



Additional Services for Children with Disabilities Plan

The Head Start program has historically had a policy of inclusion for all low-income children. Children with disabilities have been served since Head Start's inception in 1965. In 1972, Head Start began to provide handicap/disability services in a more structured manner, with evaluations, Individual Education Plans, and Special Services.

The Van Buren County Head Start program provides services for low-income, preschool children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, with necessary support services provided at the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) Van Buren Head Start (VBHS) center or through service providers in the community. This disability plan includes a full range of activities and services normally provided to all Head Start children and provisions for any modifications necessary to meet the special needs of children with disabilities. Also taken into account are the needs of the children for small group activities, for modifications for large group activities, and for any individual special help. As part of its programming for young children with disabilities, Van Buren Head Start works closely with other agencies, including Van Buren County Schools, to provide the most appropriate placement and services available.

If a child comes into the program with an IFSP the families have the option to continue with an IFSP until the child reaches the age of 5 or start proceedings to convert to an IEP with the local LEA. The Van Buren County Head Start program refers all children with suspected disabilities to the LEA for evaluation and special services unless the family has decided to continue with an IFSP. The following plan stipulates the manner in which Van Buren County Head Start will provide services to special needs children.

The Van Buren Head Start program refers all children with suspected disabilities to the LEA for evaluation and special services. The following plan stipulates the manner in which UCHRA-Van Buren County Head Start will provide services to special needs children.

The Van Buren Head Start program will make all efforts to develop and maintain interagency agreements with LEAs and other agencies. When resources are not available within the service area, efforts will be made to obtain agreements to ensure services. If no agreement can be reached, the Head Start will document all efforts and inform the regional office.

Agreements should include, but is not limited to participation in Child Find, joint training of staff and parents, procedures for referrals for evaluations and responsibility to reporting children with IEPs to LEA for child count report. Agreement should also include any other items agreed upon by both agencies. This agreement will be updated annually.

Recruitment and Enrollment

The Van Buren County Head Start Program has an active recruitment program designed to seek out preschool children with disabilities who are most in need of UCHRA Head Start, i.e., children from low-income families, children with special needs and children from high-risk environments. Ten percent of the slots are to be maintained by children with disabilities eligible for special education and related service or early intervention services. The Community Assessment is used to determine geographic areas to be served, as well as the potential need of the population to be served.

The UCHRA-Van Buren County Head Start program begins its annual recruitment activities in May of each year. They include: (1) door-to-door surveying, (2) newspaper advertisements, (3) neighborhood center recruitment and surveying, (4) current UCHRA-Head Start parents, and (5) contact with community agencies that serve families with young children. Major recruitment efforts are carried on with the Department of Children's Services and the Van Buren County Health Department. Parent Committees, Policy Council and other parent participants are involved in recruitment efforts.

Van Buren County Head Start maintains continuing contact with persons, agencies and organizations that serve, or are likely to be aware of young children with disabilities. Emphasis is given, in the spring of each year, to special recruitment activities by phone, personal contacts and meetings.

The Van Buren County Head Start Family/Community Partnership and Health/Disability Services staff are jointly responsible for these contacts, and for providing agencies with information about Head Start disabilities services, eligibility guidelines, diagnostic criteria of disabling conditions and application and referral forms. Maintains a MOU with TEIS to aid in ensuring Head Start's ability to actively participate in Transition meetings from part c services to part b services and to support ongoing communications and relationships with all stakeholders.

While young children with special needs receive special recruitment efforts and some priority for enrollment, they still must meet UCHRA-Head Start guidelines and be considered within the framework of the selection criteria rating process.

During the application process children suspected of having or identified as

having disabilities are flagged by the Family Community Partnership Specialist, who is responsible for the application process. Any referrals of children suspected of having or identified as having disabilities go to the Family Community Partnership Specialist so that she may flag the concern on the application. Generally, the decision to enroll a suspected or certified special needs child will be made by the Family/Community Partnership Specialist in conjunction with the Health/Disability Services Specialist. However, for children with severe disabilities, the Family/Community Partnership Specialist will work closely with the Health/Disability Specialist and the Van Buren County School System to determine the appropriate placement and services based on the IEP. Upon application or upon enrollment, the Family/Community Partnership Specialist notifies the Health/Disability Specialist of children with suspected disabilities. These children are identified for referral priority in the UCHRA-Head Start screening process.

