

## Mission Statement

The Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc.  
Early Childhood Programs will provide  
comprehensive services utilizing all  
available resources that will positively  
impact children and families allowing them  
to maximize their potential for life-long  
enrichment.



## 2026/2027 PARENTHANDBOOK

Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc.  
101 E Robins Street, Graettinger, IA  
(712) 859-3885 Fax (712) 859-3892

[www.udmo.com](http://www.udmo.com)

# Table of Contents

|                                                        |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Center Locations .....                                 | 3  |
| Welcome .....                                          | 4  |
| What is Head Start?                                    |    |
| Handbook Terms                                         |    |
| Program Information                                    |    |
| Attendance Policy .....                                | 5  |
| Non-Discrimination                                     |    |
| Emergency Contacts .....                               | 6  |
| Drop Off/Pick Up                                       |    |
| Building Security and Access                           |    |
| Classroom Curriculum.....                              | 7  |
| Social-Emotional Curriculum                            |    |
| Classroom's Day                                        |    |
| Home-Base Program.....                                 | 8  |
| Home-Base Curriculum                                   |    |
| School Readiness .....                                 | 9  |
| Child Assessment                                       |    |
| Child Assessment (cont.).....                          | 10 |
| Language Learners                                      |    |
| Ideas for Home                                         |    |
| Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)..... | 11 |
| Clothing and Outdoor Play                              |    |
| Nap Time .....                                         | 12 |
| Holiday and Birthday                                   |    |
| Field Trips                                            |    |
| Biting Policy                                          |    |
| Nutrition                                              |    |
| Health Requirements.....                               | 13 |
| Medicine.....                                          | 14 |
| Oral Health                                            |    |
| Should I send my child to school? .....                | 15 |
| School Closings                                        |    |
| Transportation.....                                    | 16 |
| Safety.....                                            | 17 |
| Mandatory Reporting.....                               | 18 |
| What is In-Kind?.....                                  | 19 |
| Family Engagement                                      |    |
| Become a Parent Leader .....                           | 20 |
| Confidentiality .....                                  | 21 |
| Standards of Conduct .....                             | 22 |
| Parent and/or Community Complaint Form.....            | 23 |

## Head Start Locations

Clay County Head Start and Early Head Start..... 712-264-8855  
411 East 10<sup>th</sup>  
Street Spencer,  
IA 51301

Emmet County Head Start and Early Head Start ..... 712-765-1058  
315 N.6th St.  
Estherville, IA  
51334

Buena Vista Head Start and Early Head Start (Gingerbread)..... 712-732-1358  
525 Oates Street  
Storm Lake, IA  
50588

Hartley Head Start..... 712-298-0420  
400 3rd St. NW  
Hartley, IA  
51346

ILCC Head Start..... 712-852-5352  
3200 College Drive  
Emmetsburg, IA  
50536

Milford Head Start..... 712-339-1163  
1525 Three Cross  
Road Milford, IA  
51351

Sheldon Head Start ..... 712-291-1738  
105 N. 18<sup>th</sup>  
Ave. Sheldon, IA  
51201

Sibley Head Start ..... 712-298-1241  
115 Maple Dr.  
Sibley, IA  
51249

# Welcome to UDMO Head Start!

We are so glad you chose our program. We are very excited to begin this new program year with you and your child.

Your participation in the Head Start program is important to us. **You are your child's most valuable teacher.** We encourage you to be active in the program and you are always welcome to join activities.

This handbook is yours to keep. Please use it all year. You can use it to look up information about any questions you may have.

We look forward to a great program year for you and your child.



## What is Head Start?

The Head Start program is a program of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. It provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent engagement services for low-income children and their families.

There are **Head Start Program Performance Standards** that tell us how to provide services for children and families. They are the law that we are required to follow.

**Program Assessment:** The federal government monitors each Head Start program multiple times over a five-year period. Teams review and audit the entire program. The teams visit program sites to ensure teachers are providing quality instruction and safety in the classrooms. They make sure that children's health assessments are up to date and that families are a part of their child's program.

