

Southwest HRA Head Start COVID-19 Handbook Supplement



All items in this Handbook insert are subject to change based upon guidance from the CDC and other experts.



This handbook contains changes and additions to the 2021-2022 program year due to the Coronavirus 19 outbreak. These changes will be followed until further notice.

Southwest HRA Head Start has developed a 2 phase plan for instruction as follows:

Phase 1-Classroom enrollment will increase to normal capacity- no virtual services will be offered

Phase 2-Classroom enrollment at normal capacity- Volunteers allowed in classroom.

The phase level will be reevaluated periodically to assure safety and well being of all parties. Assuming that the guidelines relax and the number of cases decrease we will move to the next level but if COVID-19 cases increase in areas or guidelines become stricter then the phase level may move down instead of up.

Opening of Classrooms

We currently plan to **open the classrooms on August 16, 2021** under Phase 1. Classrooms will open at 7:30 am and close at 1:45 for a total of 6 hours and 15 minutes. their family believes is best for them. If there is a need to close a classroom for a short period, we will offer remote learning to all the children in the classroom.

Parent Drop-off and Pick-up

Families will not be allowed in the building at this time. You will be assigned a time for drop off and pick up in order to ensure proper social distancing and to make it easier for vehicles to navigate the parking lots at our centers. The teaching staff will let you know if you will need to park and walk your child to the door or if you can drive up and remain in your car. The procedure will vary due to location. We encourage parents to closely check their expected time or arrival and to call if you be late arriving. Please keep the pickup list up to date. You may be issued a color-coded tag to hang from your rear-view mirror to help facilitate a smooth pick up.

At the end of the day, we will monitor the pickup area and wave as we recognize your vehicle. Check with center staff for more specific directions. Please avoid sending others to pick up your child especially as we are getting used to the new process.

Please try to be on time for your scheduled drop off and pick up. Any late arriving families will need to call the center and wait for a staff member to come to the door with sign in sheet. If you plan to pick your child up early, please let your child's teacher know as soon as possible. When you arrive to pick up your child, wait for a staff member to acknowledge your arrival and follow the center's protocol for picking up your child.

Arrival Health Check

Staff members will complete a quick morning health check before your child is admitted into the building. Staff will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing.

If your child appears ill, their temperature will be taken, and your child may not be allowed to enter the center.

Please assess your child before you come to school each day. Review the following questions and if any of the answers are yes, **DO NOT BRING YOUR CHILD** to the CENTER!

- Have you or your child been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- Is your child experiencing a cough, shortness of breath, sore throat or stomach symptoms?
- Has your child had a fever in the last 72 hours? Have they had a new loss of taste or smell?
- Has your child had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?

When should my child stay home?

Your child will need to stay home if they have any of the following ailments or symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4 or above in the last 72 hours
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- Cough, sore throat, chills, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 72 hours
- Contagious illness such as flu, pink eye, ringworm, scabies, chicken pox, measles, strep throat, impetigo or other contagious diseases
- Untreated head lice
- In need of a breathing treatment using a nebulizer (due to COVID-19 we are unable to administer treatments using a nebulizer)
- Unable to go outside and/or participate in class due to cold or another ailment.

Parents, volunteer and other visitors

After the morning health check your child will be escorted to the classroom by one of our center staff members. At this time, parents, volunteers and other visitors are not allowed to enter the classroom. If your child has separation issues, we will do everything we can to reassure your child. We are happy to work with parents on a plan to make this process easier for all. We hope this requirement does not last all year. We love to have our parents to be able visit and volunteer! Parents will use face coverings during drop off and pick up times and any time they enter the building space.

Sick Child

Center staff will check the children's health throughout the day. If your child begins running a temperature of 100.4 or greater, or if your child shows any symptoms of COVID-19, your child will be taken to an isolated area in the center to await pick-up. A staff member wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) will be assigned to stay with your child until you arrive to pick them up.

If your child becomes ill, we will contact you by phone so that you may pick up your child as soon as possible. It is very important that your emergency contact information be kept up to

date. Please let your family service worker or other staff member know if there have been any changes in your contact information. If we are unable to contact you, we will call the individuals on your child's emergency contact list. Make sure these numbers are also current at all times. Please inform those listed on your child's emergency contact list that you have identified them as being able to pick your child up from school should they become ill.

When you arrive to pick up a sick child, call the center to let them know you are in the parking areas. The staff caring for your child will be happy to escort them to your car.

Positive COVID-19 Cases

We are required to report all positive cases of COVID-19 to the Tennessee Department of Childcare Licensing, and the local health department. Should a child or staff test positive in a classroom for COVID-19, we will send home a letter informing parents that someone at the center has tested positive. In the event that a staff or child tests positive for COVID-19, we will follow the guidance from the local health department and CDC. Because of the social distancing and disinfecting between groups of children our current closure plan, calls for the closing of the affected classroom only.

Contact information for children and staff that have been in close contact with the individual testing positive for COVID-19 will be shared with the local health department. If a child comes in close contact with someone with COVID-19, the health department will likely ask that your child be quarantined for 14 days.

Close contact is defined as any individual who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting 2 days before illness onset (or for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to positive specimen collection) until the time the infected person is isolated.

