literacy

By taking advantage of partnering, parents will join The Consortium's staff by forming a strong team to educate their child and enhance their family's opportunity to grow in parenting, relationship and leadership skills.

We will share information with you on a regular basis through parent meeting minutes, Consortium website, notes, text, newsletters and flyers. **Parent information will also be sent home with your child. Please check your child's backpack daily for mail and to see what she/he was working on that day at school.**

In the following pages you will learn how The Consortium's forms partnerships and depends upon the involvement of parents and other community organizations. The Consortium is unique in that it does not seek to simply teach children, but enhance families through learning and growing together.

You will find opportunities to interact with other families, The Consortium's staff and community leaders to gain knowledge, information and necessary services for your family as you partner with The Consortium. The Consortium needs you to plan for this involvement at many levels. The next few pages of this Handbook describe what is expected from both The Consortium and you as a family that benefit from its services.

If you have not already met with your Family and Community Specialist (FACS) you will soon have that opportunity. You will be asked to provide family information and set growth goals. This will require a partnership that depends upon The Consortium keeping its commitments. Each family will have to plan on keeping similar commitments as well.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Philosophy and Goals

The Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium is family centered and is designed to build upon a parent's role as the principle influence on a child's development. Our Consortium Program works to engage in a process of collaborative partnership with individual families to develop a "Family Partnership Agreement". This partnership between The Consortium and parents is required by the Department of Health and Human Services to help parents in developing their individual strengths and successfully meet personal and family objectives. Through these agreements, parents are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of The Consortium, including direct involvement in policy and program decisions that respond to their interests and needs. A Family and Community Specialist will be assigned to your family to assist you.

The general objective of Family Partnerships are...

- To establish mutual trust, identify strengths or need of services for each family, and the necessary services or supports to meet those goals.
- To establish new or build upon pre-existing family plans and goals by obtaining information from the family, provide information and/or opportunities available from other community agencies to enhance or meet those goals.
- To establish the roles that staff and families will play in addressing and meeting each goal.
- To work collaboratively with participating parents to identify and access those community services and resources that are responsive to their interests and goals.
- To ensure that parents are provided opportunities to enhance their own parenting skills, as well as, gain knowledge and understanding of the educational, developmental needs and activities of their children.
- To provide opportunity to participate in medical, dental, nutritional, and mental health education programs.

About Community Partnerships

The Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium is a community organization that works to form collaborative partnerships with other child and family service organizations. The outcome is the forming of a "Community Partnership Agreement" with those community organizations that are responsive to the needs of children and families. These partnerships help to establish a wealth of information and opportunities that will enhance or improve the quality of service to The Consortium's Families.

Included in this binder are steps on how to contact 211, Findhelp.org., and Community Compass (food insecurity) Please contact your Family and Community Specialist if you need assistance.

PARENTING SUPPORT

For families that experience behavioral concerns with their child in their home may address these concerns with their assigned Family and Community Specialist. Family Specialist will introduce the Triple P program , Love & Logic, and Conscious Discipline with families to build strategies to help alleviate concerns.

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) uses proven solutions that help solve current parenting problems and prevent future problems before they arise.

Triple P suggest simple routines and small changes that can make a big difference for families. It helps you understand the way your family works and uses the things you already say, think, feel and do in new ways that:

- Create a stable, supportive and harmonious family.
- Encourage positive behavior in your child.
- Build positive relationships with your children, so that conflict can be resolved.
- Plan ahead to avoid or manage potentially difficult situations.
- Take care of yourself as a parent.
- Love & Logic: Techniques from Love and Logic systems designed to improve a child's decision making skills.
- Parents will be able to identify multiple challenges with their children and gain help to develop strategies to frame issues in a positive manner. Parents will be provided support through the Triple P Level 3 (Positive Parenting Program), a research-based behavior management approach teaching resource.
- Conscious Discipline is a research-based behavior management approach which focuses on safety, connection and problem solving.

Finally, the Consortium partners with families using a SAT (Student Assistance Team) meeting to address a variety of concerns. A SAT can be initiated by a parent/guardian or Head Start staff. The Consortium will use these meetings to identify concerns and work as a team towards a positive referral and/or resolution and develop an action plan, as needed.