They review our finances, policies and procedures to ensure we are doing everything that is required. In addition, the monitoring team interviews a variety of people such as Policy Council members, Line Staff, Management Staff, and others. They also review our program's data on: school readiness, family, child and program outcomes.

## Handbook Terms



In this handbook, the term "Head Start" refers to the following programs:

### **Early Head Start (EHS)**

- Home Base: Home-Base teacher provides weekly (90 min.) visits in the home to facilitate healthy parent-child interactions as well as providing support in becoming more self-sufficient. We provide support to pregnant mothers to ensure healthy pregnancies and prenatal care.
- Center Base: Center-Based preschool offers a unique form of care for toddlers by assigning one teacher to only four children. It provides the necessary resources to nurture the continued growth in children physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

### **Head Start Preschool (HSP)**

- Center Base: quality preschool for 3-5 year-old children that helps prepare children for their transition to Kindergarten.

In Iowa's Child Care Assistance program, "family" is defined as a group of interdependent individuals living in the same household. This includes legal spouses, parents (natural, adoptive, or step-), and their children who reside together. It also includes a child or children living with a person or persons not legally responsible for their support.

## Program Information

Our programs focus on expectant mothers and families with children ages birth to age five. Individuals who meet our guidelines may apply by visiting our website or one of our Head Start Centers.

We plan for the needs of each child on an individual basis so that they may receive the best education based on their needs.

We take early childhood one step further by involving the entire family so that their learning doesn't end in the classroom. Funding for our programs is received through federal, state, and local resources.

Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children . NAEYC strives to ensure that all young children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential.

# Attendance Policy

Every minute of the program is important to your child's learning. Research tells us that children with absences, even starting in preschool, have lower reading scores and may be held back in later grades. Help your child succeed in school; build the habit of good attendance early. Classrooms require an 85% attendance rate for each child. If your child is below, staff will discuss with you.

## Absences

**If your child is absent, please call before 8:00 a.m. each day your child will be late or absent.** You can leave a voicemail at any time, **day or night**. Staff will contact you if they have not heard from you in the first hour of class.

Late drop offs are highly discouraged. Coming to school on time helps your child start the day positively. Plus, timely drop off ensures your child receives all program benefits.

If parents have not responded, the following actions will be taken:

- Staff call family's emergency contacts about the status of the child.
- Staff may do a home visit.
- By the end of the day, if staff still have not heard from parent or emergency contacts, law enforcement may be contacted to check on the welfare of the child.

If a child has consecutive unexplained absences classroom staff will immediately notify the home visitor to contact the family.

## **Parental Participation:**

Parents have unlimited access to their children and to the provider caring for the children during center hours of operation, unless parental contact is prohibited by court order. In order to enforce restrictions, the classroom must have a copy of this order.



## Notice of Non-Discrimination

The principles of equal access and equal opportunity require that all interactions within the agency be free from invidious discrimination. Upper Des Moines Head Start therefore prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, creed, religion, age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

# Emergency Contacts

Children must be signed in and out by an adult each day. Persons picking up a child must be listed on the *Emergency Contact Form*. Notify staff immediately with any changes in your phone and/or address. When picking up, staff may request a photo I.D. to ensure the child's safety.

It is important to pick up children on time. If a child is not picked up on time, staff will:

- Contact parents
- If you are not able to be reached, staff will call Emergency Contacts.
- **If these are unsuccessful staff may call law enforcement and HHS.**
- If a child is picked up late, a plan will be developed to prevent it from happening again.



## Safety of Children when Dropping Off and Picking Up

Please drive slowly and hold your child's hand while in parking areas. The safety of you and your child is Head Start's priority.

Remember to **NEVER** leave any child alone in the car. This includes younger or older siblings when dropping off or picking up a child at Head Start.

