



First Start Partnerships *for* Children & Families

2020-2021

FAMILY HANDBOOK



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DEAR FAMILY,

Congratulations on taking the step to prepare your child for kindergarten by enrolling in a high-quality early education program! We want to assure you that at First Start Partnerships for Children and Families, your child will be cared for in a safe and nurturing environment for learning that enables children to grow through fun, intentional, and developmentally appropriate activities.

Our program is designed with your family in mind. In valuing you as your child's first and forever teacher, we seek to form a partnership with you to foster the learning and healthy development of your child. You are welcome in the classroom at any time during the day to join your child for lunch, to observe your child in the classroom, or to speak with the teachers, leadership, or other families once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Our aim is to make First Start Partnerships for Children and Families an active community that fosters friendships and creates a supportive network.

We recognize that adjustment periods will vary depending on the age of your child and prior experiences in a classroom setting. We also understand the pace of modern life. Our teachers are very experienced in welcoming new children and will work with you to make the process as seamless as possible.

As we build our partnership together, please feel free to share new ideas and suggestions. Consider joining your Parent Committee or volunteering in your child's classroom. Your involvement will help your child to see just how special school is and that you value his or her learning!

We value the need for close communication between families and teachers. We look forward to getting to know you and to offering you and your child a safe, caring, and joyful educational environment.

In partnership,
Annette Searfoss, Ph.D.
President & CEO

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ABOUT US

Our Mission:

We partner with our families, schools, and communities to ensure that each child arrives ready for kindergarten

Our Values



We value **family** as children depend on family for love, safety, health and learning. We nurture a family-friendly workplace so our staff can be there for their families too.

We value **compassion**

dedicated to love, joy, empathy and hope necessary to support children, families and ourselves to become who we want to be.



We value **excellence** and the continuous process of setting goals, reviewing progress, and planning for improved outcomes for children, families, and our organization.

We value **partnerships**

for the connections to others that allow us to serve our children, families, and communities better than we can serve them alone.



We value **equity** to ensure equal opportunities for children, families and staff members regardless of race, ethnicity, ability, religion, language, family income, family structure, geography, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Our Vision:

For Children:

To ensure school readiness by providing high quality education and strong foundations for social, emotional and physical development

For Families:

To create stronger, healthier families by ensuring access to community resources, increasing positive parenting practices and providing opportunities for personal growth.

For Communities:

To build more vibrant communities through advocacy, education, collaboration, and commitment to building stronger families.

Growing **Hearts**
&
Minds

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors 2020-2021

First Start Partnerships' Board of Directors, together with the President and CEO, are responsible for maintaining a formal structure for program governance, for the oversight of quality services for children and families and for making decisions related to program design and implementation. In general, the Board of Directors has legal and fiscal responsibility for First Start Partnerships for Children and Families.

BOARD CHAIR

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Program Leadership

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Pre-K Counts Director

Diane Hummel

Head Start Director

Nicole Nicholson

Early Head Start Director

The Board of Directors and President & CEO perform their responsibilities with input and data from a variety of sources. One important source is the parents and families we serve. There are two formal parent councils, one for Head Start & Early Head Start families, and one for Pre-K Counts Families.

Pre-K Advisory Council and Policy Council

The Pre-K Advisory Council (PAC) and the Policy Council support families in becoming involved in their child's education and offer an opportunity for participation in program leadership. Both offer guidance on overall program operations, including family engagement efforts, community involvement, Parent Committee activities, review of written procedures, and review of program efforts.

All Pre-K Counts family participants are invited to become members of the PAC and all Head Start and Early Head Start families are invited to become members of the Policy Council. Members may voluntarily elect to serve in officer roles to guide the PAC and Policy Council's work and focus. Both councils meet once per month.

If you are interested in serving on the PAC or Policy Council please talk to your Program Coordinator.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

At First Start Partnerships, we continually review the high quality performance standards set by the Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K Counts programs. These standards serve as the foundation we use to deliver high-quality services to support the school readiness of our children. Program Performance Standards include:

- Having well-qualified and trained staff
- Specific staff-child ratios
- Length of children’s day
- Comprehensive curriculum

We continually assess our children’s progress and teacher practices to ensure we are meeting and exceeding the standards. We value input from families, schools and communities in this continuous quality improvement process.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

All staff of First Start Partnerships for Children and Families commit to:

- Protecting and nurturing children.
- Ensuring that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- Respecting and supporting families in their task of nurturing children.
- Respecting colleagues in early childhood care and education and supporting them in maintaining the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Serving as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in the community and society.
- Staying informed of and maintaining high standards of professional conduct.
- Engaging in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
- Being open to new ideas and learning from the suggestions of others.
- Continuing to learn, grow, and contribute as a professional.
- Honoring the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.



PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

PARENT COMMITTEES

Parent Committees are an excellent way to get involved with the day-to-day planning of First Start Partnerships for Children and Families programming. Parent Committee participants are involved with advising staff in developing and implementing local program policies and activities/services to ensure that the needs of all families are met. We look forward to having your input. Look for more information about Parent Committee opportunities from your child's classroom teacher or home visitor.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Your participation and involvement are essential to the success of First Start Partnerships for Children and Families. We believe that you are your child's first and forever teacher and you are valuable to our program.

Parent Rights

My rights as a parent or guardian in the program include:

- To be recognized as my child's primary educator.
- To be treated with respect by First Start Partnerships for Children and Families programming.
- To be welcomed in my child's classroom. There is an open-door policy, and I may visit the center at any time during its hours of operation once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- To receive information and guidance from the program about my child's progress and development, including regular progress reports from my child's teacher.
- To participate in discussions about my child's progress and setting goals for my child's learning and development.
- To be supported as an advocate for my child. If my child has a diagnosed disability or has been referred for concern, I will be involved by the local intermediate unit in creating an Individualized Education Plan or Early Intervention in creating an Individualized Family Service Plan and will be kept informed of my child's progress in meeting his/her goals.
- To take part in decisions regarding my child's center and the program. My ideas and suggestions will be valued, and I will have opportunities to share them with staff and other parents. Opportunities include surveys, Parent Committee meetings, and Policy or Pre-K Advisory Council meetings.

- To be informed about resources within the community related to education, health, social services, employment, etc.
- To review and ask for clarification on policies and procedures.
- To submit any concerns regarding the program's alleged violation of the local and federal standards.
- To report any concerns about child abuse or neglect occurring at the program to the state.

Parent Responsibilities

My responsibilities as a parent/guardian in the program include:

- Ensure my child attends the program consistently and on time to support his/her development.
- Participate actively in the program and take advantage of the opportunities that the program offers.
- Work with teachers, staff, and other families in a cooperative manner.
- Be open to new ideas and experiences that can benefit my child(ren) and me.
- Offer my opinions and suggestions to improve the program.
- Ask questions of my child's teacher, the Program Coordinator, or other members of the staff.
- Reinforce what my child learns at the program by working with my child at home.
- Ensure that my child is up to date on all required medical and dental needs.
- Agree to access follow-up care when health concerns are suspected or identified.
- Participate in the orientation process to assist my child with transitioning into the school year at his/her center.
- Participate in home visits and parent-teacher conferences each year with my child's teachers.
- Volunteer with my child's program.
- Ensure that my child has extra clothing at the center.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

First Start Partnerships values the important impact volunteers make in our classrooms and the program as a whole. Your children benefit from having parents and family members spend time with them and shows your commitment to your child's education. We have an open-door policy and there are many opportunities to be involved in your child's education whether in the home or in the classroom once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. For more information on how to volunteer in the classroom or at home, speak with your classroom teacher!

Volunteer Clearances and Training

In accordance with Pennsylvania law, First Start Partnerships for Children and Families requires volunteers to have updated clearances on file. As a volunteer, you will be required to obtain the following clearances, screenings, and training:

- PA Criminal Record
 - Go to <https://epatch.state.pa.us/>
 - Click on "New Record Check – Volunteers Only"
 - Read the information and click "Accept"
 - Complete the requested information
- PA Child Abuse History
 - Go to <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
 - Click "Create Individual Account"
 - Read the information and complete the profile
 - Follow the directions provided
- FBI Criminal Background Check
 - PA residents for 10 years or longer will need to sign a 10-year Disclosure form; if you have not lived in Pennsylvania for 10 consecutive years or more, the FBI Criminal Background Check must be performed.
 - If your child's classroom is in a school building, an FBI Criminal Background Check will be performed regardless of the length of residency.
- Pennsylvania state law requires that all volunteers also participate in the Mandated Reporter training. The training is provided free of charge online at www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu. Once you have completed this online training, you must submit the certificate of completion to FSP.
- If your child's classroom is in a school building, you may be required to have a TB (Tuberculosis) screening completed.

