



# Early Head Start/Head Start Parent Handbook

We are:

Kind

Safe

Positive



Dear Families,

Welcome to the Commission on Economic Opportunity's (CEO) Early Head Start/Head Start program! The Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) creates partnerships and develops opportunities for social and economic growth and empowerment in individuals, families and communities. We are a federally funded program that provides comprehensive early childhood services to children and families throughout Rensselaer County. We promote school readiness of children ages birth to five by supporting the development of the whole child. The Commission on Economic Opportunity's (CEO) Head Start programs support children's growth and development in a positive learning environment through a variety of services, which include:

- **Early learning:** Children's readiness for school is fostered through individualized learning experiences. Through relationships with adults, play, and planned and spontaneous instruction, children grow in many aspects of development. Children progress in social skills and emotional well-being, along with language and literacy learning, and concept development
- **Health:** All children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. We connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services to ensure that children are receiving the services they need.
- **Family well-being:** Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals. We support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development.

We are very excited to have your family and child(ren) be part of our program and begin the school year with us! We are committed to providing quality educational services to your child and work with your family. We look forward to partnering with you in your child's educational experience with us. We encourage family engagement and hope you are able to volunteer in your child's classroom or get involved in the program.

To learn more about The Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) please visit us at :  
<https://www.ceoempowers.org/>

You can also follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ceocap>

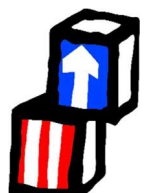
If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at 518-272-6012 ext. 209.

Here is to a great 2021-2022 school year!

*Tia Nunziato*

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Early Childhood Services Director



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## How CEO Works with Your Family

CEO's Early Childhood program will gather information from families about child development, health, nutrition, and social service needs throughout a family's enrollment in the program. This information helps to provide targeted services to your family. The ultimate goal is to always meet your family's changing needs.

**Please note, because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, services referenced in this handbook may be temporarily unavailable. Please see the center manager for any updates.**

### Classroom Teaching Staff

At the start of the school year, Teachers and/or Family Advocates will schedule a home visit to get to know your family and complete necessary paperwork.

Teachers will host two parent -teacher conferences with families throughout the year (fall and winter) as well as a final home visit (spring) to review and discuss child progress.

If at any time you have concerns about your child's development or progress, please reach out to a CEO staff member for information about potential referrals or supports.

### Family Advocates

During the first several weeks of school, Family Advocates (FAs) will work with families to complete a Strengths and Needs Assessment and Interest Survey, as well as an individual goal plan (aka: Family Partnership Agreement).

Family Advocates are here to support families with any questions or needs. They will be in regular contact with families from the time of their enrollment into the program and going forward.

### Center Manager/Site Supervisor

Each site/center has a site supervisor or Center Manager that oversees the site staff and ensures the daily operation of the location. Center Managers and site supervisors can and will assist families in any way they are able to. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out.

### Health and Kitchen Staff

Program health staff will work with you to ensure your child's health needs are met and up to date. Program kitchen staff work diligently to ensure that meals provided are nutritious to your child. Program menus will be available to all families throughout the school year.



# Kind

## Family Engagement

CEO Early Head Start/Head Start encourages all families to play an active role in their child's Early Childhood experience. Families and staff work together toward the goals that families choose for themselves and their children. Children are at the heart of meaningful family engagement.

Families enter relationships with staff on their children's behalf, and they deepen these relationships with their children in mind. They know their children better than anyone—their temperaments, personalities, strengths, vulnerabilities, talents, and special needs. When parents share their knowledge, they improve provider practices and program quality.

CEO's Head Start and Early Head Start staff create partnerships. The more knowledge and energy families can give to CEO, the better the program will be!

### Ways for Families to get Involved

Family volunteers are ALWAYS welcome!

- Guest Readers & Librarians
- Meal Helpers
- Family Fun Day Planning & Attendance
- Parent Meeting Planning & Attendance
- 6-Week Parent Educational Program
- Special Center Events & Celebrations
- Fatherhood Initiative activities
- Family Goal Setting
- School Readiness take home activities
- Bringing your child to school every day

### In-Kind

CEO is required to raise donations to match Federal Head Start funding. All donations of time help us to meet our goal! All volunteer time and activities can be counted as "In-Kind". Please be sure to document your time spent in the program through CEO's In-Kind process.