Screening, Referral and Evaluation

The Health/Disability Specialist is involved with other program staff in the assessment of children. This assessment is completed in three stages.

- A. The first stage of the ongoing assessment process is the screening process, in which all enrolled children participate. This screening includes both developmental and health screenings. Screenings must be completed by 45 calendar days after the start of the program or 45 days after the child's enrollment.
- B. The second stage of the ongoing assessment process is the collection of data in each child's development areas. All data is documented on the outcome-tracking tool. The classroom teacher completes this developmental assessment during the early weeks of the child's enrollment.
- C. After a child is referred for a comprehensive evaluation, parental consent is obtained for the initial assessment.

Meeting

A meeting for children referred and evaluated by the LEA will be scheduled by the Van Buren County School system. IEP team members shall include but not limited to; the UCHRA Head Start Health/Disability Specialist, the teachers, and the child's parents must attend the first initial meeting. Others who may also be invited include the Director, other special service providers, staff or consultants directly involved with the child's program, or persons requested to attend by the parent. UCHRA Head Start staff will assist in contacting persons who are to attend the meeting, and will help to provide transportation and/or childcare if needed.

At this meeting, the team members will determine whether the evaluated child is

eligible for special education or related services as regulated by the state of TN eligibility guidelines for disability. The child may meet eligibility if his/her educational achievement or performance differs significantly from that of his/her peers. This information has been addressed in the Eligibility Report. In order to be eligible, the child must meet the IDEA criteria. It must also be demonstrated that his/her needs cannot be met in the regular classroom without receiving special education services.

It is also the responsibility of the team members at the meeting to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP will first establish the child's present level of functioning. This includes a statement of the child's educational performance in the following areas: cognitive/language, self-help skills, psychological, gross/fine motor skills, and social skills. An annual program goal must then be established for each identified deficient area. The annual goal must describe what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish within one school year. This annual goal must be measurable and will be established with the input and the cooperation of all members of the meeting. The IEP will include a description of all the special education and related services required by the child; any modifications or adaptations of the regular school program, which may be required, as well as any special materials needed in order to implement the IEP.

The IEP will include the date that each service will commence, and the person/agency responsible for providing each service. It will also include a description of the frequency and duration of the special education services to be provided.

All members of the meeting will sign the IEP indicating their agreement or disagreement with the proposal. The parent also signs under the "informed parental consent." This signature indicates that the parent was informed of his/her rights, including the right to view the IEP at any time, the right to request a due process hearing, and the right to review their child's records. The parent's signature also indicates their consent to implement the IEP.

The Health/Disabilities Specialist must act as an advocate for the child and must be mindful of the rights and responsibilities of the parents of the child, the LEA, and the Van Buren County Head Start program.

Minutes will be recorded at each meeting. Copies of the Procedural Safeguards will be given to the parent at the first meeting and parents will be made aware they may request another copy at any time following the initial meeting.

The first responsibility of the members of the meeting is to verify eligibility and then if so a primary and as necessary a secondary disabling condition of the child. The process of verification includes a review of the health record, developmental screening, parent observations, teacher observations, and

professional consultations. Also reviewed are the diagnosticians' reports, the certification statement, functional description and recommendations. Members of the meeting will verify that they agree that the child has a disability by signing and may also offer a dissenting opinion. However, if the parent offers the dissenting opinion, the process shall be stopped, unless the parent agrees to services through the completion of the IEP. In the case of a dissenting opinion a narrative statement explaining the dissention will be attached.

