



Family and Community Engagement Program Services Plan

1302.50, 51, 52 Family Engagement

Primary goals for the Head Start Program across all aspects of the program in general, and the Family/Community Partnership Specialist in particular, is to assist the parent/guardian of Head Start children, to assume a more active and confident roles in identifying the needs of their children and families, establishing and understanding of safe, stable and nurturing environments and relationships, and giving them the tools to recognize that they are their child's primary teacher and lead them to the understanding of how important it is to participate in their child's learning and development. The program staff will develop meaningful and respectful relationships to encourage trust through an ongoing system of communication, recognizing the family unit as a whole in the program and community. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to visit the center and take part in daily activities such as performing classroom observations, Parents/guardians are always welcome to observe at their convenience.

Fathers make critical contributions to the "educational achievement and physical and emotional health" of their children. Research shows that fathers make unique and important contributions to their children's development and children of involved fathers are more likely to succeed in school. Fathers can help a Head Start program be more effective at promoting children's development and learning. And at the same time, a Head Start program can help fathers be more effective in their children's lives. The Van Buren County Head Start will involve fathers/ male valued partners by incorporating activities to include but not limited to Pizza for Pops/Donuts for dads, Birdhouse building, MVP Day (Male Valued Partner), a socializing activity day geared toward significant males and children only. We ensure that in situations where the father does not live in the home, they will receive invitations to activities and access to center to home communications. The Family/Community Partnership staff will arrange for a Parent Committee to be held, through memorandums sent home by children, personal phone calls and calling system. All Head Start parents will be invited to attend. The Family Partnership staff will arrange and assist with the organization of the Policy Council and their related meetings.

If parents/guardians have exhibited outstanding performance while volunteering in the center and classrooms, they will have priority, consideration for employment, as positions become available. Whenever possible and as required, transportation and child care services will be provided by the Family/Community Partnership Specialist to facilitate participation in parent activities.

A notification of family needs through ChildPlus notes is used by the education staff and other Head Start staff to notify the Family/Community Partnership Specialist of a child's/family's social service, health and disability needs which they have been trying and/or unable to meet, and ask for assistance.

A literacy program is established to encourage parents and families to obtain the necessary skills required to advocate for themselves and their families. Adult Basic Education and G.E.D. classes are made available to assist families in this goal. A library has been established for parents/guardians and staff to utilize, with various levels of reading materials and interests. This will expand vocabulary and enrich knowledge. Through this service we encourage parents and staff to set the proper example for our children by teaching and developing good reading skills. The preschool child is impressionable and enjoys imitating peers and parents/guardians; thus, the adults and teachers that surround the child daily play an important role in molding the child's attitude toward school and learning. The program will extend school readiness through partnerships that include but are not limited to Burritt Memorial Library where all parents/children will be provided a library card to access books for home use On site Lending Library for parents to access books when public library is not a convenient, Van Buren County Health Department partners with the program allowing us to maintain the Book Smart Express at their facility where parents and community can access books, materials and brochures while accessing Health Dept. services. Staff will assist and educate dual language families on the importance of and benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Staff will promote and train parents in the need for regular attendance and its importance to the child's educational needs, now and for the future, by using the "attendance works" model, reviewing the parents' plan to assist them to modify the plan as attendance issues arise.

The Van Buren County Head Start utilized the Compendium of Parenting Interventions provided by the Office of Head Start to determine which research based parenting curriculum would be used by the program to improve child outcomes. The compendium provided the program with information needed to make informed judgments. Information from the Compendium of Parenting Interventions helped the program compare parenting interventions and includes a brief description of child outcomes, child age, required initial training, level of education required to deliver the intervention, and startup costs. Through the programs comparison of each Parenting Intervention provided by the Office of Head Start. Extensive research and determined needs of the program and families served by Van Buren County Head Start chose to use Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (Conscious Discipline) as the program's parenting curriculum. Conscious Discipline is provided to enrolled families once a year, while staff provide information and resources from Conscious Discipline on an ongoing basis to parents in need of intervention. Conscious Discipline utilizes lectures that are presented in group format in combination with interactive activities including role-play exercises, discussions of hypothetical parenting situations, and the sharing of personal experiences. Topics include: Understanding child behavior, building children's confidence and self-esteem, communication skills including developing the parent-child relationship, managing anger, drug prevention, guilt, adoption, stepparents, and parenting without a partner.

The Family/Community Partnership Specialist staff will conduct a Parent Needs and Interest Survey during the first weeks of the school year. On the survey, parents will be asked to list their interests and preferences concerning training activities to be held throughout the school year and will be scheduled at a convenient time for parents. Training will be offered throughout the school year aimed at educating and providing resources. Through follow-ups made with parents/guardians, the staff will obtain feedback using evaluation forms as to the quality and usefulness of services and training provided. The Family/ Community Partnership Specialist will be responsible for

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developing, arranging and coordinating all training. All training will take place at the center level.

