



# **CHILDCARE NETWORK OF EVANSTON HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START CENTER BASED PARENT HANDBOOK**

**CHILDCARE NETWORK OF EVANSTON**

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Dear Parents and Caregivers,

**WELCOME** to the Childcare Network of Evanston Head Start/Early Head Start program! You have chosen a program that ensures you and your child receive personalized, high quality early learning and family support services.

We are here to support your relationship with your child and your family. We know that when families are strong and healthy, children are ready to learn.

How can we support you? Our Head Start/Early Head Start program will:

- introduce you to other parents and **build community**
- **identify supports** you and your family may need
- **help you to learn about healthy development** of your child

A positive, warm, and dependable relationship with caretakers is the foundation on which all children grow and learn. We look forward to sharing information about child development and the best ways to help your child succeed in the classroom and beyond! And we look forward to learning from your family, too!

Head Start/Early Head Start is one of several programs we offer that supports children, pregnant parents, their families, and community early childhood programs. We look forward to working together to create healthy communities.

Please visit our website for more information:

**[www.childcarenetworkofevanston.org](http://www.childcarenetworkofevanston.org)**

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

There are several purposes of this handbook:

- Get to know us and how we work
- Help you understand important policies that help us run the programs safely and smoothly

If you have any questions that we did not answer here, please let us know.

## ABOUT HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

### HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

What is Head Start and Early Head start? Head Start and Early Head Start are:

- **Federally funded programs for pregnant parents and young children** birth through age five (Early Head Start for 0-3, Head Start for 3-5)
- **A program focused on school readiness** for children
- **Prenatal education services** that support families through pregnancy and beyond

### HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START AT CNE

CNE offers multiple program types within Head Start / Early Head Start to best serve your family:

- Home Visiting for pregnant families and children ages Birth-5
- Center based care at Swift Child Care in Skokie for children ages 6 weeks – age 5
- Center based care at the McGaw YMCA program for children ages 3-5

## HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

### CLASSROOM LEARNING & ONGOING ASSESSMENT TOOL



We use a curriculum called *The Creative Curriculum®*, a comprehensive, research-based learning plan. Children learn by exploring and discovering, which enables them to develop confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills to use throughout their lives.

With this curriculum, our teachers can plan appropriate, content-rich programming for children with diverse backgrounds and skill levels.

In addition, to track your child's developmental milestones, we use Teaching Strategies Gold as our assessment tool.

### FAMILY SUPPORT SPECIALIST (FSS)

As a participant in our program, you will work closely with one of our Family Support Specialists (FSS). Your FSS will meet with you before you enroll to learn more about your child and talk about your family's goals. Together you may talk about ways to help your child have a good experience at school. The FSS will also share information to help your family access any resources you may need, such as food, clothing, counseling, rental assistance, etc.

Your FSS will visit the childcare center weekly to connect with you, your children, and their teachers.

### ATTENDANCE

We talk about attendance a lot! Why? Attending school regularly is important for healthy growth and development.

We expect your child to attend each day, unless they are sick. If your child is sick or you have another emergency, please contact the school within one hour of the start of the school day. Your child must maintain a monthly attendance rate of 90%. Head Start requires us to track attendance closely each day and note why children are absent.

#### WHAT IF MY CHILD CANNOT ATTEND REGULARLY?

IF SOMETHING KEEPS YOU FROM BRINGING YOUR CHILD REGULARLY, PLEASE LET YOUR CHILD'S SITE AND FSS KNOW. YOUR FSS WILL REACH OUT TO YOUR FAMILY AFTER 3 UNEXCUSED ABSENCES. WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND THE REASONS FOR THE ABSENCES AND OFFER SUPPORT.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

At the start of the school year, your child's teacher will assess your child and learn more about them using these two screening tools:

- the ASQ-3 (how your child growing and learning)
- the ASQ-SE (how your child manages feelings and emotions)

The results of these tools will be shared with you and will help us track your child's progress through the program.