If you are interested in volunteering and would like assistance in obtaining your clearances, please reach out to your child's teacher.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Here are the many ways we will be reaching out to you:

- Flyers and formal invitations
- Facebook/Instagram
- Remind
- Face-to-face conversations
- Email and text messages
- Phone calls
- MyTeachingStrategies Family app

You can also visit the First Start Partnerships for Children and Families website for information. www.firststartpartnerships.org

School Calendars

School Calendars can be found on our website www.firststartpartnerships.org under the Family Resources tab. Calendars are available for download and print.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All files and information recorded in our database regarding children and families in the program are kept strictly confidential. Access to these files is limited to the staff that are involved with your child/family and consultants as needed. (e.g. in the case of a specific health concern).

Release of Confidential Information

First Start Partnerships will not release information from a child's record or file without your consent. If we need to share or receive information about your child with another organization, we will request that you sign a release form.

You may request access to your child's records. Once a child leaves First Start Partnerships, their file will be kept by our program for at least one year. You have the right to add any information to your child's record. It is also your right to request that information be deleted from your child's record. This request must be done in writing.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

All complaints must be in writing and submitted to the classroom's Education Coordinator.

Step 1 - A letter must be completed and signed with details of the complaint.

Step 2 - Submit the complaint to the classroom's Education Coordinator.

Step 3 - Within 7 business days, the classroom's Education Coordinator will complete an investigation to include any observations of the situation and interview any persons directly involved. This will be completed using the External Complaint Investigation Form and the External Complaint Statement Form.

Step 4 - Within 5 business days of the completed investigation, a follow-up will be completed with you to share results and recommendations.



OUR PROGRAM

OUR GOALS FOR CHILDREN

Our teachers take great care in setting goals for each child and lesson planning to meet the interests of the children. We plan experiences to help children gain the skills that will help them to be ready for school.

Social Experiences to teach skills for “play’ with other children, self-help skills, respect for classroom materials, and being a positive member of the classroom community.

Language Development to understand and follow directions, ask questions, talk with peers and adults, and build their vocabulary.

Literacy Development to recognize letters, identify and write their names, and understand and value books and printed materials.

Cognitive Development to sort and match objects, count and identify numbers, recognize colors and shapes, and problem solve.

Physical Development to develop large muscles to run, jump, climb and small muscles to hold a pencil and cut with scissors.

These plans and experiences support learning in large groups, small groups, and individual children. All children develop at their own pace. Our goal is to support each child’s individual learning while maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all children in the classroom. Our goal is to partner with you to make the learning experience a positive and beneficial one for your child.

CURRICULUM

Our teachers use *Creative Curriculum* to plan lessons for your child. Children's needs and interests are identified through ongoing observations and assessments that are gathered by the teaching staff.

Our Early Head Start home visitors use *Parent as Teachers* in supporting you as your child's first teacher. The curriculum consists of four components to provide your family with quality, research-based services: home visits, group experiences, child screenings, and resource networking. Your home visitor will use these four parts to assist you in creating and achieving goals specific to your child and family.

All of our lessons at First Start Partnerships meet the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework* and the *Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards*.

Early Head Start Group Experiences

Family Days are held twice per month and are designed to provide opportunities to explore topics around child development, parenting, and positive parent-child interactions. We will implement a variety of parent-child activities, presentations, and discussion groups to support your family through the involvement of all families and home visitors.

- All families are encouraged to attend and participate.
- Please notify your home visitor as soon as possible if you are unable to attend.
- You will have the opportunity to develop relationships with other families and build lasting friendships.
- Each Family Day will last about an hour and a half.
- A healthy snack or meal will be provided for you and your child(ren).

CHILD PROTECTIVE UNIT

Each Head Start/Pre-K center will be participating in a program called Child Protective Unit, an additional unit of the Second Step program. The Weekly Themes in this unit build on foundational skills children learn in the Second Step program in particular self-talk, help-seeking, and assertiveness skills- and teach additional skills children need to recognize, report, and refuse unsafe situations, touches, and sexually abusive touch.

In these lessons, children will learn three types of skills:

- **Personal Safety.** Children will learn important safety rules, such as safety with guns, sharp tools, fire, and when riding on wheels or in cars. They will also learn to help them decide if something is safe or not.
- **Touching Safety.** Children will learn about safe, unsafe, and unwanted touches, and to tell a grown-up if someone breaks rules about touching private body parts.
- **Assertiveness.** These lessons will also give children a chance to practice asking a grown-up for help, telling a grown-up about an unsafe situation, and being assertive to get out of unsafe situations.