As part of the application process, the Family/Community Partnership Specialist will complete a Family Partnership Agreement, identifying with parents the goals and strengths of the family. A Family Partnership Agreement Plan will be established and implemented for each family of an enrolled child within 30 days of enrollment into the Head Start Program. In conjunction with the parent/guardian, the Family/Community Partnership Specialist will identify needs, both of their children and other family members, and set goals to improve the conditions and quality of their family lives. Information obtained during the family assessment process will result in the development of the Family Partnership Agreement Plan geared toward helping families reach their desired goals, which should include school readiness and to fully prepare children and families to succeed in school. Acknowledging that families are changing (no parent in the home, grandparents as parents, fathers as single parents), we will ensure that the needs of these families will be addressed. The Agreement Plan will include, but is not limited to, family goals and responsibilities, and strategies designed for family members to achieve these goals within reasonable time frames. The Family/Community Partnership Specialist will assist parents/guardians through referrals to local community partnership agencies, i.e., Department of Human Services, Family Resource Center, G.E.D., and other Educational Resources, Housing Assistance, Child Support Services, etc. The parents have the support of the Mental Health Consultant who conducts classroom observations and is available to the parents for meeting, training, and individual support. Follow-ups will be made to ensure services are being obtained and provided. Services will be tracked and monitored in Childplus. Close contact will be kept with partnership agencies and resources to eliminate the duplication of services. Referrals will also be made to other Head Start staff members, i.e., the Health/Disability Specialist, for assistance in additional areas of family life. The Family Partnership staff will maintain contact with the families of Head Start children, monitoring each family's progress and offering assistance as needed throughout the child's Head Start enrollment period. This will be done by phone calls, contact at the center or on bus routes, parent meetings and training, other events and home visits when needed. Support will be provided to Dual Language Learners, through translating and interpreting as needed. Each family's Family Partnership Agreement will be reviewed mid year and will be used to ensure needs and school readiness goals are current. End of year surveys will be obtained from parents evaluating services and quality of services received. Our goal is to strengthen Family Well Being so that the families we serve will gain additional knowledge and take opportunities to advance their education/employment/etc.

The Family Partnership Specialist will establish and maintain a comprehensive and confidential record keeping system for the Social Services Area. Parents may examine their child's file, when necessary. The Family Partnership Specialist will be responsible for establishing the social services file system, and all correspondence pertaining to the family will be documented on Family Contact Notes and/or in the Childplus reporting system. The Family Contact report will present a composite picture of the interaction with the family by Head Start staff. The Family/Community Partnership Specialist will be responsible for maintaining confidentiality and protecting the privacy of personally identifiable information regarding Head Start children and their families. There will be equal protections to FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act).

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency Van Buren County Head Start develops collaborated relationships and partnerships with community organizations, including the
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utilization of services administered by the grantee that may include but are not limited to:

- Health care providers, Medicaid managed care networks
- Dentists, other health professionals
- Nutritional service providers
- Individuals and agencies that provide services to children with disabilities and their families
- Public schools
- Nutrition assistance agencies
- Workforce development and training programs
- Adult education,
- Housing assistance agencies
- Domestic violence prevention and support providers
- Any other organizations or businesses that may provide support and resources to the children and families served by the program.

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency Van Buren County Head Start works to promote comprehensive early childhood services by establishing partnerships, relationships and effective communication with the local school system. A Memorandum of Understanding is maintained by the program and Head Start Staff will assume an active role in the local school system preschool advisory council sharing and learning from one another.

Community partnerships are established to support positive child and family outcomes that can respond to families interests and needs. The program builds relationships and partnerships with community organizations by establishing procedures, contracts and informal partnership agreements with local and regional entities providing services to children and families served as determined by the community assessment. Food insecurity is an issue within our Head Start community. This concern is addressed by providing nutrition home activities and weekly snack packs for the children in the program to take home. Nutrition services will be maintained by the program when dollars are available and when nutrition support cannot be located or are insufficient to meet the needs of the families ie:(food bank, snack packs, commodities, etc.). Finding outside resources can be time consuming and challenging. The Family/Community Partnership Specialist is responsible for making parents aware of community services and resources thus facilitating their use and making community agencies aware of Head Start families' needs and ways of meeting them. The program has very dedicated staff who are very determined when it comes to helping families in need.

The State of Tennessee provides for a quality rating system through the Department of Human Services Licensing unit. Through this process the program is evaluated in seven areas which include parent family involvement, staff compensation, director qualifications, staff /child ratios, environmental rating system, professional development, developmental learning. The process evaluates programs using a numeric rating scale. Van Buren County Head Start actively participates, maintaining a 99% or better rate since the inception of the program.