



1302.71 & 1302.72 Van Buren County Head Start Transition Plan

Young children enter preschool from a variety of settings, which may include Early Head Start, child care and the home. These children represent diverse circumstances and learning needs and encounter many new experiences: separating from family; adjusting emotionally and socially to new environment; learning more structured routines at home and at school; developing relationships with new adults; interacting with other children in a classroom setting; taking care of self and personal belongings; learning new rules; and riding a bus, just to name a few.

In an effort to help alleviate the child and parent's feelings of transitioning anxiety, Head Start teachers make an initial home visit prior to children's attendance into Head Start so that children/family will feel more comfortable with their teacher. This allows teachers to obtain a good overview of the whole child in their family environment, learning the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families. In order to ease the parents' worries they will attend orientation prior to their child's enrollment. At this time, parents will be encouraged to engage in their child's education by participating in school readiness activities, home activities, join in classroom and school events by volunteering in the classroom, attend child/parent events, engage in family meetings, and be involved in their child's education through parent/teacher conferences and home visits. During the program year if a child and family must move from our service area we will make all efforts to support an effective transition into another Head Start program. If a Head Start program is not available, we will assist the family as needed to identify another early childhood program that meets their needs. Head Start Staff will review transition information at staffing during the months of August, December, March and May every year. In the summer the program will provide for all the Head Start children a calendar of summer educational activities to encourage continued educational opportunities for the child and families in the home environment. When Head Start parents transition into public schools they will be prepared to exercise their rights and responsibilities concerning the education of their children in the elementary school setting, including services and supports available to children who are homeless and whom have disabilities and various options for their child to participate in language instruction educational programs as well as when they enter the program.

Head Start works to establish a connection between the preschool child and kindergarten by partnering with local school systems, creating a connection between the child and kindergarten using special school functions, and aiding children in practicing kindergarten rituals in preschool. During kindergarten transition, children are given opportunities to practice activities that will be helpful for them when they enter elementary school such as opening milk cartons, handling trays for cafeteria style lunch and learning bus riding rules. During this transitional phase Head Start children are given the opportunity to meet teachers on field trips to the elementary schools and attend kindergarten orientation during which time children will establish connections with peers

who will be in kindergarten. During orientation children will visit the kindergarten classroom and will meet kindergarten teachers and participate in educational activities with currently enrolled kindergarten students. Prior to kindergarten visitation children will transition to cafeteria style lunch while in Head Start allowing skills to be developed that will be used during kindergarten visitation. In addition, transitioning children/parents will participate in local school system bus training. Transition issues are addressed at this training and at other family meetings and individually with families as needed. All parents will be provided a Transition material kit housing expectations and developmental milestones of their child's future placement at kindergarten with one-on-one transitional training by education staff for transitioning families. The FCPS will work with parents to ensure that all documentation is provided to the next placement. Parents are provided with academic expectations, local school policies, and school supplies requirements, allowing for families to establish a two way communication with the kindergarten environment. Backpacks and school supplies are provided to each child entering public school in partnership with the LEA to ensure children have established a strong “head start” in the public schools. The Assistant Mentor Coach/Education Supervisor will hold membership on the local school system’s Pre-K Advisory Board. Head Start will ensure policy coordination through interagency agreements. Van Buren County Head Start staff will work with the local school system to make certain all Head Start students will attend Kindergarten registration, and share written records. Head Start “Preschool” teachers will discuss children’s strengths and challenges with designated school system staff. Preschool teachers will monitor success of former students by meeting with and receiving updated status of progress from current kindergarten teachers. The program and local school system will participate in joint training and professional development opportunities as possible. The program will inquire about summer school opportunities for children who are entering kindergarten. Staff will assist parents in developing individual plans for children entering kindergarten through the kindergarten transition training kit to include dual language and cultural considerations. Through collective efforts and in partnership with the local school system, parents and community partners, Head Start strives to ease the transition into, through and out of Head Start.