



Orange County
Head Start, Inc

Brilliant Beginnings. Bright Futures.



2022–2023
Program Year



OCHS FAMILY HANDBOOK



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Section 1: Introduction

Welcome to Orange County Head Start, Inc.

Orange County Head Start, Inc. (OCHS) is a Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) grantee that provides a comprehensive early education program for children and families, with special emphasis on promoting children's school readiness in the areas of language and cognitive development, early reading, science, mathematics, social skills, health and physical development. At OCHS, parents/guardians are empowered as partners, leaders and advocates for their children's education, families' success, and betterment of the communities where they live, work and play.

OCHS serves over 2,000 preschool aged children, infants, toddlers, pregnant mothers, and families throughout all of Orange County annually, including those who are homeless, in foster care, have special needs, are on public assistance, and/or whose family incomes are at or below the federal poverty line. Early Head Start (0-3 years old) and Head Start (3-5 years old) programs and services are offered through center-based and home-based programs throughout the Orange County at no cost to qualifying families.

OCHS is successful when, through communication and collaboration among families, staff, and community partners, each child/family's needs are identified, and high quality comprehensive services are provided by our staff and/or partner agencies to meet those needs. Each year, OCHS looks forward to learning more about each child and family so that together we can thrive.

OCHS's Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

Our Vision...

Orange County Head Start, Inc. is the catalyst that launches children and their families to a brighter future.

Our Mission...

We provide children and their families with quality early childhood development programs and integrated support services.

Our Guiding Principles...

- **Advocacy** – We advocate on behalf of the children we serve by providing access to resources and protection of their rights and interests.
- **Empowerment** - We provide the tools and environment to empower children and their families.

- **Learning** – We are an organization dedicated to learning at all levels, especially during the early childhood years.
- **Partnerships** – We deliver services through partnerships and collaboration.
- **Quality** – We ensure the quality of our programs through continuous improvement and outcome-based practices.
- **Respect** – We respect diversity and acknowledge the value it brings to our community.
- **Wellness** – We are committed to the emotional and physical well-being of our staff, children, and families.

Inclusive Agency and Environment

OCHS is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of harassment of any kind. In keeping with this commitment, we do not tolerate harassment by anyone. Harassment is any unwelcome or unwanted speech, action, or conduct that is offensive or abusive. Harassment of any kind, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon an individual's race, color, religion, sex or gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical or mental disability, national origin, marital status, ancestry, medical condition, marital or domestic partner status, veteran status, or any other characteristics is specifically prohibited at OCHS. This policy also prohibits harassment and discrimination based on the perception that anyone who has any of these characteristics or is associated with a person who has or is perceived as having any of these characteristics. Examples of prohibited harassment include derogatory remarks or slurs, negative stereotyping, circulation of written or graphic materials, jokes, cartoons, pictures, e-mails or instant messages or computer transmissions, and gestures that demean, intimidate, ridicule, torment, or show hostility toward an individual because of his or her personal characteristics. This includes discriminating, harassing or retaliating against someone who is perceived to be different because of that person's personal characteristics, or who associates with another because of that person's characteristics. OCHS will not tolerate harassing behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for employees, families, visitors, or anyone present at an OCHS facility.

Section 2: About This Handbook

The purpose of this Handbook is to assist you, as parents/guardians of a child in our program, in getting to know OCHS policies and procedures currently in effect. This Handbook supersedes and replaces any previously issued Handbook that may have been received in the past.

This Handbook does not cover every aspect of our operations at OCHS, and it is not intended to provide in detail all policies, practices, and procedures we have in place. The content of this Handbook may need to be revised from time to time by OCHS due to changes in Federal, State, or Local laws and/or requirements. Any changes to this Handbook will be communicated to all parents/guardians through additional written updates.

Please keep this guide in a convenient place so it can be referred to it throughout the year. Please speak with your Teacher or the Center Director at your child's Center regarding any questions or concerns that arise during or after reading this Handbook.

Section 3: Parent Engagement and Responsibilities

Parent and family participation and engagement are essential to the success of our HS and EHS programs. OCHS believes that you are your child's first teachers and are valuable contributors to the success of our program and the success of the child. For this reason, OCHS has high expectations for our staff and families alike.

OCHS Responsibilities for Parent/Guardian Engagement

OCHS asks that as a parent/guardian of a child in our program, you commit to collaborating with us by being engaged in your child's education and health. As a parent or guardian of a child receiving services in HS/EHS, I understand I will:

1. be recognized as my child's primary educator.
2. be treated with respect by the HS/EHS program staff.
3. be welcomed in my child's classroom. OCHS has an open-door policy, and I may visit the center at any time during its hours of operation (without advance notice).
4. receive information and guidance from the Head Start program staff about my child's progress and development, and participate in discussions about my child's progress and setting goals for my child's learning and development.
5. be supported as an advocate for my child.
6. be involved by the Regional Center/local school district in creating an Individual Family Services Plan/Individualized Education Plan, and will be kept informed on my child's progress in meeting his/her goals in the event my child has a diagnosed disability or has been referred for a developmental or behavioral concern;
7. take part in decisions regarding my child's center and the HS/EHS program.
8. have opportunities to share my ideas and thoughts with OCHS staff and other parents. These opportunities include Center Parent Committee Meetings, Policy Council meetings, and other workshops, trainings, individual meetings, and/or OCHS events.

