



# CAAS HEAD START Family Handbook

*Helping Young Children and Their Families  
Get Ready for School and Beyond*



# Welcome to CAAS Head Start!

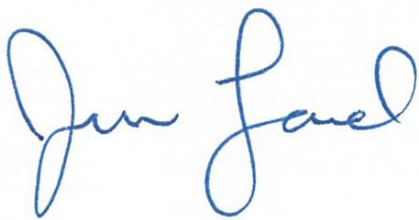
Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the CAAS Head Start program! On behalf of all our staff, thank you for choosing to partner with us for the care and education of your child.

For more than 30 years, CAAS Head Start's dedicated staff has worked successfully with thousands of children and families from many different backgrounds and who have a wide range of needs. We continue to provide comprehensive and effective educational activities and services to prepare young children to successfully begin their journey to life-long learning. This handbook has been developed to provide all enrolled families with detailed information about the program. I encourage you to carefully read this handbook, to ask questions if you have them, to participate as much as possible in the many activities available throughout the year, and take advantage of the services we offer. Your involvement is very important to the success of our program!

We look forward to working with you and your child. May the experiences we provide help your family learn, achieve, and thrive for many years to come!

Sincerely,



Jessie Leonard  
Director  
CAAS Head Start



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# CAAS Overview

Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) is an anti-poverty agency serving Somerville, Massachusetts since 1981. CAAS' mission is to reduce poverty among local families and individuals while working to counteract, and whenever possible eliminate, the societal conditions that cause and perpetuate poverty.

CAAS' core programs are Head Start, Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP), and Free Tax Preparation Assistance (VITA).

HPP provides a wide range of services to low-income individuals at risk of homelessness each year, including preventing evictions through advocacy with landlords and in district court and maximizing income by improving access to public benefits. Case management targeting the root causes of housing affordability helps prevent future crises. HPP serves Somerville residents with incomes up to 80% of area median income (AMI).

VITA provides low- and moderate-income families with free tax preparation assistance. The VITA program can help reduce the tax burden of families and help them get back money that can be used to build savings or pay off debts. VITA clients do not need to be Somerville residents.



## **Administrative Office**

66-70 Union Square  
Somerville, MA 02143  
617/623.7370  
Info@caasomerville.org  
www.caasomerville.org

## **CAAS Executive Leadership**

David Gibbs, *Executive Director*  
John Hsieh, *Associate Director*  
Jessie Leonard, *Director of Head Start*  
Ashley Tienken, *Director of Housing Advocacy*  
Nicole Eigbrett, *Director of Community Organizing*  
Janet Grogan, *Human Resources Manager*

CAAS Head Start Early Education Centers are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care: 51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor, Boston, MA 02210 Phone: 617/988.6600 TTY: 617/ 988.2454. Parents may contact EEC for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history.

# CAAS Head Start General Information

## What is Head Start?

Head Start is a free, comprehensive preschool program that provides a variety of wrap-around services to approximately 270 children and their families each year. Components of this wraparound include extensive supports in the economic, social, health, nutritional and psychological domains. Parent and family targeted services include: adult education; case management and economic mobility planning; referrals and assistance coordinating external supports. Head Start serves low-income or otherwise eligible residents of Somerville and Cambridge.

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 and beyond is fostered through individualized learning experiences. Through caring 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:** Each child's perceptual, motor, and physical development is supported to permit them to fully explore and function in their environment. All children receive health and developmental screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services to ensure they are receiving the services they need.

**Family well-being:** Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security. Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov>

## Head Start Early Education Centers

### Cambridge

#### **Jefferson Park**

280 Rindge Ave  
Cambridge, MA 02140  
617/623-7370  
JP1: Ext. 203 / JP2: Ext. 202

#### **Frisoli Youth Center**

61 Willow Street  
Cambridge, MA 02141  
617/623-7370  
Frisoli 1: Ext. 303 / Frisoli 2: Ext. 304

### Somerville:

#### **Jack Hamilton Center**

29 Allen Street  
Somerville, MA 02143  
617/623-7370 Ext. 400

#### **Mystic Center**

35 Memorial Road  
Somerville, MA 02145  
617/623-7370  
Mystic 1: Ext. 501 / Mystic 2: Ext. 502

#### **Capuano Early Childhood Center**

150 Glen Street  
Somerville, MA 02145  
617/623-6600 Ext. 3613

#### **Arthur D. Healey School**

5 Meacham Street  
Somerville, MA 02145  
617/629-6545



HEAD START



# Program Governance and Staff

## Policy Council

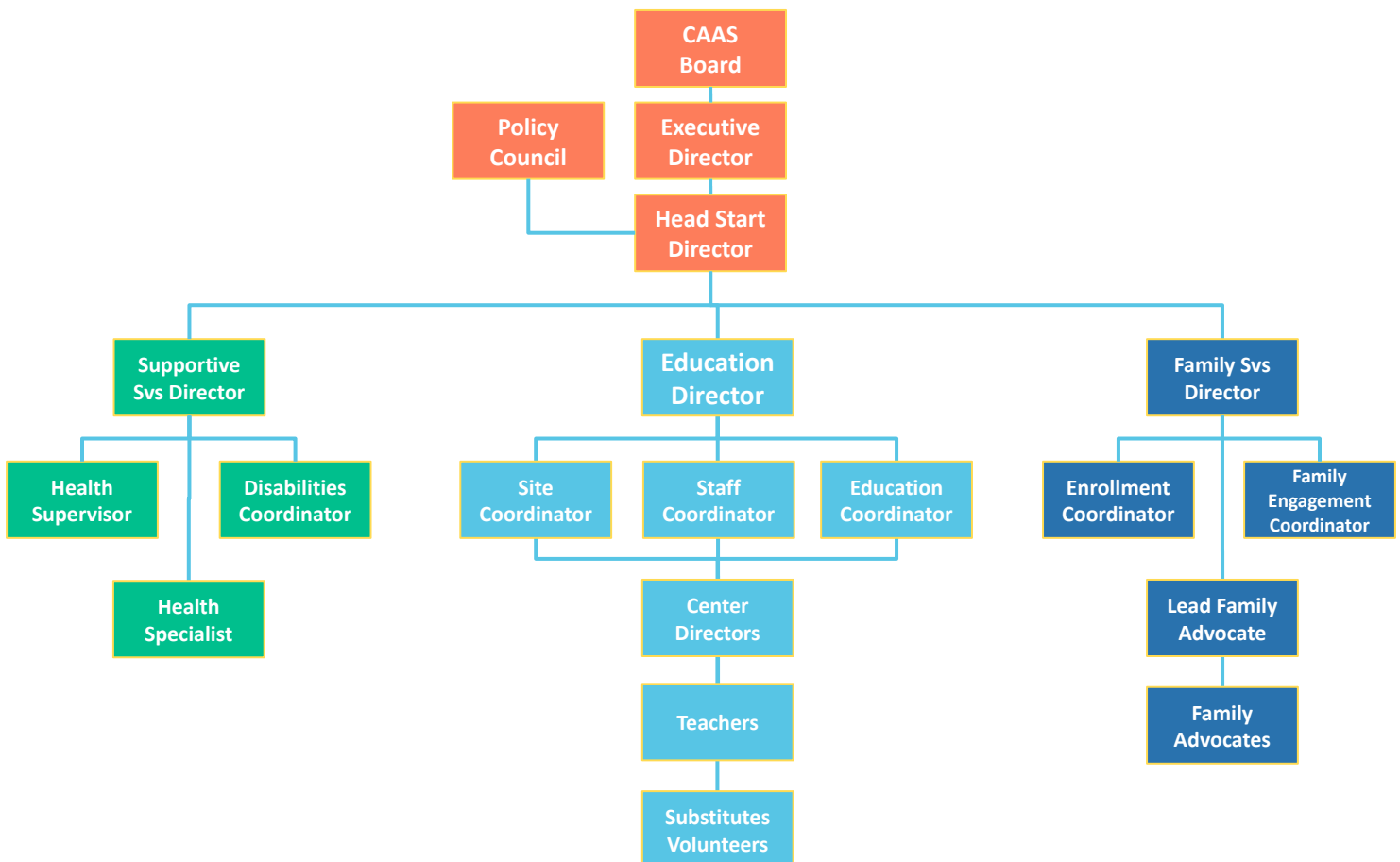
The Head Start Policy Council is a governing body responsible for the direction of the Head Start program, including program design and operation, and long- and short-term planning goals and objectives, taking into account the annual community-wide strategic planning and needs assessment and self-assessment.

The Policy Council is made up of parents currently enrolled in the program. *You can be part of it!* Each Head Start classroom sends a representative to participate on the Policy Council. Other members of the Council are past parents, community people, representatives from local community agencies, and a member of the CAAS Board of Directors. The Policy Council is involved in the development of Head Start budgets, our work with other community agencies, the hiring of new staff, and assisting in the evaluation of our Head Start program. *All parents are welcome to attend Policy Council meetings.* Call the Family Engagement Supervisor at 617-623-7370 for more information.

The Policy Council meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month, from 10:00am-12:00pm. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Policy Council meets by zoom on the fourth Monday of the month, from 6:00pm-7:00pm. Please talk to your Advocate or the Family Engagement Supervisor if transportation to and from PC meetings is an issue.

## Head Start Staff

Head Start is comprised of education staff, family services staff, supportive services staff, and administrative staff.