Vehicles should be turned off while not attended. A car may be left running only in extreme weather that would cause danger to passengers.



## Building Security and Access:

Each center has a designated door and process for entry to ensure safety. Parents are welcome at the center during building operating hours.

# Classroom Curriculum

Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start classrooms use a research-based curriculum called *The Creative Curriculum* that includes large group instruction, small group instruction, centers, and outdoor play.

## Social-Emotional Curriculum

To help children develop social-emotional skills, UDMO Head Start uses Second Step and Conscious Discipline curriculum in Head Start classrooms. Second Step and Conscious Discipline teaches children the skills that help them make friends, manage their feelings and solve problems. Staff can also answer any questions you may have about curriculum and your child's learning.

## Classroom's Day

The same schedule is followed each day so that children develop a consistent routine so they know what will happen next. This helps children feel comfortable and secure.

**A typical schedule in a classroom may include:**

- Welcome/Greeting
- Large Group: All the children come together to read a story, discuss plans, or sing songs for a short time.
- Center Time: Children choose the interest area where they want to play and learn.
- Outdoor Time: Teachers plan 20-30 minutes of outdoor learning activities for children that may include running, jumping, and climbing.
- Small Group Time: A few children are grouped together for a short time. They may talk about new ideas and learn new skills.

**The classrooms are planned so children learn every minute of the day. Interest areas include:**

- Blocks
- Art
- Toys and games
- Dramatic play
- Library
- Music and movement
- Science
- Math



# Home Base Program

- The **Early Head Start Home Base program** serves pregnant moms, children ages birth to age three and their families in *Buena Vista, Clay and Emmet* counties year round.

## Home Base Curriculum

Home Base teachers use a research-based curriculum called *Partners for a Healthy Baby and Creative Curriculum*.

### **What does it mean to be in Home Base?**

- Home visits occur weekly with a Home Base Teacher for 90 minutes.
- During the visit, staff and families work together on the child's developmental goals and family goals.
- Staff and families will work together to identify needs and locate resources available to support them. Parent education information will also be discussed.

### **How to get the most out of a home visit:**

- Be ready to begin when the Home Visitor arrives.
- Everybody is prepared to participate during the visit.
- Try to minimize distractions, such as cell phones, pets and televisions, during a visit so everyone can focus on learning.
- If a visit needs to be canceled, please notify your Home Base Teacher as soon as possible. This will help the program better serve other children and families.



# School Readiness

UDMO Head Start developed five School Readiness Goals for staff, children, and families in order to align practices and improve outcomes for each child and family.

Our goals state that children at UDMO Head Start will progress in the following domains as documented through observations and assessment:

1. Social-Emotional Development
2. Physical: Gross and Fine Motor
3. Cognitive
4. Language and Literacy
5. Math



## Child Assessment

Center Base staff and Home Base staff will use the research-based Teaching Strategies GOLD to assess your child's learning and development using the following objective areas:

### **Social-Emotional**

- Manages feelings and behaviors
- Establishes and sustains positive relationships
- Shares, takes turns, problem solves with others

### **Physical (Gross and Fine Motor)**

- Crawls, walks, runs, skips
- Jumps, hops (balancing)
- Demonstrates throwing, catching, kicking
- Demonstrates pencil grasping, writing and cutting

### **Language**

- Listens to and understands increasingly complex language
- Uses language to express thoughts and needs
- Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills

### **Cognitive**

- Demonstrates positive approaches to learning
- Remembers and connects experiences
- Uses classification skills
- Uses symbols and images to represent something not present

### **Literacy**

- Demonstrates phonological awareness
- Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
- Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses
- Comprehends and responds to books and other texts
- Demonstrates emergent writing skills



**Teaching  
Strategies®**

# Child Assessment (cont.)

## Mathematics

- Uses number concepts & operations
- Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes
- Compares and measures
- Demonstrates knowledge of patterns

## English Language Acquisition

- Demonstrates progress in listening and understanding English
- Demonstrates progress in speaking English

## English Language Learners

- The program recognizes bilingualism and bi-literacy as strengths.
- Children who know their first language well will learn English more easily
- Teaching children in their home language at home helps them do better in school. Talk and read in your home language.
- Be proud of your home language and culture, it will help your children.
- Head Start provides interpreters when needed at no cost to the family.