Classroom Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

We have put measures in place to keep children and staff safe in the classroom. Most classrooms will have three teaching staff in the room and the children will only be exposed to those adults and their classmates, to the extent possible.

A few strategies we are putting in place include but are not limited to:

- Encouraging the use of masks for children and requiring all staff to wear a mask (rare exceptions) when social distancing is not possible.
- Providing the children with their own container of art supplies and encouraging children to use their own materials.
- Limiting the number of children to play in a center and sanitizing toys after each use to the extent possible.
- Continuing to assist the children with handwashing.
- Spreading children out at mealtimes.
- We will not be brushing teeth at our centers this year. We will be sending home toothbrushes and toothpaste twice during the year to promote good oral health.

- Only one classroom will be allowed on the playground at any one time.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

We will continue to follow the DHS Child Care Licensing cleaning and sanitizing schedule. The schedule calls for routinely cleaning sanitizing and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially toys and games. We will also be cleaning/sanitizing objects and surfaces such as doorknobs, electronic devices and other high touch surfaces often using Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance. We will be cleaning/sanitizing high touch surfaces on the playground between groups. We have temporarily removed soft toys that cannot be easily cleaned from classrooms. All cleaning products are labeled and kept out of reach of children.

Hand Hygiene

Staff will continue to teach children good hand hygiene. Children and staff wash hands upon entering the building, before and after “messy” play, after blowing or wiping nose, before and after eating, after playground and bathroom use and anytime other time needed.

Masks

Children will be encouraged to use masks. We realize that children will likely be taking the masks off and on; playing with the mask, etc. Masks are an important part of keeping children and staff safe and virus free.

- Children will be offered a clean cloth mask on arrival at the center each morning.
- Children will not be forced to wear a mask, but encouraged to do so. Masks will be removed while eating and drinking and for outdoor activities. Masks will be stored in a labeled paper bag or hang in cubby.
- Masks will be washed daily by our staff. Routine laundry kill COVID-19 and it is not necessary to wash masks separately. We will be using fragrance and dye free detergent.
- Children who become ill will be more strongly urged to use a mask while waiting to be picked up.

Staff members will wear cloth masks when social distancing is not possible. Staff members may step six feet away from children and other staff and remove their mask for a short period of time. Cooks, area manager/site supervisors and family case managers will not be required to wear a mask when working alone in their assigned work area (unless they prefer to). They must keep a mask nearby to pop on when visitors arrive.

Center Closings

Our centers will follow the local public-school schedule for closures due to weather and COVID-19. If this should occur, your child's teacher will provide more information in regard to at home learning.

Home Visits and Parent Conferences

Home visits are important because they help us get to know you and your child. They give your child's teacher a chance to see your child in the most comfortable place. Home visits are not an inspection, just a way to get to know each other. These visits are also a requirement of Head Start programs.

This year, in order to ensure proper social distancing, home visits and parent conferences will be done in an open-air environment whenever possible or at a public place where social distancing is easier.

At home learning experiences

- All families will have access to a touch screen tablet to use during the program year. The tablet will be brought into the center periodically to download and update as needed. At the end of the year the tablet and charger will be returned. Staff will be verifying which families wish to borrow a tablet for the year. For audit reasons, we will need to see the tablet regularly- please take care to keep it handy and to call us if you have any questions. There is a separate agreement for the loan of the tablet.
- **Ready Rosie** is a parent curriculum that offers training for parents on the topics of child development, health and mental wellness, nurturing, positive discipline, stress management, etc. The program provides a parent friendly website that can be accessed from a computer, tablet or downloaded on a cell phone which has hundreds of videos on parenting skills, along with a variety of videos made by experts in various fields of child development. When utilizing the website parents can set their own times and place to view the videos. This curriculum has provided games and songs that has increased parent and child relationships building and alternative ways for teaching parenting skills. Parents can utilize the "Give Me Ten" workshops and/or participate in the seven group workshops facilitated by our staff. The "Give Me Ten" are ten minute training sessions for parents that do not have the time to participate in group workshops.
- **Ignite** is a researched based application that offers a variety of fun, learning games that the children will use at school and at home. These play-based experiences span seven domains of development including social-emotional learning. Once the application is installed, an internet connection is not required to play. When connected to the internet, the application will upload the data and allow the teaching staff to monitor progress of the child from any location. Ignite will work on most touchscreen devices and will be installed on the tablets
- **READS** is an online program that is supported by your local state library. Your family can download electronic and audio books for every age. You can complete a book form for any online book or printed book that you and your Head Start child reads. The teaching staff will explain this process to you in more details.

- If the classroom must switch to remote learning, the teaching staff will work with you to use the above learning experiences as well as any additional materials that may be available.

Family Fun Nights

Family Fun Nights will be suspended due to COVID-19.

Parent Volunteers

Due to the restrictions on visitors to out centers, we are encouraging alternate types of volunteering. Here are some ideas:

- Families who are in the remote learning groups should fill out a parent activity form each week to track the time spent on Head Start activities. These activities can be counted as volunteer hours.
- We need participants in our parent groups and Policy Council. These meetings will be held virtually until guidelines change.
- You can record yourself or a family member reading a children's book or singing a song to share in the classroom.