It is the responsibility of the members to develop an IEP for the child, which identifies mutually agreed upon goals for the disabled child. Included in the written IEP shall be a statement of the child's present levels of performance in the areas of gross motor, fine motor, pre-writing, social/emotional, self-help, cognitive and language as applicable and in accordance with the identified disability. Also included is information describing the child's strengths and weaknesses.

The IEP provides for a statement of annual goals; related services needed by the disabled child, and the extent to which the child will participate in regular educational programs. These goals and services are determined through a collaborative effort involving all of the members of the meeting.

The IEP should identify classroom and home activities-as applicable, that will enhance the child's development. For example, it may address any of the following: staff or parent education, medication, transportation, diet, physical concerns, counseling, educational services, special materials or equipment, facility modifications and other agency involvement. The Health/Disability Specialist must act as an advocate for the child and must be mindful of the rights and responsibilities of the parents of the child and the UCHRA Head Start program, the disability reviewing progress and ensuring that all provisions of the IEP are carried out.

If any member of the meeting disagrees with any or all parts of the IEP, he/she may file a statement explaining why he/she does not concur.

Minutes will be recorded at each IEP meeting.

At the annual meeting, annual goals and/or objectives will be developed by the Health/Disability Specialist Services Staff in conjunction with the LEA and family input.

Implementation of the IEP

The approval of the IEP by the meeting members sets in motion the next phase of the disability process; implementation of the IEP. The Health/Disability Specialist will schedule the agreed upon special education and related services

as outlined and defined in the child's IEP.

If special education services are to be provided by the Van Buren County School System, the Health/Disability Specialist will work with them to schedule the required services. The Health/Disability Specialist will make sure that UCHRA Head Start staff and parents understand these schedules. If services are to be provided at the Head Start center, UCHRA Head Start will provide adequate and appropriate space for use by the service provider and/or therapist. If the services specified by the IEP are to be provided at a location other than Head Start, the Health/Disability Specialist will make parents aware of these appointments and assist with transportation, if necessary.

When the special education services are being provided by UCHRA Head Start, the Health/Disability Specialist will prepare a Schedule of Services for the child and assure that appropriate scheduling of time and responsibility are understood and coordinated among UCHRA Head Start staff, parents and outside service providers. When the special education services, as indicated on the child's IEP, are to be provided by outside service providers, other than the LEA, a Consultant Contract will be written. This contract will include a description of the strategy and approach on the child's IEP, time period covered, specific measurable objectives, and will require periodic progress reports.

Whether the special education service is provided by the LEA or UCHRA Head Start, the Health/Disability Specialist will work closely with UCHRA Head Start service area staff to ensure that goals and objectives expressed in the IEP are being addressed, and that the child receives regular UCHRA- Head Start services he/she is entitled to, as well as the special services as they relate to and are required by the disabling condition.

Throughout the child's program, the Health/Disability Specialist will ensure that the scheduling of special and regular service does not impair their combined delivery. Quarterly Progress Reports will be required. Health/Disability Specialist will track that each child is receiving the appropriate services and implementation of the current IEP is occurring. Progress Reports will be provided at nine-week intervals. An IEP meeting will be held annually.

The HDSS collaborates with the LEA Service provider as needed. An IEP progress report is generated every 9 weeks and copies are placed in student's files and copies are sent home to guardians. If further explanation is necessary for the parent, the Disability Specialist will call, make a home visit or conduct a conference in the center. The parent may request a conference or a meeting at any time to discuss the IEP.

All children who have been identified as having special education needs and who will be transitioning to the public schools will be reviewed in the spring of each school year. UCHRA VBHS has an extensive transition plan to support all children families while entering our program, throughout program services, and in

exiting to another program and/or kindergarten.

A. When the special services have been provided by the Van Buren County School System, school personnel will complete assessments as required updating the child's current level of functioning. Van Buren Head Start will update developmental assessment information and Health information. The LEA will conduct and participate in the meetings with Head Start personnel to determine fall placement and special services, which may be required. The Health/Disability Specialist will encourage parent meetings through home visits, center conferences, telephone calls and reminder letters.