## PROVIDING FURTHER SUPPORT

These tools also help us determine if your child would benefit from more support. If so, we will refer your child for an evaluation to receive additional services depending on your child's need.

Your FSS is available to answer any questions you have about how we assess your child. They will also guide you through the referral process if you and your child's teacher decide your child might need extra support. Here are some examples of how children may benefit from extra support.

| COMMON TYPES OF SUPPORT         | WHAT IT DOES                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>speech therapy</b>           | Helps children with talking, swallowing, etc.                                                      |
| <b>occupational therapy</b>     | Helps children with everyday tasks, like using zippers. Also helps children play well with others. |
| <b>developmental therapy</b>    | Helps children engage in activities appropriate for their age                                      |
| <b>physical therapy</b>         | Helps children feel comfortable and strong moving around                                           |
| <b>social-emotional support</b> | Helps children manage feelings and emotions in a healthy way                                       |

## PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES & HOME VISITS

Teachers conduct 2 home visits and 2 parent-teacher conferences each year. The purpose of these meetings is to work together with your family to promote the best outcomes for your child.

We value you as your child's first teacher and are happy to have this time to connect with you!

### WHAT WILL WE TALK ABOUT AT PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES?

AT THESE MEETINGS, WE TALK ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH, MOVEMENT, PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS, BEHAVIOR, AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING. THE MEETINGS ALLOW US A CHANCE TO **CONNECT** AND **CELEBRATE YOUR CHILD!** IT ALSO GIVES US A SPACE TO **TALK ABOUT ANY SUPPORT** YOU OR YOUR FAMILY NEED.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY



Your childcare center, FSS, and CNE's nurse will support you in keeping up to date with your child's well visits and immunizations. They will also talk with you if you have any questions or concerns about any medical issues related to your child.

### VISITING THE DOCTOR BEFORE START

You must follow these health guidelines for wellness checks, immunizations, and dental health for your child to attend CNE programs. Please talk to us if you need help finding a doctor or a dentist.

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## WELLNESS CHECK

Before your child can start at CNE, you must provide us with a copy of the child's most recent physical exam signed by the doctor/clinic and by you as the parent. The exam must follow the Illinois Department of Public Health recommendations by age. The physical exam also cannot be more than 6 months old.

We track a variety of things such as height and weight. We also review:

- hearing and vision
- nutrition
- risk of anemia (how blood carries oxygen through the body)
- your child's developmental growth (if your child needs any support in different areas) including language and speech

It is your responsibility as a parent to review the results for your child. You are also responsible for following-up with any necessary referrals or appointments for your child that we or the doctor/clinic recommend. Your FSS can help if you have questions.

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## VACCINES/IMMUNIZATIONS

Vaccines protect children against many illnesses. Before your child can start school and receive any additional services, your child must have up to date vaccines, as recommended by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

You must bring in proof of their vaccines/immunization to your child's school and complete all follow-up appointments.

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## DENTAL EXAMS

Healthy teeth are very important! Your child must visit the dentist for an exam starting by age 1.

If your child is age 1 or older, you must visit the dentist and provide CNE with a completed School Dental Exam Form before your child can start school.

After the first exam, you must take your child for a checkup at least once a year (We recommend every 6 months whenever possible).

Parents must share a copy of this dental exam with your child's school and complete all follow-up appointments.

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

CNE works closely with a mental health professional who visits the classrooms regularly and offers support to teachers. They are available to work directly with families as needed.

## WELLNESS & NUTRITION

All of the meals we serve meet the State of Illinois Food program and USDA guidelines for infant, toddler and preschool nutrition and safety. CNE also works with a nutritionist as needed if there are any concerns such as allergies or other nutrition challenges.

## CAR SEAT CONSULTATION

CNE has staff who are Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians. Please notify your FSS if you need help or advice on buying or installing a car seat or a booster seat.

## GETTING INVOLVED WITH CNE

There are many ways that you can get involved:

- Talk with your FSS about how to participate in parent committees and/or Policy Council, which are parent involvement groups
- Check out our Book Nook library on the 1st floor at CNE — take a book and return it when you are done
- Attend parent meetings and workshops on many topics aimed at parents such as literacy, self-care, budgeting, etc.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS WE OFFER

CNE is proud to partner with community organizations: Bundled Blessings and Cradles to Crayons.

### DIAPERS + PULL-UPS

Thanks to our partner, Bundled Blessings, each child enrolled in our Head Start/Early Head Start program receives one pack of 50 diapers and/or a pack of 40 pull-ups monthly, as needed. If you are a pregnant parent in your last trimester, you can request diapers for your newborn baby.

### KID PACKS



Thanks to our partnership with Cradles to Crayons, we are able to provide Kid Packs that consist of all sorts of things that kids often need (gently used seasonally-appropriate clothes, books, hygiene kits, school supplies, etc.) to children 12 and younger. Expectant parents can request kid packs to prepare for the arrival of their new baby.

CNE will offer Kid Packs to families 3 times per year. Your FSS will work with you to figure out what items you need and they will place the orders.

# YOUR CHILD + FAMILY'S RIGHTS

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

All information in your child's HS/EHS file is private. Only appropriate staff at CNE and your child's school may access children's information. We must have written parent permission and informed consent for other agencies or organizations to access your child's information. At intake we ask you to sign a written release of information that allows us to share the information that we need to share.

We will only share records with parents listed on the program application. If there is another parent whose rights have been legally terminated, please provide a copy of the court order terminating these rights so that we are aware.

You, and other co-parents, have the right to:

- Review your children's records and challenge inaccurate information
- Know about and attend meetings about your children
- Discuss concerns with your Parent Educator or FSS

Paper copies of your child and family records are kept in locked file cabinets in restricted areas. They are kept 1 year after your child transitions out of our program. After that, we destroy them. Additional records are also kept on a secure electronic database.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse and neglect are against the law in Illinois. In Illinois, the law requires that most people who work in education, health care, law enforcement and social work report neglect or abuse if they suspect it. These individuals are called **Mandated Reporters**.

If we suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, we at CNE are mandated by law to report it to the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) or to a law enforcement agency. We must make a report within 48 hours of the time we learn that a child has been or may be abused or neglected.

Here are some ways we work to prevent and address child abuse and neglect. We:

- Require yearly training for all Head Start/Early Head Start staff
- Raise awareness around issues regarding abuse and neglect including warning signs that a child may be a victim
- Train staff and parents on child abuse prevention strategies
- Train parents about how to get help and support if their child is a victim of abuse or neglect

## CODE OF CONDUCT

At CNE, we have a Code of Conduct so that we — parents/guardians, visitors, staff, and anyone else at CNE — all have the same understanding and expectations while at CNE.

We expect parents/guardians, visitors, and staff to have an understanding and commitment to engage in respectful verbal and written communication, as well as, respectful and appropriate behavior at all times.

## PARENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

We hope that all families at CNE are happy with our services, but we respect your opinions about services, policies, and procedures. The following procedures are designed to encourage open, helpful communication, and more importantly protect your rights according to the law.

Friendliness, a problem-solving approach, and working openly together usually solve most problems. Your FSS can help you talk through how to address your concerns. If these strategies don't work, we have a system to address your concerns.

| IF...                                                            | THEN...                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>You have concerns or questions about your child,</b>          | Please start with your child's teacher. Ask for more explanations, talk over your concerns or questions, and suggest solutions |
| <b>You have a concern with a classroom teacher,</b>              | Please contact the site director at your childcare center.                                                                     |
| <b>You have a concern with a CNE staff person,</b>               | Please contact our Director of Programs/Head Start Director who will work with you to find a solution.                         |
| <b>You have tried the methods above but still have concerns,</b> | We will forward your concerns to our Executive Director.                                                                       |

We will continue to serve your family during this complaint procedure unless you decide otherwise.

THANK YOU AND WELCOME TO CNE!



We are thrilled to have you as a part of our school community.

Stay connected with us by following us on Facebook:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ChildcareNetworkOfEvanston/>

Instagram: @childcarenetworkofevanston