## Ideas for Home!

- **Read with your child at least fifteen minutes every day.** Let your child choose which book to read. Sometimes children like to read the same book over and over.
- **Talk about what you read or what happens during the day.** Describe what you are doing when you cook or take a walk together. Give your child time to respond to you. Sometimes it takes 10-30 seconds.
- **Count with your child.** Count everyday objects such as forks or spoons when your child is setting the table. Describe things using the number of items, "Could you hand me those three spoons, please?"
- **Let your child know the work they do at school is very important.** Tell them how important their learning is and how important it is to be on time and in school every day.



# Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)

## **School Rules!**



Looking  
Eyes



Touch  
Gently



Listening  
Ears



Walking  
Feet



Speak  
Softly

All Classrooms have the same rules/expectations and follow a daily schedule.

All staff use Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) by:

- Providing choices and good examples
- Giving praise
- Giving encouragement
- Redirecting children to positive choices
- Setting a good example
- *Positive Solutions for Families* will be offered to parents

## Clothing & Outdoor Play

It is important for children to be safe and comfortable while at school.

- Please send your child to school in comfortable shoes, socks, and clothes that can get dirty.
- It is recommended that your child have an extra set of clothing and underwear at school daily.
- For the children's safety, please make sure your child wears sneakers or rubber-sole shoes.

### Cold Weather Recommendations: (Mid-October and through the winter)

- Hats
  - Water-resistant mittens
  - Snow pants
  - Boots
- Outdoor play is a required part of the Head Start program.
  - All children play outside each day the weather allows.
  - Fresh air is good for children and helps cut down on illness.



## Nap time:

Children rest or nap at a scheduled time on a provided cot and blanket. Children keep their shoes on for safety purposes. After resting, the children who are not sleeping are allowed to get up and participate in quiet activities. A child who remains sleeping will be allowed to do so while other children engage in the next activity. EHS rest time is based on the child's need and is part of the daily routine.



## Holiday and Birthday Information

Head Start welcomes families from all cultures and provides an objective program. This means that Head Start does not celebrate holidays. The program will provide a book to your child on their birthday. Children with summer birthdays will have a "special day". Due to CACFP participation and safety of children, parents are asked to **NOT** bring treats.



## Field Trips

Throughout the year various educational field trips may be taken. Parents are encouraged to attend. These are special days for your child and *siblings are requested not to join field trips*.



## Biting Policy

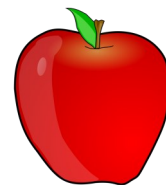
Biting is a very common behavior among children birth to three years. Biting is a form of communication. When biting occurs, it can be scary and very frustrating for children, parents, and teachers.

UDMO Head Start follows the DHS licensing biting policy.

## Nutrition

Meals: Each classroom offers two meals.

- Special dietary needs are followed with physician's order.
- Remember: NO OUTSIDE FOOD is allowed in classrooms.



**The Iowa Child and Adult Care Food Program:** The UDMO Head Start Program follows CACFP guidelines.

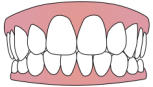
Menus: Menus are provided. Your child is offered a healthy meal, low in fat and sodium.

# Health Requirements

Children come into contact with germs that can cause illness or disease. The best way to protect your child is to make sure they are up-to-date on their childhood immunizations. Staff will work with you to make sure your child has all of their shots and exams. **UDMO Head Start follows Iowa Child Care Licensing Standards. All health requirements must be up-to-date for each child.**

## Physical Exam

A current physical exam is required upon enrollment and yearly thereafter to remain in the program. HS follows EPSDT Well-Child exams.



