



Growing **Hearts**
&
Minds

Pre-K Counts Family Handbook 2019-2020



**First Start
Partnerships**
for **Children & Families**



First Start Partnerships for Children and Families has been serving the children and families of Franklin County, PA since 1965

Dear Family,

Congratulations on taking the step to prepare for school readiness 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 educator, 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, management, or other families. 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 staff are very experienced in welcoming new families 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 their 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.

Yours,

Annette

**Dr. Annette Searfoss
President & CEO**

Table of Contents

About Us

- 5 **What is Pre-KCounts?**
- 6 **Program Leadership**
- 7 **Program Information/Sample Daily Schedule**
- 8 **Important School Year Information**
- 9-10 **2019-20 School Calendar**

What can I expect?

- 13 **Head Start Performance Standards/Statement of Commitment**
- 14 **Assurance of Non-Discrimination**
- 15 **Confidentiality/Child's Records**
- 15 **Eligibility and Enrollment**

What do I need to know?

- 18-20 **Classroom Policies (Backpacks, Clothing, Pick Up/Drop Off, Attendance, etc.)**
- 21 **Our goals for children**
- 21 **Emergency Preparedness/Weather and Emergency Closings**
- 22 **Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences**
- 22 **Screening & Assessment and Curriculum**
- 23 **Transitions**
- 24-29 **Health and Safety**

How can I be involved?

- 32 **Volunteer Opportunities**
- 32 **Parent Committees**
- 32-33 **Parent/Guardian Rights and Responsibilities**
- 34 **Staff/Family Partnerships, Communication**
- 34 **Services to families**
- 35 **Complaint Procedure**
- 36-38 **Classroom Permission/Health Consent**
- 39 **Statement of Understanding**

Our Mission and Vision

Mission:

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

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.

1

About Us

What is Pre-K Counts?

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts pre-kindergarten program, established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, makes quality pre-kindergarten opportunities available to children and families across the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania provides high-quality pre-kindergarten education for at-risk three and four-year old children within the state. Grant funding covers all costs of Pre-K Counts. In 2016-17, there were 17,900 children served in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in 65 counties by 204 lead agencies at 673 locations.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is a state-funded pre-kindergarten learning program. This 5 ½ hour, school-year program for 3 and 4-year-old boys and girls, is intended to provide an early educational boost that will support a positive transition to kindergarten and future school success.

Pre-K Counts focuses on reading and math skills, social and school readiness skills, following directions and getting along with fellow students and teachers. Additionally, there is an emphasis on developing an interest in learning and involving the family in their child's education.

Program Leadership

Board of Directors

BOARD CHAIR Gladys Leon	VICE BOARDCHAIR Jennifer Hawbecker	NOMINATING CHAIR Robert L. Thomas
SECRETARY Ms. Yolanda Slimmer	BOARD MEMBER Carolyn Clouser	BOARD MEMBER Alice Elia, M.Ed.
BOARD MEMBER Brandi Glenn-Akers	BOARD MEMBER Joanne Cochran	BOARD MEMBER Ms. Ann Spottswood
BOARD MEMBER Dr. Linda L. Thomas-Worthy	BOARD MEMBER Dr. Paul Sick	BOARD MEMBER Casey Bogner
BOARD MEMBER Ryan Elbel		

Pre-K Advisory Council

The Pre-K Advisory Council (PAC) supports families in becoming integrally involved in their child's education and offers an opportunity for participation in program leadership. The PAC offers guidance on overall program operations, including: family engagement efforts, community involvement, Parent Committee activities, review of written procedures, and review of program efforts. The PAC meets monthly, all Pre-K Counts family participants are invited to become members of the Council and may voluntarily elect to serve in PAC officer roles to guide the Council's work and focus.

Program information

Hours of Operation

Our administration office location:

1438 Excel Avenue

Chambersburg, PA 17201

Monday-Friday 8:00 AM-4:00 PM, Closed on all school holidays/staff training days.

Our program office location:

290 W. Washington St.

Chambersburg, PA 17201

Monday - Friday 8:00-4:00 PM, Closed on all school holidays/staff training days.