Your child will bring home simple, fun activities called Home Links that will help you understand what he/she is learning about safety at school and give your child another chance to practice safety skills. The following is an outline of the lessons that are included in the program:

Week 1: Ways to Stay Safe

Week 2: The Always Ask First Rule

Week 3: Safe and Unsafe Touches

Week 4: The Touching Rule

Week 5: Practicing Staying Safe

Week 6: Reviewing Safety Skills

TRANSITIONS

First Start Partnerships aims to support you and your child through all school transitions.

Children and families who transition from the infant/toddler program to our preschool program will:

- Be encouraged to visit your child's preschool classroom
- Be able to discuss with the teachers any follow-up as needed during ongoing home visits to support you in the transition.
- Have classroom experiences that include discussions about the upcoming preschool transition.
- Have child outcomes, individualized goals, and your child's portfolio shared with the receiving preschool teacher.

Children and families who transition to Kindergarten will:

- Be encouraged to attend the information-sharing meeting within your home school district.
- Be provided with a list of necessary materials needed for Kindergarten registration, as well as registration information for your child's receiving elementary school or school district.
- Be able to discuss with the teachers any follow-up as needed to support you in gathering the necessary information.
- Participate in Kindergarten Registration events in your child's home school or district.
- Have classroom experiences that include discussions about the upcoming Kindergarten transition and reading books with children about starting Kindergarten.
- Have child outcomes, readiness checklists, and work samples shared with your child's receiving Kindergarten teacher or school district.
- Receive information about summer programs, school district lunch programs, school district summer learning programs, etc.

Children and families who transition out of the First Start Partnerships program will:

- Receive resources and information, as requested, to support the transition to other high-quality early childhood programs.
- Be assisted in sharing information, as requested and with permission.

USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal Civil Rights law and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Civil Rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: How to File a Complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit a completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

CLASSROOM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Appropriate Clothing

At First Start Partnerships, our children are involved in active play both inside and outside. It is important that your child come to school dressed appropriately for play as well as the season.

This includes:

- Comfortable clothing
- Comfortable closed-toed shoes that allow your child to run and play safely
- Coat, mittens, hats in cold weather
- Boots for rain or snow

Please send one full change of clothing including underwear and socks with your child to be kept in the classroom. This outfit should be appropriate for the season. Please label your child's clothing with their first name and last initial.

Outdoor Play

- Outdoor play will occur if the temperature falls above 25°F (including wind chill) or below 90°F.
- When poor air quality conditions exist (including ozone levels), or when there is a heat advisory in effect we will not be playing outside.

We will not be able to accommodate requests for children to stay inside during outdoor play.

Diapering/Toileting Policy

Your child will have his/her diapers/pull-ups checked and changed at least every 2 hours. We will also change diapers as needed between 2 hour-time frames and as needed in between. When your child is showing signs that he/she is ready for toilet training, staff will work with you to meet your toilet-training goals.

In addition to scheduled bathroom breaks, your child will be able to use the toilet as needed during the school day.

Arrival and Departure

To keep your child safe, you or your authorized adult must bring your child to your classroom's drop-off and pick-up area when arriving and departing school. You must sign in your child at drop-off and sign out at pick-up. Your child's teacher will share classroom hours for arrival and departure and your classroom's drop-off and pick-up areas.

When an emergency arises and you will be late for pick up, you **must notify** your child's teacher. If there is no communication within one hour, and no one has arrived to pick up your child, the local police department and Franklin County Children and Youth Agency **may** be called.

We know you understand that for the safety and well-being of your child, it is essential that all children are picked up on time by the appropriate people. At no time will staff hold the child responsible for the situation or discuss the issue with the child. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Emergency Contact Information

During the enrollment process, you will provide Emergency Contact information. This information will be updated at least annually. First Start Partnerships must have at least one phone number by which we can reach you. We recommend that there be at least two emergency contacts (authorized persons that can pick up and transport the child home in your absence).

If contact information changes at any time, the classroom must be notified immediately. You must ensure that the information is current at all times: Changes or additions to emergency contacts must be made in writing.

Smoke-Free Zones

All First Start Partnerships' classrooms, outdoor areas and offices are smoke-free zones.

Pick Up Authorization

Children will only be released to parents/guardians and authorized adults. Authorized adults should be **18 years of age or older**. Requests for a person of a younger age to pick up your child will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

All persons picking up your child from the classroom must have a photo ID for verification (preferably a driver's license), including parents/guardians.

