



Volunteers of America

SOUTHWEST

Early Head Start Program

PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK

www.voasw.org



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Welcome to Volunteers of America Southwest Early Head Start Program

Welcome to the Early Head Start (EHS) Program. This Handbook provides you with helpful information and important reminders to maximize the opportunities the program provides to you and your family. All parents/guardians are asked to thoroughly read this handbook and refer back to it throughout the year. Communication is the key to a successful relationship between the family and the program. If you have further questions regarding enrollment or program policies, please do not hesitate to call the Center Coordinator or the Administration Staff at our various centers:

Program History

Our Mission

To inspire hope through our ministry of service by providing vulnerable individuals and families with the tools to improve their quality of life.

Our Vision

A safe, healthy, and productive community where families are strengthened, people live with dignity, and human potential is realized.

Our Promise

To meet you where you are and walk side by side with you on your difficult, emotional journey toward a transformed life.

Our Philosophy

Three powerful concepts are the cornerstones to the Volunteers of America Southwest Early Head Start Programs: Trust, Connectedness, and Continuity. The concept of trust includes the relationships between Early Head Start families, caring and knowledgeable caregivers, parents, program planners, direct service providers, and community agencies. The concept of connectedness describes a system of interrelationships that promote participants working together staff/parents, parent/child, parent/parent, and community partners/parents/staff. Issues of continuity include continuity of care, of relationships, and service.

Holidays

Volunteers of America Southwest observes the following holidays and centers will be closed. Celebrations of commercialized or religious holidays will not be part of program curriculum.

- New Year's Eve & New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King's Day
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day



Child Development Services

Early Head Start- 0-3 and Pregnant Women

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Home-Based Imperial

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> Program Goals

- ◆ Families will be actively engaged in their child's education and act as advocates for their families.
- ◆ Program will effectively use technology to enhance overall data collection and analysis, communication and reporting systems and ensure program services are based on evidence-based practices, solid data and reflect the needs of staff, families, and partner's service area.
- ◆ The program will support strong communities and partnerships that reflect the needs of families within the service area.

> Program Options

Center-Based

The Center Based program option provides educational and child development services in the classroom setting. Center Based option operates Monday through Friday.

Home-Based

The Home-Based program offers weekly home visits for children and Bi-weekly home visits for prenatal for an hour and a half and two group socializations a month. Home Based program focuses on the home as the child's primary learning environment and the parent/guardian as their first teacher.

Prenatal

Prenatal services provide comprehensive prenatal and postpartum information, education and services that address needs for appropriate supports for emotional well-being, nurturing and responsive caregiving, and father engagement during pregnancy and early childhood.

> Non-Discrimination Policy

Volunteers of America Southwest EHS does not discriminate when determining which pregnant women, infants or toddlers will be served. The program does not discriminate based on sex, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, color, and mental or physical disability.

VOASW EHS:

- ◆ Welcomes the enrollment of infants, and toddlers with disabilities
- ◆ Understands the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make reasonable accommodations for such clients and implements appropriate accommodations.
- ◆ Refrains from all forms of religious instruction or worship.





> Confidentiality of Services

The use or disclosure of information maintained in the family's file will be limited to:

- ◆ VOASW EHS staff and Community Care Licensing (CCL)
- ◆ Those for whom the parent/guardian has provided a written and signed "Release of Information"
- ◆ Authorized personnel of agencies providing a high-quality service to all participating families, meeting funding requirements and coordination with city, state, and county services.

> Enrollment Procedures

All applicants must meet age and income requirements set forth by federal regulations. All eligible applicants are placed on a waitlist and ranked per the program's established criteria. All applicants must provide the following documents prior to enrollment:

- ◆ Income Verification
- ◆ Record of Birth or proof of pregnancy with expected date of delivery
- ◆ Immunization record and TB clearance
- ◆ Current Well Child Exam / Physical
- ◆ Copies of court orders relating to custody suits or restraining order if applicable
- ◆ Proof of address

> Custody Issues

Custody disputes must be handled by the courts. VOASW EHS has no legal jurisdiction to refuse a biological parent/guardian access to his/her child and/or school records. The only exception is when signed restraining orders or legal court papers, specifically stating visitation limitations, are on file at the site. Any student release situation which leaves the child's welfare in question will be handled at the discretion of the Center Coordinator, Family Service Coordinator, or designee. Should any situation become a disruption to the center, law enforcement will be contacted, and an officer will be requested to intervene. Parents/Guardians are asked to make every attempt not to involve site in custody matters. VOASW will make every attempt to reach the custodial parent/guardian when any other person not listed on the emergency card attempts to pick up a child.