## Dental Exam

Your child needs to have a dental exam within 90 days of starting the program and yearly thereafter.

## Immunizations



A certificate of immunization or exemption form is required prior to enrollment.

## Screenings

With parental consent and help, the following screenings are completed within 45 days of enrollment:

- Developmental
- Motor
- Language
- Social
- Cognitive
- Health history/nutrition
- Speech
- Vision
- Hearing
- Emotional skills



## Lead and Hemoglobin

Children should have a blood lead screening at 12 & 24 months. Hemoglobin should be checked at 12 months old.

# Medicine

All medicines should be given at home. If a medicine needs to be given in the classroom, the parent/legal guardian will need to:

- Bring the medicine in the original bottle with the pharmacy label.
- If over-the-counter medication is needed, a written prescription from the medical provider is required.
- The medicine must be left on site for the days the medicine is to be given.
- Ask for one for at home and one for school. The drugstore will put medicines in two containers when parents ask.
- Parents must sign Medication Authorization Forms when starting new medication and every 30 days thereafter.

*Talk to the nurse if you have any questions.*

## Food Allergies

If there is an allergy or intolerance to a specific food, a doctor must complete a UDMO Head Start form before your child attends Head Start. This is to ensure the offending food is not served to your child.

- The form is called a CACFP Diet Modification Request Form.
- Request this form from staff and return it to the teacher, nurse, or staff.
- Families asking for food substitutions for religious or personal reasons must also complete a CACFP Diet Modification Request Form before their child attends Head Start.



# Oral Health

Children brush their teeth each day following meals.

## Children age one and over or when their first tooth erupts:

Children brush their teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush and a small smear of toothpaste.

Parents should help their children brush their teeth with hand-over-hand assistance. Be a good role model and brush your teeth too.

Infants under the age of one: Staff will teach parents oral care for their infant. This includes gently wiping the infant's gums with a soft cloth.



## Should I send my child to school?

Please keep your child home if they have any of the following symptoms within a 24-hour time frame:

- Temperature at or above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit without fever reducing medication
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Open and draining skin sores
- Rash
  - ◊ Covering majority of body
  - ◊ With fever or
  - ◊ Behavior changes
- Any infectious disease
- We follow the Iowa HHS Child Illness and Exclusion Criteria for Education and Child Care Settings.



When in doubt, please contact the nurse to further discuss symptoms and make a decision regarding attendance.

## Weather Closings

- Each center follows the school district's late start/school closure policy.
- Safety is our first concern.
- Text messages from your local school will be sent if you sign up. Sign up at Iowa School Alert.
- Teachers can provide specifics per site.

## Program Closings for Reasons Other Than Weather

- If your program closes for reasons other than weather, staff will contact you. Please be sure that classrooms have at least two working telephone numbers where you can be reached and messages can be left.
- It is important to have other child care plans in place when this happens.
- If a program closes, a make-up day or home visit may be scheduled at a later date.



# Transportation

The safety of your children is of the utmost importance to us. If unsafe practices or events are observed by parents, please contact the classroom teacher or call the Central Office located in Graettinger, Iowa, at **1-800-245-6151 ext. 1004**.

Parents are asked to review and follow safety rules with their children. Please get instructions from your classroom teacher to follow the correct procedure at your classroom.

**Parents are asked to review and follow safety rules with their children.**

## Bus



- Always be ready at least 15 minutes before the bus is due to arrive.
- Walk your child across the street.
- When crossing the street, look left, then right, then left again. (Cars will approach on the left first)
- When the bus approaches, stand back 3 feet (a yard stick) from the road.
- Wait until the door opens before allowing your child to step onto the bus.
- Never walk behind the bus or close to the side of the bus. You could be in the driver's blind spot.
- If you drop something near the bus, don't pick it up until you tell the bus driver that you dropped something as he/she may not see you.
- When your child gets onto the bus, they should take their assigned seat.
- If the bus is equipped with seat belts, use them.
- When the bus is moving, your child should stay in their seat.
- Make sure your child knows that the bus driver needs to concentrate on the road. Children should use their inside voice when riding in the bus.
- When your child is getting off the bus, they should use the handrail.
- Make sure your child is not wearing anything that might get caught on the handrail or the bus door.