You must indicate in writing who is authorized to pick up your child.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access or granted limited access to your child by court order, **we must have documentation of this**. We will keep a copy on file and comply with the terms of the documentation. If any person picking up your child is physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that your child would be placed at risk of harm, we will not release your child. If this happens, staff will attempt to contact another authorized person for pick-up.

Emergency Preparedness

First Start Partnerships place the utmost importance on children's health and safety. Teachers and children participate in a variety of drills targeted towards safety preparedness. These trainings include fire drills, securing the building, lockdown, immediate shelter and shelter in place drills.

Attendance

Good attendance ensures that your child will receive the greatest benefit from our program. We want your child to experience all of the learning activities planned on a daily basis. Children are expected to attend our program each day, unless your child is sick. You must contact your child's teacher when your child will be absent or tardy. We will contact you if your child is unexpectedly absent. This may be done via phone call, text, or REMIND app.

First Start Partnerships strives to work with you to remove barriers, which may cause your child to be absent or tardy, so that he/she can benefit from the program.

Early Head Start Home Visiting Attendance Policy

Good attendance ensures that your child will receive the greatest benefit from our program. We want you and your child to experience all of the learning activities we have planned with you. Home Visits are planned to best meet your family's needs. If you need to reschedule a Home Visit appointment, please contact your Home Visitor immediately.

If your Home Visitor arrives at your home and you are not there, we will attempt to contact you to ensure you and your child's safety and well-being. If you miss three (3) consecutive Home Visits with no explanation, the Home Visitor will contact you to complete an Engagement Plan and Agreement.

If you are unable to be reached after multiple attempts (phone calls, Facebook, ChildPlus or Remind messages), your Home Visitor along with the program's Administrative staff will make a determination regarding your child's enrollment. A letter may be sent to your family regarding your child's withdrawal from the program. Withdrawals or dismissals from the program will be utilized as a last resort, and only after all attempts have been made to improve your engagement with your Home Visitor.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families strives to work with parents to remove barriers causing attendance issues, so that you and your child can benefit from the program fully.

Weather and Emergency Closings

When inclement weather occurs and it is not safe for our families to be out on the roads, we may close our program for the day. Your child's safety is our number one priority! Your child's classroom will be closed when your designated School District is closed. Two-hour delays follow the school district as well. Please tune into your local news channel, district websites, and Facebook. Information regarding First Start Partnerships closings or delays will be available via the website (firststartpartnerships.org), Remind, and our Facebook page.

Classroom Rules and Program Participation

Each classroom has a set of classroom rules (three to five) developed by the teachers and children. These are a set of expectations that foster learning and maintain a positive environment. Teachers use classroom rules, curriculum support, and other resources as a foundation for positive behavior guidance. Behavior guidance is viewed as a way to teach children to have control of their actions and encourage good choices. We support your child in learning how to work and play with other children, as well as how to follow the classroom routines and expectations. Classroom teachers will offer positive reinforcement in a variety of ways. These include redirection, setting expectations, encouraging independence in problem-solving, and offering choices. For some children, the adjustment to classroom routines can be difficult. In these cases, our classroom teachers and Program Coordinators will work with your family to establish a support plan for your child. We want to ensure your child's success in the classroom as well as meet their individual needs. First Start Partnerships does not exclude any eligible child from participation in the program.

Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences

Our staff look forward to getting to know you and your family. Our staff will meet with each family for a home visit prior to your child starting the program. Please feel free to ask questions, share information, and get to know our staff.

These visits are meant to build upon the relationship between your child's classroom and their home. There will be opportunities for parent/teacher conferences throughout the year and possible additional education home visits that will be planned with you. Our staff are here to support you as your child grows and develops. We are also here to help you and your child reach the goals you are working towards while in our program.

Early Head Start Home Visiting

During your weekly home visit, your home visitor will:

- Share information on child development.
- Design age-appropriate activities for your child with your input and ideas.
- Observe your child's play and development along with you.

In order for your home visitor to provide quality services to your family, we ask you to follow these guidelines during home visits:

- Welcome your home visitor into your home and accept him/her as a support and resource for your family. Your home visitor will be respectful of your family's culture and beliefs.
- Drug and alcohol consumption is not permitted during home visits or prior to home visits.
- Smoking is not permitted during home visits. Your home visitor may have allergies or asthma, and smoking can heighten their symptoms and cause severe health complications.
- Weapons, such as firearms, knives, etc., must be kept in a secure, locked area.
- Please limit distractions for your child by turning off your family's television/radio.
- Pets should be kept out of the home visit area during a home visit. Your home visitor may have allergies or asthma, and pets can heighten their symptoms and cause severe health complications.
- The parent/guardian MUST be present and participate in-home visits.
- We welcome the involvement of other siblings during home visit activities provided they are not a distraction to the child receiving the home visit. Your home visitor will provide activities to keep other siblings entertained during specific visits, especially those involving screenings.
- We ask that you politely refrain from accepting personal telephone calls, texts, or visitors during home visits to allow for you and your child to have the best possible educational and bonding experiences.