> Arrival and Departure

For your child's protection and in compliance with state law, you must sign-in your child when he/she arrives at the school site and sign-out your child when he/she is picked up. Your full signature is required. (Please do not initial and make sure signature is clear)

The arrival and departure of your infant and toddlers are transitional times that need to be handled delicately. Please make sure the teaching staff are aware that your child is at school. Never leave the child alone under any circumstances. It is important that the teacher is aware of all arrivals and departures.





Arrival and Departure Cont'd

Please inform the staff in writing of any special instructions or information needed for that day. When picking up your children, parents/guardians must come into the centers through the front entrance of the building.

- ◆ Regular attendance provides the child with the opportunities to fully participate in the child's Individualized Developmental program. Frequent absences will result in a review of service options.
- ◆ A responsible adult must accompany all children on arrival and departure. No one under 18 will be allowed to bring or pick up a child. The responsible adult must sign-in children (using the iPad), fill-out a daily log sheet, and wait for a staff member to complete a health check on the child before leaving their child at the time of arrival.
- ◆ At the time of departure, the responsible adult must sign their child out (using the iPad) before taking their child from the center. Only individuals listed on your emergency form may pick up your child. A photo ID is required of anyone other than parents/guardians who come to pick up children. Please notify relatives, friends, and neighbors that you have listed on the emergency form that a photo ID is required to pick up your child
- ◆ It is important that you and the teacher communicate at the time of arrival and departure, so we ask that cell phones be turned off or vibrate on and that you do not use them when entering the building. It is also important to your child to feel a connection with you when arriving or leaving the center.
- ◆ Parents/guardians are responsible for the child's transportation to and from the center. Parents/guardians must follow safe driving and parking procedures when arriving or departing from the center. Please ensure you do not park in the RED ZONE areas. For the safety of your child, he/she must be in the proper car seat. All children in the family vehicle must adhere to the required safety car seat guidelines, or the child will not be released until appropriate arrangements are made for your child's safety.
- ◆ Make sure there are NO children left in your vehicle when you drop off your child.
- ◆ Any adult on the emergency card who is in possession of alcohol or illegal substances, or who is under the influence, and/or whose behavior poses a threat to the child or staff will not be allowed to remove the child from the center.

Late Drop/Late Pick Up Policy

- ◆ Contact the center if you are going to be late.
- ◆ Arrange with someone on the emergency card to pick up your child.

If you are late and have not contacted the center, one of the following actions may be taken:

- ◆ We will call you or your emergency contacts, using the telephone numbers provided card.
- ◆ If we do not get a response, we will call the police and they will transport your child to the nearest police station.



Attendance Policy (Center-Based)

Daily activities are planned for continuous learning experiences. It is critical for your child's success in the EHS program that you have them at school on time and that they participate throughout the day. Excessive absences, late arrivals or early pickups deny your child the full benefits of the learning experiences essential for their success.

- ◆ For emergency and legal purposes, parents/guardians are required to sign-in/sign-out (using full signature) on the iPad. The iPad signatures are used for roll call in an emergency.

- ◆ Parent/Guardian is responsible for contacting the center staff on the morning of or the day before the child is expected to be absent. Parent/Guardian will provide reason for absence.

**Note: Doctor's notes are required in cases of communicable diseases, serious illnesses/injuries including fractured bones.

- ◆ Children that show excessive late drop off and early or late pick-up may be dropped from the Center Base program and offered the Home Based program

- ◆ When a child is dropped off late, picked up early and/or not picked up at the end of class, a Late Arrival and Departure Notice will be completed with the parent/guardian

- ◆ After four (4) consecutive "Late Drop off/Late Pick-up" notices have been given, a plan of action will be developed with the Family Service Advocate (FSA). If the problem continues, the plan will be reviewed by the Family Service Coordinator (FSC), the child may be dropped from the Center Based program and offered the Home Based program. The parent/guardian can re-apply for the program, and the child may be placed on the wait list.



Attendance Policy (Home-Based)

Weekly activities are planned for continuous learning with parent/guardian and Home-Based Educator (HBE). Home visits cancelled by the HBE must be rescheduled within a month. We ask parents/guardians to make every attempt to schedule appointments as not to interfere with their weekly home visits. It is critical for your child's success that they participate in their weekly visits. Visits cancelled by the parent/guardian are not required to be rescheduled but will be recorded on the Home-Based, Home Visit Module in the Child Plus Software. The Home-Based Coordinator (HBC) will review each case before the family is dropped.

For example: death in the family or called into work. Parents/guardians must communicate with the HBE to ensure proper documentation is recorded for the excused home visit.