Files containing therapy attendance and notes will be maintained with limited access at the center until the end of the school year. At that time, center files will be incorporated into the child's comprehensive file. The Health/Disability Specialist will monitor the center records to assure that services are being delivered as defined in the IEP. Progress reviews are necessary to periodically review the child's placement and progress, to determine the appropriateness of the IEP or to determine the need for change in the program. The purpose of the review is to:

1. Review the child's progress
2. Determine whether the goals, objectives and services of the IEP are being implemented, and that the roles and responsibilities of the staff are clearly understood.
3. Determine if the IEP continues to be appropriate or needs revision. When the LEA is providing services, progress reviews will be completed every nine weeks. Progress is reviewed on the Progress Reports. Copies of the review are sent to parents and to the child's teacher.

The LEA will release, with therapy notes, progress reports, and attendance records for the child's comprehensive UCHRA Head Start files.

B. When special services have been provided by UCHRA Head Start (such as children not meeting the state of TN guidelines for disability or are in the process of obtaining IEP), results from developmental assessments are compiled, observations are made and reevaluation, if needed, is conducted. On the basis of this information, recommendations for continued special services in subsequent educational placements can be made. The Disability Specialist and Education Supervisor schedules a conference with the parents regarding these recommendations. This meeting may convene when questions of removing the disabled conditions arise, or when a revised IEP is desired. The Health/Disability Specialist may obtain parental consent for the release of information/records to the LEA or other appropriate placement.

The Health/Disability Specialist or designee will be responsible for making the follow-up contact within 60 days after the new placement is scheduled to begin. This is to determine if the child is attending and if he/she is adjusting to his/her

new environment. (During Monthly Staffing- updates will be shared among the team.)

For returning UCHRA-Head Start children, within 30 days after a special needs child returns to the program, the UCHRA Head Start Disability staff and the LEA will review current IEPs for appropriateness by examining current developmental screening/ assessment results, completing classroom observations and necessary screening and examining reevaluation results, when available.

When the LEA has provided special education services, or when the services have been provided by UCHRA Head Start, the Health/Disability Specialist will conduct a Parent Review Conference during either a home visit or center conference to review services. When changes in the IEP are necessary, or when questions of removing the disabling condition arise, a meeting will convene. Changes will be documented on the IEP and copies given to the parents and teacher.

The Annual Parent Review for returning children is held on or before the annual review date noted on the IEP. The purpose is to review the progress the child has made toward reaching the written objectives, and to discuss the possibilities for subsequent services, if needed.

When the LEA has provided special education services, the SPED staff will complete testing/assessments as required to update the child's current level of functioning. UCHRA Head Start staff will update developmental assessment information as well as health information. The LEA's staff and UCHRA Head Start personnel will participate in the meeting to determine if the current IEP remains appropriate to meet the child's special education needs. The Health/Disability Specialist will assist in enlisting parental participation in this meeting.

When Van Buren County Head Start has been providing special education services, updated Teaching Strategies/Developmental scores are compiled, observations are made and reevaluation, if necessary, is conducted. The Health/Disability Specialist schedules a meeting with the parents. During this meeting the current IEP goals will be discussed. If these goals and objectives are judged to be inappropriate, new goals and objectives will be provided.

Parental input is sought to help the Health/Disability staff identify children who may have special needs. At the time of application, the parent is encouraged to provide information and observations of their child that may be helpful in identifying any suspected disabilities. At this time the parent is informed of the health and developmental screening which will be completed on all enrolled children and grants consent for these activities.

When screening and follow up assessments are complete the Health/Disability and Education Supervisor staff will meet with the parents of the child and share screening information and observations about the child's strengths, weaknesses

and other pertinent information. If further evaluation is recommended, the parent is asked to sign an initial consent form for the evaluation of the child by the LEA.

No evaluation can be done without securing this consent. If the LEA does not evaluate the child the UCHRA Head Start Health/Disability Specialist will obtain parent consent and evaluation will be arranged and provided by Head Start.