## Walkers

- Stay on the sidewalks
- Walk your child across the street
- Always follow the traffic lights
  - ◇ Red means stop! Do not walk in the street.
  - ◇ Yellow means caution! Do not begin to walk across the street, if already in the street, walk quickly to the other side of the street.
  - ◇ Green means go! Walk across the street.



# Safety

**Emergency Drills:** Each center has an Emergency Preparedness Plan. Written emergency evacuation procedures are posted near the exit door in each classroom. Plans are made to accommodate immobile children. These procedures are practiced on a regular basis:

- Fire Drills
- Tornado/Earthquake Drills
- Bus Evacuation Drills
- Intruder
- Other emergencies



**Evacuation Locations:** Children are not allowed to leave evacuation locations until their teacher has taken attendance. They will then be released to a parent or an authorized person.

**Smoke Free:** The use of tobacco, in any form, will not be permitted on any UDMO property, whether owned, rented or leased or any UDMO owned or leased vehicle, unless within designated smoking locations.

Due to the acknowledged hazards, both to adult non-smokers and especially to young children arising from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, it shall be the policy of the Early Childhood Program to provide a smoke-free, tobacco-free environment for all staff, children, and participants. This policy, which is inclusive and respects the health of everyone, covers tobacco, nicotine products, vaping and electronic devices and applies to employees and nonemployee participants. This policy always applies, including Head Start and non-Head Start sponsored events. Persons failing to abide by this policy are required to extinguish their smoking material, dispose of the tobacco/nicotine product or leave UDMO premises.

- The facility, program grounds, including parking lots, personal vehicles in the parking lot and outdoor play areas are entirely smoke free and tobacco-free.
- Tobacco, nicotine, and vaping product use are prohibited inside the program, on program grounds, in person vehicles while at work, and in company vehicles, including any vehicle used to transport children.
- Tobacco, nicotine, and vaping product use is not permitted in the presence of children.
- Smoking off of the premises during the child care program's paid time including break time is prohibited.
- Staff are not allowed to enter the facility if they smell of tobacco due to the dangers of third hand smoke.

Third hand smoke refers to gases and particles that cling to smokers' hair, clothing, cushions, carpeting, and outdoor equipment, after tobacco smoke has dissipated. The residue includes heavy metals, carcinogens and radioactive materials that young children can get on their hands and ingest, especially if they're crawling or playing on the floor.

It is mandatory for all individuals on the property, including the parking lot, to adhere to this policy. Employees who fail to comply with this policy will face written warnings and corrective action. Volunteers and parents who do not abide by this policy are required to extinguish or dispose of their tobacco products or leave the premises immediately.

Any violations of this policy are to be reported to the Iowa Department of Public Health Smokefree Air Act at 1-888-944-2247 and will be handled through the standard grievance procedure.

**Substance Free:** Children cannot be transported by individuals who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Law enforcement will be notified immediately.

**Weapons:** Weapons and other significant hazards that pose risks to children and adults are prohibited. If children bring weapons or dangerous objects to school, parents will be notified and will be asked to meet with administrators and staff to determine a course of action. The police may be called to conduct an investigation. Police will be called immediately if parents, volunteers, or visitors are in possession of weapons or other dangerous objects.



# **Mandatory Reporting**

All Head Start staff members are trained Mandatory Reporters. This means they are responsible for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect to the Department of Health and Human Services.