> Health Checks

Daily health checks are required by licensing, you must check your child's diaper upon arrival. If they are wet or soiled, please use our facilities and supplies to replace them. You are required to wash your children's hands and to stay with your child until health checks are completed before you can sign onto the iPad. Health checks include visual evaluation of your child's eyes, ears, nose, hair, arms, legs and feet, a temperature will be taken if the child appears sick upon arrival at school. Once health checks are complete you may sign in your child. If a child shows signs of illness, she/he will not be accepted into the classroom.

> Medication

If medication is needed during school hours, a Health Plan for Medication will need to be completed by the physician along with the required information:

- ◆ Physician instructions and written parental consent for any medication
- ◆ Medications must be in the original container with the child's name, name of medications with instructions of amount and how often it is to be administered, doctor's name and date medication was filled. All medication must also be checked for the expiration date.
- ◆ Medication must be cleared by the Center Coordinator and or Health Coordinator before the medication can be accepted in the classrooms. Teachers are not allowed to accept any medications from parents without prior approval from the Health Coordinator.

> Illness

The objective of the Illness Policy is to guarantee health and safety for all children and adults. If your child is sick, please keep them at home until he/she is better. If your child becomes ill at school, she/he will be separated from the other children and placed in an isolation area and will be notified immediately. In the event you cannot be reached, the alternate emergency names and numbers you have provided will be called. The staff will make the child comfortable and remain with her/him until you arrive. Please make sure emergency information on file for your child is current.

Children with the following symptoms or illnesses must stay home or be picked up immediately (30 min or less). This list is not all-inclusive:

- ◆ All contagious illnesses must have Doctor's clearance before returning to the site. Doctor's clearance should state whether the child had a contagious or non-contagious illness, as we report all communicable diseases to the Public Health Office and Licensing. Additional medical information, tests or examinations may be required prior to return. Our centers are required to report communicable diseases to the Public Health Department. In case of contagious illness in the family or household, the program must be notified within 24 hours. A written notice to parents/guardians will be sent whenever children have been exposed to a contagious illness.



- ◆ *Blisters on hand, feet, and mouth* – Child will be temporarily excluded for 7-10 days and will need a doctor's note to return
- ◆ *Chicken Pox*—the child may return after sores are dry and crusted over. A doctor's clearance is required and must state no longer contagious.
- ◆ *Conjunctivitis (Pink eye)*—the child may return 24 hours after treatment has started. A doctor's clearance must state child is no longer contagious.
- ◆ *COVID-19 Symptoms-Any Parents, child and siblings showing signs of COVID-19, or known to have tested positive for COVID-19*
- ◆ *Diaper Rashes* – if skin is broken and open, parents will need to fill out Licensing Medication Form 9221 and provide the center with diaper rash medication. Child may need a doctor's note to return. If a child requires a special diaper or wipes, the parent/guardian must have a doctor's note
- ◆ *Diarrhea*-Child must stay home for 24 hours and can return after there is no more diarrhea. A doctor's note may be required.
- ◆ *Fever*—A child will be sent home with a fever of 100.1 degrees and must stay home 24 hours. When the child returns to school, must be fever free with no fever reducing medications. Temperature will be checked during health check prior to signing in the child into class.

- ◆ *Impetigo*—the child may return 24 hours after treatment has started. A doctor's clearance is needed and must state child is no longer contagious
- ◆ *Lice*—the child may return when the hair is free of lice and nits. A check of the child's hair will be conducted by the Center Coordinator and our Health Coordinator before the child can be signed into the center.
- ◆ *Persistent cough, congestion, labored breathing, and wheezing.* May or may not be accompanied by yellow or green phlegm or is persistent and interferes with the child's comfort and/or ability to participate in the program's activities. They may return when symptoms are no longer present. A clearance from the Doctor may be required to return. If a child has asthma, the parent must inform the school at the time of daily health check if any medication was given for the asthma.
- ◆ *Rashes of unknown origin,* will need a doctor's note for clearance
- ◆ *Ringworm*—Ringworm of the scalp: The child may return after treatment is started and there is no drainage. A clearance from a doctor is required.
- ◆ *Ringworm of the body* does not require exclusion under the following circumstances:
 - Treatment has started, and area is covered
 - The affected area is not draining bodily fluids
 - If the condition does not improve, and the child is sent home for drainage issues, a doctor's clearance will be required
- ◆ *Runny nose*—A child with green mucous may be sent home, if it interferes with the child's comfort and/or ability to do activities in the classroom. A doctor's note may be requested for clearance for re-entry into the program.
- ◆ *Strep Throat*—A child may return 48 hours (about 2 days) after the 1st treatment was given. Child must be fever free. Doctor's clearance is needed and must state child is no longer contagious.
- ◆ *Vomiting*- Child must stay home for 24 hours and vomiting has stopped. A doctor's note may be required.