Screening & Assessment

We will partner with you to assess your child's development as they enter our program. We will ask for your help in completing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. We will use this to learn about your child and it will provide us with information to support their learning.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Food and Nutrition

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will provide meals to your child each day. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families collaborates with USDA nutrition programs to ensure all meals and snacks are credible and meet all food requirement components. All menus are reviewed by a nutritionist to ensure all meals meet USDA requirements.

Daily Health Checks

We perform health checks on each child daily, because a child's health is important to learning.

- When your child has a fever of 100.4 or greater, is vomiting, has diarrhea, and/or perceived pink eye, the classroom staff will contact you immediately to pick your child up from school.
- When your child has an itchy scalp/body, cough, headache, runny nose, sore throat, stomach ache, and/or unusual skin color, the classroom staff will communicate concerns to you.
- When your child has ongoing health-related concerns such as mouth pain or unusual mood/behavior, you may be asked to seek medical attention from a Primary Care Physician and/or dental provider.
- When your child presents with unexplained bruises/swelling and/or cuts/sores, the classroom staff will contact you. **When there is a concern, the classroom staff are mandated reporters and are required to report any signs of potential child abuse.**

COVID-19 Exclusion Policy

Our first and most important strategy to keep us safe and healthy is to **NOT** enter our program if we are unhealthy. Each of us bears responsibility for maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our children, families and staff members.

Families must complete the home health-screener prior to bringing their child to school to ensure their child is symptom free.

Self-check your child's health before you leave home.

- Is your child's temperature 100.4 degrees or above?
- Does your child have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?
- Does your child have a new loss of taste or smell?

If your child has any one (or more) of these symptoms, contact your child's teacher
and

STAY HOME.

In addition to the short list above, self-check the list below for any TWO or more symptoms.

- Chills or shaking
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose

If your child has any two (or more) of these symptoms, contact your teacher and

STAY HOME.

COVID-19 Safety Procedure

When you arrive at the building:

- Staff will greet your child at the door while maintaining 6 ft. distance from family.
- Families must remain 6 ft. apart, social distancing while waiting in line for drop-off and masks are to be worn.
- Children must use hand sanitizer as they transition into the building (60% alcohol); and then wash hands as soon as possible.
- As possible, one staff will greet/sign your child in at the door to the building.
- Children will then be escorted to the classroom by the second teacher who will assist the child with hand washing as they enter.
- The third teacher will stay with the children in the classroom as others arrive.

This process will vary by program and classroom. The process may change depending on the availability of staff.

- No backpacks will be allowed- only medicine or life saving equipment can be transferred to/from school.
- Items will be sanitized upon receipt.
- No outside food should come into the classroom w/ the exception of a packed meal (w/ documentation) or sealed food purchased at a store for a special event (staff will sanitize outside packaging).
- Children's coats, extra clothes, etc. will be stored away from each other in individual bags or cubbies.

Daily Health check will be conducted before you are able to leave your child:

- Teaching staff will ask you if the home screener was conducted and if there were any signs of illness present.
- Temperature will then be taken with a no contact thermometer.
- Thermometers will be sanitized before/after use, and in-between if contact was made using alcohol pad.
- Teaching staff will conduct a visual inspection of your child.
- Children who are showing signs of feeling unwell (flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing, persistent coughing, sore throat, fatigue, or excessive fussiness), have a temperature above 100.4 degrees, will be sent home with the you.
 - If symptoms resolve within 24 hours without fever reducing medication (and no other signs or new symptoms develop) the child may return to the school setting.