Our classroom and teacher times vary.

Please consult with your teacher for classroom specific information.

Daily Schedule

While all classroom schedules vary, an example of a 5 1/2 hour day could look like this:

8:00-Arrival/Handwashing/Welcome Activities

8:45-Breakfast

9:20-Circle Time

9:35-Center Time

10:30-Small Groups

11:00-Movement/Outdoor Play

11:45-Handwashing/Lunch

12:30-Center Time

1:30-Dismissal

Important School Year Information

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 _____, _____, and _____

The classroom phone number is _____

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

The classroom supervisor's name and phone number is _____

Inclement Weather Information:

My classroom will be delayed or closed when the _____ 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 _____.

2019 – 2020 School Calendars

Access the calendars by clicking the School District below

[Waynesboro Area School District](#)

[Chambersburg Area School District](#)

[Tuscarora School District](#)

[Greencastle/Antrim School District](#)

[Fannett-Metal School District](#)



2

What can I expect?

Pre-K Counts Program Regulations

Pre-K Counts has a variety of regulations and criteria related to providing a developmentally appropriate program. These criteria include having well-qualified and trained staff, specific staff-child ratios and group sizes, requirements for length of children's day, and a comprehensive curriculum. The Program's curriculum aligns with the early learning standards established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education including assessment of student progress and the classroom environment.

We believe that quality is a goal to work toward every day. Therefore, we have also made ongoing self-assessment an integral part of our programs. Teachers must maintain ongoing professional development in order to provide the best educational opportunities to all Pre-K Counts students.

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 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.**

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.



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 provided exclusively to staff including Classroom Teachers, Education Coordinators, and other staff and consultants as needed (e.g. in the case of a specific health concern).

Access to files is on a “Need to Know Basis”. Only staff members that are involved with your child/family will have access to the records.

Release of Confidential Information

Our program will not release information from a child’s record or file without the consent of a parent/guardian. If the program receives a request for information on a child and/or our program would like to obtain information from an outside entity, we will request that the parent/guardian sign a consent form. Parents/guardians have the right to refuse signing a release consent form.

Upon request, a parent/guardian may have access to a child’s records. Upon transitioning out of Pre-K Counts, files will be retained for one year.

Parents/guardians have the right to add information, comments, data, or other relevant material to their child’s record. They also have the right to request, in writing, deletion or amendment of any information contained in the record.

Eligibility and Enrollment

Our program follows PA Pre-K Counts enrollment guidelines. To enroll in our program, you must:

- **Be income eligible**
- **Meet the age requirement of 3 or 4 years old by August 31.**
- **Complete all health and enrollment forms in the application packet**
- **Provide proof of eligibility/income**
- **There are no tuition/fees for enrolling and attending the Pre-K Counts program.**



3

**What do I need
to know?**

Classroom Policies

Appropriate Clothing

In our Head Start program, children are involved in active play every day, both inside and outside. It is important that children come to school dressed appropriately. This includes:

- **Comfortable clothing, which is easy to put on and take off (for easier toileting)**
- **Comfortable shoes, preferably sneakers (Open-toed or backless shoes are not permitted)**

Please send your child to school with clothing appropriate for the weather/season:

- **Coat, mittens, hats in the winter**
- **Boots for rain or snow.**

Children must have at least one complete change of clothing appropriate for the season (labeled with child's name or initials) at all times in case of messy play or a bathroom accident. This includes:

- **Shirt & Pants**
- **Underwear & Socks**

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is provided every day in suitable weather. Outdoor play will not occur if the temperature falls below 25°F (including wind chill) or above 90°F, poor air quality conditions exist (including ozone levels), or if there is a heat advisory in effect. Due to supervision requirements, First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will not be able to accommodate requests for children to stay inside during outdoor playtime.

Toileting Policy

If a child is not potty-trained before entering our program, staff will work with you to meet your goals of toilet training your child. Staff and parents will work to ensure that children will reach milestones in toilet training through learning about muscle control, emotional readiness and willingness to cooperate, and ability to communicate toileting needs. You will need to provide wipes and pull-ups/diapers for your child during program hours.

Arrival and Departure

To ensure your child's safety, a parent/guardian or an authorized adult must accompany your child to and from the classroom when dropping them off and picking them up. You must sign your child in at drop off and out at pick up. Please follow your child's classroom hours for arrival and departure times.

If an emergency arises and you will be late for pick up, you must notify the center. If there is no notification 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 thank you for your cooperation in this matter. We know you understand that for the safety and well-being of your children, it is essential that all children are picked up on time by the appropriate people and that a responsible adult is available to receive the children from the center. At no time will staff hold the child responsible for the situation or discuss the issue with the child.

Emergency Contact Information

During the enrollment process, you will provide Emergency Contact information. This information will be updated at least annually for your family. The center/program must have at least one phone number by which we can reach the parent/guardian. We recommend that there be at least two emergency contacts (authorized persons that can pick up and transport the child home in the parent/guardian's absence).

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

Pick up authorization

Our program is deeply committed to the safety of the children we serve. Children will only be released to parents/guardians and authorized adults. Authorized adults should be 18 years of age or older, however, if due to your family's needs, a person of a younger age is needed to pick-up your child, this request may be considered on a case by case basis.

All requests to designate additional emergency contacts as authorized adults, must be received in writing. All persons picking up your child from the center must have proper photo identification (preferably a driver's license) at all times, this includes parents/guardians.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access to the child by a court order, we must have documentation to this effect. We will keep a copy on file and comply with the terms of the documentation.

If the parent picking up the child, or the person authorized by you to do so, is physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the staff on site, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, we will not release your child. In this event, staff will

attempt to contact your child's other parent/guardian or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parents/guardian.

Smoke-Free Zones

First Start Partnership's classrooms and offices are smoke-free zones. Please do not smoke on the property of any of our classroom locations.

Transportation

At school district sites where transportation is provided, the school district ensures compliance with Pennsylvania law.

The center will not transport children in emergency situations. If a child requires emergency transportation, the parent/guardian or the emergency responders will provide transportation.

Safety is our primary concern when transporting our children. Everyone is expected to follow the district's bus safety rules and if the rules are not followed it could result in suspension or termination of transportation services.

In using school district transportation services, you must agree to the following:

- **The monitor will assist each child into/out of their seat.**
- **You must be ready with your child 10 minutes before and after scheduled pick-up and drop-off times. Remember, we are transporting preschoolers and sometimes delays in the route may occur due to unforeseen circumstances. We appreciate your understanding.**
- **Drivers will come to a complete stop at each designated bus stop. If no one is at the stop, the driver will continue the route.**
- **Never approach the bus until the bus has stopped and the driver has opened the door.**
- **Stay out of the DANGER ZONE-10 feet all around the bus is the danger zone. The driver may not be able to see a person standing in the danger zone.**
- **Children will only be picked up and dropped off at assigned community bus stops.**
- **Pick-up/drop off points are established at the discretion of the district's transportation services.**
- **Each child must have at least one authorized adult (as indicated in writing) in the immediate area of the pickup/drop off spot.**
- **If no authorized person is there to receive your preschooler, we:**
 - **Will not release your child.**
 - **Will notify the program office to attempt to contact you or authorized person listed as an Emergency Contact.**
 - **Will return to the center with your child.**
 - **If no authorized person is available after 1 hour past the expected drop-off time and no contact has been made by you, the local police department and Children and Youth Services will be notified.**

Emergency Preparedness

It is a goal of First Start Partnerships to partner with the local school district(s) in order to place the utmost importance on children's health and safety. Therefore, teachers and children participate in a variety of drills targeted towards safety preparedness.

These trainings may include:

- **Severe Weather Drills**
- **Fire Drills**
- **ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) Active Shooter Response Training**
- **Bus Evacuations (Transport centers only)**

Attendance Policy

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 each day. If your child will be absent or tardy, you must contact the teachers immediately. When necessary, you may need to provide written documentation from a doctor regarding the absence.

Pre-K Regulations define Excused Absences as: absences when a student is prevented from attending for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons. These can be further defined as illness, family emergency, death of a family member, health or dental appointments, fire, natural disasters, or other extenuating circumstances deemed as excused by the program. All other absences are defined as Unexcused Absences.

If your child has been absent for three (3) consecutive days with no explanation from you, the teacher is required to contact you by phone. If your child has more than five (5) consecutive unexcused absences, teaching staff will contact you and together, discuss the reasons for the absence and determine ways to support the child's attendance in school. The discussion will be recorded as part of the child's Attendance Success Plan.

If a child has ten (10) or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10 percent unexcused absences over the course of the school year (more than 18 days total) and have not responded to program supports, the child may be withdrawn from the Pre-K Counts 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 child's attendance.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families strives to work with parents to remove barriers causing children to be absent or tardy, so that your child can benefit from the 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 “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 name, and understand and value books and printed materials.

Cognitive Development to sort and match objects, count and identify numbers, recognize colors and shapes and to 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 group, small group, and for individual children. All children develop at their own pace, many “challenging” behaviors are developmentally appropriate for preschool-aged children. Our goal is to support each child’s individual learning, while maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all children in the classroom. We strive to partner with you to make the learning experience a positive and beneficial one for your child.

Classroom Rules and Program Participation

Each classroom has a set of classroom rules (three to five) developed by the teachers and children. The classroom rules 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 including: 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 Education Coordinators will work with your family to establish a support plan for your child, to ensure their success in the classroom and to meet your child’s individual needs. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families does not exclude any eligible child from participation in the Pre-K Counts program.

Weather and emergency closings

Your child's safety is our number one priority. When inclement weather occurs and it is not safe for our children and families to be out on the roads, we may close our program for the day.

You 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 for Children and Families closings or delays will be available via the website and Facebook page. www.firststartpartnerships.org

Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences

The classroom teachers look forward to getting to know you and your family. Teachers will meet with your family for a home visit prior to your child starting the program. Please feel free to ask questions, share information, and get to know your child's teachers.

In late *October*, teachers will schedule times for parent-teacher conferences in the classroom. We will share what your child has been learning at school and ask you about their experiences at home.

In mid-*February*, there will be another opportunity for parent teacher conferences. We will update you on your child's progress towards their goals and talk about ways we can partner in the next few months. Additionally, teaching staff will use this time to discuss Kindergarten registration with you.

In early *May*, the teachers will schedule a time to meet with you and discuss the progress your child made during the school year and help you plan for summer learning. This is also a time to discuss transitions if your child will be moving onto Kindergarten.

Screening & Assessment

It is important for us to assess all children's development as they enter our program. This helps teachers create the best possible plan to get your child ready for school. We will ask for your help in filling out the *Ages and Stages Questionnaires* which we will use to learn about your child and the necessary guidance needed to support their learning.

Curriculum

Our teachers use the *Creative Curriculum* to plan lessons for your child. The Creative Curriculum is based on a firm foundation of research and provides a curriculum framework that includes focus/interest areas. Children's needs and interests are identified through ongoing observations and assessments that are gathered by the teaching staff, and the environment and lesson plans are molded to meet the needs of the classroom and children.

All of our lessons align with the *Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards*. We also supplement our teaching with the *Second Step* curriculum for social and emotional learning, the *Child Protective Unit* to build upon

the child's protective factors, and *Color Me Healthy* to educate about nutrition. To learn more about lesson planning in your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher.

Transitions

First Start Partnerships aims to support you and your child through all school transitions. Your child and family will receive the necessary services to best meet your needs and support you as your child's first and primary teacher.

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.**
- **Collaboration from First Start Partnerships in sharing information, as requested and with permission, in support of the transition to the new program.**

Children and families who transition to Kindergarten will:

- **Be encouraged to attend the information-sharing meeting within their home school district.**
- **Be provided with a list of necessary materials needed for Kindergarten registration, as well as registration information for their child's receiving elementary school or school district.**
- **Be able to discuss with the teachers any follow-up as needed during ongoing home visits to support families in gathering the necessary information.**
- **Participate in Kindergarten Registration events in the 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 the child's receiving Kindergarten teacher or school district.**
- **Receive information about summer programs, including BOPIC, school district lunch programs, school district summer learning programs, etc.**

Pre-K classrooms located in a school district building provide opportunities for children and their families to become familiar with the environment, personnel, and routines of the district where they will be attending Kindergarten, this may include:

- **Shared activities (reading buddies, assemblies, engagement events)**
- **Meal time routines**
- **Interactions with Kindergarten teachers and school personnel**
- **Library experiences, etc.**

Health and Safety

Food and Nutrition

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will provide the meals of breakfast and lunch to your child each day.

- If your child is in a school building, the school cafeteria will provide your child with their meals.
- If your child is in a church building, First Start Partnerships contracts with a local company to provide meals.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families collaborates with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to ensure all meals and snacks are credible and meet all food requirement components. All children who are developmentally ready to eat solid foods will receive the following food items daily: one vegetable, one fruit, one whole grain, and a meat item which can include: meat/poultry/seafood/egg/cheese/yogurt daily. Children who are 3-5 years of age will receive low-fat or fat-free milk.

Menus are reviewed to ensure all meals meet CACFP requirements.

Daily Health Checks

Because we know how important a child's health is to learning, we perform health checks on each child daily. Upon arrival each day, classroom staff will LOOK, LISTEN, and FEEL for signs and complaints of the following: bruises/swelling, fever, rash, itchy scalp/body, cough, cuts/sores, headache, diarrhea, pink eye, mouth pain, runny nose, sore throat, stomach ache, unusual mood/behavior (excessively tired), unusual skin color (pale), and vomiting.

- **If a child has a fever of 101 or greater, is vomiting, has diarrhea, and/or perceived pink eye, the classroom staff will contact the parent/guardian immediately to pick the child up from school.**
- **If a child has bruising/swelling, itchy scalp/body, cough, cuts/sores, headache, runny nose, sore throat, stomach ache, unusual mood/behavior, and/or unusual skin color, the classroom staff will communicate concerns to parent/guardian either via phone call or in person the same day.**
 - **If a child has ongoing health related concerns such as mouth pain or unusual mood/behavior, parent/guardians may be asked to seek medical attention from a Primary Care Physician and/or dental provider.**
 - **If a child presents with unexplained bruises/swelling and/or cuts/sores the classroom staff will contact the parent/guardian. *If there is concern, the classroom staff are mandated reporters and required to report any signs of potential child abuse.***

Illness Policy

When a child is feeling ill, he/she may have a hard time participating in daily activities, therefore the classroom staff will consider the following when deciding if a child can stay for the program day.

- **If an illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities**

- **If the care the child needs is greater than the classroom staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children**
- **If the child poses a risk of spreading illness to others**

Temporary exclusions occur when the following are observed or documented:

<i>Fever above 101, child must be fever free without the aid of medications before returning back to school the next day</i>
<i>Diarrhea, watery stools or decreased form of stool that is not contained in diaper or if it causes soiled pants or clothing</i>
<i>Blood or mucus in the stools</i>
<i>Vomiting more than two times in the previous twenty-four hours, unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a non-infections condition and the child remains adequately hydrated</i>
<i>Abdominal pain that continues for more than two hours or intermittent pain associated with fever or other symptoms of an illness</i>
<i>Mouth sores with drooling that the child cannot control unless the child's primary care provider states that the child is noninfectious</i>
<i>Rash with fever or behavioral changes, until the primary care provider has determined that the illness is not an infectious disease</i>
<i>Active tuberculosis until the child's primary care provider or local health department indicates the child received appropriate treatment and can return</i>
<i>Streptococcal Pharyngitis (Strep throat or other streptococcal infection), until the child has two doses of antibiotic (one may be taken the day of exclusion and the second just before returning the next day)</i>
<i>Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried or crusted (usually six days after onset of rash and no new lesions have appeared for at least 24 hours)</i>
<i>Rubella, until 7 days after the rash appears</i>
<i>Mumps, until five days after onset of parotid gland swelling</i>
<i>Pertussis, until five days of appropriate antibiotic treatment</i>
<i>Measles, until four days after onset of rash</i>
<i>Hepatitis A infections, until one week after onset of illness or jaundice if the child's symptoms are mild or as directed by health department (Note: Protection of the</i>

others in the group should be checked to ensure everyone who was exposed has received the vaccine or receives the vaccine immediately.)

Impetigo/Scabies/Head lice **ONLY IF** child has not been treated after notifying family at the end of the prior program day. Exclusion is not necessary before the end of the day as long as the lesions can be covered

Classroom staff will perform the following if any of the above symptoms are observed:

- Provide a place where the child will be comfortable and supervised
- Contact the family to pick up the child as soon as possible
- Discuss signs and symptoms of illness with the parent/guardian
- Follow advice given by the Primary Care Physician
- Contact the Health Coordinator if there is a concern for infectious disease

Children may return to school when the following occurs:

- Fever free for 24 hours **WITHOUT** medication
- Stools are formed and contained in diaper or pants
- Doctors note indicating that blood and mucus in stools is not contagious
- Vomiting and abdominal pain has subsided
- Doctor's note indicating that child may return to school following necessary treatment.

Head Lice Policy

You will be notified if your child is affected and will need to provide treatment before your child may return to school. Please speak with your child's teacher if you have any questions regarding the school district's Head Lice Policy.

In addition to treating your child with appropriate treatment:

- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens and other items 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.
- Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry cleaned 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 and furniture, particularly where your child sat or lay.

Children and staff who have been in close contact with an affected child should be examined and treated if infested.

Head lice infestations in children attending preschool is common and is NOT a sign of poor hygiene. Transmission occurs by direct contact with hair of infested people and less commonly by direct contact with personal items of infested people. Head lice survive less than one to two days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp.

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 teach the children 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 paper towel, not your clean hands

Children and Teaching Staff will wash their hands:

- Upon arrival for the day, after breaks or transitioning from one location to another

Before and After:

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

After:

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

First Aid/CPR

All classroom teachers have ongoing training on program developed health, safety, and child care 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.

Source of Health Care

Within 30 days of program attendance, parents will be consulted to determine whether their child has accessible health care provided by a primary care physician (PCP) who maintains the child's ongoing health record and is not primarily a source of emergency or urgent care.

If a child does not have a primary care physician (PCP) and/or health insurance coverage, the family advocate will assist the family in accessing a source of care and health insurance that will meet the above criteria, as quickly as possible.

Keystone Health also provides health care services to children and families who do not have insurance by using a sliding scale based on income.

Keeping Children's Healthcare Up-to-Date

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will obtain child physicals and dentals from health care and oral health care professionals. A child is up-to-date when he/she is on a schedule of age appropriate preventative primary medical and oral health care.

- The above up-to-date information will be accessed using well-child visits and dental periodicity schedules.
- If a child is not up-to-date on his/her well-child or dental exams, the classroom staff will assist the family in facilitating those health care services to bring the child up-to-date.

Ongoing and Follow-Up Care

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will assist you in continuing with the recommended well-child and oral health care schedules. First Start Partnerships will track referrals and services provided and monitor implementation of a follow-up plan to meet any treatment needs associated with health or oral health.

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, classroom staff 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 the child's primary care physician (PCP)
- Legal exemption with notarization, waiver, or other state-specific document signed by the parent/guardian
- Religious or strong moral or ethical convictions opposing immunizations must be submitted in writing and signed by the parent/guardian

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 he/she enters the program. A signed care plan from your child's primary care physician (PCP) indicating the food allergies your child experiences as well as the following:

- **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 ensure all dietary modifications are posted in the classroom to include:

- **Child's full name**
- **Child's special needs**
- **Any dietary restrictions with instructions, to include food substitutions**
- **What, if anything, needs to be done if your child is exposed to restricted foods**
- **If there is a nut allergy, classroom staff will post a sign outside the classroom door indicating the classroom is a nut free classroom**

The cafeteria/caterer will be notified of food restriction and substitutions will be provided.

Medication administration

Generally, when a child is taking medication he/she may be too sick to attend our program. 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 the proper authorization.**



4

**How can I be
involved?**

Volunteer Opportunities

In the classroom or at home - First Start Partnerships for Children and Families has an open-door policy. There are many opportunities to be involved in your child's education whether in the classroom or at home. According to the National Education Association, "regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school."¹ For more information on how to volunteer in the classroom or at home, speak with your classroom teacher!

If you would like to be a classroom volunteer, please speak with the classroom teacher about obtaining your clearances and the school district's approval process.

In the community - There are opportunities to hand out flyers or post them in the community. You may also partner with Pre-K Counts by performing other recruitment-type activities such as reaching out to families through community events. For more information, speak with your child's teacher.

Parent Committees

Parent Committees (PC) are an excellent way to get involved with the day-to-day planning of the Pre-K Counts Program. PC participants are involved with advising staff in developing and implementing local program policies and activities/services to ensure that the needs of Pre-K Counts families are met. We look forward to having your input.

Parent Committees will be held quarterly and may last approximately two hours. PC Meetings are structured so you and your child may attend.

Parent/Guardian Rights and Responsibilities

Parent and family participation and involvement are essential to the success of the Pre-K Counts program. We believe that parents and family members are their child's first teachers and are valuable contributors to our program.

Parent Rights

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

1. To be recognized as my child's primary educator.
2. To be treated with respect by the Pre-K Counts program.
3. To be welcomed in my child's classroom.
4. To receive information and guidance from the Pre-K Counts program about my child's progress and development, including regular progress reports from my child's teacher.
5. To participate in discussions about my child's progress and setting goals for my child's learning and development.

6. **To be supported as an advocate for my child. In the event that my child has a diagnosed disability or has been referred for a concern; I will be involved by the local intermediate unit in creating an Individualized Education Plan, and will be kept informed about my child's progress in meeting his/her goals.**
7. **To take part in decisions regarding my child's center and the Pre-K Counts 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 Pre-K Advisory Council participation.**
8. **To be informed about resources within the community related to education, health, social services, employment, etc.**
9. **To review and ask for clarification on policies and procedures.**
10. **To submit any concerns regarding the program's alleged violation of the local and federal standards.**
11. **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 Pre-K Counts program include:

1. **Ensuring my child attends the program consistently and on time to support his/her development.**
2. **Participating actively in the program and taking advantage of the opportunities that the program offers.**
3. **Working with teachers, staff, and other families in a cooperative manner.**
4. **Be open to new ideas and experiences that can benefit my child(ren) and me.**
5. **Helping make the Pre-K Counts program better by offering my opinions, constructive criticism, and suggestions.**
6. **Asking questions of my child's teacher, the Education Coordinator, or other members of the staff.**
7. **Reinforcing what my child learns at the program by working with my child at home.**
8. **Ensuring that my child is up to date on all required medical, dental, and immunization needs.**
9. **Agreeing to access follow-up care when health concerns are suspected or identified.**
10. **Participating in the orientation process to assist my child with transitioning into the school year at his/her center. This process occurs with all "new" children throughout the program year.**
11. **Participating in home visits and parent-teacher conferences each year with my child's teachers.**
12. **Volunteer with my child's program.**
13. **Ensuring that my child has extra clothing at the center.**

Services to Families

Our teachers are here to help you work towards your dreams and goals.

Teachers make home visits and schedule conferences throughout the year with all Pre-K Counts families.

These visits/conferences are meant to build upon the relationship between your child's classroom and the home. The visits/conferences are scheduled around your availability and are usually about a half hour long. This is your opportunity to share your thoughts about your child's progress in the classroom, talk about the things your family may need, and to let us know how we can help you.

The teachers support all areas of the program including health, nutrition and education. Their job is to be a bridge between you and our program and ensure we are meeting your family's needs.