# Starting the Program

## Home Visits

Before the first day of school, families and children meet their teachers and often a family advocate at a home visit. These are usually set up during the summer by Family Services staff, who will call you to find a time that works. These visits are meant to be friendly and relaxed, and staff are not here to judge families or their homes. Rather, the home visit is a very important step in the enrollment process, and helps children bridge the gap between home and school, see their teachers and parents communicating and collaborating, and begin to feel comfortable with the new adults. It is also a time that teachers will guide families in filling out necessary forms for each child's file, and answer any questions families may have.

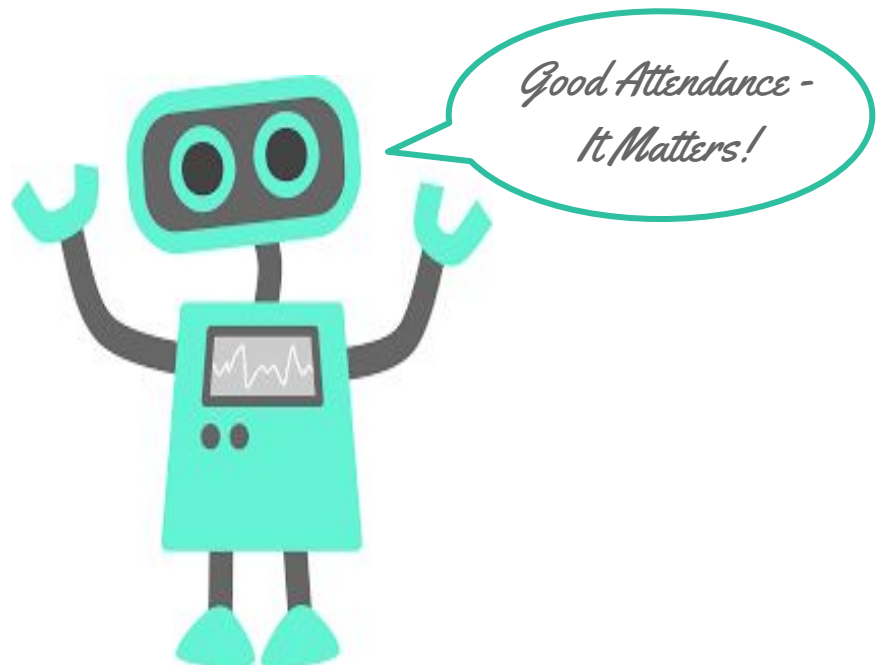
## Attendance

From their first day of school, **a young child's attendance matters!** Good attendance is vital for children's development and learning and for future school success. Good attendance leads to lifelong learning and positive habits necessary for school and work. Research shows that one-third of chronically absent (missing 10 percent or more of the school year) 4-year-olds continue to be chronically absent in kindergarten. Of those students, more than 30 percent are still chronically absent in second grade. This has a direct and negative impact on student reading levels. Absenteeism decreases children's opportunity to engage in learning, impacting their development in all domains of the Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

We know there can be barriers to bringing your child to school each day, like transportation issues. Your classroom's Family Advocate can help you resolve issues and access resources that will make regular attendance work well for your family. If you are having difficulty with regular attendance please reach out to your Family Advocate, or ask your child's teacher to pass along a message so the Family Advocate can get in touch with you. We will do everything we can to help your child come to school every day!

If your child is going to be absent, we need you to *call the classroom to let us know*. Your Advocate will call you if we haven't heard from you within 1 hour of classroom start time. It is our policy and a Head Start requirement to make a home visit if a child has two or more consecutive, unexcused absences.

Please let us know when an absence is due to illness. We need to notify other families in the event of a communicable disease, so please be clear if this is the case. Your child's identity is always kept confidential.





# Confidentiality

CAAS Head Start maintains the confidentiality of child and family information. We will seek the parent/guardian's written permission before releasing confidential information when doing so may reveal client identity. General information which is non-specific, unidentifiable, does not include the name, address, or other identifying information may be released without written consent. (Examples includes: number of client's in agency programs, compiled family needs assessment data, family members by age, etc.)

## Exceptions

Client permission is not needed to release client information to the following: a. Agency staff and consultants directly involved in planning and delivery of services. b. Local School District that the client or child plans to attend. c. Funding source officials and contractors who are conducting an audit or assessment. d. Officials dealing with client's application for/and receipt of financial aid (e.g. DSI, DDS, Home Health). e. Courts via a judicial order or subpoena. f. Officials involved in health and safety emergencies. g. Agencies from whom the client is receiving additional services.

## Record Keeping

CAAS Head Start is required to maintain records on enrolled children and families. These records are kept confidential and stored securely. The information stored in these records is not shared with non-Head Start staff, except:

1. With the parent/guardian's explicit, written permission;
2. During state and federal regulatory reviews;
3. During an investigation by the Dept. of Children and Families; or
4. As otherwise required by law or court order.

## Suspension and Termination

CAAS Head Start does not suspend children from the program. We will only terminate enrollment of a child if, after exhausting all reasonable efforts at a solution, it is clear that our program is an inappropriate placement. We will work closely with a family before terminating the child and will make every effort to facilitate the transition to a more appropriate program or school.

# Family Engagement & Support

CAAS Head Start operates through a two-generation approach which recognizes the necessity of family well-being to a child's success in school and beyond, as well as critical role parents play in their child's development. We work to integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children's learning and development. We recognize parents as their children's primary teachers and nurturers and we implement intentional strategies to engage parents in their children's learning and development and support parent-child relationships.



CAAS Head Start has an *open door* policy; parents are welcome and encouraged to visit and participate in all aspects of the program. There are many ways to get involved, including volunteering, workshops and more.

## Family Support

Family well-being occurs when all family members are safe, healthy, and have chances for educational advancement and economic mobility. Support services such as early care and education, housing and food assistance, and physical and mental health care positively contribute to the well-being of families and their children. When families face challenges that cause stress, including poverty and homelessness, their health and wellness can be negatively impacted. We work to engage families as active participants in problem-solving and goal-setting to help them identify and use their own strengths to address the challenges they face. When families are healthy, safe, and economically stable, their children's health and well-being can thrive.

Many Head Start families are dealing with significant hardships, including homelessness, trauma, substance use disorders, domestic violence, mental or physical illness, and more. Our Family Advocates are trained to help and have a wide array of resources to offer. We are not here to judge, only to support and we welcome you to reach out whenever you need to.

## Parent Volunteering

Volunteering in the classroom is a wonderful way to strengthen the parent-child relationship and the parent-teacher partnership. Parents are welcome to volunteer on an occasional or ongoing basis. Parents are always welcome in their child's classroom, but if a parent wants to volunteer on an ongoing basis they need to complete the Parent Volunteer Training\*, and provide us with documentation of MMR and TB immunization or immunity to and a recent "fit to work with children" doctor's letter. Regular parent volunteers will also need to agree to a background check, a state licensing requirement for all child care programs.

\*If you wish to be a regular classroom volunteer but are unable to complete the parent volunteer training, you may be able to arrange an orientation session with the Education Director instead.

## Parent Education and Workforce Development

CAAS Head Start offers opportunities for interested parents of enrolled children to pursue a career in early childhood education by providing:

- **College courses in Child Development**, offered for free and conducted on-site at our Administration building in Union Square. The 3-credit course satisfies the education requirement for state preschool teaching certification
- **Parent Volunteer Training**, a 5 week training that prepares parents for a role in the classroom and is a prerequisite for substitute positions
- **Substitute teaching opportunities**, paid positions which help parents fulfill the work experience requirement for state preschool teaching certification



*Did you know?*

*Many of our Head Start staff began as Head Start parents!*

## Parent Activities

CAAS Head Start offers workshops and other activities designed to promote family well-being and foster community ties. Examples of parenting activities we provide are: sewing class, cooking and nutrition workshops, parenting class, ESOL class, and more.

## Family Resource Center

The Family Resource Center offers a variety of activities for families. The center is a safe and comfortable place for adults. Parents are welcome to stop in and have a cup of coffee, meet other parents, use the computers, sewing machines, and crafts materials. We maintain a supply of extra children's clothes and canned foods for any Head Start family who needs them. If you'd like to visit you can call, text, or email the Family Engagement Coordinator at 617-623-7370 x132 / 617-785-3663 / [gsanders@caasomerville.org](mailto:gsanders@caasomerville.org).



Note: During the COVID pandemic the Family Resource Center is closed.

## Staff-Family Partnerships

Head Start is a unique early childhood education program in that it places significant emphasis on building a collaborative and strong partnership with the families we serve. The goals of these partnerships are to support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability, to support child learning and development, to provide, if applicable, services and supports for children with disabilities, and to foster parental confidence and skills that promote the early learning and development of their children. The process begins at enrollment and continues for as long as the family participates in the program, based on parent interest and need.

Our aim is to develop trust and respectful, ongoing two-way communication between staff and parents to create welcoming program environments that incorporate the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families in our community. We make every effort to conduct family engagement services in the family's preferred language, or through an interpreter, to the extent possible, and ensure families have the opportunity to share personal information in an environment in which they feel safe.

## Family Strengths and Needs Assessment

The foundation of this partnership is the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment, a survey that Family Advocates conduct with each child's parents/caregivers in a private setting (usually the first home visit), which seeks to determine the family's strengths and needs around family well-being, parent-child relationships, families as lifelong educators, families as learners, family engagement in transitions, family connections to peers and the local community, and families as advocates and leaders.

## Individual Family Partnership Agreements (IFPAs)

Drawing from the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment, the Family Advocate works with the parents/caregivers to develop goals. These goals are limited only by parent interest, and can be both short and long term. Throughout the family's time in the program, the Advocate will work with them to pursue and achieve each goal, and then set new goals as they arise.