## **What is Child Abuse Under Iowa Law:**

- Physical Abuse
- Mental injury
- Sexual abuse
- Child prostitution
- Presence of illegal drugs in child's body
- Child sex trafficking
- Denial of critical care
- Dangerous substances
- Bestiality in presence of a child
- Allows access to a registered sex offender
- Allows access to obscene material

---

Reports are always confidential and made with the child's safety in mind. Anyone may report suspected child abuse by calling the Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-362-2178.

## **How can families be sure their child is safe with Head Start staff members?**

- Every staff member is screened for a criminal record.
- Staff maintain ratio.
- Staff are trained in active supervision of children.
- Staff are trained in PBIS.
- Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid.
- Staff complete daily, weekly, and monthly safety checks.

Please share any concerning situations with a staff member.

# What is In-Kind?

Our Head Start program must demonstrate community support through donations and volunteerism such as:

- Parents volunteering in classroom.
- Parents working on child's goals and curriculum activities at home.
- Parents actively engaged in parent opportunities, policy council, and planning committees.
- Parents volunteering in classrooms such as book clubs and field trips.
- Individual services for children with disabilities through AEA services.
- Maintenance services from school districts.

When you volunteer, you help us get closer to 20% of our grant which is our required in-kind.

## **How?**

Every parent volunteer hour equals **\$16.79** for Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start programs. If you volunteer 4 hours, you earn **4 x \$16.79 = \$67.16** of In-Kind for Head Start.

**Example: working on your child's goals at home.**

**Interested in getting involved?** Please talk with Head Start staff to find out how to participate.

## Benefits of Volunteering

By volunteering with the UDMO Head Start program:

- you learn more about your child's program,
- help your child learn and
- have more time together

Every minute of your time helps our program.



## Family Engagement

Research shows that strong family engagement makes children more successful in Head Start and in the future.

Being engaged means partnering with staff to teach skills at home. It means having an open mind and trying new ideas. It also means that UDMO staff and families work together and share ideas to meet goals.

We will work together to increase child success by:

- Developing family and child goals together
- Finding strategies to achieve your goals
- Celebrating achievements together
- Providing volunteer opportunities



## Become a Parent Leader

### Policy Council

Policy Council is Head Start's school board.

- Parents and community representatives are elected through a democratic process. All parents are given the opportunity to vote and elect members by completing an online ballot. Elected individuals represent all HS and EHS program options.
- Representatives learn about Head Start programming and assist in making program decisions such as:
  - Approval of funding applications
  - Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance
  - Oversee budget and spending
  - Monitor program goals
  - Approval of policies and procedures
  - Participate in programs self-assessment
  - Policy Council minutes are posted online.

*Positive Solutions for Families* is a research based parenting curriculum that is offered in all program areas:

- Builds on parents' knowledge and offers parents the opportunity to practice these skills to promote children's :
  - Social emotional skills
  - Understand their problem behavior
  - Use positive approaches to help children learn appropriate behavior

# Confidentiality

\*Keep things you hear and see in the classroom  
confidential

Information collected from children and families is maintained on file and kept confidential. It is available in two weeks upon request. Parent's/legal guardian's written permission is secured prior to sharing information.

## **File content is available to:**

- Child's parent or legal guardian
- Administrator and Teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian to access records.
- Regulatory authorities, upon request

Files contain a record review log to record date and individual who accessed the file. Program staff maintain confidentiality of family information

## **Disclosure without parental consent may include:**

- Staff working with the child and family
- Nursing staff
- Administrative staff
- Officials who provide services for which the program would otherwise use employees (AEA)
- Federal or state officials
- Iowa Department of Education and Local School District receive GOLD child assessment information as part of Head Start receiving State Wide Voluntary Preschool and Shared Visions (CDC) funding.
- Auditors
- Complying with judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena (make effort to notify parents)
- Authorized representative from Food and Nutrition Service (CACFP)
- Caseworker from a state, local, or tribal child welfare agency who has right to access case plan in foster care placement.
- Appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child maltreatment on reporting child abuse and neglect

**Annual Notice:** Parents are provided annual notice through the Parent Handbook

## **Parental Rights:**

### **Inspect:**

- To inspect their child's records, only
- Program make records available within 45 calendar days
- No records will be destroyed, if a request has been made.

