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**Early Head Start/Head Start**

**Staff Manual**

Dear Early Childhood Services Staff,

CEO’s Early Head Start/Head Start program 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 the school readiness of children ages birth to five by supporting the development of the whole child. CEO’s 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 you be part of our program and begin the school year with us!

To learn more about 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 hesistate to contact me at 518-272-6012 ext. 283.

Here is to a great 2024-2025 school year!

Tia Nunziato

Tia Nunziatio

Early Childhood Services Director

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Policy Council

In-Kind

Early Childhood Services Locations and Collaborations

Director of Early Childhood Services: Tia Nunziato (518) 272-6012 Ext. 283

Director of Center Based Operations: Lori Tantakis 518-272-6012 Ext. 304

Hours of Operation for Staff: 7:30am - 3:00pm

Hours of Operations for children (unless noted differently): 8:00am-2:00pm

**Rensselaer Family Resource Center (RFRC) Community Resource Center (CRC)**

1641 Third Street 2328 Fifth Avenue

Rensselaer, NY 12144 Troy, NY 12180

Center Manager: Tracy Baker Center Manager: Teresa Raso

Phone: 518-694-9915 Phone: 518-272-6012 Ext. 276

**Schodack Family Resource Center (SFRC) Lansingburgh Family Resource Center (LFRC)**

24 New Road 754 Fourth Avenue

Nassau, NY 12123 Troy, NY 12182

Center Manager: Melissa Fuss Center Manager: Casey Caldwell

 Phone: 518-766-4120 Assistant Center Manager:

 Phone: 518-235-9035

**Hoosick Falls Family Resource Center (HFFRC) Troy Public School 2**

75 River Road470 10th Street

Hoosick Falls, NY 12090 Troy, NY 12180

Center Manager: Dana Flores Contact: Kelly Berbrick

Phone: 518-686-5045 (or direct line: 518-271-5410)

 Staff Hours: 7:15am-2:45pm

 Children’s Hours: 7:30am-2:15pm

**Troy Public School 12 Hoosic Valley Central School District**

475 1st Street 2 Pleasant Avenue

Troy, NY 12180 Schaghticoke, NY 12154

Contact: Kelly Berbrick Contact: Dana Flores

(or direct line: 518-328-5083) (or direct line: 518-753-4458)

 Staff Hours: 7:30 am- 3:00pm Children’s Hours: 8:00am-2:00pm (HS)

 Children’s Hours: 8:00am-2:00 Children’s Hours: 8:30am-1:30pm (UPK only)

 *Please note staff hours differ at this site.*

 **Rensselaer City School District**

25 Van Rensselaer Drive

Rensselaer, NY 12144

Contact: Samantha Altscher

(or direct line: 518-436-8561)

Staff Hours: 7:30am-3:00pm

Children’s Hours: 8:30am-2:30pm

Staff and Support

**Support**: On your first day as a CEO staff member, you will be introduced to a lot of new people and information. In CEO’s EHS/HS program there is a lot of information to learn, and we want to set everyone up for success. During your onboarding experience with us we have supports available to provide you with the tools and information to be successful. If you have any questions, please ask!

**Center Managers:** The Center Manager/Site Supervisor is your direct supervisor. Each site/center has a site supervisor or Center Manager that oversees the site staff and ensures the daily operation of the location.

**Mentors:** Mentor teachers are assigned to new staff to be available on an ongoing basis to answer questions, review expectations, policies and procedures, help solve problems, and provide encouragement and support. You will meet with your mentor on an ongoing basis during our orientation period.

**Coaching:** As part of Practice-Based Coaching, staff will participate in a self-reflection process during the fall, identifying and documenting areas of strength and needed support. Any staff member identified through self-reflection as wanting individualized coaching will be provided with the opportunity to receive coaching.

**Teaching and Support Staff:** Each CEO location has a combination of some or all the following staff members: Infant and Toddler Teachers, Head Start Teachers, Head Start Teacher Assistants, Universal Pre-Kindergarten Teachers, Custodians, Cooking Staff, Nurses, Foster Grandparents, Family Advocates, Program Assistants and Substitutes. All staff are knowledgeable and have a wealth of information to offer. Please make sure to reach out to any of the staff at your building if you have a question or need support.

**Content Area Managers:** Content Area Managers support and monitor the various content areas of the program. Content Area Managers conduct periodic site visits, ensure compliance in each content area, and provide additional support and resources to all staff.

**Education Team:** The members of the Education Team support staff by conducting observations, giving suggestions on strategies in the classroom, support for children with disabilities, mental health concerns and behaviors. You can reach out to your Center Manager if you need support from the Education Team.

Professional Development / Trainings

CEO Early Childhood Services offers a wide range of training and professional development to support and enhance the knowledge of staff. According to OCFS any employee who regularly interacts with children must complete a minimum of 30 hours of training every two years. The first 15 hours of training must occur within 6 months of their hire date. Training must cover all of the 10 areas on the OCFS Individual Tracking Log.

Some typical offerings are:

* In-service training at the beginning of the school year
* First Aid / CPR
* MAT training
* Curriculum Training
* Pyramid Model (Social Emotional) Training
* Behavior Management training
* Infant and Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA)
* Preschool Teacher Assistant Child Development Associate (CDA)
* Professional Development Planning (PDP) and goal setting
* Off -site training based on interest
* Staff will utilize and maintain their Aspire account

Different Ways the Program Works

**Early Head Start**

Early Head Start provides early, continuous, and comprehensive child development and family support services to income qualifying families of infants and toddlers. Early Head Start also supports Home Base services for infant and toddlers, and pregnant women and their families.

To learn more about Early Head Start please visit the Early Childhood Services and Learning Center at: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/about-early-head-start-program>

**Head Start**

Head Start serves children three to five years of age for income qualifying families. Its aim is to prepare children for success in school through an early learning program that focuses on the entire child and their families.

To learn more about Head Start please visit the Early Childhood Services and Learning Center at:

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-programs>

Program Options

**Center Based –** children are provided services in a center or school district classroom five days per week. Breakfast and lunch are provided.

**Home Based** – a home visiting program for infants and toddlers that includes weekly 90 - minute home visits, as well as bi-weekly opportunities to participate in family socialization and activities. Home Based includes all the comprehensive services of Early Head Start and Head Start.

**Babies in Waiting** – a home visiting program for pregnant women providing pre and postnatal education, opportunities to meet other expectant families. Families will have access to supportive services throughout the community.

Collaboration Classrooms

**Universal Pre- Kindergarten-** Universal Pre-Kindergarten classrooms serve three and four (by December 1st) year old children. Sites are located within the Troy, Hoosic Valley, and Rensselaer School Districts.

**Integration-** Capital District Beginnings is a special education pre–school provider for children ages three-five. CEO collaborates with Capital District Beginnings to provide support services as well as integrated classrooms for children with special needs. All children designated for the receipt of integration are referred through the Committee on Pre-School Special Education (CPSE).

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 ***Creative Curriculum*** is a research-based and culturally appropriate curricula. Teachers will be trained on the curriculum to support their understanding. The curriculum includes:

* Developmentally appropriate learning goals and guidance on how to use them for 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 are teaching staff responsible for in classrooms?

* Daily classroom schedule.
* Teaching Strategies GOLD.
* Developmental age-appropriate learning experiences.
* Activities to promote school readiness and the home to school connection.
* Weekly lesson plans and monthly newsletters.
* Home Visits and Parent Teacher conferences throughout the school year.
* Developmental and social/emotional screening for each child within 45 days of entry into the program:
	+ ASQ – developmental screener
	+ DECA – social/emotional screener
* Transition planning. CEO will work with each family to make 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.
* All teachers are required to practice confidentiality of family and child information.
* CEO School Readiness Goals are developed in accordance with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, NYS Early Learning Guidelines, staff input, district input, family input, and child assessment data from Teaching Strategies GOLD. Goals are reviewed on an annual basis. CEO implements the Pyramid Model of Social and Emotional to support School Readiness.

**School Readiness/Social Emotional Development-** School Readiness Goals are the expectations of children's status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve readiness for kindergarten goals. 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, district input and child assessment from Teaching Strategies GOLD. Goals are reviewed on an annual basis.

**Special Services-** Integrated classrooms are present throughout the program and service providers often visit to engage in speech, physical, and / or occupational therapy with the children in our centers. CEO staff complete developmental and social / emotional screeners of every child in program to determine if there may be need for intervention. CEO does not diagnose children, but if you suspect that a child in your classroom may benefit from additional support, please reach out to your Center Manager, Family Advocate, or the Education Service Manager to discuss your concerns. A formal referral process is followed for children to be evaluated. CEO Staff work with the families to initiate and support this process, as well as communicate with service providers on a regular basis to ensure consistency for those children who are receiving services.