9. be informed about resources within the community related to education, health, nutrition, mental health, social services, employment, etc.
10. review and ask for clarification on OCHS policies and procedures.
11. Bring any concerns to the attention of my Teacher or Center Director right away so they can be solved quickly.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities for Parent/Guardian Engagement

As a parent/guardian in the HS/EHS, I also commit to:

1. ensuring my child attends the program consistently and on time to support his/her development;
2. participating actively in the program and take advantage of the opportunities that the program offers;
3. working with OCHS program staff and other families in a cooperative manner;
4. being open to new ideas and experiences that can benefit my child(ren), me or my family;
5. helping make the program better by offering my thoughts and suggestions to the OCHS staff;
6. asking questions of my child's teacher, Family Engagement Advocate, the Center Director or other members of the staff when I don't understand something;
7. reinforcing what my child learns in the program by working with my child at home regularly;
8. ensuring that my child is up-to-date on all required medical and dental needs so he/she can continue to attend the program.

Children in Center-based Program Option Only

Additionally, I will participate in:

1. 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;
2. two home visits each year with my child's Teachers;
3. home visits with the Family Engagement Advocates assigned to my family on an as needed basis;
4. in two Parent/Teacher Conferences per year;
5. any meeting requested by an OCHS staff member to discuss the needs of my child or the program.
6. my child's education by volunteering in the classroom and/or in various other opportunities provided by the program whenever possible

Children in Home-Based Program Option Only

I will participate in:

1. one home visit each week with my child's Home-Educator;
2. monthly group socialization activities with my child;
3. any meeting requested by an OCHS staff member to discuss the needs of my child or the program.

Section 4: General Policies & Procedures

The following policies apply to all OCHS families.

Statement of Confidentiality

All files and information regarding children and families in the program are kept strictly confidential. OCHS staff members are the only people who have access to these files.

Release of Confidential Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

OCHS will not release Personally Identifiable Information (PII) from a child's record or file without your consent. If during the process of providing services for your family you would like to authorize OCHS to share any of your child's PII with another individual or Agency/Service Provider, you will be asked to sign and submit an Authorization for Exchange of Information form. This form will require you to specifically identify the individual and/or Agency that OCHS is authorized to share PII with, the specific information to be shared and the reason for the exchange of information. You have the right not to sign this form and to revoke any authorization signed at any time in writing.

You may be provided access to your own child's records upon written request. If you requests access to your child's records, staff will provide you with a Request to Access Child's Records form. All requests will be responded to

Disclosure of PII without Parental Consent

An OCHS Division Director, or Executive Director, may disclose PII from a child records without parental consent to:

- Officials acting for OCHS, such as contractors and sub recipients, if the official provides services for which OCHS would otherwise use employees, OCHS determines it is necessary

for Head Start or EHS services, and OCHS maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement;

- Officials acting for the OCHS, or from a federal or state entity, in connection with an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs, or for enforcement of or compliance with federal legal requirements of the program; provided OCHS maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the disclosure, except when the disclosure is specifically authorized by federal law or by the responsible HHS official;
- Officials acting for OCHS, or from a federal or state entity, to conduct a study to improve child and family outcomes, including improving the quality of programs, for, or on behalf of, OCHS, provided OCHS maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the disclosure;
- Appropriate parties in order to address a disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or a serious health and safety risk such as a serious food allergy, if OCHS determines that disclosing the PII from child records is necessary to protect the health or safety of children or other persons;
- Comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, provided OCHS makes a reasonable effort to notify you about all such subpoenas and court orders in advance of the compliance, unless:
- A court has ordered that neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information provided in response be disclosed;
- The disclosure is in compliance with an ex parte court order obtained by the United States Attorney General (or designee not lower than an Assistant Attorney General) concerning investigations or prosecutions of an offense listed in 18 U.S.C. 2332b(g)(5)(B) or an act of domestic or international terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. 2331.
- A parent is a party to a court proceeding directly involving child abuse and neglect (as defined in Section 3 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101)) or dependency matters, and the order is issued in the context of that proceeding, additional notice to the parent by the program is not required; or,

- OCHS initiates legal action against a parent or a parent initiates legal action against OCHS, then OCHS may disclose to the court, also without a court order or subpoena, the child records relevant for OCHS to act as plaintiff or defendant.
- The Secretary of Agriculture or an authorized representative from the Food and Nutrition Service to conduct program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, if the results will be reported in an aggregate form that does not identify any individual: provided, that any data collected must be protected in a manner that will not permit the personal identification of students and parents by other than the authorized representatives of the Secretary of Agriculture and any PII must be destroyed when the data are no longer needed for program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements;
- A caseworker or other representative from a state, local, or tribal child welfare Agency, who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement, when the Agency is legally responsible for the child's care and protection, under state or tribal law, if the Agency agrees in writing to protect PII, to use information from the child's case plan for specific purposes intended of addressing the child's needs, and to destroy information that is no longer needed for those purposes; and,
- Appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child maltreatment and is consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws on reporting child abuse and neglect.