Education

Children learn best through play while interacting with their environment and others. Daily routines are a balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated learning, with an emphasis on responding to children's learning styles and building on their strengths and interests. Children are encouraged to interact with their environment while teachers facilitate learning. Playtime is designed to be non-gender based. The daily routines alternate periods of activity with quiet periods in accordance with the interest of the children. Weather permitting, all age groups play outdoors daily.

Your child's development is important to us. Teachers observe children carefully and design program activities with educational goals in mind for each child. Teachers want to meet with parents/guardians to share insights and to learn more about each child. The VOASW EHS program has established a mandate that teachers and parents/guardians meet four times a year to discuss the child's developmental progress.

VOASW EHS values the home-school partnership and have implemented the following activities to ensure effective two-way communication:

Center-Based Home Visit

Meeting families in their homes allows for intimate connections and trust to develop. These strong relationships are essential for supporting children and their families effectively. Home Visits are done twice a year, at the child's primary residence. A Home Visit offers opportunities for parents/guardians and teachers to share knowledge related to the strengths, needs, interests, and concerns regarding the child and family. During the initial Home Visit teachers will share the child's growth and development based on the results from the Ages & Stages Questionnaires-3, and Ages & Stages Questionnaires-SE. Parents/Guardians will participate in providing their perspective as they collaborate in creating an Individualized Development Plan (IDP) to provide goals and objectives that help with individualization during curriculum planning.

Center-Based Parent/Guardian Conference

Parent/Guardian Conferences are hosted at the site and are scheduled twice a year. You will be notified when these conferences are scheduled based on your availability. Conferences are a time for parents/guardian and teachers to communicate expectations, goals, and concerns. We value parents' input in the goal -setting process. Teachers will share the child's growth and development based on the results from the Desired Results Developmental Profile. The child's IDP goals we also be reviewed, and new goals will be created as needed.

Home-Based Parent/Guardian Conference

The Home-Based option participates in completing four (4) parent/guardian conferences throughout the year. The first parent/guardian conference is completed with parent/guardian and HBE to review the ASQ'SE and ASQ-3. HBE's will work collaboratively with parent/guardian to review and assess the developmental growth of each DRDP. The parent/guardian conferences are scheduled to be completed at home. HBE will notify parents/guardians in advance to plan and review the developmental growth of the child.

Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)

VOASW Early Head Start staff members provide a personalized learning plan for each child using an assessment tool developed by the California Department of Education, Early Learning and Care Division. The Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) is a validated assessment instrument that covers the developmental domains of approaches to learning, social-emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, and physical development. Children are assessed using the DRDP within 60 days of enrollment, following an assessment pattern of Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer if needed. This assessment tool is designed for teachers and providers to observe, document, and reflect on the learning, development, and progress of all infants and toddlers in our program. The assessment results are intended to be used by the teacher and providers to plan curriculum for individual children and groups of children, and to guide continuous program improvement. Parent input is a necessary component of this assessment.

Learning Genie

VOASW Early Head Start utilizes the Learning Genie application to engage, communicate and inform parents/guardians throughout the school year. The Learning Genie app will assist with capturing children's continuous growth through assessment and family engagement. Learning Genie is a confidential, and program compliant application utilized for documenting, tracking, and rating child observations. This electronic portfolio and reporting system enable teachers to maximize learning opportunities through quick and organized recorded observations of children. The Learning Genie helps teachers track and rate children's growth daily which informs their curriculum planning, activities, and lessons.

In addition, the Learning Genie offers a secure interactive mode of two-way communication that supports the school to home connection. Parents/guardians will be expected to download the Learning Genie application to receive messages, program notifications and other classroom updates. Teachers may share information including pictures, videos, activity notes, event invites, reminders, and important program notifications.

School Readiness Goals

VOASW Early Head Start approach to school readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. School Readiness Goals have been developed and implemented to support the student and families feeling of preparedness for kindergarten by providing developmentally appropriate experiences for children to excel at their pace, learning style, and interests. Parent/guardian engagement activities are sent home monthly, additional support is obtained through Ready Rosie, and in collaboration with Individual Development Plans (IDP's), these activities can support the child's learning from home.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

VOASW Early Head Start classrooms are assessed utilizing the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a researched-based observation tool used to help teachers and centers improve the quality of classroom interactions. The CLASS tool is designed to provide an objective behavioral assessment of a classroom focused on interactions.

The Infant CLASS tool has a single domain called Responsive Caregiving, which has four dimensions:

- Relational Climate
- Facilitated Exploration
- Teacher Sensitivity
- Early Language Support

The Toddler CLASS tool has two domains and Engaged Support for Learning. It is then divided into eight Dimensions:

Emotional and Behavioral Support

- Positive Climate
- Negative Climate
- Teacher Sensitivity
- Regard for Child Perspective
- Behavior Guidance

Engaged Support for Learning

- Facilitation of Learning and Development
- Quality of Feedback
- Language Modeling

Together, these dimensions describe classrooms where teachers participate in shared experiences, attend quickly to children's cues and needs, follow their leads, and expand on experiences, while engaging in back-and-forth communication exchanges.

> Curriculum

Curriculum for Early Head Start- Center-Based

Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Two's

Creative Curriculum is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that supports the development of the whole child, including those with disabilities and dual-language learners. Through high-quality comprehensive resources, and intentional support for caregivers as they create a foundation for school readiness. Creative Curriculum supports the unique needs of children during these critical and formative years of development. The curriculum focuses on integrating meaningful learning experiences into daily routines that help young children learn to regulate their emotions and behaviors, participate in a group, develop trusting relationships and have confidence in their own learning. Responsive planning, meaningful engagements and developmentally appropriate experiences build upon children's natural curiosity to learn and explore.

Curriculum Components

Teaching Guides: These guides provide detailed instruction for activities related to various studies.

Intentional Teaching Experience: Bilingual resources that support intentional teaching experiences.

Mighty Minutes: Short, engaging activities to enhance learning during transitions.

Highlights Hello: Short, engaging books for a read-aloud experience.

Book Conversation Cards: Promote language *development and interactions.*

> Curriculum for Early Head Start- Home-Based

Parents As Teachers

Parents as Teachers is a researched-based curriculum that promotes a parent's role as a child's teacher. Parents as Teachers is aligned with Head Start Early learning framework. Parents as Teacher's curriculum has an organized developmental scope and sequence including plans and materials to support implementation. It supports parent-child interactions. PAT is a home visiting parent education program that teaches new and expectant parents' skills to promote positive child development and school readiness.

> Ready Rosie Parent Curriculum

Ready Rosie is a research-based parenting curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge. Ready Rosie harnesses the power of video and mobile technology to empower families and programs to work together to promote school readiness. It provides education to parents/guardians through interactive workshops, on-going support, and resources.





Home-Based Visits

Home visits provide child-focused interactions that promote parent's ability to support their child's development, as the child's primary educator. Early Head Start Home-Based program provide a home visit per week, per family that lasts at least an hour and a half. If there are two participants enrolled in a household, the visit will be two hours. Visits are conducted with the enrolling parent/guardian at the address provided during enrollment.

Group Socialization

Early Head Start Home-Based program provide at least 22, two-hour group socializations activities over the course of the program year. The purpose of group socialization experience is to support child development for infant and toddlers by strengthening the parent/child relationship. The group socialization experiences reflect the program goals such as helping parents/guardians to better understand child development and encourage them to share their parenting challenges and joys with one another.



Pregnant Women

Early Head Start program provide prenatal services to pregnant women every other week for an hour and a half. These services include prenatal education in home visits or classes, referrals for prenatal care, and home visits by the nurse. We also provide prenatal and postpartum information, education and services to our pregnant moms.

Mental Health

Volunteers of America Southwest provides mental health services for our participants and families. Services are age appropriate and targeting specific needs of the individual. Behavior needs, concerns and classroom management of individuals will be provided services to assist the teaching staff and families. Confidentiality is maintained while mental health services are being provided. Social Emotional component is target through the services provided.



> Developmental Screenings

The initial developmental screenings must be completed within 45 days of the child entry into the program. The screening process is used only to determine whether a child's development is progressing as expected or whether a concern needs further evaluations. Developmental assessments, like the DRDP, however, are ongoing processes to observe and evaluate a child's needs and resources throughout the child's participation in the program.

Ages & Stages Questionnaire Screenings (ASQ 3/ ASQ-SE 2)

Staff and providers in collaboration with parents/guardians of each child, and within 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) of the child's start date in the program, completes the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ 3/ASQ-SE 2) to obtain a broad sampling of a child's skills and behaviors for one or more of the following reasons:

- ◆ To identify a child who should be referred for a more comprehensive evaluation to determine a disability or the need for special placement.
- ◆ To help determine the most appropriate initial placement or grouping of children.
- ◆ To assist the teacher in planning a more appropriate program for the child.
- ◆ To comply with mandated screening requirements.

The ASQ-SE 2:

It is a screening system for identifying young children at risk for social or emotional delays or difficulties. Health screenings include Well baby assessments, Vision, Hearing, Dental, Lead, TB clearance due within 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) of enrollment.

> Children With Special Needs



EHS programs welcome children with special needs to our program. The program ensures that all children with special needs receive all the benefits to which they are entitled. Parents/guardians are involved in the planning and implementation of services for their children. Efforts are made by staff to coordinate the services offered to the children by resource agencies. Services to children, families and staff include:

- ◆ Identification of the special needs of children through observation, screening, and assessment.
- ◆ Workshops on behavior management and modification to the learning environment or instruction.
- ◆ Working with speech, language, or hearing-impaired children.
- ◆ Referral of children to a mental health professional when necessary.

> Transitioning Out Of Early Head Start

Staff will introduce the transition process to the parent/guardian at the time of enrollment and will follow-up at the following ages: 30 months, 33 months and 30 days prior to the child's 3rd birthday. Center Coordinator will conduct a meeting to review child's needs and concerns between 33 to 36 months. If a child has an active IFSP a meeting between the Disability's Coordinator, FSA and Center Coordinator will be conducted to review child's needs and concerns. If the child is transitioning to a different agency, staff will obtain parent's/guardians written permission to transfer information to the specified agency.

Nutrition

All children receive a nutritious, free breakfast, lunch and snack every day. Children are taught family style and have every opportunity to be able to serve themselves. Menus are posted in each classroom. All meals and snacks conform to the nutritional requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All food is eaten in the classroom and cannot be taken home by staff, parents/guardians, children, or volunteers. No outside food is allowed in the classrooms. Home Based children that attend socializations receive a healthy lunch.

Food Allergies and or Milk Substitutions, Formula Substitution

Special Meal Accommodation form must be completed if a child has a food allergen. This form must be completed by the medical provider, indicate the food the child is to omit and have a substitute list. If a child has a milk allergen and requires Soymilk or Lactaid substitution the parent/guardian must request a Milk Substitution Form. If an infant in the program cannot drink the formula provided by the Center, the parent/guardian must fill out the "decline of formula" form and have the doctor fill out an order for special formula. The Nutrition Coordinator must approve forms before the child can start or remain in school.

Nut Free Facility

To provide a safe learning environment and to allow every student to participate fully in all class activities, we have designated the school as nut-free. This controlled eating environment will allow all students to remain safe at school. VOA EHS has a Food Allergy Policy that does not allow any outside food to be brought into the classroom and shared with classmates for celebrations or school activities.

Clothing

The early years are a fun time for children as they explore, discover, and create. During class time, your child may be provided with an opportunity to paint, play outdoors, and enjoy sand. It is important that your child is dressed in play clothes and can learn and explore. Additional sets of clothing for emergencies or accidents are needed. If there are no extra clothes, the parent/guardian will be notified. Clothing that remains at the site must be labeled with the child's first and last name. VOASW is not responsible for lost, damaged or stolen clothing. Shirts must not have any gang related, obscene, or violent pictures or words.

Toileting. Toileting is an important stage. Your child may also be learning to use the toilet independently. We will assist and support you as your child gains this skill. For times like this, easy on and off clothing would be best as well as extra sets of shorts/pants, underwear, socks, and shoes.

Footwear. For the health and safety of your child, it is important to consider the type of shoes your child wears to school. Socks and shoes with closed toes and heel, and non-skid soles are required at school.

Jewelry. Parents/guardians should evaluate allowing their child to wear jewelry to school. These items pose health risks as children go about their normal classroom activities and use the playground.

Parents/guardians of infants and toddlers should be especially conscious of choking hazards with jewelry or having earrings get caught in blankets and tearing earlobes.

Please check your child's cubby routinely, ensuring they have a complete set of weather-appropriate clothing for your child to keep at school. This includes underwear, shorts/pants, T-shirt/sweater, and socks.

Behavior Guidance

Positive methods of guidance will be used to help children learn to regulate their individual and group behaviors. This will include promoting behavioral self-regulation and supporting positive behavior through individualized activities or redirection that leads to help the child reassess the situation and develop self-regulation skills by promoting positive self-esteem. This encourages the child to develop self-sufficiency by taking responsibility for themselves, their actions, and their environment.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in their child's learning experiences.

Parents/guardians will be kept informed of their children's progress in achieving self-regulation. If necessary, the Center may recommend outside counseling or intervention in dealing with a child's ongoing behavior concerns. The parents/guardians are expected to cooperate in this process to help the child. If it is determined that the child's needs cannot be met in the center, the Center Coordinator and the parents will review the program options to best meet the child and family needs.

Mandated Reporter

All employees of Volunteers of America Southwest EHS are mandated reporters. As mandated by the California Child Abuse Reporting Law each staff member must report any incident of known or suspected child abuse. Reports are kept confidential and will only be disclosed to the appropriate agencies.

Categories of Child Abuse include the following:

- ◆ Physical Abuse- any act resulting in non-accidental injury, including biting, and cutting
- ◆ Physical Neglect- Withholding necessities of life, (food, clothing, shelter, medical)
- ◆ Emotional Abuse- includes verbal, belittling, screaming, threats, blaming and sarcasm.
- ◆ Sexual Abuse- rape, incest, sodomy, oral copulation, penetration, and child molestation
- ◆ Kaitlyn's Law- Never leave children in the car unattended or unsupervised.

Parent/Guardian Engagement

Parent/guardian involvement is a vital part of our program. We encourage you to become actively involved in your child's education. We need your input and value your suggestions and observations. All parents/guardians are encouraged to volunteer regularly in whatever capacity you feel is appropriate for you.

Non-Federal Share (In-Kind)

Non-Federal Share contributions consist of volunteering, attending EHS activities, donating materials, working on the educational goals of children at home, serving on Policy Council, working on parent/child activity record and many other ways.

Parent/Guardian Orientation

Parent orientations are provided at the beginning and ongoing throughout the school year. These orientation meetings are held to provide new parents/guardians with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the teacher, the classroom environment, and our policies and procedures. It is a valuable opportunity for all parents/guardians, new and returning, to socialize and network with other parents/guardians. For these reasons, we strongly recommend that all parents/guardians attend.

Parent/Guardian Meetings for Center Based

Parent/Guardians meetings are held once a month and is open to all parents/guardians to attend, as they will collaboratively work with the Center Coordinator and teachers in planning suggested topic related to the developmental goals of their children. Some topics relevant to the needs of parents/guardians, children and families are health and safety, developmental domains, behaviors, nutrition, and home safety. Parents/guardians have the chance to decide what topics are relevant and be an active participant in planning monthly meetings.

Parent/ Guardian Committee

Parents/guardians of children enrolled at the center are also invited to participate on the Parent Committee. This committee is a parent/guardian run committee that meets every month and is open to all parents/guardians to plan and discuss program activities offered at the center. It is designed to offer parents/guardians a forum where questions can be answered, suggestions can be made, and problems solved. Equally, the purpose of the committee is to ensure that effective, two-way, comprehensive communication between staff and parents/guardians is carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year.

Policy Council

An important feature of EHS's parent/guardian involvement is the parents/guardian's role in contributing to the policies for the organization. The Policy Council is comprised of current parent/guardian representatives from each center and community representatives. This group helps to plan activities and to contribute to decision making in some areas of operations. Meetings are held monthly. The Policy Council term begins in July and ends on June 30th. Council membership is limited to five years, ensuring parents have current children enrolled in the program. Policy Council participants are trained in and invited to participate in the interview process for potential EHS staff.

Parent/ Guardian Education & Training

Parent/guardian education and training opportunities will be offered to parents/guardians. Topics for workshops, seminars and other education and training activities are requested from parents/guardians.

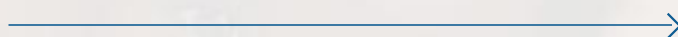
Communication with Parents/ Guardians

We believe that parents/guardians have the right to be informed about issues and events at the center. Parents/guardians can expect a variety of communications including:

Bulletin Board: Each classroom has a bulletin board that contains information for parents/guardians. A bulletin board is also in the center containing community and center information.

Newsletter: All our centers distribute a newsletter for families of enrolled children. These often include tips for dealing with certain situations and behaviors and information about activities in your child's school. Periodically, the newsletter will include information on such topics as separation anxiety, the importance of play, the benefits of inclusion and other relevant issues in the field of Child Development and Early Childhood Studies.

Annual Calendar: Parents/guardians receive a calendar containing important dates and center events for the year.



Procedures for Concerns, Questions and Solving Problems

If you have concerns, we ask that all attempts are made to resolve them through direct feedback and problem solving with the staff and supervisors involved.

- ◆ If a parent/guardian has a concern or questions regarding his/her child, the parents/guardians must first direct the concern to the child's teacher. If the parent/guardian does not feel comfortable with the teacher's response, they must then direct the concern to the Center Coordinator. If the parents are still not comfortable with the response, then the parents/guardians may contact the Associate Director.
- ◆ If a parent/guardian has a concern or question regarding a teacher, then he/she must first direct the concern to the Center Coordinator. If the parent/guardian is uncomfortable with the coordinator's response, they may contact the Associate Director.
- ◆ A meeting will be scheduled to discuss the situation; The Associate Director may invite those concerned to attempt to resolve the concern;
- ◆ The Associate Director will issue a written decision in response to the concern not later than 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) from the date of filing.

Parent/Guardian Exclusion from the Program

Volunteers of America Southwest have the right to exclude parents/guardians who willingly interfere with the discipline, good order, lawful conduct or administration of any school or activity of the program. When a child's parent/guardian or other family member threatens another parent/guardian and/or staff member in any way, including intimidations, bullying, belittling, yelling, and/or disregards the agency's policies and procedures, this will be cause for immediate exclusion from the program. When the parent/guardian or a family member is excluded from the program, the child will not be affected and will continue to attend the program to avoid disruption of the child's routine. The parent/guardian will be provided with the reason for the exclusion. A meeting will then be established with the Center Coordinator and Associate Director to address the issues related to the exclusion.

Disaster Preparedness

We have a Disaster Plan of Action in case of an earthquake or other disaster. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. Parents/guardians can help to make a possible traumatic occurrence less stressful by keeping their child's emergency form updated.

The emergency form contains vital information regarding your child's doctor, authorization for medical treatment, if necessary, names of individuals to contact if you cannot be reached, as well as the names of those who are authorized to pick up your child if you are unable to do so.

To ensure that the center is prepared for emergencies, we practice both earthquake and fire drills monthly. In addition, the center maintains a permanent supply of food, water, blankets, flashlights, radios, and first aid supplies. It is estimated that these supplies are sufficient for two days. Teachers and all staff on duty during an emergency will work together to account for the welfare of all the children.

In the event of an emergency or disaster:

- Do not call the center. All telephone lines need to be open, so staff can call out as necessary;
- ◆ Come as quickly as you can to pick up your child;
- ◆ When you reach the center, come in as calmly as you can so as not to up the children

Fire/Emergency Drills

Early Head Start sites conduct monthly fire, earthquake, and lockdown drills. Parents/Guardians, staff, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of our emergency evacuation plans. During a fire/earthquake/lockdown drill or real fire/earthquake/lockdown situation, parents/guardians may not sign children in or out of the school. Parents/guardians must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into or out of school. Parents/Guardians may wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/earthquake/lockdown situation, the Center Coordinator or designated staff member will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time, any parents/guardians waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. When parents/guardians arrive to pick up their child, we ask that you wait until the Center Coordinator or designee has accounted for all staff and children and has given the staff permission to release children. All other parents/guardians or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone of the situation. Children must be picked up immediately.

In the Case of Power Outage, Heat Loss or Water Loss

If, upon arrival, the Center is without power, heat or water, the administrative staff will contact the appropriate people to determine the cause and evaluate the situation. If the situation cannot be resolved in a reasonable amount of time, the Center will be closed until the situation is rectified. The closing of a center will be announced through Learning Genie. If power, heat or water is lost during the day, staff will determine the cause and the estimated time of recovery. If recovery time is more than 1 hour, parents/guardians will be notified and required to pick up their child(ren). Children will be kept at the Center except where the power, heat or water loss is accompanied by an emergency requiring evacuation. If evacuation becomes necessary, the disaster plan will be followed.

Pedestrian Safety

- Hold hands with your child when walking to and from your car.
- Supervise all children with you at all times.
- Never allow young children to cross the street alone.
- Cross the street at designated crosswalks and look both ways before crossing.

Set a positive example for children by practicing safe pedestrian habits. Make pedestrian safety and ongoing activity with your child. There are songs and other activities you can do with your child which will help him/her to remember these safety rules.



Acknowledgement of a Receiving Parent/Guardian Handbook

Child's/Clients Name

I wish to acknowledge that I received, read, and understand the contents of the Volunteers of America Southwest's Parent/Guardian Handbook. As a parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the program, I will follow the policies and procedures of the program, as detailed in the Parent/Guardian Handbook. I will also work collaboratively and in partnership with the VOASW staff to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal regulations as required in the daily operation of the programs offered for young children.

I have received:

An orientation for parent/guardian, which includes program philosophy, program goals and objectives, program activities, eligibility requirements, and due process procedures.

Parent's Rights (Center Based only)

Personal Rights (Center Based only)

Parent/ Guardian Name: Please Print

Date

Parent/ Guardian Signature

Place original in child's/clients site folder.