Supervision of Children Policy

Safety is the number one priority of the Early Childhood Program. Each staff member is expected to, always, maintain the highest level of supervision and safety. Staff are responsible for understanding and applying of the following supervision practices in the classroom and the playground:

* Scanning the environment to be always aware of location and whereabouts of children.
* Positioning your body to ensure that you are in optimal placement to be able to see all children.
* Sweeping the classroom/playground before leaving to ensure that there are no children left behind.
* Monitoring and being aware of any areas of the environment that could be areas of vulnerability.
* Communicating with classroom staff to ensure that all children are accounted for.
* Cleary identifying responsibilities and expectations for all staff members.
* Implement a zoning plan for indoors and outdoors.

**Counting of Children-** All staff working within a classroom are required to immediately know the accurate number of children present in their classrooms at all times.

**Completion of the Daily Head Count Sheet-** Staff are required to complete the **Daily Head Count** **Sheet** every half-hour throughout the day and, before leaving the classroom, playground, gross motor room or any other location.

\* Children’s entrance to or movement from the classroom with a parent, therapist or CEO staff member should also be noted on the **Daily Head Count** **Sheet.**

All classrooms are subject to “head count sheet” spot checks to ensure compliance.

**Leaving the Classroom:** The following process is required to be followed by all staff when leaving a classroom to go to another location:

* One staff person should be at the front of the line, the other at the back of the line.
* The staff person at the front of the line will complete the Head Count Sheet by counting all children and completing name to face recognition of all children present.
* The staff person at the back of the line will complete the sweeping process of the location.
* The staff person at the back of the line will count all the children and complete name to face recognition of all children present by verbally comparing with the other staff member.
* Both staff members will verbally confirm the number and names of children match.
* The classroom door sign will be turned over to the “we’re out” side. This will confirm that the teachers have completed the head count, swept all areas of the classroom, and have their emergency bag.
* The class will stop at each checkpoint that the CM has identified throughout the center. The teachers will complete a head count at each checkpoint.
* Teachers will complete the sign in/out sheet each time the class leaves the building for any reason (playground, walk, field trip).
* This process is to be completed before leaving a destination and when arriving at a destination.
* \*\**If there is a distraction (parent arriving, child behavior) during this process, you must begin the process again from the start once the distraction is resolved*\*\*
* Teaching staff must check all areas of the classroom and playground before they exit to ensure a child has not been left behind. This includes, but is not limited to, behind furniture, playground equipment, and in bathrooms.
* All staff providing classroom coverage must, at all times, be mindful of all exits from the classrooms. Door areas must be monitored to ensure that children are not exiting the classroom unsupervised.
* All staff must adhere to the active supervision policy while on outdoor playgrounds and when going for walks.
* All staff must ensure they are actively supervising all exits and entrances of playground spaces and staff are positioned appropriately to be able to see all the children.

Mandated Reporter Policy

All CEO Early Childhood Staff are considered mandated reporters under the NYS Social Services Law.

* Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child abuse or maltreatment when they are presented with a reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or maltreatment. These reasons may include, but are not limited to, a child verbally reporting an incident or visible signs of abuse or neglect on the child.
* ***When a parent self-reports*** *that CPS has become involved with their child because of suspected abuse or neglect, staff are still responsible to call the mandated reporter hotline and report what they were told.*
* When calling the public hotline, staff will have the child’s emergency card available. This will enable them to have all contact information ready to be provided.
* Immediately upon completion of the call, and if the call was accepted by the hotline,
* staff will complete the LDSS-2221A form and mail to their regional CPS office.  A copy of the report will be emailed to the Director.
* Staff will inform their center manager and/or supervisor that they made a call to the hotline.
* If staff inform the manager of a concern, but do not call the hotline, or the manager has reason to believe a call was not made; the manager must call the hotline.
* Staff will comply with all directives from CPS, local authorities and/or court orders to ensure the child’s safety.

Behavior Management and Discipline Policy

To ensure the safety, health, and well belling of children and staff CEO has developed the following guidance for staff to have a clear understanding of appropriate practices and strategies to implement when interacting with children.

* The approaches staff will utilize are in alignment with the Teaching Pyramid Model for Promoting the Social and Emotional Development of Young Children (<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/index.html>).
* Staff will provide nurturing and responsive care to children within quality, supportive environments.
* The use of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden by CEO and OCFS regulations.
* Any discipline measure that may frighten or humiliate a child is strictly forbidden by CEO and OCFS regulations.
* Prohibiting or delaying food as a form of punishment is strictly forbidden by CEO and OCFS regulations.
* Prohibiting or delaying outside time as a form of punishment is strictly forbidden by CEO and OCFS regulations but may be used as a reward.
* All staff are required to use positive reinforcement and redirection as the primary means of discipline. It is important that staff begin with prevention strategies and look at the classroom environment, setting, schedule, or etc. that may be creating or maintain a child’s challenging behavior.
* All children are to be treated in an equal and consistent manner. Discipline measures must be applied equally to all children within the classroom.
* Teachers must always use an appropriate tone of voice. Yelling, obvious frustration, and sarcasm are forbidden. Teachers are expected to maintain a calm tone whenever dealing with discipline issues.
* Classroom rules will be developed collaboratively between all classroom staff and children. Rules will be reviewed daily and should be consistent with the pyramid model for social-emotional development and the Creative Curriculum guidance.
* Teachers must recognize that certain actions (i.e. rough housing) are a normal part of development. While these actions may require redirection for safety reasons, they do not necessarily require discipline measures.
* Teachers will make children aware that their behavior is inappropriate BEFORE any discipline measure is imposed.
* Teachers must have developmentally appropriate conversations with children prior to, during, and after any discipline measure.
* The use of time-out is restricted. A child may be separated from the group if the teacher accompanies them to discuss the situation.
* A quiet area in the classroom may be used to deescalate the child as long as appropriate materials and supplies are available (i.e. bean bag chairs, books, sensory materials, Pyramid Model strategies including feeling charts, mirrors, etc.).
* Any ongoing behavioral issues must be brought to the Education Team’s attention. If necessary, mental health support staff will be asked for assistance.
* The use of physical restraint is prohibited.

Release of Children

Families are required to fill out an Emergency Card at the time of enrollment.

* When parents/caregivers enter CEO centers to pick a child up the following protocol must be followed:
	+ Parent/guardian is greeted by center staff.
	+ Parent/guardian is identified by center staff.
	+ Parent/guardian may then proceed to the classroom to pick up.
	+ Center staff will only release children to the care of an individual who is known and/or identified on the child’s Emergency Card.
* When any person who is not known to program staff attempts to pick a child up for the first time, the following protocol must be followed:
* The individual is asked their name and to produce identification before they enter the center.
* Program staff will then check the child’s Emergency Card to determine whether the person has been approved by the child’s parent/guardian.
* If the individual is not listed on the child’s Emergency Card, a phone call must be made to a parent/guardian before the child can be released.
* Staff may accept verbal permission for an unlisted person to pick up from a parent/guardian ONCE. Parent/guardians must then make necessary written changes to the child’s Emergency Card.

**OCFS Regulations**

As a licensed daycare center, each CEO center must abide by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations. Listed below are the examples of OCFS regulations that must be in compliance at all times.

* Supervision of Children **(Children cannot be left without competent direct supervision at any time).**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age of Children** | **Staff/ Child Maximum Ration (\*)** | **Maximum Group Size (\*\*)** |
| Under 6 weeks | 1: 3 | 6 |
| 6 weeks to 18 months | 1: 4 | 8 |
| 18 months to 36 months | 1: 5 | 12 |
| 3 years | 1: 7 | 18 |
| 4 years | 1: 8 | 21 |
| 5 years | 1: 9 | 24 |

\*Head Start requires 1: 4 ratio for toddlers

\*\*When children three years of age or older are cared for in mixed age groups, the staff / child ratio the staff will use the ratio/group size for the majority of children in the classroom.