Addressing Parent/Guardian Concerns

OCHS deeply values feedback from our families. OCHS encourages you to follow the process outlined below to ensure that all concerns are heard and adequately addressed in a timely manner. Attention to confidentiality of all parties involved will be paid throughout the process, and resolutions will be reached within a reasonable amount of time.

OCHS would like to address all concerns in a timely manner. Please be sure to communicate with the staff at the center if there are any issues that need to be addressed. When a concern arises:

- Come prepared with specific information related to the concern (e.g. dates, names, details of any incidents);
- Focus on the facts;
- Come with solutions to the concern if possible;
- Work in partnership with OCHS Staff to resolve the concern.
- Keep in mind that OCHS is working hard to provide quality services to every child and family while meeting all of the laws and regulations we are required to follow.

Concerns Related to the Classroom

In the event there is a concern(s) regarding the classroom environment:

1. Verbally report each concern directly to the Teaching Staff if possible and comfortable;
2. Speak to the Center Director/Site Supervisor if the issue is not resolved;
3. If the issue is still not resolved after speaking directly to the Center Director/Site Supervisor; call the OCHS Administration Office at 714-241-8920 and request to speak with the Education Manager that oversees the center.
4. If the issue has still not been resolved, contact the OCHS Division Director of Center and Program Operations who can also be reached by calling the OCHS Administration Office at 714-241-8920.

Non-Classroom Related Concerns

1. In the event there is a concern(s) regarding something other than the classroom environment: Speak directly to the Center Director/Site Supervisor/Home Base Supervisor right away;
2. If the issue is still not resolved after speaking directly to the Center Director/Site Supervisor, call the OCHS Administration Office at 714-241-8920 and request to speak with the Education Manager that oversees the center.
3. If the issue has still not been resolved, contact the OCHS Division Director of Center and Program Operations who can also be reached by calling the OCHS Administration Office at 714-241-8920.

Anti-Bias and Inclusive Curricula

The goal of providing an anti-bias and inclusive curricula, environments, and interaction is to create a climate of positive self and group identity development, through which every child will achieve his or her fullest potential. OCHS Teachers will tailor and scaffold anti-bias education materials and activities to each child's cognitive, social, and emotional developmental capacities. All OCHS Teachers will

- Nurture each child's development of knowledgeable, confident, individual personal and social identities to enable them to demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
- Promote each child's comfort in empathetic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds, to be able to express comfort and joy in human diversity, use accurate language for human differences, and form caring connections with all human diversity.

- Foster each child's capacity to identify bias and will nurture each child's empathy for the hurt bias causes and to help children increasingly recognize unfairness, have the language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
- Cultivate each child's ability and confidence to stand up for himself and for others and help children to demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against unfairness, prejudice and/or discriminatory actions. (Education for Young Children and Ourselves, by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards.)

Positive Discipline and Guidance Policy for Children

OCHS uses an approach to child discipline and guidance:

- that emphasizes respect for each child,
- ensures developmentally appropriate expectations of children's behavior; and
- that uses positive discipline and guidance strategies to change behaviors.

OCHS staff members strive to create a positive environment that enables children to explore and experiment while remaining healthy, safe, and feeling well supported and secure. Through positive guidance strategies and the modeling of appropriate social skills, OCHS staff help children learn pro-social behaviors, build confidence and self-esteem, and develop greater respect for others' rights and feelings, as well as a sense that they themselves are respected.

Discipline concerns are handled by Teachers in a way that encourages children to solve problems and develop a sense of inner self-control. Children are given authentic choices and the opportunity to be an active part of decision-making in their environment, thus fostering a sense of personal responsibility. Staff help children to understand the reasons for rules and limits and to feel good about the choices they make.

Building positive relationships is the first step in the prevention, guidance, and management of behavior of all children in the classroom. Staff will use the following strategies in building positive relationships with each child in order to develop social-emotional skills in accordance with the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) framework:

- Warmly greeting each child each day upon arrival;
- Responding to each child consistently and appropriately;
- Using meaningful praise and positive descriptive acknowledgement e.g. "Good job Tommy sharing your..."
- Consistently encouraging and recognizing appropriate play and behaviors.

All staff will use the following strategies in guiding and managing behavior of children in classrooms:

1. Teaching children positive social skills through:
 - a. Direct teaching
 - b. Modeling and using practice with competent peers
 - c. Including mental health and social skills curriculum in lesson plans
 - d. Providing children alternative choices and redirection away from inappropriate behavior: (“when and then” statements e.g. “When you finish putting the puzzle away then you can work in the house area.”)
 - e. Avoiding power struggles with children
 - f. Developing classroom rules that are clear, reasonable and consistent;
2. Including children in the development of the rules at the beginning of the program year:
 - a. Rules will be posted in classrooms at the child’s eye-level and in the appropriate languages.
 - b. Posted rules will include pictures as much as possible (photos of children and drawings are appropriate)
 - c. Discussing rules will be part of the regular daily routine, e.g. during transition times, “Now we are going to small group -show me your walking feet”
 - d. Rules will be as few in number as possible. Large and small group times are to be used to discuss specifics about how rules are implemented.
 - e. Rules will be stated in the positive, i.e.: what children CAN do.
3. Teachers will plan a safe and developmentally appropriate environment that supports pro-social behavior:
 - a. Teachers will communicate and model to children what to do and how to behave and how to use the equipment and materials in appropriate ways
 - b. All furniture and equipment will be checked regularly for safety and will be arranged to promote ease of movement
 - c. A daily routine will be established and followed to promote predictability and security for children in all ways (See Daily Routine SAPPP)
 - d. Cultures of the children will be reflected in the environment in a positive and inclusive way
 - e. All adults in the classroom will be expected to interact with children in a positive friendly, and socially supportive manner, modeling pro-social behaviors with each other and the children

Behavior Intervention Strategies

Occasionally, young children present unacceptable behavior in the classroom. In such circumstances, children may need behavioral strategies to help them learn appropriate behaviors.

Teaching staff may use the following strategies to help children learn the skills to behave in more socially acceptable ways. Examples of such strategies might include, but are not limited to:

1. Using natural consequences - explain to the child that when he/she hits another child, that child will not want to play with them;
2. Using time away - removing the child from the immediate situation when he/she is behaving inappropriately or is very upset in order for the child to calm down and be able to more successfully cope with the situation. The teacher will remain with a child during this time to ensure supervision and support is provided.
3. Utilize the High Scope problem-solving approach to conflict:
 - a. Approach the situation calmly
 - b. Acknowledge children's feelings
 - c. Gather information
 - d. Restate the problem
 - e. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together
 - f. Be prepared to give follow-up support

All OCHS Staff will use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. Staff will not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basic needs.

Behavior Intervention Plan

In cases where your child's behavior is not able to be successfully remedied by the strategies listed above, a Behavior Intervention Plan will be developed for your child. The Center Director/Site Supervisor, Teacher and you will always be involved in the development and implementation of this plan.

A meeting will be scheduled with you to ensure your involvement in the Behavior Intervention Plan process.. You will be encouraged to participate in the Plan by providing input regarding your child's strengths and needs and by utilizing strategies at home that are consistent with strategies at school. If you choose not attend the Behavior Intervention Plan meeting the Education Manager will be notified. When three (3) attempts have been made to schedule a meeting with you, and/or you have cancelled or refused to attend, then your child will be excluded from the program until you are able to attend and participate in the Behavior Intervention Plan process as the home to school connection is important to your child's success.

Developmental and Social-Emotional Screenings

OCHS strives to meet the individual needs of all children in the program. To determine your child's needs the program conducts screenings within the first 45 days of school to assess children's developmental, behavioral, and language development. There are two different screenings that are administered in our programs:

1. **Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE):** At each child's first home, or virtual home visit the Teacher and you will complete the Ages and Stage Questionnaire and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional together. The ASQ and ASQ-SE assists Teachers and you to quickly recognize if your child may be at risk for social or emotional difficulties, to identify behaviors of concern, and identify any need for further assessment. Behavioral concerns at home and/or in school can include one or more of the following: self-regulation, compliance, communication, adaptive functioning, autonomy, affect, and interaction with people concerns. Developmental concerns at home and/or in school can include one or more of the following: personal-social, language, fine and gross motor, and problem solving concerns. The results will be shared with the parent at the time of the screening.

Services for Children with Special Needs

If the screenings listed above, as well as information gathered from observations or provided by you as the parent/guardian, doctors or other specialists result in a concern about the child's development or functioning, OCHS staff will begin a process to follow up on that concern, including further evaluation if needed.

- The first step in addressing the identified concern is to refer your child for further assessment to OCHS's Inclusion Support Department. Your child's teacher, the Center Director/Site Supervisor, the Inclusion Support Facilitator, and center support staff such as the Family Engagement Advocate (FEA) and/or Health Specialist will meet with you to discuss the concerns and develop a short-term plan to address them. You will be kept updated on this process at all times.
- In the case of a child whose suspected disabilities is clear, extreme, or persists after implementing the short-term action plan, the Inclusion Support Facilitator will assist you in requesting further evaluation from the school district in which your family resides, or the Regional Center of Orange County.
- If after further evaluation your child qualifies for special education or intervention services, your child's teacher, the Center Director/Site Supervisor and Inclusion Support Facilitator will work together you throughout the year to ensure that the IFSP/IEP goals

are being supported, including the use of special modifications and strategies to support the child in being able to fully participate in the classroom.

- If your child enters the program with a documented, diagnosed special need including medical, physical, developmental or nutritional/ feeding concern, you will need to meet with appropriate OCHS staff prior to the child starting school. OCHS will need to review the child's needs and ensure that the center/program is prepared, and able, to make all necessary accommodations to fully serve your child. If needed, for the health and safety of your child, entry into the program may be delayed for a short period of time in order to ensure that all accommodations are in place.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

OCHS staff are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all children participating in the HS/EHS. All OCHS Center Staff are State mandated reporters of any suspected child abuse or neglect. If an OCHS staff member suspects, and then reports, suspected abuse to the Child Protective Service Agency the decision to notify you will be determined by the Child Protective Service Agency Representative, not OCHS. Once the Child Protective Service Agency allows contact, OCHS staff will follow up with you to ensure supportive services are offered if necessary.

Section 5: Center Based Program Option & Classroom Operations

Allergies and Diet Restrictions

You must notify the Center Director/Site Supervisor in writing of any allergies or other medical conditions your child's has at time of enrollment, or as soon as you become aware of them. Any special diet requiring food substitutions at the center must be documented in writing by your child's doctor or religious leader. All of the meals provided at OCHS are nut and fish free. In addition, no pork products are served. OCHS has two Registered Dietitians available to work with you if your child has special dietary requirements. OCHS strives to ensure that all children in the program are well-nourished, healthy and safe at all times.

Meal Times

OCHS serves children using a family style meal service. Children serve themselves all menu items provided at each meal/snack. Children are encouraged to taste all foods, but are never forced to eat anything they do not want. The goal of OCHS's food program is to introduce children to a wide variety of foods.

Teachers and volunteers in the classroom also serve themselves in the same manner. Portion sizes for adults are the same as those for children. Teachers and volunteers sit with the children during meal times to model appropriate eating behavior and initiate conversations similar to a home setting. Teachers also use this time for learning so that nutrition education is incorporated into the routine of meals.

OCHS's meal menus are created by a Registered Dietitian who ensures that each meal is nutritious, attractive and taste good at the same time providing 1/3 of the Recommended Daily Allowance of nutrients for preschoolers. The menus follow the guidelines of the National Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Necessary adaptations will be made for any children with special needs. If a child arrives late to the center, they will be offered a nutritious meal. You, and other family members of yours, are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom and participate in meal times.

Outside Food/Beverages

Only foods provided by the OCHS Central Kitchen or contracted vendors can be served to children while at school. Outside foods/beverages may not be brought into the center without special accommodations and approval from OCHS. **Due to the possibility of severe food allergies, no nut or fish products are allowed in any OCHS facility.**

Holidays and Celebrations

OCHS is interested in facilitating meaningful experiences for children at all times; therefore, we do not emphasize specific holiday celebrations or themed activities. Your child and you are encouraged to share meaningful experiences from your own family traditions with the class. Conversations about the diversity of cultures are encouraged, and are included as part of OCHS's inclusive curriculum and program. As children show interest in holidays, Teachers will add related open-ended materials according to their interests (i.e. wrapping paper and boxes, costumes in house area). These items will be added to the classroom and children may explore them. OCHS strives to respect each family's race, culture, religion, and customs.

Children's birthdays are acknowledged in various ways in OCHS classrooms. In keeping with our Nutrition Policy and for the health and safety of all children, OCHS does not allow families to bring any food or treats into the center to celebrate birthdays.

Kindergarten Transition Celebrations

OCHS understands that preschool graduation events with caps and gowns and related activities have strong significance in many communities. However, these kinds of events can be stressful

for children, can result in expensive costs for families and hours of practice and preparation for children and teachers. Children and families will experience these types of events when children are older and better able to understand and appreciate them. OCHS offers developmentally appropriate Kindergarten Transition Celebrations that are organized by staff and parents each year to celebrate children's growth, development and accomplishments.

Bathroom & Toileting

As a component of OCHS's comprehensive early childhood program for children, OCHS works with children who are still in the process of becoming toilet-trained. If a child is not potty trained, the Center Director/Site Supervisor will develop a toileting plan with the parents/guardians. The plan will include strategies the teaching staff will use to assist the child in learning to use the toilet. If the child is not ready to use the toilet, the plan will include the diapering process.

Staff are required to wash their hands, and assist the children to wash, with soap and water after each toileting/diaper changing.

Appropriate Clothing for School

In our HS/EHS programs, children are involved in active play every day, both inside and outside. Therefore, it is very important that children come to school dressed appropriately. Appropriate preschool attire 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.

Children must have **at least one complete change of clothing** at all times in case of messy play or a bathroom accident. A complete change of clothes includes:

- Shirt (short-sleeved in warm weather, long-sleeved in colder weather)
- Pants
- Underwear
- Socks
- Extra pair of shoes if possible

All extra clothing must be labeled with the child's name or initials with a permanent marker. Please ensure that a new set of extra clothing is sent the next day when extra clothing has been used., Please discuss this with your teacher, Center Director/Site Supervisor or Family Engagement Advocate if there is a concern regarding providing an extra set of clothing.

Rest Time in Full Day Classes

Young children need a rest time to help them relax and unwind from their busy morning schedule. Rest time in the daily schedule enables children to have a more positive afternoon and be a happier child at home at the end of the day. During the scheduled rest time, children are encouraged to rest quietly on their cot; children are not required to sleep. If a child falls asleep at any other time in the daily routine, OCHS will provide them with an appropriate cot and area to continue sleeping.

You are encouraged to reinforce with your children the importance of resting during the day.

Rest Time Items for Full Day

OCHS provides cots, sheets, and blankets for each child during naptime. However, if needed, children may bring a small comfort item, such as a pillow or stuffed animal, to sleep with.

Fire Drills/Earthquake Drills

As required by the Federal Performance Standards and California Child Care Licensing, OCHS centers will hold monthly fire drills and post evacuation plans in all classrooms. During the fire/earthquake drills, teaching staff will lead children to a safe area outside of the building. Please do not be alarmed if a fire drill occurs while onsite, simply follow the direction of the staff to role model for the children.

Attendance, Arrival and Departure

We want your child to be successful in school. Attending school daily can increase your child's chances of developing good reading, math and other academic skills; feeling good about school and themselves; and continued success in school, graduating high school, and obtaining a career. Please ensure that your child attends and arrives to the center every day on time. For children attending part-day classes, it is important for you to abide by the designated drop off and pick up times.

- Morning (AM) Session: Drop off at 8:00 a.m. and Pick up at 11:30 a.m. (may vary location)
- Afternoon (PM) Session: Drop off at 12:30 p.m. and Pick up at 4:00 p.m. (may vary location)

Children attending full-day classes are expected, at a minimum, to arrive by breakfast time (8:30 a.m., but no later than 8:45 a.m.) and stay until after lunchtime (12:15 p.m.), regardless of your work or school schedule. All full-day children must be picked up by 5:30 p.m.

Please contact the center as early as possible if your child will be absent or late that day. If the center does not receive a call within the initial hour of the day, OCHS staff will contact you no later than noon the same day. If your child's attendance becomes a concern, the Center Director/Site Supervisor and Family Engagement Advocate will request a meeting with you to discuss barriers and develop a School Readiness and Attendance Success Plan to address

attendance concerns. If there is no improvement over the specified period of time in the Plan, OCHS may determine that the current program option does not meet the needs of your child/family and another program option will be offered if available.

To ensure each child's safety during pick up and drop off times:

- You, or designated adult, must accompany your child to and from his/her classroom and until the Teacher has accepted the child into the classroom;
- Your child must be signed in by you, or the designated adult, when being dropped off and signed out when being picked up each day;
- Upon drop off, you, or designated adult, must stay with child until the Teacher acknowledges the child's presence and does a brief health check to ensure the child is well enough to attend school;
- Part-day children must be picked up promptly at the end of class time;
- Full-day children must be picked up before closing time (5:30p.m.).

Late Pick Ups

If you are going to be late picking up your child, please call the center so that arrangements may be made to care for your child until you arrive. If you arrive more than one hour after the center closing time to pick up your child, and the center staff has not had any communication with you, or any of the authorized contacts listed on the Emergency Contact form, OCHS is required to call the local authorities. Prior to calling the local authorities, center staff will make every effort to contact you or the emergency contacts listed on your child's emergency card.

Emergency Contact Information

During the enrollment process, orientation process, or prior to your child's first day of school, staff will provide an "Emergency Contact Information Card," for you to complete.

Please note that you are responsible for keeping the Emergency Contact Information Card up-to-date at all times. Additionally:

- If any of your emergency contact information changes (address, phone number, work information), you are responsible for completing a new emergency contact information card.
- OCHS recommends there be at least three (3) emergency contacts (authorized persons that can pick up and transport the child home in your absence).
- It is important that all of the authorized emergency contacts are willing to take responsibility for picking up the child from the center.

- It is important that all of the authorized emergency contacts are willing to answer calls from OCHS. Staff will communicate with emergency contacts if unable to contact you when your child does not arrive to school within an hour of the set arrival time or has not been picked up within an hour of dismissal (see *Attendance, Arrival and Departure* and *Late Pick Ups* sections above).
- The names of each emergency contact **must** match the name on each of their Photo Identification Cards, and emergency contact must have proof of identification on them in order for OCHS to allow them to pick up a child. If the emergency contact does not have proof of identification upon picking up your child, staff will not release your child to them.
- It is required that these “Authorized Emergency Contacts” be adults 18 years of age or older.

Section 6: Health & Safety

Health Requirements

OCHS will work with you to ensure that your child is up-to-date on all preventive medical and dental procedures, including doctor visits, dental visits, needed treatment, immunizations, and screenings.

Requirements for Children to Attend Classes at the Center

In order to attend center base classes, your child must be current on certain health requirements:

- All necessary immunizations required by CA health laws;
- Physical exam (doctor’s exam) performed within the past year;
- TB Screening (risk assessment or skin test results) performed within the past year ;
- All children are required to have a physical exam with current TB Screening Results within the first 30 days of entering the program.
- If a physical exam with current TB Screening Results for your child is not received by the 30th day, proof of a scheduled appointment will need to be provided or your child will have to be excluded from center base classes until the appropriate and completed documents have been submitted.

Illness Policy

Teachers will greet you and your child as you arrive each day. During the greeting, the Teacher will complete a health check in order to ensure your child is healthy enough to attend school that day. OCHS is committed to ensuring the health and safety of each child and family we serve. For this reason, and in compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards, CA Child Care

Licensing regulations, and Health Care Agency guidance, the Illness Policy below defines OCHS's procedures for a child's short-term exclusion.

Signs of Illness in Children

- A temperature of 100 **or more**
- A painful, red throat, even if no fever is present
- A deep, hacking cough
- Difficulty breathing or untreated wheezing (call or see doctor)
- Severe sneezing
- Rash (bumps and redness) accompanied by fever, anaphylaxis, and/or abnormal behavior
- Vomiting (more than one time in last 24 hours)
- Diarrhea/abnormal stools (runny, watery or bloody stools)
- Complaints of pain and not feeling well
- Listless (tired, extremely sleepy)
- Cranky (not in good spirits/abnormal behavior)
- Holding stomach (stomach ache)
- Complaints of a stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms (call or see doctor)
- Thick green drainage from the nose along with sinus pressure, fever or tiredness
- Yellow discharge from the eyes
- An unusual yellow coloring to the skin or eyes (call or see doctor)
- Cuts or openings on the skin that are pus-filled or oozing (bring a note from doctor and keep sores covered)
- Limping
- Lice or nits

Procedure for Excluding a Child Who is Ill

1. Classroom staff will be responsible for reporting children suspected of having an illness to the Center Director/Site Supervisor. The Center Director/Site Supervisor will be responsible for determining if:
 - The child should be isolated for further observation
 - You will be notified to pick up the child from school
 - The plan for emergencies will be followed if your child has an existing Individual Care Plan
2. For absences due to an illness and/or infection from a communicable disease or condition, you must inform the Teacher upon your child's return to regular attendance and provide a note from the doctor clearing your child to return to school.

3. The primary focus when readmitting your child to school after an illness is to ensure we are able to provide the appropriate supportive health care and to prevent the transmission of disease to other children, staff, and adults at the center.

Emergency Procedure

In the case of a severe accident or illness to your child, the staff will do the following:

1. Have an adult stay with the child at all times;
2. Call 911;
3. Notify you at home or work;
4. Have an OCHS staff member accompany your child in the ambulance, and take your child's health record and Emergency Contacts with them.

Accidents at the Center

Any accident that results in a minor injury, or possible injury, will be reported to you the same day that the accident occurs. The following information will be reported to you if your child is injured at the center even if the injury is not visible:

- Nature of the injury or possible injury;
- How and when the injury occurred;
- Who witnessed the occurrence;
- First Aid and or treatment provided and by whom;
- Recommended follow up.

Any accident involving a head injury will be reported to you as soon as possible, regardless of the severity. If a severe head injury occurs, the Emergency Procedure will be followed. For minor head injuries, you will be able to determine if you would like to pick up your child or not.

If medical treatment may be necessary you will be called immediately to pick up your child, or in severe cases, the Emergency Procedure will be followed.

All child injuries will be documented on the Accident Report Form and filed in your Child's Center File.

Individual Care Plan

OCHS ensures every child's needs are met at the time of admission to the program and throughout the child's attendance.

OCHS staff will develop Individual Care Plans with parents for all children with a health condition requiring an accommodation to ensure that all staff working with children understands the necessary procedures for providing appropriate accommodations and services for children served. Individual Care Plans will be developed with parents incorporating medical providers' feedback to accommodate children with such needs.

Children's Medication Information

OCHS prioritizes your child's health and safety. Medications are rarely given in school; however, there are exceptions, which involve children with serious health conditions, where it is deemed absolutely necessary to give the medication during school hours. OCHS staff receives annual and ongoing training, as needed, on common medications used in childcare centers and emergency procedures in the case that medication needs to be given.

OCHS recognizes that medical treatment is the responsibility of the parent/guardian and the family physician; therefore, if a prescribed medication needs to be administered during school hours, OCHS staff will follow written instructions as prescribed by your child's primary physician. For serious health conditions that require any topical over-the-counter medications, the OCHS Health Department will work with you to complete a form with written instructions on how the medication needs be applied. The administration of some medications may require the child to be picked up from school for the child's health and safety.

Medication administration will be logged and communicated to the parent/guardian and or the designated person on the Emergency Card picking up the child. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to request to review the medication log if he/she is not regularly picking up the child. It is also the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the Center Director/Site Supervisor should there be any changes in the medication orders. Medication orders must be renewed annually and when the medication regimen is changed.

The following checklist is a guide of OCHS's medication procedure. Please contact your Center Director/Site Supervisor with further questions or concerns.

Please complete the following steps for any Prescribed Medication needed at school:

- ☐ Pick up the **Parent/Guardian and Physician Request for Medication (PPRM) form and Medication Information Request Letter** from the center.
- ☐ Sign and date the top portion of the PPRM form.
- ☐ Take the PPRM form and Medication Information Request Letter to your child's doctor.
 - Make sure the doctor completes **all** sections of the PPRM form. Incomplete forms will NOT be accepted.
- ☐ Pick up the prescribed medication from your pharmacy and make sure it reflects your doctor's orders written on the PPRM form.

- ☐ Submit the completed PPRM form along with the new medication to the Center Director/Site Supervisor.
- ☐ Deliver the medication in its original container to the Center Director/Site Supervisor. The medication must be labeled by the pharmacist, unaltered and unused.
 - Health Staff will review the medication and paperwork. The Center Director/Site Supervisor will contact you for a meeting.
- ☐ Attend meeting with the Center Director/Site Supervisor to review and sign your child's Individual Care Plan

****The Center Director/Site Supervisor will notify you once your child can begin/resume school, once the above steps have been completed. The medication will then be administered as instructed.***

Please complete the following steps for any Topical Over-the-Counter Medication needed at school:

- ☐ Notify the Center Director/Site Supervisor of your child's medical condition and possible topical over-the-counter medication needs
 - If the request is appropriate, the Center Director/Site Supervisor will send your request to a Health Specialist or Manager, who will further determine if the medication can be accepted for school use.
 - If the request is approved, the Health Specialist or Manager will contact you to discuss your child's health condition and instructions for the type of medication that will be applied at school.
- ☐ Speak with the Health Specialist or Manager over the phone to complete the **Parent/Guardian Request for Topical Over-the-Counter Medication (RT-OTC) form**
- ☐ Deliver the medication in its original container to the Center Director/Site Supervisor. The medication must be unaltered and unused.
 - Health Staff will review the medication. The Center Director/Site Supervisor will contact you for a meeting.
- ☐ Attend meeting with the Center Director/Site Supervisor to review and sign your child's Individual Care Plan and the RT-OTC form.

***Your child will have the topical over-the counter medication applied at school as instructed once the above steps have been completed.**

Section 7: Home-Based Program Option

The following policy applies to families enrolled in the Home-Based Program only.

The Home-Based program is an option that meets many of our family's needs. This is a unique opportunity for you to receive individualized services for your child and family. In the Home Based program, your child and family receive all the comprehensive services that are offered through the Head Start program in your weekly 90 minute Home Based Visit and the two

Socialization Activities that are offered each month. OCHS uses the High Scope Approach as the primary curriculum.

Parent Participation

The purpose of the Home-Based Program is to you develop as your child's primary educator; to build parenting skills; and to assist in the use of your home as your child's primary learning environment. To meet Head Start Program Performance Standards, as well as ensure that the Home-Based Program is a positive and meaningful experience, we ask all parents/guardians to review, acknowledge, and sign a "Home-Based Program Agreement" that includes the following:

OCHS's Home-Based Educator will:

- Schedule and conduct weekly home visits, approximately 1½ hours per visit, for a minimum of 46 weeks per program year for Early Head Start, and 32 weeks per program year for Head Start. A schedule will be agreed upon by you and the Home Based Educator at your first home visit.
- Provide or coordinate comprehensive services for your child and family, including education, family services, health, nutrition, mental health, and special needs, if applicable.
- Collaborate with you to plan activities for home visits, incorporating the family's ideas and interests.
- Facilitate Group Socialization activities twice per month for you and other parents/guardians and children enrolled in the program.
- Work with you to complete a Family Strengths Assessment and develop a Family Success Plan; identify family's strengths, goals, and provide referrals to community resources and support the family in reaching these goals.
- Provide professional services to your family, adjusting the schedule if needed with ample notice.

As a Parent/Guardian of a Child in Home-Base, OCHS asks that you will:

- actively participate in the entire home visit. Weekly home visits cannot be conducted with anyone besides you as the parent/guardian. Babysitters, friends, or other relatives may not fill in unless an exception has been approved by OCHS's Executive Director.
- inform your Home-Based Visitor 24 hours in advance if you need to cancel your weekly home visit session.
 - If there are recurring issues with keeping your scheduled home visits, the Home-Based Visitor will have a discussion with you to determine if this is the best

program option for your family. A Family Support Plan may be developed to address this problem.

- Missing two (2) consecutive home visits that are considered “unexcused absences” (i.e., home visits missed without notifying the Home-based Visitor or canceled for a reason other than illness or family emergency), may result in your child being terminated from the program. Please communicate regularly with your Home Educator to avoid this.
- inform my Home-Based Educator in advance if me, or my child, is ill. The Home-Based Program follows the same illness policy that is utilized in the center (See “Illness Policy” section of this Family Handbook) If a contagious disease affects the household, the Home-Based Educator will resume home visits once the matter has been addressed.

Additionally, to the following guidelines will support a successful home visit with your Home Educator. As a parent I commit to

- being home, dressed and ready to participate when the Home-Based Educator arrives. Please refer to the “Appropriate clothing for School” section of this Family Handbook ;
- providing a clear and safe working space our home visit activities;
- being involved in the learning activity with Home-Based Educator;
- having no other visitor are in the home;
- asking other people that live in the home not to distract from the home visit session.
 - If you reside in a shared home, please be sure there is a designated space in the home that is conducive for a successful and fun visit;
- using only positive discipline techniques during the home visit session. (See “Positive Discipline and Guidance Policy for Children” Section of this Family Handbook securing all pets in another room or outside;
- not smoking or consuming alcoholic beverages;;
- turning off the television and/or radios have been ;
- not engaging in extended phone conversations;
- assisting my child in toileting or other personal hygiene matters,
- participating in all aspects of the home visit, and not leaving my child alone in the care of the Home-Based Educator.

Please Note: If the above conditions are not met, the Home-Based Educator may need to reschedule the home visit in order to provide you and your child with a successful home visit

Socialization Activities

OCHS strongly encourages you to bring your child to the scheduled group socialization activities that take place twice per month. Group socializations can consist of field trips or facilitating a group activity times in one of our center based classrooms, or a local community center. Educational activities for parents/guardians also take place during these events.

Group socializations provide essential opportunities your child and you to interact with other families. Socialization activities cannot be conducted with anyone besides the parent/guardian, babysitters, friends or other relatives may not fill in.

Section 8: Our Closing Message

We thank you for familiarizing yourself with the important information in our Family Handbook. We hope this Handbook enables you to gain a better understanding of our Agency's policies, procedures, and expectations for all families. All families are expected to remember Our Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles at all times as they are the keys to providing the highest quality services to your children and family.

We ask that all parents/guardians refer to the Family Handbook and/or talk with a member of the OCHS staff should you have future questions.

We look forward to serving, and collaborating with, so that your child can be successful now and in the future!