Methods of Communication

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

- **Family E-Newsletter (email on file is required to receive newsletter)**
- **Flyers and formal invitations**
- **Facebook, Remind and First Start Partnerships for Children and Families website**
- **Face to face conversations**
- **Email and text messages**
- **Phone calls**

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.

Complaint Procedure

Step 1 – Discuss your concern with your classroom teacher.

Step 2 – After speaking to your child's teacher, if you feel that your concern has not been resolved please contact the Education Coordinator. Write a statement of concern with as much detail as possible and make sure to include your name and contact information.

Step 3 – Within 1 week of receiving the statement of concern the Education Coordinator will complete an investigation to include any observations of the situation and interview any persons directly involved.

Step 4 – You will be contacted after the investigation has been completed with follow up.

Classroom Permission

By signing the Family Handbook Statement of Understanding, I hereby agree that:

- **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 district 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 on 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 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.**

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families

Autorización para el Aula

Al firmar la declaración de entendimiento del manual del familiar, acepto lo siguiente:

- **Doy permiso a mi hijo a participar en viajes de campo de clase todos durante el año escolar. Entiendo que los niños a caminar o transportados en autobuses de First Start Partnerships for Children and Families para excursiones. También entiendo que será informado de excursiones programadas, distintos paseos rutinarios en el barrio y a parques cercanos. También doy permiso a mi hijo ser transportado como sea necesario para servicios y actividades de First Start Partnerships for Children and Families proporciona.**
- **Doy permiso para que mi hijo involucrado en general observaciones de aula por miembros del personal, fuera asesores y estudiantes.**
- **Yo doy para realizar la evaluación “Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment” (Evaluación de Estrategias de Enseñanza) a mi hijo.**
- **Doy permiso para reenviar archivos de Educación de mi hijo y a comunicarse verbalmente con la siguiente escuela que asistirá mi hijo.**
- **Doy permiso para que mi hijo a ser fotografiado o grabado en video para ser utilizado en el marco del salón de clases.**
- **Doy permiso para permitir que mi hijo sea fotografiado o filmado con el propósito de relaciones públicas.(Página web, Facebook, y folletos, etc.) y comunicados de prensa.**

_____ *Si no desea que la foto/video de su hijo sea tomada*

Health Consent

Pre-K Counts is mandated to provide health services to your child. Health services include screenings and/or observations on all children in cognitive development, speech/language development, and mental health development with vision and hearing screenings within 45 days of enrollment. You will receive the results of the screenings and if further evaluation is needed, Pre-K Counts staff will contact you.

By signing the Family Handbooks Statement of Understanding, you give your permission to forward your child's health and dental records and communicate verbally to the next school placement which your child will be attending.

Pre-K Counts tiene el mandato de proveer servicios de salud a su hijo. Los servicios de salud incluyen proyecciones y/o observaciones sobre todos los niños en desarrollo cognitivo, desarrollo del habla/lenguaje y desarrollo de salud mental con exámenes de visión y audición dentro de los 45 días de la inscripción. Usted recibirá los resultados de las proyecciones y si se necesita una evaluación adicional, el personal de Pre-K Counts se pondrá en contacto con usted.

Al firmar la declaración de comprensión de los manuales de familia, usted da su permiso para remitir los registros dentales y de salud de su hijo y comunicarse verbalmente a la siguiente colocación escolar a la que mi hijo asistirá.

Child Protective Unit

Each Head Start/PreK 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 the self-talk, help-seeking, and assertiveness skills- and teach additional skills children need to recognize, report, and refuse unsafe situations and 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 and 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

Statement of Understanding

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.

By signing below, I acknowledge receipt of these materials, and agree to abide by them.

I understand that it is my responsibility to address any questions I may have regarding the policies and procedures and information contained in the Family Handbook directly with my child’s teacher or classroom Education Coordinator. Information contained in this handbook may be subject to change.

_____ *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 read, understand, and accept the conditions noted above.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



**First Start
Partnerships**
for Children & Families