* Garbage receptacles must be covered and cleaned as needed after emptying.
* The following items must be used and stored in such a manner that they are not accessible to children: handbags, backpacks or briefcases belonging to adults, plastic bags, toys and objects small enough for children to swallow.
* Daily supervised outdoor play is required for all children in care, except during inclement or extreme weather or unless otherwise ordered by a health care provider.
* Except while sleeping, awakening or going to sleep, an infant must not be left in a crib, playpen or other confined space for more than 30 minutes at any one time. Other than at meals or snack time, a child must not be left in a highchair for longer than 15 minutes.
* For children unable to nap, time and space must be provided for quiet play. Children must not be forced to rest for long periods of time.
* The child day care center must establish written disciplinary guidelines and provide copies of these guidelines to all staff and parents of children in care at the center. These guidelines must include acceptable methods of guiding the behavior of children. Corporal punishment, withholding food, rest or sleep as punishment is prohibited.
* All staff that work in CEO centers are Mandated Reporters and must follow the agency policy/procedure for reporting child abuse/neglect.
* Universal precautions must always be utilized. Gloves must be always worn when handling bodily fluids. Only staff that are MAT certified may administer medication.
* The day care center must provide plentiful and nutritious snacks to children. The center must ensure that each child in care for more than four hours a day receives a nutritious meal. Where meals are furnished by the child day care center, food preferences for personal, religious, or medical reasons may be accommodated.
* Providers must obtain a written statement from the parent of each infant in care, setting forth the formula and feeding schedule instructions for the infant. All containers or bottles of formula, breast milk or other individualized food items must be clearly marked with the child’s complete name. Infants six months of age or younger must be held while being bottle fed.
* Protective caps, covers or permanently installed obstructive devices must be used on all electrical outlets that are accessible to children. Safety straps must be fastened around children who are seated in highchairs.
* The use of any type of personal electronic media device for social or entertainment purposes, including but not limited to, listening to music on headphones, playing screen games, surfing the internet, sending e-mails, or making personal calls while supervising children is prohibited. The use of mobile phones is permitted as necessary to promote the children’s safety and ensuring the orderly operation of the program.

Attendance

The routines that children develop in CEO’s Early Head Start / Head Start program will continue throughout their school career. Families enrolled are expected to maintain 85% monthly attendance. CEO encourages and promotes families arriving to school by 9: 00 am so the child will not miss out on the most important part of the day and does not cause disruption to the rest of the classroom. If a child has low attendance or chronic tardiness, please contact your Center Manager and Family Advocate so the family can be contacted to determine what level, if any, support is needed to help increase attendance.

Health and 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 children begin program are**:

* Physical examination (within one prior calendar year)
* Up-to-date immunizations (Accepted NYS exemptions can be discussed)
* Allergy & Anaphylaxis Form (as needed)
* Individual Health Care Plans (as needed)
* MAT Forms (as needed)

**Strongly encouraged**:

* Dental exam
* Anemia Screening
* Lead Screening

**Child Illness and Exclusion Policy -** determines if a child is well enough to participate in programming. Please refer to CEO’s *Exclusion Due to Illness* policy to determine what symptoms would be the reason for a child to be excluded from programming. The decision to exclude a child will only be made by the Center Manager and the Health Team.

**Incident Reporting -** Any time a child is injured during program hours, staff must fill out and complete a Child Incident Report. Please make sure to notify your Center Manager and Program Nurse of any serious incidents that need immediate medical attention or notification of a family member.

**Mealtime** – Outside food is not permitted in Early Childhood classrooms. The program provides breakfast and lunch to children (all food is provided by the program). For infants, formula and baby food are provided. Infants will never be introduced to new foods at school; and families should be sure to update infant and toddler teachers regarding new foods being tried at home.

All meals should be served Family Style. Mealtimes should consist of children participating in serving themselves, as well as conversation that is appropriate for the age group.

**Only MAT trained staff members can provide medication to children in the program.**

When medication has been administered a Medication Administration Form must be completed and signed by a doctor. Medication cannot be transported between home and school by a child.

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.

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

* Family Engagement is everyone’s job!
* CEO Staff will communicate with families daily through conversations, monthly newsletters, conferences, center events, and Learning Genie. Please remember that information shared with you is confidential and should only be shared with individuals who need to know.
* Interactions and conversations with families must always remain professional. Families are our customers, and we must ensure that boundaries are not crossed.
* If you have any concerns about a family or need to share information, please make sure to discuss this with your Family Advocate and/or Center Manager.
* The goal of staff members is to work with families and keep them informed of their child’s growth, progress, and overall development in order to prepare them for success in school.
* CEO staff offer multiple opportunities for families to come to the center and participate in Family Fun Days that revolve around a variety of topics that promote School Readiness and Family Engagement. Please encourage families to participate in these events and volunteer in the classrooms.

**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 meaningful 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!

**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. 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. The Policy Council is responsible for aiding in budgetary, personnel, and planning decision-making as well as the development and support of CEO Early Childhood program enhancements.