If every family could donate five hours of their time per school year, CEO can easily surpass our goal!

### Want to Get Involved? Join the Policy Council!

Policy Council is made up of parents and members of the community who are interested in supporting the Early Childhood program, as well as working toward making positive change in the community. **The Policy Council is responsible for providing assistance in budgetary and program decision-making as well as the development and support of CEO Early Childhood program enhancements.** Policy Council parent representatives are elected within the program by other parents. Community representatives are identified as positive partners and/or resources to the program. If you would like more information about Policy Council, please contact the Early Childhood Services Program Specialist at 272-6012 Ext. 215.



# Positive Education

The CEO Early Childhood program uses a nationally recognized curriculum for teaching young children. The ***Creative Curriculum*** helps teachers and parents plan each child's educational growth. The curriculum includes:

- Developmentally appropriate learning goals and guidance on how to use them for the individualization of learning experiences based on children's strengths and needs
- Comprehensive guidance on ongoing child assessment
- Strategies and resources to support parent and family engagement
- Specific adaptations for children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs

What can you expect from our classrooms?

- Daily classroom schedule
- Open door policy and volunteering
- Developmental age appropriate learning experiences
- Activities sent home to promote school readiness and the home to school connection
- Weekly lesson plans and newsletters
- Home Visits and Parent Teacher conferences throughout the school year
- Developmental and social/emotional screening results of your child
- Transition planning. CEO will work with each family to make sure school transitions are as easy as possible. Several activities will take place throughout the year including:
  - Parent meetings and information sessions on various transition topics
  - Transition planning for children moving into a different CEO classroom
  - Teacher and/or Family Advocate home visits
- All teachers are required to use positive reinforcement and redirection as the primary means of discipline.
- Confidentiality of your family and child information

## School Readiness

CEO Early Childhood programs are here to prepare your children for kindergarten and beyond. Every year we develop School Readiness Goals, which are expectations of children's progress across learning domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development. CEO's School Readiness Goals are developed in accordance with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, NYS Early Learning Guidelines, staff input, family input, and child assessment from Teaching Strategies GOLD. Goals are reviewed on an annual basis.

School Readiness activities for home and school are designed and offered by CEO staff. Please be on the lookout for how your family can participate.



## Attendance and Enrollment

Having your child attend school every day and on time is important to your child's success and learning. The routines that your child develops in CEO's Early Head Start/Head Start program will continue throughout their school career. CEO Early Head Start/Head Start staff is dedicated to working with you to help your child develop and maintain strong attendance.

Families are expected to maintain **85% monthly attendance**. This means that they should miss no more than three days of school per month. If your child's attendance falls below 85% and your child has chronic unexcused absences this will lead to meeting with program staff to complete an Attendance Success Plan. If your child's attendance is deemed to be chronic it could have an impact on your child's enrollment in the program.

### Absence Procedure

If your child will be absent from school, please contact your classroom or center by 9:00am to let us know your child will be and the reason why. Otherwise, CEO staff will be in touch with you within one hour of the start time of the program.

### Arrival Time

It is important that your child arrive to school by 9:00am, unless there is an excused reason why they will be late. It is important to adhere to this drop-off time, so your child does not miss out on the most important part of the day and does not cause a disruption to the rest of the classroom. If you have several instances of unexcused late arrivals, then program staff will meet with you to discuss the impact this may have on your child's enrollment in the program.

### Late Pick Up

Due to staffing, it is very important that your child(ren) are picked up by program end time. If an emergency occurs, and a child will be picked up late, please contact your child's center to notify them. If a family has an excessive number of late pick-ups, Center Managers will meet with families to discuss the impact on your child's enrollment in the program.

## Safety

Safety is the number one priority of the Early Childhood Program. In order to ensure the safety of children in our program we have to follow the below policies:

- Each childcare center conducts monthly fire drills
- Bi-annual shelter in place drills are conducted
- All CEO staff are Mandated Reporters and are required to report any suspected child abuse and maltreatment of children.



## Release Policy

All families need to ensure that the Emergency Card they fill out is current and up-to-date. **Please notify the center immediately of any changes.** In order to be able to pick children up from program individuals need to be 16 years of age and provide photo identification at time of pick up.

## Sign In and Out

Please make sure that children are signed in and out of their classroom each day.

## Electronic Devices

When entering CEO locations families should refrain from using their cell phones. In order to protect the confidentiality of children, families should not take pictures of other children and staff using your own personal electronic devices.

## Pedestrian Safety

To help prevent injuries as a pedestrian on the way to and from school, the National SAFE KIDS Campaign recommends the following tips:

- Children under age 10 should not be allowed to cross streets by themselves.
- Children should be taught proper pedestrian behavior, such as crossing at street corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks when available and making eye contact with drivers before crossing.
- Children should be encouraged to look LEFT, RIGHT and then LEFT again when crossing a street.
- Children should be aware that seeing a driver in a vehicle does not mean that the driver can see them.
- When walking along a street with no sidewalks, pedestrians should walk facing oncoming traffic, as far to the left as possible.
- At dawn and dusk, children should wear bright or reflective materials and carry flashlight.

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## Emergency Closing

In the event that CEO locations may close due to emergency situations or weather we will post information on CEO's website: [www.ceoempowers.org](http://www.ceoempowers.org).





# Health & Nutrition

Achieving positive health outcomes for children and families is an integral part of the CEO Early Childhood experience.

**Health requirements which must be completed before your child begins program are:**

- Physical examination (within one prior calendar year)
- Up-to-date immunizations  
*\*Please note, infants are required to follow the well-baby visit schedule\**
- Asthma/Allergy Statement
- Allergy and Special Diet Forms
- Individual Health Care Plans (if applicable)

**Strongly encouraged:**

- Dental exam
- Anemia Screening
- Lead Screening

**PLEASE DO NOT send your child to program with a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or any other sign of illness.** Further details can be found within CEO's *Exclusion Due to Illness* policy. CEO will notify parents of any communicable disease that can be transferred among the children present in the classroom (s).

**If a child becomes ill at school,** CEO staff will contact you to make arrangements to take the child home.

**CEO cannot administer any medication** not prescribed by a doctor for any illness or condition. When medication has been prescribed a Medication Administration Form must be completed and signed by a doctor. Medication cannot be transported between home and school by a child.

If families need help finding a healthcare provider, please contact a Family Advocate or a Nurse. Early Childhood staff will provide health screening at the start of program and will share all results with families.

## **Nutrition**

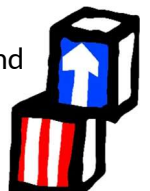
Children are served two meals each day at school. If your child has food allergies or dietary restrictions, please let staff know. Once allergies and/or special dietary needs have been confirmed by a doctor, CEO will do everything possible to accommodate restrictions.

Infants will never be introduced to new foods at school. All families should be sure to update Infant and Toddler teachers in regard to new foods being tried at home.

## **Mental Health**

Mental Health supports are available to all enrolled children and families through collaboration with St. Catherine's.

St. Catherine's staff provide on-site observation and follow-up within CEO buildings regularly and



as needed. If you would like for your child and/or family to participate, or would like more information, please contact your Family Advocate.

## Adult Conduct Policy

Adult behavior in schools and in classrooms directly impacts children and their ability to learn. All parents are invited to join staff in setting a good example for our children by:

- Refraining from the use of loud voices, foul language, negative comments, uncontrolled public anger and/or any physical contact.
- Not smoking on CEO property or within the view of children.
- Never carrying weapons.
- Adhering to a dress code that is appropriate for young children.
- Abstaining from the use of electronic devices while in CEO centers and classrooms. In the event that a call must be answered, please step out of classrooms.
- Only using social media to promote positive messages; always reaching out to program staff with questions or concerns.
- Never discussing the behaviors, words or actions of other children or adults within the program; speaking with a Manager if there are concerns.
- If any caregiver designated to pick up is found to be incapable of driving, or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, CEO staff members will:
  - Assist in making a call to another adult listed on the child's emergency contact list to pick up both the child and caregiver.
  - Call the police for assistance if any caregiver is unable to understand or respond to questions about their ability to safely supervise a child, or becomes aggressive or threatening,

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Caring for your child(ren) is a shared responsibility. The Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) Early Head Start / Head Start program is excited to be able to work with you and your family during the upcoming school year!