### **Amend:**

- Parent can make a written request to amend specifying information they believe is inaccurate, misleading, or violates child's privacy.
- If request is denied, a written decision and option of a hearing is provided to the parent within 45 calendar days.

### **Hearing:**

- If a parent requests a hearing to challenge information in the child's record, the program must schedule a hearing within 45 days and notify parents in advance. The program will conduct a hearing with a person who does not have direct interest in its outcome.
- The program will ensure the hearing affords the parent a full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issues.
- If information is found to be inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy, the program must amend or remove information from the file and notify the parent..
- If information is found to be accurate, the program informs the parent of the right to place a statement in the child's record that either comments or contest information or states why the parent disagrees.

## **Right to Copy of Record:**

The program must provide , free of charge, and initial copy of child records disclosed to third parties with written parental consent. If the court orders neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information furnished be disclosed. It will not be shared. If a court report is required, a one-week notice is needed.

## **Right to Inspect Written Agreements:**

A parent has the right to review any written agreements with third parties.

## **Maintaining Records:**

Childs records are maintained for three years past the current school year and are then destroyed.



# Standards of Conduct

Employees, consultants, and volunteers will abide by the UDMO Code of Conduct. These standards specify that:

- They will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family.
- They will refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.
- They will follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members.
- No child who is enrolled in UDMO Early Childhood Programs will be left alone or unsupervised while in our care.
- Positive methods of child guidance will be used in all Early Childhood Programs. Employees are prohibited from engaging in any type of corporal punishment, emotional and/or physical abuse, or humiliation. Employees are not allowed to use food as a punishment or deny basic needs.

## Parent Concern

- Parents are encouraged to address concerns with staff involved.
- If they are not satisfied, the parent should contact the coordinator. A conversation will occur in hopes of resolving the issue.
- If further action is needed the Head Start Director will be involved.
- If needed, a formal written complaint may be completed by following the procedure below

## Procedure for Community and/or Parent Complaints

### Definition

A complaint may be defined as an expressed concern, based on circumstances regarded as just cause for protest.

### Right to File a Complaint

- Any parent and/or community person who feels that he/she or any child has been subject to unfair treatment, has a right to present their written complaint for prompt consideration and a fair decision.
- Parents and/or community persons have the right to express their concerns without fear of retaliation.

### Types of Complaints

- Determinations concerning the enrollment status of a child, which the parent or a community person may feel has been unfair, i.e. withdrawals, transfers, denials, over-income classification, etc.
- Complaints filed against the Executive Director will be referred to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

### Submitting a Complaint

- Parents and/or community person may present complaints in writing on the Community/Parent Complaint Form, to the Home Visitor and/or the center staff with the following details included:
  - The specific incident
  - Individuals involved
  - Date(s) of the incident
  - A brief summary of the attempts made to resolve the situation

**NOTE:** An honest effort should be made to resolve problems, concerns, or conflicts at the center level or through the Coordinator.

- The complaint form shall be stored in the child's file once the issue is resolved
- If the complaint cannot be resolved at the center level it will be forwarded to the Home Visitor and the Early Childhood Director. If the complaint is not resolved it will be taken to the Policy Council and given to the Policy and Personnel Committee to be resolved.

### Responsibility of Complaint Committee

It is the responsibility of the "Committee" to promptly, confidentially, and courteously review all complaints registered, taking all facts into consideration, to assure that a fair and unbiased decision is rendered.

## Parent and/or Community Complaint Form

Name of person filing complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Center Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Nature of Complaint:**

1. Date(s) and location of incident:
2. Individuals involved:
3. Specific incident:
  
4. Summary of the attempts made to resolve the situation:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Actions Taken by UDMO Head Start Program:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_