Whether the evaluation is to be completed by the LEA or by Head Start the parent is kept apprised of all appointments with providers and is encouraged to attend these appointments. UCHRA Head Start staff will assist/provide transportation and childcare related to these appointments as necessary.

The parents are further involved in the process once the diagnostic reports are completed. When the evaluations are completed by the Van Buren County School system, diagnostic reports are reviewed prior to and at the time of the meeting. If UCHRA Head Start has provided the evaluations, parents may be invited to review with the diagnosticians prior to the meeting. In both cases the Health/Disability Specialist will be present to help parents understand the results of the evaluations as well as to explain the implications for the child.

Once the evaluations are complete the parents attend the meeting. At this time the parents, along with other members of the team, decide whether or not the child is eligible for special services and develop the child's IEP.

The parent will be given progress reports and end-of-the-year reviews. These provide parents with the necessary information to follow his/her child's progress and to ensure that the child is receiving all of the services as specified in the IEP. This will also assist parents in participating in any future IEP meetings.

Communication and coordination among all of the UCHRA Head Start staff is necessary to the success of the disability services.

Curriculum, learning materials and equipment are planned so that the needs of the disabled, as well as those of their typically developing peers, may be met. The Education component is largely responsible for managing the "least restrictive" mainstream environment.

The Education Staff assists the Health/Disability Specialist by providing updated Teaching Strategies/Developmental information, classroom and child observations and other pertinent data to complete the assessment of the child before and/or after referral.

Teaching staff are trained in identifying children who may have special needs and in making appropriate referrals to the Health/Disability Specialist. The teacher is a member of the IEP planning process. The teacher is also the primary implementer of mainstream educational activities. He/she designs a learning environment which provides developmentally appropriate activities, socialization,

play, art activities, sensory and language development for the disabled child within the regular program. The Education staff helps to ensure that classroom staff makes provisions for inclusion and provides for the needs of children with disabilities. Individualization to address IEP goals is reflected in Lesson Plans and tracked in Child Plus.

The Health/Disability Specialist is responsible for health screenings, medical examinations and health care for all UCHRA-Head Start children. Health staff are also responsible for the management of health related problems of disabled children, especially health concerns related to the child's disability. The Health/Disability Specialist will assure the accessibility of facilities for children with disabilities. The HDSS also assists parents to access services and resources for their family, including securing adaptive equipment and devices and supports available through a child's health insurance or other entities, creating linkages to family support programs, and helping parents establish eligibility for additional support programs, as needed and practicable.

The Family/Community Partnership Specialist has the responsibility for recruitment of disabled children and maintaining contact with community service providers for children with disabilities. The Family/Community Partnership Specialist may provide initial contact between Head Start and the disabled child and his/her family. They also provide other needed social services for the family such as clothing, shelter, food, employment training, adult education, etc.

The Transportation Staff works with the Health/Disability Specialist providing staff to transport parents and children to appointments which may be scheduled for the purpose of screening, evaluation, therapy, or treatment for the child with a disability—suspected or confirmed. The transportation staff also cooperates in providing transportation for parent training groups, Policy Council and Parent Committee meetings and other UCHRA Head Start functions, which are of interest and importance to the parents of special needs children.

Parent Involvement and Mental Health are important and integral parts of the Van Buren County Head Start program. Parents are encouraged to volunteer regularly in their child's classroom. For the parent of a special needs child, this provides them with a unique opportunity to see how their child functions in an inclusive environment and in cooperation with their peer group. All parents, including the parents of children with disabilities are invited to participate in and attend parent groups, which address improved parenting skills, health training and counseling as needed. Regular attendance at the Parent Committee, Policy Council and/or Health Council (HSAC) helps to increase knowledge and provides a support base to help parents deal with the special needs of the child. Parents are provided with the Parent File, which includes copies of evaluations, rights and responsibilities, IEPs, progress reports and other pertinent information.

A Comprehensive File is maintained on each Van Buren County Head Start child at the Head Start center. The file includes all documentation related to the child,

family and services provided by and through Van Buren County Head Start.