- If a child has signs of suspected or confirmed COVID-19, they can return to the center
 - with a doctor's release note and/or
 - when they are fever free for 72 hours without medication
 - the symptoms have improved, and
 - it has been 10 days since symptoms appeared
- If anyone in the family has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the child may not return to school until a 14-day quarantine period has passed (see What to do if children, staff, or parents develop signs of COVID-19 below)

In the classroom:

- Teaching staff will stagger circle time and table time activities to allow for 10 or less children to be in each group.
- Small Group combinations will remain consistent- same group of children with same teacher.
- Siblings or children from the same household will be grouped together.
- We will limit the mixing of children, such as staggering playground times and keeping groups separate for special activities.
- We will allow for increased ventilation when possible (keep windows open, etc.) and use an air purifier.
- When possible, more time will be spent outdoors.
- No tooth brushing will occur in the classroom setting.
- Each student will have an individual box of materials- pencil, crayons, scissors, glue, play dough, etc. that will be sanitized weekly on Wednesdays.

Some accommodations or adjustments may need to be made on an individual basis.

Masks:

Children (2 years of age or older) must wear masks throughout the school day.

- Masks will be stored during meals or mask breaks in individual Ziploc bags, on chairs by command hook, or suspended from child's neck using mask lanyards.
- Masks must be worn on the playground/outside, unless children are able to consistently, appropriately social distance and utilize individual materials.
- Mask breaks will occur throughout the day (preferably outside)
 - Children will be spaced at minimum, 6 feet apart throughout the space or separated by solid furniture
- Staff will provide individual activities or independent reading materials (materials will be sanitized after use or at least weekly if assigned to individual children).

Mealtime:

- Seating will be staggered where possible to allow room in between children, both at circle areas and tables.
- Staff and children will be eating meals in the classroom (unless otherwise identified)
 - We will use staggered seating and use of available tables to provide distance; teaching staff will monitor and sit close to but not at the table with children when possible.
- No family-style dining- staff will plate meals for children and/or districts will provide individually bagged meals.

Steps for COVID-19 Exposure

In the event you suspect that you may have been exposed to the virus, please follow these steps:

- **Identify the level of risk.** Ask yourself, were you in close contact for 15 minutes or more (no mask or social distancing) with someone infected with the virus within two days of the person experiencing symptoms? (If so, you will likely be contacted by a PA Department of Health Contact Tracer or designee).

If YES: You should self-quarantine for 14 days, even if you are not experiencing symptoms.

- Contact your child's teacher immediately by phone

If you are experiencing symptoms:

- **Contact your health care provider.** It can take up to 14 days after exposure to the virus for a person to develop COVID-19 symptoms. A negative result before the end of the 14-day quarantine period does not rule out possible infections. By self-quarantining for 14 days, you lower the chance of possibly exposing others to COVID-19.

Hand Washing Procedures for Adults & Children

Proper handwashing is key to preventing illness from spreading. All program staff will follow the handwashing procedure below and will work with your children and families to do the same:

- Use soap and running water between 60 and 120 degrees Fahrenheit
- Rub your hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds (a good rule of thumb would be to sing the ABC's twice)
- Wash hands thoroughly making sure to clean the back of hand, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails
- Rinse well
- Dry hands with a paper towel
- Turn off the water using a paper towel, not your clean hands

Hand Washing is Required

Before and After:

- Eating, handling food, or feeding your child
- Giving medication or applying first aid
- Playing in water that is used by more than one person
- Diapering
- Tooth brushing

After:

- Using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet
- Handling bodily fluid (mucus, blood, vomit)
- Handling animals or cleaning up animal waste
- Playing in the sand, on wooden playsets, and being outdoors
- Cleaning or handling the garbage

Head Lice Policy

Children in our program will avoid head-to-head contact with other children to minimize the spread of head lice. If your child has head lice, you will be notified and informed that your child must be treated before returning to school.

In addition to applying the appropriate head lice treatment:

- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens and other items (car seat) that your child wore or used during the two days before the scalp treatment.
- Use hot water (at least 130 degrees F) for the laundry cycle and high heat for the dryer cycle.
- Dry clean clothing and items that are not washable and/or seal these items in a plastic bag for two weeks.
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (at least 130 degrees F) for 5-10 minutes.
- Vacuum the floor, furniture, and car seats. Be sure to dispose of vacuum bags and/or clean the vacuum canister.

First Aid/CPR

Staff have ongoing training on program developed health, safety, and childcare requirements to ensure the safety of children in their care; including appropriate training in First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) based on the ages of the children. At least one staff person who has successfully completed training in Pediatric First Aid and CPR will be in attendance at all times.

Keeping Children's Healthcare Up-to-Date

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will work with you to obtain records of your child's physical and dental exams. A child is considered "up-to-date" when he/she is on a schedule of age-appropriate preventative primary medical and oral dental health care. We will monitor the implementation of a follow-up plan to meet any treatment needs.