If a parent refuses to follow through with the recommendations of the referral /behavioral plan, after two weeks, the Head Start Mental Health Coordinator and Executive Director will evaluate such action plan. This may include the possible recommendation to place the child on the waitlist, in certain situations. Other options might include the following:

- Modified schedule
- Temporary exclusion per license Mental Health Manager
- Short-Term Home-based option

The goal would be to bring the child back to classroom setting as they successfully work through the referral/behavior plan

Parent's Workshops

These Workshops are designed specifically to provide parental support in key areas of family life. They are offered monthly and virtual or in person. At these workshops, parents will receive support from experts on various family issues through informational training sessions. Some of the subjects include:

- Relationship Training: How to improve relationship skills in the family, improving a child's environment and enhancing their educational and social development.
- Fatherhood: The value of a father's involvement in a child's life, how that relationship is different from a mother's and why it is necessary into a child's educational and social growth.
- Kindergarten Readiness: How to help your child succeed within their Early Childhood growth to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond.
- Family Financial Planning: How to improve your budgeting skills within your family.
- Children's Literacy: Encouraging parents/families to develop literacy skills to advance their growth.
- Nutrition: Parent education on healthy eating tools to prevent and address childhood and family obesity.

Definition of In-Kind, Parent Responsibilities

In-Kind and Parent's Role

Parents play a critical role when volunteering in their child's Head Start program. During the school year as parents participate in various activities and document the time, it converts toward an in-kind match like money, it tells the government we have taken our grant seriously and through the support of parents are able to meet the government's challenge.

Here's an easy example of how it works:

If you bought a house for \$10,000, the bank is willing to help you get started by giving you a loan for 80% of the house's value and the bank expects you to bring in a down payment of 20%.

So the figures will be:

House costs	\$10,000.00	(100% of the house costs)
Bank loan	<u>\$ 8,000.00</u>	(80% of the loan)
Your down payment	\$ 2,000.00	(20% of your match to buy the home)

In-kind is the same concept. We need to match 20% of our grant funds from the Federal Government to be supported by parents through in-kind by taking the hourly wage of our Teacher Assistant and multiple your hours of volunteerism to document your work toward meeting the match.

What is in-kind? In-kind is services (volunteers) or goods (items or supplies) that would normally be hired or purchased through grant dollars that are given for free.

Examples of In-kind:

1. Attending Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences and generating child plans with your child's teacher, FPA, SAT, and site meetings/workshops.
2. Classroom volunteer or prepare classroom materials, clean the room, or a lunchroom assistant.
3. Doing the homework packets and assignments sent home to you from your child's teacher and documenting your time, signature, and send back to your child's teacher.
4. Doing other activities as a family that would relate to similar school activities and writing it on the in-kind form. Those activities include:
 - Sorting silverware for meals, laundry, buttons, vegetables, fruits.
 - Cutting out pictures or coupons from advertisement or junk mail.
 - Making homemade play dough and creating letters, numbers, or sculpture.
 - Helping parents make simple meals and discussing with parents the value of good foods.
 - Taking objects from home such as dry lima beans and grouping them into small sets like 3 white beans and 2 red beans equals 5 total beans. Making simple projects like that to reinforce math skills.
 - Read a story book every day to your child for about 15 mins.
 - Completing the homework packets.

If you have any questions regarding if your activities qualify for in-kind, please feel free to do the activity and fill out the form, we will determine if it counts. Mainly, get involved with your child is the most important message we can send here today. And, **FILL OUT THE FORM WITH YOUR SIGNATURE.**

Specific Partner Opportunities and Guidelines

Additional parent partner opportunities that are available have specific responsibilities that encourages professional development. There are several opportunities and guidelines listed in the next few pages. In each case your child's Teacher or Consortium's Staff can help you receive training and education to fulfill your duties.

You may find yourself serving in only one area, but many parents find joy in serving in several areas of The Consortium at the same time.

A Regular Volunteer

A REGULAR volunteer is defined as a volunteer who has applied for a specific volunteer position that requires direct contact with any Consortium's children and a written agreement, **or** is in the classroom more than 8 hours per month, **or** those on a set schedule that have direct contact with children, **or** those identified as a regular volunteer by the Executive Director, Parent Engagement Manager, Family and Community Specialist, **or** Teacher due to the nature of the specific volunteer role.

Many community volunteers participate in our classrooms as well, however **all regular volunteers** must provide background information and proof of a Negative TB test and for Early Head Start a TDap immunization is required and sent to the Head Start Office. All regular volunteers will be required to complete a Criminal background check and receive training regarding volunteer expectations. License facility volunteers working eight hours or more must have finger print paperwork on file.



List of All Areas of Parent Involvement: Especially to generate in-kind services

- In the classroom;
- Attend Parent Site Meetings;
- As a member of an Advisory Committee;
- As a member of the Policy Council;
- As a regular volunteer, volunteer their talents/skills to the program;
- Do work at home to support the staff's classroom needs;
- Assist your child by completing homework packets;
- Love and Logic Work shop, Triple P workshop, Conscience Discipline
- Healthy Family Relationships Workshop.
- Financial Literacy Workshop
- Fatherhood Initiatives;
- Family Partnership Agreement (FPA)
- Work at home to support school readiness goals
- Parent-Teacher Conferences and Home Visits
- SAT (Student Assistance Team) Meeting



Parent Site Meetings

Every parent or guardian of a child enrolled in The Consortium is a member of the Parent Site Meeting for that site. You should take the opportunity to attend and become active at your site meetings. At Site Meetings parents have the very important task of helping plan and conduct the Site Meetings and activities. You will also give input in program planning (example: giving input to teachers on ideas for the classroom.) Early in the school year, parents will be elected by parents to serve as officers and representatives for the parent site meeting and the Policy Council. The newly elected leaders will help plan and conduct the meetings for the rest of the year. Each site will be able to set project goals and parent engagement activities to help improve the Site Meetings, families, classrooms and The Consortium in general. Parent engagement activities will happen monthly, weather permitting.

A binder will be provided to those elected as a representative from each Site. It will contain the Head Start Performance Standards, Rules of Operation, and other parent information available for your review. All helpful information to help you fulfill your new role as a Consortium's parent/leader.

Your Family and Community Specialist will give you a better explanation and training on what happens at Site Meetings, but the following is a brief overview of what elected leaders can expect.

What are Site Meetings?

What types of things happen at a site meeting?

- Goals are set for group partnership with The Consortium to improve programs
- Parents meet parents with common goals and experiences
- Discuss and plan parent activities that improve family and educational experiences for the children
- Opportunities for parent involvement in community

How does a meeting work?

- Parents are elected to leadership positions
- Each meeting is run by parents starting in October/November
- Each meeting follows a prepared agenda (help from FACS personnel)
- Each meeting has a record of what was discussed (minutes)
- Sign in sheets record attendance

What positions are available?

- Representative to Policy Council **What kind of responsibility does a parent/leader have?**
 - Faithful attendance
 - Available time to fulfill duties
 - Learn Roberts Rules of Order (Training will be provided)
 - Learn/Understand leadership principles (Training will be provided)

Policy Council

There are many leadership opportunities Council. (Complete training is provided for parents who are elected from the site meetings. It is not necessary for someone to understand all of the duties to fill this position; You just need a willingness to serve and learn.)



The Policy Council is a parent committee established from among the families whose children are participating in the current year's Head Start. This committee provides opportunity for parents to share in decisions to be made about the program and its vision. Besides parents a portion of the Policy Council is made up of members that are representatives from the community. The Community Representatives are selected from among qualified people from both Elkhart and St. Joseph counties and serve one year terms until fulfilling the lifetime term limit of five (5) years.

Parent members are elected from their local sites as leaders and join together forming the Policy Council. The council meets regularly to learn about and conduct business on behalf of the parents and the program. There are lots of opportunities to grow in personal leaderships skills, to learn more about the Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium processes and procedures and to share in the overall Improvement of the program with their input and oversight.

Parents are elected at the site meetings early in the year and serve for a term of one (1) year. Qualified parents may serve as many as five (5) one year terms if they are elected.

Parents and Community Representatives do not need any prior experience to be elected or selected. If someone is elected/selected for a position on the Policy Council according to the Rules of Operation established by the Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium, they will receive all of the training necessary to be able to successfully serve. Just need to be a Parent and get involved.



Community Comment Policy

The Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start/Early Head Start Consortium is a team of people assembled to provide opportunity and education for families with pre-school children. This team consists of board members, administrators, educators, parents and a variety of other support staff all working together to provide the best assistance possible. It is important to improve and enhance our program providing the best and most comprehensive care possible for all involved in Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties.

As you become more involved with Head Start you may find times that you wish to offer suggestions, comments or even voice concerns to one or more of the team members. When you have a suggestion or even a problem the Community Comment Policy described in this brochure will help you get the best service possible from a valuable team member of the Head Start Consortium.

According to the regulations of the Office of Head Start Sec. 642 [42 U.S.C. 9837] (1),(E),(V), (X), (bb) The Governing Board of the local Head Start program is to establish, adopt, and periodically update written standards of conduct that establish standards and formal procedures for disclosing, addressing, and resolving—(bb) complaints, including investigations, when appropriate;

This process known as “The Community Comment Policy” has been established so that any concerned individuals may resolve their issue without contacting the Offices of Head Start (OHS) directly. Contacting the (OHS) before attempting to follow this process will result in them contacting the Executive Director to determine if there has been an attempt to resolve it within the organization using this process. The (OHS) simply notifies the Head Start Executive Director that you have lodged a complaint. The Director then has to try to find out the details and begin this process from the start. Therefore, contacting the (OHS) does not speed up the process, nor resolve the problem as it is not lawful for them to provide a resolution for a conflict between the Grantee and the families they serve.

It is the intent of the Head Start Consortium to be open to all suggestions for quality improvement of the agency and the programs that it administers.

In order to accomplish this goal, the agency utilizes the following procedure. If you have a suggestion or problem this will help you get the best service possible from the Head Start Consortium. Each step must be taken in the correct order to ensure a timely and effective response to your concerns. Advancing to an inappropriate step or person in charge will only slow the process as it must be documented that each step was appropriately followed.

The Community Comment Tracking Form should be completed and will help you to follow the process. This form insures that you have a record of who has been spoken to and what has been accomplished.

Staff persons receiving a complaint should sign all complaints as having been made aware of the problem. A signature does not mean that you agree or disagree with the complaint. After recording the suggested solution, action or recommendation given, make a copy and place it in the family file.

All complaints must be in writing using the Community Comment Tracking Form and contain sufficient detail to identify the nature of the concern or complaint. The concern/complaint should be submitted within ten (10) working days of knowledge of the incident or circumstances involved. Anonymous complaints, concerns or phone call concerns cannot be investigated. **(You must fill out a written concern on a Community Comment Tracking Form.)**

Revised 6/2024

STEP 1 – Take the concern to any Head Start staff person

Should you have a concern or a complaint please feel free to speak with your Family And Community Specialist (FACS) or your child's teacher. Using the Comment Tracking Form please describe your concern(s). Your child's teacher or your (FACS) Family And Community Specialist can assist in transcribing an oral complaint for you if necessary.

Please provide a brief description of what your concern is. Be sure to fill in the date of the incident or date when your concern first arose. Provide a current phone number and address where you may be reached. Be sure to sign the form and attach any additional documents about the incident.

Two copies of the Concern/Comment Tracking Form will be made. The original will be placed in your family file, a copy will be forwarded to their Site Supervisor and you will receive the other copy. This will ensure that we each have a record of your concern and the resolution.

(Should your concern involve your (FACS) or Teacher and you feel uncomfortable speaking with either of them, you may fill out the STEP 1 portion of the Form and take your concern directly to STEP 2 (the Site Supervisor))

STEP 2 – Your concern will be taken to the Site Supervisor

Whether your concern is resolved or not, the Community Comment Tracking Form will be forwarded on to the staff person's Site Supervisor. It will go along with a request for them to attempt to resolve your concern. Unless the nature of the concern is an emergency, the Site Supervisor will have 3 **business** days to respond to your concern by phone or in writing. If the concern remains unresolved following conversations with the Site Supervisor it is raised to STEP 3.

Emergency is defined: Any situation that implies that your child(ren) or yourself are in danger of physical harm, abuse, or would create a physical or mental risk of additional harm by not responding.

STEP 3 – Your concern is taken to the Head Start Executive Director

Should the Site Supervisor determine that your concern cannot be resolved through their authority they will speak with the Head Start Executive Director about how to resolve it.

The Executive Director will meet with all parties involved within 3 **business days** (provided the process has been properly followed). Some problems require additional time to investigate details. Calling to speak with the management staff including the Executive Director during the process will not be helpful. The Executive Director cannot provide progress reports or comment on concerns during the time of investigation.

Within 5 business days following the meeting and all the information has been reviewed the Executive Director will provide verbal or written explanation to all parties.

STEP 4 –Your concern will be taken to the Governing Board and Policy Council

Should the Executive Director determine that your concern is a violation of a Consortium policy or requires a change in policy to be resolved she will make appropriate recommendations to the Policy Council and Governing Board for appropriate action. Dependent upon the time of the next available planned or emergency meetings of the Policy Council and Governing Board, you will be made aware of the dates and time of such board meeting should you desire to be present to provide any additional information concerning your issue.

At the conclusion of Step 3 or 4, the Executive Director will notify the (OHS) of any necessary changes to be made in the program as a result of the concern you raised.

Revised 6/2024

Community Comment Tracking Form

Today's Date: _____

This process known as "The Community Comment Policy" has been established so that any concerned individuals may resolve their issue without contacting the Offices of Head Start (OHS) directly. [According to the regulations of the Office of Head Start Sec. 642 [42 U.S.C. 9837] (1),(E),(V), (X), (bb)] Contacting the (OHS) before attempting to follow this process will result in them contacting the Executive Director to determine if there has been an attempt to resolve it within the organization using this process. The (OHS) simply notifies the Head Start Executive Director that you have lodged a complaint. Each step must be followed in order to ensure a timely and effective response to your concerns. **Advancing to an inappropriate step or person in charge will only slow the process as it must be documented that each step was appropriately followed.**

This form will help you to complete the process and ensure that you have a record of who has been spoken to and what has been accomplished. Please feel free to attach additional appropriate documents that help to explain what has been accomplished.

Staff person receiving the comment or complaint must sign. A signature does not mean that you agree or disagree with the complaint. After recording the suggested solution, action or recommendation given, make a copy and place it in the family file.

All concerns should be presented to your Family and Community Specialist (FACS) or your child's Teacher. The concern must be in writing using this form. You may attach any other information needed to explain your concerns. **(Should your concern involve your (FACS) or Teacher and you feel uncomfortable speaking with either of them, you may fill out the STEP 1 portion of the form and take your concern directly to STEP 2 (Site Supervisor))**

Step 1—Take the concern to any Head Start staff person

Date incident or problem occurred: _____ (Within the last 10 Days)

Are there any documents attached with this tracking form? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Describe the nature of your comment, concern or complaint: _____

Suggested solution, action, or recommendation given: _____

Person submitting comment or complaint: _____

Please Print

(Name)

(Relationship to child)

(Signature)

(Today's Date)

Staff Person receiving the comment or complaint. _____

(Signature)

Position

Date action taken)

Attach a written explanation of any immediate action taken. _____
(Number of pages if there are attachments)

Revised 7/18/24
Governing Board Approval:
Policy Council Approval

Step 2 (If Necessary) Your Concern will be forwarded to the Site Supervisor

If your concern has not been resolved in the meeting with your Teacher or FACS, this form will be forwarded on to the staff person's Site Supervisor along with a request for them to attempt resolve your concern. Unless the nature of the concern is an emergency, the Site Supervisor will have 3 business days to respond to your concern by phone or in writing.

Emergency is defined: Any situation that implies that your child(ren) or yourself are in danger of physical harm, abuse, or would create a physical or mental risk of additional harm by not responding.

Outcome notes from either a phone call or face to face meeting: _____

Site Supervisor resolving the comment or concern: _____

(Signature

Position

Date action taken)

Attach a copy of written response and explanation of action taken. _____

(number of pages attached)

Step 3 – Your concern is forwarded to the Head Start Executive Director

Location or name of site: _____

Describe any additional information about your concern, so they can be added to all previous notes. _____

The Executive Director will meet with all parties involved within **3 business days** (provided the process has been properly followed). Some problems require additional time to investigate details. Calling to speak with the management staff including the Executive Director during the process will not be helpful.

Step 4 – Your concern will be taken to the Governing Board and the Policy Council.

Should the Executive Director determine that your concern is a violation of a Consortium policy or requires a change in policy to be resolved she will make appropriate recommendations to the Policy Council and Governing Board for appropriate action. Dependent upon the time of the next available planned or emergency meetings of the Policy Council and Governing Board, you will be made aware of the dates and time of such board meeting should you desire to be present to provide any additional information concerning your issue.

Today's Date: _____

Describe any change or unresolved portion of the problem. _____

Date Head Start Director received complaint: _____

Attach response: _____

(number of pages)

At the conclusion of Step 3 or 4, the Executive Director will notify the (OHS) of any necessary changes to be made in the program as a result of the concern you raised.

NUTRITION

All children attending a full day program, he/she will receive two-thirds of his/her daily nutritional needs in Head Start. The program provides breakfast, lunch, and a snack.

Children in the half day Head Start program will receive one-third of his/her daily nutritional needs at Head Start. The program provides breakfast and a hot lunch for AM classes and a hot lunch and nutritious afternoon snack for PM classes each day.

The safety of children is our most important concern. We must restrict food prepared off site due to health considerations, including allergies, food sensitivities, choking concerns, and nutritional content, as well as religious food preferences. Therefore, we do not allow any outside food to be given to the children. Please do not bring any food or “treats” for birthday or holiday parties. If you would like to send in something to share with the class, some suggestions would be stickers, pencils, erasers, puzzles, etc. The only exception will be for Family Engagement Celebrations and notification will go home prior to the celebration.

If your child needs a specific diet for religious or medical reasons or has any food allergies, forms must be completed to request changes. These forms must be returned to Head Start FACS person so that the Head Start Nutrition Consultant may review and make necessary recommendations. Changes or substitutions because of food allergies for medical reasons must be documented by the child's physician. The Head Start Nutrition Consultant will arrange for all necessary meals or food substitutions by working with your family and the school kitchens.

The Nutrition Consultant also plans nutrition education opportunities for you and your child. Weekly food projects and nutrition activities are done in the classroom; by involving the children in nutrition activities they learn about new foods and enjoy eating them. From time to time a variety of nutrition topics may be offered to parents at site meetings. Health and safety information, as well as fun healthy recipes will be sent home for your enjoyment.

Head Start ensures that each child is nutritionally assessed while in the program. This is accomplished through:

- The Nutrition Assessment and Health History forms that you will complete before your child enters the program
- Height and weight measurements at least two times a year
- Dental reports (a dental exam)
- Blood hemoglobin levels
- Food eating habits/behaviors

The Dietitian will evaluate the results and work with the staff and parents of any children with specific problems such as:

- Anemia
- Overweight
- Allergies
- Underweight

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

All children will receive sensory and behavioral developmental screenings within 10 to 15 calendar days of attendance to identify areas of concern. The screenings are brief checks, which help identify children who may need educational interventions. Parents will be informed of the results of the screenings and will have the opportunity to work with Head Start personnel in planning educational experiences for their child.

Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium works closely with the child's home school district and other agencies to provide a full range of services including a free and appropriate education to meet the individual special needs of the child.

Parents are an important part of this process, and a vital link in the decision making process and educational experiences for their child. The strengths and needs of the child and family will provide the basis for making decisions regarding services in the least restrictive and most appropriate environment for their child.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The promotion of positive social and emotional health is a major goal of the Head Start Program, for all members of the Head Start Community, children, their families and Head Start staff, both in the classroom environment and in the home. Head Start strives to provide a nurturing program which promotes feelings of competence, success, problem-solving skills, making new friends, a positive self-concept and respect for individual differences.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE TEAM

The purpose of the Student Assistance Team (SAT) is to identify and provide individualized services to children who are experiencing persistent behavioral/or learning difficulties within the classroom environment. A SAT may also be held to address Transportation, Health concerns, and attendance.



Families are very important members of the SAT, and are encouraged to participate anytime throughout the process. If you need further information, or have concerns regarding your child, please contact your child's teacher or Family & Community Specialist (FACS).

SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENTS

Schedule adjustments are sometimes necessary to assist children who are overwhelmed by the demands of the classroom. Schedule Adjustments can help ease transitions for children who have a history of difficulty adjusting into new experiences. Schedule adjustments are temporary and allow time for needed supports to be put into place so your child can be successful and happy. Schedule adjustments may occur at any time during the school year. For example, for children transitioning from Early to Pre-K Head Start classrooms.

If a schedule adjustment is recommended to assist your child successfully navigate the classroom, parents and the appropriate Head Start Manager will meet and collaborate on the details of a plan that best meets the needs of your child.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Our goal at Head Start is to help your child develop the skills necessary to manage emotional upset. Learning to manage emotional and behavior challenges, lead to success in your child's life journey and is just another type of education we can provide.

A Behavior Specialist, under the supervision of a licensed mental health professional, will visit classrooms as needed. The specialist will observe the classroom through the lens of Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline is a research-based behavior management approach which focuses on safety, connection and problem solving. After an initial observation **and consultation** with the Mental Health Manager a **plan** is completed, **and** strategies are identified to address the needs of your child in the classroom.

In some cases, additional services including parent education opportunities or schedule adjustments may be indicated. In these cases, a Student Assistance Team Meeting (SAT) will be Scheduled with you, the Mental Health Manager and any other Head Start Team Member needed to support your child.

REFERRALS

Mental Health and disabilities referrals may be generated during SAT meetings with parents written consent. Mental Health referrals are facilitated and monitored by Mental Health Manager. Disabilities referrals are facilitated and monitored by the Education Managers.

CONSULTATIONS

When there is evidence of a suspected disability, with parent written consent, a request for consultation is made to the local school district to determine if there is a need for a multi-disciplinary evaluation and if special services are indicated.

The child's educational program will be designed to provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences based on the child's needs. If further diagnostic testing is indicated, families will provide written consent. If test and assessment results indicate the need for an IFSP or IEP, the family is an active participant in this process and will receive a copy of the IFSP/IEP at a case conference. Together we will provide a quality educational experience for your child.

Those children entering the program with a diagnosed disability that have a current IFSP/IEP would be ready to begin special services following program entrance.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Serving children with disabilities is a very important piece of Head Start's work with children and their families. At least ten percent of enrollment opportunities in the program are made available for children with disabilities.

If a child qualifies for services, an Individual Family Services Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed with family and staff input. The IFSP/IEP must be developed before special services are provided. **Many of our children come with an IFSP/**

THE CONSORTIUM'S TRANSITION

The goal of Transition Services is to help all The Consortium's families move successfully into their next educational environment. Most Early Head Start families transition into Head Start, while some may choose other pre-school programs. Head Start families transition into Kindergarten. We also work with agencies providing early intervention services to assist families in transitioning from early intervention to Head Start. Our program will be working with the parent and the local schools and agencies to help the parent and their child with this transition. This process will continue throughout the program year.

Children with an IFSP/IEP will have an individual transition plan developed with the involvement of parents and staff or in some cases a preschool program other than Head Start or the child's home school district.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Indiana law requires that any Head Start personnel who knows or suspects child abuse or neglect will be responsible for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect and in accordance with the Governing Board Policy. As employees of the Elkhart and St. Joseph Head Start Consortium, we are not here to make judgments as to whether a child is abused or neglected. We are legally mandated to report a suspicion of abuse or neglect. Our reporting is to help protect a child if the need exists and to help a family access any needed services.

The care and well being of a child is of the utmost importance.



Parent Handbook Guide for Suspension and Expulsion

Policy:

The Consortium's desire is to provide services to all children enrolled in the program. Additionally, children who may exhibit behavior that would be a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children, Mental Health Manager will determine If the program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, the program must work with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

Should a child behave or bring items to school that pose a safety threat to other children and adults in the classroom environment or bus, The FACS will inform their Program Manager and Mental Health Manager to generate a SAT meeting to discuss the issues and create a plan. If a child must be suspended or expelled, the Mental Health Manager must recommend to the Executive Director and meet with parents before action is taken place.

Parents must check their child's back pack daily prior to boarding the bus or taken to school to ensure items that are potentially threatening to health and safety such as drugs, medication, guns, knives be removed prior.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH SERVICES EDUCATION

Head Start is designed to meet the needs of each individual child. Children are introduced to learning experiences in a one-on-one interaction with teachers and small/large group situations. The activities of the classroom promote the children's intellectual, social, emotional, language and physical growth.

Emphasis is placed on building the child's positive self-concept and making their Head Start experience a pleasant one. Head Start gives your child lots of love, attention and guidance. Much effort is given to direct your child toward activities that will lead to success at completion.

Developmental appropriate practices are used in all classrooms. To support these practices the teaching staff will:

- Promote a positive climate for learning.
- Know each child well and design activities based on their knowledge of each individual child's differing abilities, developmental levels, and approaches to learning.
- Plan and prepare a learning environment that fosters children's initiative, active exploration of materials, and sustained engagement with other children, adults, and activities.
- Provide a variety of concrete learning materials relevant to children's own life experiences that promote their interest, engagement in learning, and conceptual development.
- Encourage children's developing language and communication skills by talking with them throughout the day, speaking clearly and listening to their responses, and providing opportunities for them to talk to each other. Staff will also incorporate dual-language learners into their daily lesson plans.
- Observe and interact with children in all situations to maximize their knowledge.
- Draw children's curiosity and desire to make sense of their world to motivate them to become involved in interesting learning activities.
- Ensure that curriculum goals address learning in all developmental areas: physical, social, emotional, language, aesthetic, and intellectual.
- Use the HighScope Child Observational Record to assess children's progress, examine children's work samples, and document their developmental or learning needs.
- Work in partnership with parents and community regularly to build mutual understanding and ensure that children's learning and developmental needs are met.
- Engage in ongoing professional development activities.

High Scope in Action 2025-2026

How We Teach

In a HighScope preschool program, teachers ignite children's interest in learning by creating an environment that encourages them to explore learning materials and interact with adults and peers. We focus on supporting early learners as they make decisions, build academic skills, develop socially and emotionally, and become part of a classroom community.

Active learning is at the center of the HighScope Curriculum. It's the foundation of young children gaining knowledge through their natural play and interactions with the environment, events, and other people.

Adult-Child Interaction

Teachers act as partners, working alongside children and communicating with them both verbally and nonverbally to encourage learning. Key strategies for adult-child interactions are sharing control with children, communicating as a partner with children, scaffolding children's play, using encouragement instead of praise, and taking a problem-solving approach to supporting children in resolving conflicts.

Learning Environment

To create a predictable and active learning environment, teachers arrange and equip the classroom with diverse, open-ended materials that reflect children's home, culture, and language. The room is organized and labeled to promote independence and encourage children to carry out their intentions.


Daily Routine

A consistent framework for the day provides a balanced variety of experiences and learning opportunities. Children engage in both individual and social play, participate in small- and large-group activities, assist with cleanup, socialize during meals, develop self-care skills, and exercise their small and large muscles. The most important segment of the daily routine is the plan-do-review sequence, in which children make decisions about what they will do, carry out their ideas, and reflect upon their activities with adults and other children. These higher-level thinking skills are linked to the development of executive functions, which are needed to be successful in school and life.

Assessment

Ongoing child assessment is also an underlying component of the HighScope Curriculum. Objective anecdotal observations of children collected throughout children's natural play allow teachers to assess child progress and plan meaningful learning experiences.





Kaymbu

Information for Families

About Kaymbu

Kaymbu is a software that educators use to capture documentation of student learning and activities, complete assessments, plan classroom lessons, and is designed to enhance communication.

Why Kaymbu

Kaymbu bridges the gap between home and school! Visual updates will give you a window into the classroom, helping you to connect with your child's learning experiences and school activities, and to continue the conversation at home! Your school also uses Kaymbu to digitally document your child's growth throughout the year.

Privacy and Security

Privacy and security is a critical requirement for the Kaymbu system. We serve thousands of early education programs across the country and there is nothing we take more seriously than the security of the data and media we manage on their behalf. Media captured in the system is ultra-secure and never used for any purpose outside of your school's communication and classroom documentation.

“ As a mom, the desire for information about my children's time at school is insatiable! Kaymbu provides me with treasured glimpses into their daily interactions and development. ”

Hillary White, Kaymbu Parent

FAQ

What will I receive?

As a family member in the system, you will receive pictures, videos, messages, and more from your child's school and teachers! Unlike conventional updates, these are customized and feature only material relevant to your family. All of the moments you receive are available for download and are yours to keep forever.

Can I share with my child's teachers?

There are a variety of ways to use the Kaymbu system to share with your child's teachers and respond to communication from them. You can respond to messages sent to you through the Kaymbu system, comment on observations, and use the Kaymbu for Families app to send important messages related to screening information and morning check-ins!

How do I receive information?

You can receive information via text, email, or via the Kaymbu for Families app!



The Kaymbu for Families App is an easy and convenient way for you to receive information from your child's teacher! Simply download the app from the App Store or Google Play, then enter your email address connected to your child's profile!

www.kaymbu.com

Overview

Kaymbu

What does the app allow you to do?

Through the Kaymbu for Families app, you can receive information from your child's school, and share drop-off information and updates on your child's learning with their teachers.

The Kaymbu for Families app is connected to Kaymbu, which your child's program uses to give you a window into your child's school life. With Kaymbu, teachers record photos, videos, and anecdotes of classroom activities to document your child's progress and growth, and give you deeper insight into their learning experiences.



How it works

Home: A feed of documentation your children's teachers have shared with you. It might be photos, videos, or anecdotes of classroom activities, newsletters, or learning portfolios.

Messages: An inbox for messages teachers or administrators have sent you from Kaymbu.

Drop Off: A log of your drop off notes. Click the green plus button to add a new note and check your child in for the day.

Profile: A page to manage your contact information and notification preferences.

FAQ

How do I get set up?

Download the Kaymbu for Families app from Google Play or App Store

Log in with the email address or phone number your child's teachers have saved on file for you

How do I check in my child?

You can check your child in and add a drop-off note by clicking the green plus button. You'll be able to select your child (or children) and check them in for the day. You can add a note and may be asked to sign a liability waiver that was set by your child's program.

Who else can check my child in?

Any family members who are on your child's Kaymbu profile can check your child in and add drop off information. However, they will not be able to see anything that you have added or shared.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Employment

The Consortium's parents are given priority for becoming paid employees of the program, i.e., positions such as:

- Administrative Staff
- Support Staff
- Day to day substitutes (Minimum High School Diploma)
- Teachers or Teacher Assistants (appropriate degree required)
- Family & Community Specialist FACS (appropriate degree required)
- Other positions as they become available

Parents interested in employment please visit our website, www.headstartesj.com to the HR@headstartesj.com, Careers, Frontline (only online applications accepted):

Our Main Campus office is located at :

Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties Head Start Consortium
245 North Lombardy Drive, Door 1
South Bend, IN 46619

Parents are encouraged to apply for positions.

Career Development

Most jobs with Head Start require higher education (college degrees). The South Bend and Elkhart communities offer adult courses that lead to a high school diploma, or GED. Information about these courses may be obtained by calling the South Bend Community School Corporation at 574-393-6000 or Elkhart School Corporation at 574-262-5833.

Post high school classes are available at several local institutions, for example:

- Ivy Tech, Bethel, Indiana University (IUSB), and Goshen Colleges.

The Consortium will strive toward the betterment of its employees and parents. Training is offered to enhance parent and employee marketable skills. Career development strategies include job enhancement, professional training, educational opportunities, and a sincere desire to maximize potential.

The Child Development Associate (CDA) program provides training for parents in child development and early childhood education to explore related areas with the objective of up-grading their skills and competencies in career development.

For information regarding career development, contact the Head Start office at 574-393-5864 or go to the website, www.headstartesj.com.



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for free information and referrals for everyday needs like health care, child care, food, utility assistance and more!

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اليومية مثل الرعاية الصحية ورعاية الأطفال
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