# Parent/Guardian Rights and Responsibilities

**Parent/Guardian Concerns:** We encourage all community members to bring their concerns directly to the person involved (if possible) and to not engage in “gossip” that can cause more conflicts. We do understand that at times this is not possible for a variety of reasons so we have systems to support the process of conflict resolution. *It is each member’s right and responsibility to be part of the solution and not part of the conflict.*

When a parent has a concerns with a particular staff and does not feel comfortable going directly to that staff person, the parent should speak with the supervisor. The organizational chart at the back of this manual will display the supervisory structure.

**Code of Conduct:** Courteous and respectful behavior between and among all program participants is essential for CAAS Head Start to achieve its mission and to provide a safe and positive learning environment for the children, families, and staff. CAAS Head Start will not tolerate behavior that creates an unsafe or hostile environment for children, other parents, staff, or volunteers. Examples of violations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Threats to children, parents, guardians, volunteers, consultants
- Physical or verbal punishment of a child
- Physical violence of any kind to any person in the program
- Smoking on school grounds
- Quarreling, verbal fighting, loud shouting, and displays of anger
- Bringing drugs, alcohol, or weapons to program centers, offices, or events
- Using cellphones in the classroom
- Sharing information, photos, or videos of other enrolled children or program staff on social media

If a parent, guardian, or volunteer violates the Code of Conduct, CAAS Head Start reserves the right to:

- Restrict access to other children in the program, classrooms, and activities
- Terminate the child’s enrollment
- Contact the Department of Children and Families
- Contact the police

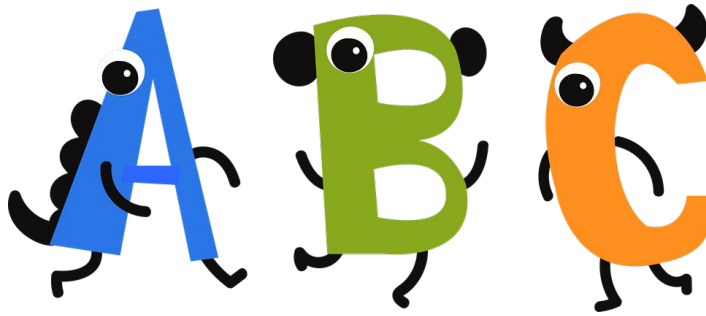
## Note About Substance Use in the Classroom

Head Start staff will not release a child to any adult that the staff person reasonably believes is currently impaired by alcohol or drugs. If an impaired adult comes to pick-up their child, teaching staff will immediately contact their Family Advocate, who will also alert the Education Director, the Family Services Director, and the Head Start Director. The staff will make every effort to prevent the child leaving with the impaired adult, up to and including calling the police and the Dept. of Children and Families..



If you or a family member is struggling with substance use  
*please talk to us - we can help!*

# Early Care and Education of Children



**The CAAS Head Start Program welcomes and embraces all children.** We recognize that each child is an individual and ensure that our curriculum is based on best practice and fully addresses the unique developmental abilities and learning styles of each child.

**We believe that parents are the first and primary educators of their children.** Successful school experiences depend on the involvement and teamwork of both parents and teachers. We offer many opportunities for families to take part in their child's education.

**Our program creates inviting classroom environments that support children's learning.** The materials and equipment that we provide in our classrooms are developmentally appropriate for young children and are designed to encourage exploration, creativity, social skill building. We believe that children's play is children's work!

**Our vision is to do our very best to prepare our children for school.** We strive to provide our children with experiences and opportunities that scaffold their learning and expand their thinking. We encourage and guide learning that encompasses the whole child. We dedicate ourselves to creating lifelong learners by instilling a love of learning in our children.

## Classroom Norms

While every classroom is unique, shaped by its teachers and families, there are some Head Start norms, values, and expectations that apply to all classrooms. We call these "The Big Rules"

- ★ Careful, Safe Bodies
- ★ Kindness with Everyone
- ★ Respect for Work
- ★ Care for the Classroom

These rules are the foundation of all our expectations for children's behavior. We guide and educate the children as they develop the skills to make positive choices for themselves. We will care for your child and continue to teach them kindness, respect, and cooperation.

All Head Start staff and families are expected to model kindness and respect in all interactions with children, parents, teachers, advocates, and support staff, and to the classroom environment.

Parents are always welcome in the classroom.

Head Start does not discriminate. No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be discriminated against by this program, including in employment, because of race, religion, sex, national origin, cultural heritage, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status. No child shall be discriminated against because they are not toilet trained.

# Child Guidance and Discipline

The CAAS Head Start Child Guidance Policy ensures the safety of all the children while helping each child to develop self-control. Learning self-control and taking responsibility for one's own behavior is a normal part of children's social and emotional development. Therefore, our approach to guiding and managing behavior is based on child development and teaching. Our approach is not about punishment. Since each child is unique, you may see teachers use different techniques in the classroom.

## Guiding Principles

- ★ "No" without a valid explanation is not a teachable response to a child
- ★ Rules are developed to teach safety and respect for ourselves, each other and our environment
- ★ Focus on the positive
- ★ Children communicate through actions and behaviors. We listen to the children!

## Goals for Children

- ★ To be safe with ourselves and with others
- ★ To develop a positive sense of self
- ★ To develop self-control and good coping skills
- ★ To appropriately express feelings
- ★ To become more independent
- ★ To balance children's own needs and wants with those of others
- ★ To learn new problem solving skills, including non-violent conflict resolution
- ★ To learn about conservation-to use equipment, materials and other resources in caring, appropriate ways

## Positive Guidance

- ★ The learning environment is arranged to encourage learning and independence
- ★ The daily schedule is predictable, yet flexible
- ★ Expectations are clear, consistent and developmentally appropriate
- ★ Transitions are predictable

## Prohibited

- ★ The use of corporal punishment including hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, pulling, or pinching.
- ★ Isolating a child in an adjacent room, hallway, or any other area where a child cannot be supervised;
- ★ Using or withholding food or beverages as a punishment;
- ★ Toilet training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
- ★ Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting,, extended ignoring, or isolating, a child;
- ★ Any abuse or maltreatment of a child;
- ★ Abusive, profane, or sarcastic language or verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family;
- ★ Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment;
- ★ Physical activity/outdoor time taken away as punishment.

## Note On Time Out

Head Start does not use time outs as a classroom management technique. We believe that time out is punitive (meant to punish) and not helpful. It does not teach children how to resolve the problems that lead to their behavior, nor does it help them develop coping skills for self-regulation. If a child is dealing with big feelings, or is losing control, teachers may offer and even encourage (or go with) the child to spend a few minutes in the classroom "cozy corner," perhaps with their lovie, until they feel calm enough to work on a resolution. Such time away is always voluntary.

# School Readiness

**School readiness means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for the children who enter their doors.**

Head Start is a school readiness program, our focus is on making sure that children possess the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development are all essential ingredients of school readiness.

Families become school-ready when they are meaningfully engaged in their children's learning and development and are poised to support the lifelong success of their child.

Schools become ready for children when Head Start programs, parents, and schools work together to promote school readiness and engage families as their children make the transition to kindergarten.

## CAAS Head Start School Readiness Goals

**Goal 1:** Approaches to Learning: *Children will show an interest in varied topics and activities, an eagerness to learn, creativity, and independence in their interactions with activities and materials.*

**Goal 2:** Social and Emotional Development: *Children will engage in and maintain positive relationships and interactions with peers and adults.*

**Goal 3:** Language and Literacy: *Children will use and comprehend oral language for conversation, communication, and literacy in developmentally appropriate ways.*

**Goal 4:** Cognition: *Children will use math regularly and in everyday routines to count, compare, relate, identify patterns, and problem-solve.*

**Goal 5:** Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development: *Children will demonstrate control of small and large muscles for movement, navigation, and balance.*

## CAAS Content Curriculum: The 3C's

The CAAS Head Start 3C's curriculum has its roots in The Creative Curriculum, a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that features exploration and discovery as a way of learning. The content and learning outcomes of the curriculum align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) and MA early care and education standards. Content is drawn from current child development science, the interests and ideas of the children, family input, and the values of the community. The curriculum also provides ways to create nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments that foster trust and emotional security. It helps families to actively engage in their child's education. Staff use what they know about each child's strengths and needs and each family's goals to plan their use of the curriculum.

Topics of exploration usually last about a month and cover the different components of children's development: cognitive, social-emotional, and motor. Each topic is designed around "Big Ideas," concepts that allow for its wide-ranging exploration. Each classroom of children is unique and teachers have the freedom to follow the interests of the children in the classroom when selecting which "Big Ideas" to study.

# Classroom Curriculum: Year-at-a-Glance

## The “Big Ideas”

<p><b>September</b> <b>Creating a Classroom Community</b></p>	<p><b>October</b> <b>Families, Neighborhoods, and Community Helpers</b></p>	<p><b>November</b> <b>Things That Go</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I belong here!</li> <li>● I can trust this place to take care of me.</li> <li>● Feelings can be named and described.</li> <li>● Using words solves problems lets others know what I want/need.</li> <li>● Adults are here to help me. I can ask for help from adults and other children.</li> <li>● We work together to make our classroom a safe and happy place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I am part of family, a neighborhood, and a community.</li> <li>● People help me be safe and grow.</li> <li>● People work at home and outside of home.</li> <li>● People work together to make our community safe, healthy, and fun.</li> <li>● Some people have jobs that help us live in our city.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● People need and want to get from one place to another.</li> <li>● People have made all kinds of vehicles to travel from one place to another.</li> <li>● Transportation happens in the air, on the water, over land and underground.</li> <li>● We travel to see family and friends who don't live with us.</li> <li>● Transportation requires fuel or energy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>December</b> <b>Clothing</b></p>	<p><b>January</b> <b>Our Bodies</b></p>	<p><b>February</b> <b>Creating a Classroom Community</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● People wear clothing to protect their bodies from the weather.</li> <li>● People wear clothing to keep their bodies private.</li> <li>● People use clothing and accessories to decorate themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I need to take care of my body to stay strong and healthy.</li> <li>● Foods nourish my body. Different foods nourish in different ways.</li> <li>● Exercise builds up my body and makes it stronger.</li> <li>● Rest and sleep help me play and learn..</li> <li>● Bodies grow and change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The sun lights the world. When our part of the world turns away from the sun each day, we have night.</li> <li>● People can light the darkness with candles, light bulbs and other electrical devices.</li> <li>● We have more time each day in darkness in winter, and more time in light in summer. Daylight gets shorter and longer throughout the year.</li> </ul>
<p><b>March</b> <b>We Can Do Projects</b></p>	<p><b>April</b> <b>Animals</b></p>	<p><b>May/June</b> <b>Water and Living Things</b></p>
<p>The children have been learning language, literacy, and math skills in many different ways.</p> <p>March is a special time for children to demonstrate and use these skills, in meaningful projects and activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Homes and Habitats</li> <li>● Food, Bodies, Skeletons, Camouflage</li> <li>● Tracks</li> <li>● Eggs, Babies, Transformations, Life cycles. How parents take care of eggs and babies.</li> <li>● Social structure (school of fish, herd of elephants, flock of birds,)</li> <li>● Interdependence on other creatures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a cycle to water on earth.</li> <li>● Water can be in solid, liquid, or vapor states.</li> <li>● Water is all over the earth. There are oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, swamps.</li> <li>● Our weather is always changing and we can observe the weather.</li> <li>● There is a cycle to plant and animal life</li> </ul>



# Classroom Curriculum: Year-at-a-Glance

## The “Big Ideas”

### Summer Programming

July Trees, Wind, and Air	August Monsters, Maps, and Explorers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trees are living things; they grow and change.</li><li>• Trees are homes to other living things such as birds, insects, and squirrels.</li><li>• Trees need care and kindness.</li><li>• Wind is air in motion; we can't see air, but we can feel the wind</li><li>• Wind can move things such as leaves, bubbles, kites, wind chimes, sailboats.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vocabulary building and language development</li><li>• Creativity</li><li>• Exploring feelings</li><li>• Maps and Explorers</li><li>• An explorer sometimes uses a map to look for treasures</li><li>• Maps are flat, portable pictures that help people find their way</li></ul>



*Our Monsters unit lets children comfortably and creatively explore and overcome a common childhood fear!*

## Second Step

CAAS Head Start also incorporates the Second Step Program into daily experiences. Second Step increases kids' school success and decreases problem behaviors by teaching them skills for learning—such as paying attention, listening, and sitting still—as well as how to manage their emotions, solve problems, and make friends. All these skills help prepare kids for kindergarten and to be more successful in school and in life.

*Second Step* activities include fun Brain Builder games, opportunities to practice skills, puppets, and songs. Brain Builder games boost skills sometimes referred to as “executive-function” skills. They help kids pay attention, use their memory, and control their behavior. And they’re fun, too! You can also play Brain Builder games at home. Skill practices allow kids to practice new skills immediately after learning about them. The more students practice a skill, the better they are at using it, both in and out of the classroom. To help your child practice *Second Step* skills at home, do the Home Link activities.

Second Step for preschool focuses on social-emotional and self-regulation skill building. Emotional intelligence is critical for lifelong happiness, successful careers, and healthier relationships. Social-emotional learning curricula teach children techniques that help them gain confidence, set and achieve positive goals, collaborate well, and navigate the world more effectively—adding a highly valuable dimension to education in the classroom.

**Emotional intelligence is a way of recognizing, understanding, and choosing how we think, feel, and act. It shapes our interactions with others and our understanding of ourselves. It defines how and what we learn; it allows us to set priorities; it determines the majority of our daily actions. Research suggests it is responsible for as much as 80 percent of the "success" in our lives. -J. Freedman**

# Child Assessments & Screenings

Screening and ongoing assessment are integral to supporting children's development and learning. Both are conducted in ways that are responsive to children's home languages and cultures. The developmental screening is an initial check to identify children who may need further evaluation to determine if they have a delay or disability. Screenings typically look at developmental, behavioral, motor, language, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. We also conduct a social and emotional screening for new children. This screening is done collaboratively between teachers and parents.

If there is a concern about the result of any screening, the concern will be evaluated by the Head Start Staff. With your participation and permission a referral for additional services could be made. Results of screenings will be kept confidential and shared only with the child's parent/guardian.

Ongoing assessment information, along with input from parents and families, helps staff determine a child's strengths and needs. Staff and families adjust strategies to ensure individualized learning and curriculum implementation. Ongoing child assessment provides information about children's developmental levels and progress toward individual child goals as well as program school readiness goals. Program school readiness goals are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF).

## Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled three times a year. The first two conferences are done in the classroom and the final one is done in the child's home. The CAAS Head Start teaching staff views these conferences as an opportunity to share the child's work in the classroom. Each conference provides the parent and teacher a time to review the child's portfolio and skill levels in the eleven domain areas – Language, Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Creative Arts, Approaches to Learning, Social/Emotional Development, and Physical Health & Well Being. Teaching staff uses this valuable opportunity to help families develop a better understanding of child growth and development. Through their conversation and discussion with the teachers, parents glean information that they can base their own observations on, helping the teachers and family to set goals, and plan curriculum for the individual child.

The first conference is in November through December. At this meeting the family and teachers review the child's portfolio and the fall Creative Curriculum Individual Child profile and the first Child Progress and Planning report.

The second conference is in February through March. At this conference family and teachers review the child's progress and individual goals from the winter Creative Curriculum Individual Child profile and the second Child Progress and Planning report. Kindergarten Registration information is given to the family if applicable, at this time.

At the third and final conference, which is scheduled in the home, teachers and family review the spring Creative Curriculum Individual Child profile and the third and final Child Progress and Planning report. The CAAS Head Start End of Year Outcomes/Preschool Transition Form is completed for children entering Kindergarten in the fall. Teachers also discuss summer plans and goals with every family for each child.



## School Closures

CAAS Head Start is closed on the following days:

September	Labor Day
October	Indigenous Peoples Day
November	Veterans Day Thanksgiving Day Day After Thanksgiving
December	Christmas Day through New Year's Day (the SPS winter vacation schedule)
January	New Year's Day Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February	Presidents Day School vacation week (full-day classrooms open)
April	Patriots Day Good Friday School vacation week (full-day classrooms open)
May	Memorial Day
June	Bunker Hill Day
July	Independence Day

CAAS Head Start also closes three times a year for professional development. A yearly calendar is given out to families at the start of each new school year and will include professional development days.

## Classroom Daily Schedule

Each classroom is unique, however, they typically follow the same daily routine:

Arrival / Open Play

Breakfast

Morning Circle

Choice Time

Outside Time\*

Lunch Time

*Dismissal - Part-Day Classes*

Rest Time

*Dismissal - School-Day Classes*

Snack Time

Open Play

End-of-Day Calm Activities

*Dismissal - Full-Day Classes*

\*We go outside every day except in severe weather



## Rest Time

Any classroom operating for more than 5 hours will include a rest time for the children. Each child is given his/her own mat and cozy blanket. Parents are asked to take the blanket home each Friday to wash it and return it Monday. This is a very important part of preventing infectious illnesses.

Rest time is handled in a relaxed, reassuring, and individual manner based on developmental needs. Soft music is played, blankets and comfort toys from home are encouraged, and books for quiet reading are all incorporated into naptime thus creating a secure and nurturing atmosphere conducive to well-rested and healthy children. Rest time boxes of books, puzzles, small toys, and/or drawing materials are also available for children that are relaxing and not necessarily needing to nap.

## Diapering and Toilet-Training

Children do not need to be toilet trained to attend Head Start. Our teachers are experienced in supporting children through the process, when families are ready. If your child is still in diapers, you are encouraged to talk with your child's teachers and/or your Family Advocate so we can best support you and your child in approaching toilet training according to your wishes and your child's needs. We are also happy to provide you with information and resources on best practices.

CAAS Head Start strictly prohibits disciplining, scolding, shaming or humiliating a child for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet; forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing; or forcing a child to remain on the toilet.

Head Start staff will handle a child's toilet training with a positive attitude; they will be supportive, understanding, and patient. Parents and staff should decide together when a child is ready to begin toilet training and should develop a plan that will be consistent and manageable in both settings. Some children will need equipment to use an adult size toilet; classrooms will be equipped with stools and toilet seat adapters as needed. Parents may provide a personal potty chair for their child per Individual Health Plan if needed. Staff will supervise and as needed, assist children using the toilet and with hand washing. Classrooms will have available extra clean and dry indoor and outdoor clothing to change a child's clothing when wet or soiled. Soiled clothing will be placed in a sealed plastic bag, labeled, and returned to the child's parent at the end of the day.

## Toothbrushing

CAAS Head Start promotes oral health in many ways, and provides a daily opportunity for toothbrushing. Each child is given a toothbrush which is labeled and stored according to sanitary guidelines, and replaced every 3 months. Children are encouraged but never pressured or forced to brush their teeth.

## Hand Washing

washing is one of the best defenses against the transmission of infectious conditions! Proper hand washing is taught to and modeled for the children. Hand-washing occurs:

- Upon arrival to the classroom -- this is the parent's responsibility!
- Before and after water play
- Before and after eating
- After contact with bodily fluids
- After toileting/diapering
- After outdoor play

# Other Classroom Policies & Procedures

## Attendance

From the first day of enrollment, **a young child's attendance matters!** Good attendance is vital for children's development and learning and for future school success. Good attendance leads to lifelong learning and positive habits necessary for school and work. Research shows that one-third of chronically absent (missing 10 percent or more of the school year) 4-year-olds continue to be chronically absent in kindergarten. Of those students, more than 30 percent are still chronically absent in second grade. This has a direct and negative impact on student reading levels. Absenteeism decreases children's opportunity to engage in learning, impacting their development in all domains of the Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

We know there can be barriers to bringing your child to school each day, like transportation issues. Your classroom's Family Advocate can help you resolve issues and access resources that will make regular attendance work well for your family. If you are having difficulty with regular attendance please reach out to your Family Advocate, or ask your child's teacher to pass along a message so the Family Advocate can get in touch with you. We will do everything we can to help your child come to school every day!

If your child is going to be absent, we need you to *call the classroom to let us know*. It is our policy and a Head Start requirement to make a home visit if a child has two or more consecutive, unexcused absences.

Please let us know when an absence is due to illness. We need to notify other families in the event of a communicable disease, so please be clear if this is the case. Your child's identity is always kept confidential.



## Arrival and Departure

Parents/Guardians bring their child into the classroom, sign them in, and help them settle in. It can be helpful to establish a separation routine, such as putting your child's belongings in her cubby, *washing hands*, and reading a book or helping her get involved in an activity before saying goodbye. We know how hard it can be for children to say goodbye, and teachers will support your child in acknowledging her feelings and helping her adjust to the classroom. You know your child best! If there are certain things teachers can do or say that will help your child transition smoothly, please share them with us and we will accommodate as best we can.

*Remember...*

- ★ To sign-in your child at arrival; sign-out your child at departure
- ★ To make sure your child washes her hands before joining classroom activities
- ★ To always say goodbye! It can be tempting to slip away when your child has settled in, but this may actually make the transition harder for your child, and take him longer to adjust to school. Say goodbye and leave promptly; teachers will comfort your child and help him get busy with something fun!

## Lateness

Late arrival: Good attendance means showing up for school, and showing up on time. When children arrive late they often have a harder time settling in, they might miss breakfast or other meaningful activities, and it can be disruptive to the rest of the group. Parents who arrive late multiple times will be contacted for a conversation with their Family Advocate. Parents who are chronically late will need to come in and meet with the Director of Family Services. Chronic lateness in one of the full-day classrooms may result in the loss of a spot in that classroom and a transfer to a part-day room.

Late departure: Parents or approved pick-up persons must pick up their children no later than the time their child's classroom closes. Late pick-up is unacceptable. Late pick-up is stressful and even frightening to a child, and places an unfair burden on teachers. Every instance of late departure is treated seriously and requires a conversation with the Director of Family Services. Chronic lateness in one of the full-day classrooms may result in the loss of a spot in that classroom and a transfer to a part-day room. Chronic and significant late pick-ups in any classroom may be a sign that Head Start is not the most appropriate placement for the family. We're here to help! Please reach out to your Family Advocate if you are having difficulty being on time.

## Clothing

Children should wear play clothes to school. Preschool learning is messy, and this is a good thing. Your child will be exploring with paint and markers, glue, sand and water tables, and many other materials. Many of our materials are washable, but some are not.

Children should wear clothes that are well-fitting and appropriate for the weather. They should bring mittens and a warm hat in the winter. Head Start provides sun hats for the spring and summer; please keep these hats at school, in your child's cubby. If you have a sunhat you would prefer your child to wear, teachers will be happy to accommodate. Footwear should be close-toed and comfortable, good for running and climbing. During snowy weather, parents are welcome to keep a pair of indoor shoes or slippers in their child's cubby.

Each child needs a set of extra clothes to keep in their cubby. Children often need to change at some point during the day, whether it is due to spills, art materials, weather, or toileting accident. Teachers will put a note in your child's cubby when the extra clothes need to be replaced. The set should include underwear and socks.

**Please label your child's clothes with permanent marker!**

Head Start maintains a supply of extra children's clothes at the Parent Resource Center, located in our Administrative building in Union Square. Please feel free to come to the parent resource center any time during open hours to look through the selection. We also working with a clothing donation organization and can help families obtain clothes for their child if needed. Please reach out to your Family Advocate if you need any clothes.

## Toys From Home

We encourage children to bring a small, soft comfort item that can fit in his cubby, a favorite stuffed animal, or other small, soft item, or pacifier... Such "lovies" can help with the child's transition into the classroom, as well as provide comfort throughout the day. **Please do not bring in toys from home.** Toys are things like action figures, cars, trucks, dolls, etc. Toys from home can be very disruptive to the classroom. There will be plenty of toys and other fun and interesting materials available every day.



## Holidays and Birthdays

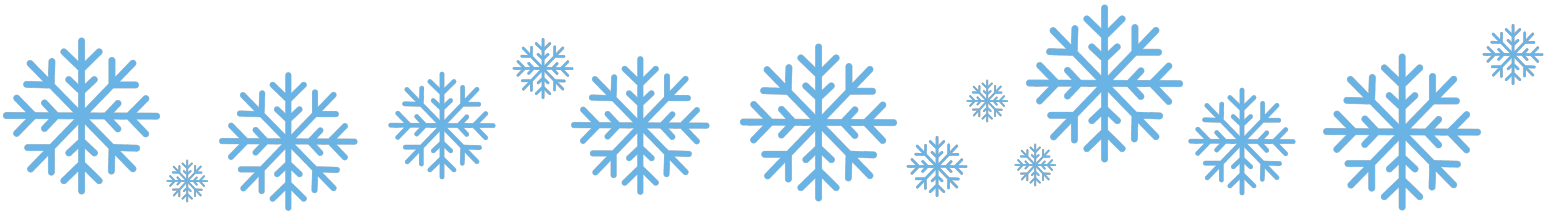
Although we are closed for all federal holidays, Head Start does not celebrate holidays in our classrooms. We do have some celebrations at different times of the year as part of our curriculum, and we support children in sharing about their family's traditions. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to join the classroom to share with us their traditions as it is a great teachable moment and a time to explore and celebrate diversity.

**Birthdays:** Unless a family or the child objects, we celebrate children's birthdays by inviting families to join us for a special fruit popsicle snack and give the birthday child a book to take home. We welcome families to share with the class *non-food* birthday traditions. We will pick a day in the last month of school to celebrate, as a group, the children whose birthdays fall after school is closed for the year.

## Snow Days

CAAS Head Start closes when the Somerville Public School closes, even for our Cambridge centers. Additionally, we may decide to close even if the SPS stays open, if we believe the snow conditions have become or threaten to become unsafe for staff and families to travel to school.

If the Somerville Public Schools are closed, both Somerville and Cambridge Head Start centers are closed. If we decide on our own to close, your Family Advocate will contact you. We make every effort to reach school closure decisions no later than 6am, if not the day before.



## Mandated Reporting: Child Abuse and Neglect

Massachusetts law requires professionals who work with children to notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if they suspect that a child is being abused, neglected, or both. Head Start staff are mandated reporters of any suspected child abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. Head Start staff take this responsibility very seriously and we will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. While the suspicion must be reasonable, we may or may not discuss the matter with you prior to filing a report. The filing of an abuse or neglect report (sometimes known as "filing a 51a") is not done to punish the family but rather with the explicit purpose of protecting the child.

Abuse is any non-accidental act to a child that causes or creates a risk of physical or emotional injury. Abuse includes any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child. Neglect is the failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to provide a child with minimal care.

For more information on reporting alleged child abuse or neglect, please see the Department of Children and Families' guide for mandated reporters. For the Massachusetts General Law on reporting of suspected abuse or neglect, please see MGL c.119, § 51A.

# Supportive Services for Children

To help children reach their full potential physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially, trained program staff assess children through developmental, social/emotional, vision, and hearing screenings within 45 days of their enrollment. Other health and nutrition related screenings are completed within 90 days of enrollment.

Child screenings and observations provide parents and staff with a quick check of each child's general health and development. Some screening results may indicate the need for further evaluation. Program staff will follow procedures for referring parents to appropriate support services for concerns related to child development, social/emotional, mental health, education, disability, physical health, and/or nutrition.

## Developmental Screening:

Upon a child's initial enrollment into the program, the teacher screens each child's overall development including large motor and small motor abilities, speech and language development, and social skills by using the ESI-P Developmental Screening Tool. The screening is completed by the teaching team within the child's first 45 days.



## Social Emotional Screening:

Upon a child's initial enrollment into the program, the teacher talks with the parent to determine each child's (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) social and emotional health using the Ages & Stages Social/Emotional Screening Tool. The screening is completed with the child's parent, usually during the first home visit.

Each year, with parent permission, children receive the following screenings from staff or outside specialists:

Vision Screening: Vision screening is done on all children who were not screened by their pediatrician. This screening is performed by the Health Services Supervisor or Health Services Specialist using the SPOT Vision Screener. Results of the screening are sent home, accompanied by the Health Referral Form, when applicable. It is important that you bring the form with the results to your child's pediatrician for follow up care.

Hearing Screening: Hearing screening is performed on all children who were not screened by their pediatrician. It is done by our Health Services staff using the OAE hearing screening tool. If a child does not pass the screening, the screening will be repeated after two weeks. If the child does not pass the second screening, the child is referred for a complete hearing examination by an audiologist. The screening results will be sent home, accompanied by the Health Referral Form. It is important that you bring the form with the results to your child's pediatrician or audiologists for follow up care.

Height/Weight Screening: Children have their height and weight measured twice a year. The first measurement is taken between September and November. The second measurement is taken in the spring. The height and weight results are part of the child's nutrition assessment. Based on the assessment parents will receive the appropriate nutrition information.

**Screening and Observation Follow Up/Referrals:** After screenings are completed or at any time during the program year, program staff may meet with the parent to share concerns resulting from screenings and observations, usually in conjunction with one of the specialists working in the program (Health & Nutrition Supervisor Supportive Services Supervisor, or Mental Health Consultant). During this meeting, the staff gives the parent the program's recommendation for further assessment and seeks written permission from the parent to assist in making a referral.



The Health & Nutrition Services Manager coordinates all medical and/or nutritional concerns or referrals. This includes children who do not pass sensory screenings or have medical conditions that need to be monitored or children who need to receive medication at school.

Developmental Concerns: In the case of developmental concerns, under IDEA parents may be referred to the local public school system for additional screening and/or evaluation for preschoolers. Our Supportive Services Supervisor helps the parent through the assessment process, maintains contact with both the parent and the local public school system, attending related meetings and monitoring the child's progress while in the program.

*All referrals and contacts made by staff are documented and maintained in the child's file.*

## Mental Health

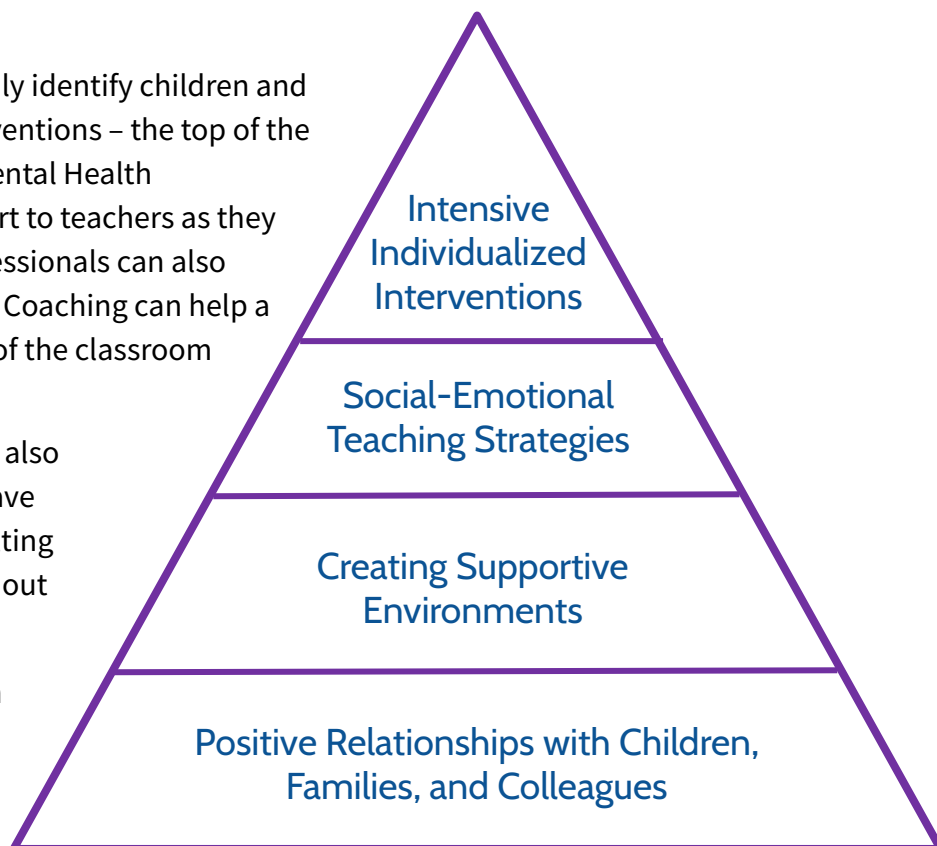
Our Mental Health Consultant is also a member of the interdisciplinary team. Results are reviewed with parents to determine the need for additional services within the program. Parents are the most critical part of any mental health service and need to be fully engaged in the process from the beginning. With parent permission, referrals are made to the Mental Health Consultant where staff and parents may receive consultation and support resulting in individual plans for the child.

Early childhood mental health is the same as social and emotional well-being. It is a child's developing capacity to express and regulate emotions, form trusting relationships, explore, and learn—all in the cultural context of family and community. The mental health of children and the adults that care for them is essential for school readiness. CAAS Head Start's Supportive Services Supervisor and the Education Team help the classrooms achieve the foundational levels of the Mental Health Pyramid. Positive relationships and supportive environments help all children. We use teachings tools such as books, songs, feeling charts, and puppets to help children learn how to express and manage feelings, cooperate with others, and achieve their goals in appropriate ways.

As a result of this work, we can more readily identify children and families who need more specialized interventions – the top of the pyramid. CAAS Head Start uses outside Mental Health professionals to provide additional support to teachers as they work with individual children. These professionals can also provide “coaching” to individual children. Coaching can help a child become a more successful member of the classroom community.

The social development professionals can also work with small groups of children who have common developmental needs. No consulting professional will work with your child without your written consent.

Our consultants are available to meet with families at our centers or our Main Office. Call the Supportive Services Supervisor to arrange a time at 617-623-7370.



## Children with Disabilities

CAAS Head Start welcomes and embraces all children. At least 10% of CAAS Head Start enrollment is kept available for children with disabilities. Our teaching staff continue to learn, implement and practice effective strategies that make it possible for all children to be able to participate in a preschool program and enjoy successful experiences.

The majority of children with disabilities in the program have an Individual Education Program, commonly known as an IEP, written by the Somerville Public Schools or the Cambridge Public Schools. The IEP provides a description of the child's level of development at the time of evaluation in the areas of social, emotional, cognitive, physical, self-help and speech and language. The IEP includes the following:

- \* Goals and objectives for the child
- \* Services to be provided
- \* Personnel responsible for providing services
- \* Start and end date for the IEP

The information that the IEP provides aides the teacher in individualizing the classroom learning environment and curriculum for a child with disabilities. The Supportive Services Supervisor, along with other Head Start staff as appropriate, and sometimes with our Mental Health Consultant, meet with teachers to ensure that the goals of the IEP will be met through individualized and appropriate planning.

## Dual Language Learners

Children learn language over many years from interactions with adults and other children. The development of strong language skills – listening, speaking, and thinking with words—is a Head Start goal for all children. Many Head Start children speak a language other than English at home and will be dual language learners. Language development is a long process that lasts for many years beyond Head Start. Learning English is a long process too. A strong foundation in the home language is important when learning a second language. **You should speak with your child in the language you know best so that you can teach them advanced vocabulary and complex thoughts.**

Our teachers use many strategies in the classroom to support language development and English learning throughout the day. We read with the children, discuss stories, sing songs, act out new words and concepts, and review what the children have done while playing and learning. Even meal time is a good time to encourage speaking, listening and thinking in Head Start!

Parents and families are key to supporting home language development for their dual language learners. Families can promote positive experiences for these young children by emphasizing their strengths, including cultural and linguistic strengths. They also provide learning supports necessary to succeed in school



# Child Safety

There are many ways the Head Start program is designed to ensure the safety of the children we teach and care for. Parents are welcome to review and/or keep a copy of the CAAS Head Start safety and emergency preparedness protocols. Staff are trained on health, safety, and emergency procedures every year.



**Safety isn't expensive, it's priceless!**

## Child Supervision

Keeping children safe is a top priority for CAAS Head Start. No child is left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under their care. To ensure that children are safe at all times, we use the Active Supervision protocol. Active Supervision is the most effective strategy for creating a safe environment and preventing injuries in young children. It transforms supervision from a passive approach to an active skill. Staff use this strategy to make sure that children of all ages explore their environments safely.

Active supervision requires focused attention and intentional observation of children at all times. Staff position themselves so that they can observe all of the children: watching, counting, and listening at all times. During transitions, staff account for all children with name-to-face recognition by visually identifying each child. They also use their knowledge of each child's development and abilities to anticipate what they will do, then get involved and redirect them when necessary. This constant vigilance helps children learn safely.

Staff set up the environment so that they can supervise children and be accessible at all times. When activities are grouped together and furniture is at waist height or shorter, adults are always able to see and hear children. Small spaces are kept clutter-free and big spaces are set up so that children have clear play spaces that staff can observe. Staff are always able to account for the children in their care. They count the children frequently. This is especially important during transitions when children are moving from one location to another.

Staff use what they know about each child's individual interests and skills to predict what he/she will do. They create challenges that children are ready for and support them in succeeding. But, they also recognize when children might wander, get upset, or take a dangerous risk. Information from the daily health check informs staff's observations and helps them anticipate children's behavior. Staff who know what to expect are better able to protect children from harm. Staff use what they know about each child's individual needs and development to offer support. Staff wait until children are unable to problem-solve on their own to get involved. They may offer different levels of assistance or redirection depending on each child's needs.

# Drop-Off and Pick-Up Policies

Every child must have reachable, involved adults listed on the *Individual Transportation Plan*. **Parents must notify their Family Advocate of changes in emergency contact information for themselves and/or emergency contacts.**

## Arrival/Drop-Off

- No child may be dropped off at a parking lot, hallway or empty classroom, etc.
- If your child has an appointment (with the doctor, e.g.) and you have informed the staff previously, you will not be considered late.
- Parents are required to sign-in when dropping off and picking up their child from the Center. If your child will be late for school, you must notify the teacher within 1 hour from class start time. Consistent lateness without prior notification to the center/program will be addressed on an individual basis with parents.

## Departure/Pick-Up

- Parents are expected to pick their child up on time every day. Parents must call the center to notify staff if they are going to be late for pick up.
- Consistent late pick up is a very serious matter. Lateness will be tracked and addressed by the Program Director in conjunction with other appropriate staff. Parents who are frequently late picking up their children will be required to meet with staff to resolve the issue with a written plan to prevent reoccurrence.
- Failure to make appropriate arrangements for getting children from the Center on time may be reported to Department of Children and Families or the local police department.
- A picture ID is required for pick-up when the person is not on the list or is not known by staff.
- No preschool child is released to anyone who has not been designated in writing by the parent (or by legal document if necessary) or who is under fourteen (14) years of age.
- A legal document (e.g. a restraining order, custody papers) is required to prevent a child's parent from picking up the child.
- No child is released to anyone intoxicated or otherwise impaired such that the safety of the child is in question. When there is a problem with the condition of the person picking up a child, one of the emergency contacts will be called.
- If a child is not picked up at the end of class and no message from the parent has been received, a person from the emergency contact list is called to pick up the child.
- If no emergency contact person can be reached and no message from the parent has been received the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the local police department will be notified.



**Always remember to sign your child  
IN and OUT!**

# Emergency Procedures

CAAS Head Start has comprehensive emergency procedures, described in detail in our Health and Safety Manual. This manual is available to any parent/guardian who wishes to read it. The following is a summary of some of our procedures.

## Medical Emergencies

In a medical emergency, the following steps are to be followed whether in the classroom, at the playground/park, or on field trips:

- ★ **Adults should stay as calm as possible.** This will help to keep the children calm.
- ★ Assess the child's injury and administer any emergency first aid as necessary.
- ★ One teacher will stay with the child while the other teacher or assistant contacts Emergency Medical Service (9-1-1) or the poison center (1-800-222-1222) if it is a poison emergency
- ★ After requesting Emergency Medical Services, the person who called 9-1-1 will return to the scene of the accident/injury as soon as possible to assist as needed.
- ★ An adult will go outside to meet the ambulance and direct the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) to the scene if possible.
- ★ A teacher will accompany the injured child to the hospital in the ambulance. The teacher will bring the child's Medical Emergency Permission Card.
- ★ When possible, one teacher will call someone at the administrative office as soon as possible, ideally the Head Start Director, Education Director, or Family Services Director).
- ★ After being contacted by the teacher, the Family Advocate and Health Services Supervisor/Health Coordinator will arrange for the child's parents to meet the child at the hospital (if applicable).
- ★ If a parent cannot be reached, the child's Emergency Contacts will be notified by phone.

## Center Evacuation Plan/Drills

Each center has an evacuation plan that has been developed by the center staff, building safety inspector, and local fire department. A visual plan should be posted in the classroom near all exits. All emergency exits in the classroom and center need to be clearly marked. Every classroom/center conducts a monthly fire drill. The Fire Drill Log remains posted in the classroom near the evacuation plan.

### **During an evacuation (drill or emergency):**

As teachers lead children out of the classroom/center and to safety, they should be counting and performing a visual-to-name roll call from the attendance sheet to account for all children.

Children who are developmentally able to understand, will be instructed to *STOP*, *DROP*, and *ROLL* when garments catch fire. Children will be instructed to crawl on the floor under the smoke if necessary when they evacuate the building. Once outside, teachers will again make sure that all of the children are accounted for at the designated meeting place.

Teachers will wait for an all-clear signal before reentering the building. If it is a drill, everyone can re-enter the building once they have made it outside and to the designated meeting place.

# Transitions

Transitions are a regular part of children's' lives and can be challenging. They work best when children are supported throughout the process minimizing anxiety over unknown changes and maximizing a sense of security and trust in the adults around them.

## Daily Transitions

Teachers plan a consistent routine as a framework to the day. It frees children and adults alike from worrying about or having to decide what comes next, and enables them to use their creative energies on the business of learning and growing!

Transitions are also a part of the classroom routine. Teachers plan transitions to be interactive and fun, to be an expected event that happens as children flow from one activity to another, and to be a vehicle of learning. Successful transitioning helps to promote trust and self-confidence in children, enabling them to learn how to handle changes and to recognize endings and beginnings. Teachers conduct smooth and unregimented transitions between activities. Transitions and routines take into account the individual needs of each child and allow for flexibility, recognizing that each child has her own pace.

## Transition to Head Start

As a child begins the Head Start Program the teaching staff is able to work with parents around separation issues that might arise. We recognize that separation from home at the start of the year could be very stressful not only for the child but for the parent as well. Parents are welcome and encouraged to share with teachers techniques that they believe can help ease their child's transition to school.

One of the ways that CAAS Head Start supports the transition from home to school by having an Open House just before the first day of school.

During the Open House, staff welcome families into the classroom community, and show the children their own cubbies, which are already labeled with their names (after Open House, a photo of each child will be added.) Each family is giving a Welcome Book which helps anticipate what each day will be like at school. This is our first opportunity to demonstrate that children feel safer if they know in advance what is going to happen. We also maintain a library of children's books about different kinds of transitions, and would be happy to lend them to any interested family.



## Transition from Early Head Start

By working together, the CAAS Head Start Program and the Early Head Start Program ensure an easier transition for the children. Early Head Start staff assist families in gathering the information needed for enrollment in CAAS Head Start. Staff from CAAS Head Start hold informational and enrollment group meetings early at Early Head Start, usually in late winter.

Early Head Start and CAAS Head Start Supportive Services staff coordinate the special education transition for Early Head Start children who were referred for the 766 core evaluations to the Somerville School Department.

## Transition to Kindergarten

The CAAS Head Start Program works closely with the Somerville and Cambridge Public Schools to facilitate enrollment of all children moving on to Kindergarten, sharing relevant information about transitioning children's skills, abilities, interests, and needs to set each child up for success in school!.

The CAAS Head Start Program works with the parent(s) to encourage them to stay actively involved in their child's education as they transition into the elementary school. During the month of April, Teachers and Family Advocates do their end of the year home visits. Parents and Teachers share the child's progress and discuss the possible needs the child may have as they transition to another school.

The parents of all children entering kindergarten from Head Start may choose to have a copy of their child's End-of-Year Progress Summary given to the kindergarten teacher. Parents may also agree to have a copy of their child's IEP given to the kindergarten teacher. The Education and the Family Services Directors, and their staff will help coordinate this, facilitating a smooth transition and continuity of services.

The CAAS Head Start Program provides parents with information about the Public School system. Parents are encouraged to participate in all transition activities including; the Early Childhood Fair, Kindergarten Open House, and Registration.

In the classroom, teachers help prepare children for the big Kindergarten transition with relevant books and small group, large group, and individual conversations between teachers and children, where all feelings are valid and questions or concerns explored together. We hold end-of-year celebrations and recognize graduating children. As is our practice, we individualize transition plans to meet each child's needs; parents are welcome and encouraged to talk with teachers and family advocates about what might help make the kindergarten transition the best experience it can be for their child.



# Child Health and Nutrition

CAAS Head Start health services cover a wide range of child and family wellness areas. Family Advocates and the Health Services team work with families to ensure that they have medical and dental insurance, and a medical and dental “home,” which means a clinic or office that they visit for routine care and other non-emergency needs.

## Health Records

The Health Services team is responsible for ensuring that we have hard copies of medical and dental records for each child that we are required by state and federal law to maintain. The health records include:

- ★ An annual physical, dental, and immunization record.
- ★ Information about health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency;
- ★ Emergency contact information for each child, updated annually;
- ★ The names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child;
- ★ Supporting evidence for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family's beliefs. Staff implement a plan to exclude the child promptly if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program.

### What Do We Need?\*



#### **Immunizations**

Document showing your child is up to date



#### **Physicals**

Document showing your child has had a *complete* well-child exam within the past year



#### **Lead Screening**

Document showing your child is up to date, often included with the physical



#### **Dental Exam**

Document showing your child has had a dental exam within the past year

### When Do We Need It?

#### ***Before the First Day***

Your child *can not* start school until we have this document

#### ***Within the First Month of School***

Submit the paperwork OR a doctor's letter showing your child has an upcoming well-child appointment

#### ***Within the First Month of School***

Submit the paperwork OR a doctor's letter showing your child has an upcoming physical appointment

#### ***Within the First 90 Days of School***

Staff can help you make arrangements

*\*For NEW Children. RETURNING Children must update these forms annually. Your child's Advocate or the Health Services team will contact you beforehand and are always available to answer questions or provide support with making appointments and obtaining paperwork.*



Health records document the dates of services to show that the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control of the United States Public Health Service (CDC-USPHS), and the Academy of Family Practice.

When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents, legal guardians, or both provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, except for any immunization for which parents are using religious exemption.



## Individual Health Plans (IHPs)

If your child has an ongoing medical condition (e.g., asthma), she will need a written Individual Health Plan. This is a document created by her pediatrician or medical specialist, that states the medical issue, and the plan of care, including any and all medications or medical interventions. The plan must be dated and signed by both the doctor and the parent/guardian. These plans expire after one year; Head Start staff will work with you to keep these and other medical documents up to date.

During intake, parents will be asked to record any known allergies on the face sheet. The face sheet will be updated yearly. All allergies or other important medical information will be posted in each classroom, on the refrigerator in the kitchen, and on the snack storage cabinet. Allergies list will be updated as necessary - new children enroll, unknown allergies become known. All staff and substitutes will be kept informed by the Program Director so that children can be protected from exposure to foods, chemicals, pets or other materials to which they are allergic.

When a child enrolled in the program has a food allergy, the center will take necessary precautions to keep the child safe. These precautions may include but are not limited to: an allergy free table for lunch, not serving the food at the center, prohibiting the food from being brought into the center.

The names of children with allergies that may be life threatening (ie - bee stings) will be posted in conspicuous locations with specific instructions if an occurrence were to happen. The Head Start Director ensures that staff receives appropriate training to handle emergency allergic reactions.

## Management of Infectious Disease and Illness

Children should stay home when they are too sick for school. But what counts as too sick for school depends on many factors, and there have been recent changes to school policies based on new information and recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. CAAS Head Start follows the guidelines in the Caring for Our Children publication, a collection of national standards that represent the best practices, based on evidence, expertise, and experience, for quality health and safety policies and practices for today's early care and education settings.

# COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

CAAS Head Start uses a layered approach to COVID-19 prevention: vaccination, masks, testing, screening, exclusion of symptomatic individuals, proper ventilation, social distancing when possible, and lots of outdoor time.



- **Vaccination: *All Head Start staff are fully vaccinated.*** Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Getting all eligible members of your family/household vaccinated will protect you, your child, and our staff (and their families) from COVID-19 and the growing threat of variants.
  - If you have any questions or concerns about getting vaccinated, please reach out to us! We will be happy to share with you factual medical information about vaccine safety, and we will also be happy to help you find and get to a vaccine appointment.
- **Masks:** We will be using universal mask precautions indoors. This means all adults and children will wear masks while indoors, except during meals, snacks, and rest time.
  - We will provide disposable masks for each child. Parents are welcome to provide their own clean, safe masks as long as it fits their child properly and otherwise complies with mask guidelines
  - We will encourage children to wear masks but will never force them.
  - We will not be wearing masks during outdoor activities
- **Testing:** We are very pleased to be able to provide free, voluntary COVID-19 testing to all enrolled children and all staff. We conduct a weekly PCR test for all staff and every child participating in testing. We also conduct symptomatic rapid testing, and exposure “test and stay” rapid testing, as needed.
  - This program is voluntary. Children are not required to participate in testing. If you do not consent to participate, your child can still fully participate in all activities. However, we *strongly* encourage you to allow your child to participate to help us reduce the spread of the COVID-19 disease.
- **Screening:** We will be conducting a well-child screening each morning when you bring your child to school. If we determine your child is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or other illness, we will then ask you to take your child home and your Family Advocate will follow up.
- **Exclusion of sick/symptomatic individuals:** Before COVID-19 we encouraged mildly ill children to come to school. While COVID-19 continues to pose a risk to our community, we will send home any children and staff who show symptoms of COVID-19 or unknown illness. Keep your child home if they are sick!

***Specific COVID exclusion policies on next page***

## Individual is Symptomatic

- Teacher contacts Health team to determine if child/staff should go home. Once decision is made, Teacher contacts Family Advocate to make arrangements to send child home; or Teacher contacts Staff Coordinator to make arrangements to test staff or send staff home
- Isolate child in isolation area until pickup; ensure child is provided with a mask
- Clean, disinfect, and ventilate areas that the ill individual occupied
- Individual should get tested
  - If tested negative, individual can return to school if symptoms mild or fever free for 24 hours + symptoms improved
  - If no test, individual can return on day 6 or when symptoms are resolved
- No closure for exposed classrooms
- No quarantine for close contacts

## Individual Tested Positive

- Individual stays home and isolates for 5 days
- If individual can test on day 5 or later:
  - If test negative + asymptomatic or symptoms are subsiding = return the day after negative test (day 6 or later), or day 11
  - If test positive, continue isolating until negative test + asymptomatic or symptoms subside, or day 11
- If individual cannot test: stay home for a total of 10 days, returning to care on day 11

## Individual is Exposed

### UNVACCINATED INDIVIDUALS ONLY:

- Individual should stay home for 5 days
- Adults: Return day 6
- Children:
  - If individual can get a PCR test on day 5 = return with negative results OR get 3 *rapid* tests, on day 5, 6 and 7 and return day 6 with negative results on all 3 days (+ asymptomatic or symptoms subsiding)
    - ※ When test is positive, follow isolation guidance above
  - If individual cannot test: stay home for total of ten days, returning to care on day 11

### VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS **OR** INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD COVID WITHIN PAST 90 DAYS:

- No quarantine for asymptomatic individuals

**Anyone who was in contact with an exposed child/staff member, but not with the actual person with COVID-19, does not need to quarantine.**

# Medication

## Prescription Medication

- Prescription medication must be brought to school in its original container and include the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, the number of times per and the number of days the medication is to be administered. This prescription label will be accepted as the written authorization of the physician.
- CAAS Head Start staff will not administer any medication contrary to the directions unless authorized by written order of the child's physician.
- The parent must bring a completed Authorization for Medication Form, signed by parent and doctor, before the medication can be given.

## Non-Prescription Medication

- Non-prescription medication will be given only with written consent of the child's physician. We will accept a signed statement from the physician listing the medication(s), the dosage and criteria for its administration. This statement will be valid for one year from the date that it was signed.
- We will also need written parental authorization. The authorization will be valid for one year.

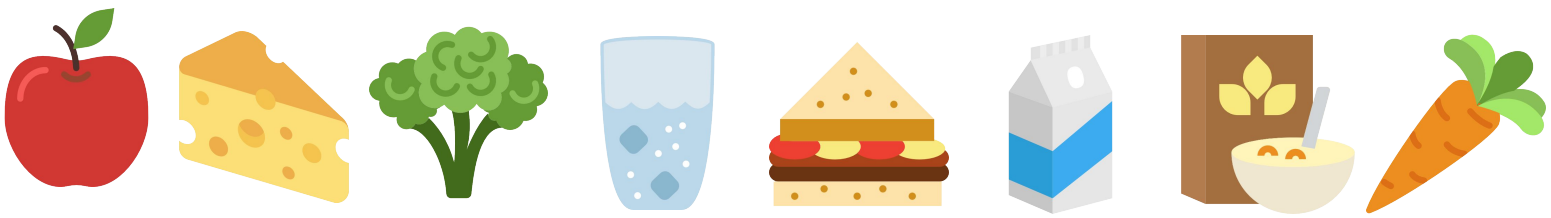
## Topical Ointments and Sprays

- Topical ointments and sprays such as petroleum jelly, sunscreen, and bug spray, etc. will be administered to the child with written parental permission. The signed statement from the parent will be valid for one year and include a list of topical non-prescription medication.
- When topical ointments and sprays are applied to wounds, rashes, or broken skin, staff will follow its written procedure for nonprescription medication which includes the written order of the physician, which is valid for a year, and the Authorization for Medication form signed by the parent.

## All Medications

- The first dosage must be administered by the parent at home in case of an allergic reaction.
- All medications must be given to the teacher directly by the parent.
- All medications will be stored out of the reach of children.
- The Center will maintain a written record of the administration of any medication (excluding topical ointments/sprays applied to normal skin) which will include the child's name, the time and date of each administration, the dosage, and the name of the staff person administering the medication.
- All unused medication will be returned to the parent.





## Nutrition Assessment

Good nutrition is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Eating healthy food helps children get the nutrients their bodies need to stay healthy, active, and strong. Health and program staff support healthy eating habits and find nutrition assistance information to share with families.

The Health Services team works with a Nutritionist from WIC to develop a healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack menu that will expose children to a variety of nutritious food. CAAS Head Start accommodates food restrictions based on medical or religious/cultural needs.

CAAS Head Start provides parent activities relating to nutrition and similar health topics throughout the year, including the Cooking Matters workshop, and the Communities for Healthy Living initiative.

## Meals and Snacks

CAAS Head Start provides every child with a nutritious breakfast and lunch every day. Full day classrooms also provide an afternoon snack. At least one meal will be hot. Meals include a fruit or vegetable, whole grains, protein, and milk. All food meets USDA nutrition standards, and staff are trained in food safety. Meals are eaten as a group, “family style”, where children learn to serve themselves and explore new foods.

Because of food allergies, we do not allow any food from home. All of our centers and classrooms are peanut-free.

CAAS Head Start’s commitment to supporting the health of children means that we do not allow sweets, candy, cookies, juice, soda, or other sugary snacks and treats in the classroom. Please keep these foods at home. We do provide real fruit popsicles at our end-of-year celebrations.

## Meal Modification

Head Start can make reasonable accommodations for food allergies and religious/cultural food restrictions with appropriate substitutes. If your child has a food allergy or food sensitivity, we will need a letter from the child’s primary care physician. We are happy to help you obtain this documentation, or make the request ourselves on your behalf. Such documentation must be turned in before your child can eat a meal at Head Start. A doctor’s note is not required for food restrictions based on religion, culture, or personal belief systems.

CAAS Head Start does not serve pork or any pork products.