Immunizations

Having your child immunized according to the Pennsylvania Academy of Pediatrics recommended schedule is an important part of his/her overall health. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will need to obtain immunization records from you within 90 calendar days of your child first attending the program.

If your child has not been immunized, we will assist you with making arrangements to bring your child up-to-date on immunizations as quickly as possible.

Children who are exempt from immunizations require the following documentation:

- Statement from your child's primary care physician (PCP).
- Legal exemption with notarization, waiver, or other state-specific document with your signature.
- Religious or strong moral or ethical convictions opposing immunizations must be submitted in writing with your signature.

Food Allergies

If your child is diagnosed with a food allergy, First Start Partnerships for Children and Families must receive a Medical Plan of Care that contains special nutrition or feeding instructions before your child enters the program.

We need a signed care plan from your child's primary care physician (PCP) indicating:

- The food allergy
- Your child's reaction to those foods
- A list of food substitutions your child can have in place of the food items he/she cannot eat
- A list of medications that must be administered should your child be exposed to that food

The classroom staff will post dietary modifications in the classroom to ensure your child's safety at all times. The cafeteria/caterer will also be notified of your child's food restriction so that substitutions can be provided.

Medication Administration

Teachers will only administer approved, necessary medications in the classroom. While your child is in our program, the following procedures must be followed:

- The first dose of a new medication should always be given at home to ensure there are no adverse side effects.
- If medications are to be provided in the classroom, a medication authorization form must be completed by the prescribing physician. We cannot accept medications without proper authorization.
- All medication authorization forms must be signed by you and the prescribing health professional.
- When medication is no longer necessary in the classroom, we will need written correspondence from the prescribing physician that includes the discontinue date and reason.

Child Abuse Reporting

Each of our staff is responsible for the health and welfare of all children participating in the program, and as such are mandatory reporters of any suspected child abuse or neglect.



APPENDICES

CONTACT INFORMATION

Head Start, Early Head Start, Pre-K Counts

Classroom/Family Services Information:

My child's classroom is _____

The classroom address is _____

The classroom times are _____ am to _____ pm

The teacher's names are _____

The classroom phone number is _____

The main office phone number is (717) 263-8019

The classroom Program Coordinator's name and phone number is _____

Inclement Weather Information:

My classroom will be delayed or closed when _____ School District is delayed or closed due to inclement weather. You will be notified by First Start Partnerships for Children and Families, via REMIND in the case of an unscheduled early dismissal.

Emergency Information:

In case of evacuation, the classroom will go to _____
at the address of _____.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Early Head Start Home Visiting

Home Visiting Information:

My family's home visitor is _____

My home visitor's work hours are typically _____ am to _____ pm

My home visitor's phone number is _____

My home visitor's email is _____

The main office phone number is (717) 263-8019

My home visitor's supervisor's name and phone number is

Inclement Weather Information:

My home visits/family days will be rescheduled when the _____

School District is closed due to inclement weather. You will be notified by your Home Visitor if a delay or early closure will affect your weekly home visit or group experience.

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STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Review the following list and initial each statement.

- I give permission for my child to participate in all classroom field trips during the school year.
- I understand that children will walk or be transported in buses.
 - I also understand that I will be kept informed of scheduled field trips other than routine walks in the neighborhood and nearby playgrounds.
- I also give permission for my child to be transported as needed for services and activities First Start Partnerships for Children and Families provides.
- I give permission to have my child involved in general classroom observations by staff members, outside consultants, and students.
- I give permission for the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment to be completed for my child.
- I give permission to forward my child's education files and to communicate verbally with the next school my child will be attending.
- I give permission to forward my child's health and dental records and communicate verbally to the next school placement which my child will be attending.
- I give permission to allow my child to be photographed or videotaped to be used within the classroom setting.
- I give permission to allow my child to be photographed or videotaped for the purpose of public relations (website, agency Facebook, brochures, etc.) and news releases.

Please initial here if you do NOT want your child to participate in the Second Step Child Protection Unit curriculum.

Please initial here if you would NOT like your child's photo/video taken for public relations purposes.

I have received the First Start Partnerships Family Handbook and applicable information specific to program policies. I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to read and familiarize myself with the policies and procedures of the Family Handbook.

I have read, understand, and accept the conditions noted above.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

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First Start Partnerships *for* Children & Families



OFFICE OF HEAD START

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families



pennsylvania
PRE-K COUNTS



pennsylvania
KEYSTONE STARS
OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING