



Upbring

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**Head Start  
Preschool**

**HEAD START  
Preschool  
Parent  
Handbook  
  
2023-2024**

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# WELCOME TO THE HEAD START FAMILY



## About the Program

Upbring Head Start works with families to ensure that all children, regardless of family or community background, enter kindergarten ready to learn. The Head Start program is deeply committed to providing the highest quality services to families and to assisting families in achieving positive family outcomes. To make this happen, Upbring has an extremely strong family services staff team. Each family is assigned center level family services staff who are supervised and supported by Head Start leadership staff.

Our Early Head Start and Head Start program provides center-based services to approximately 1,507 children every year across 34 sites in the state of Texas. With the goal of helping each child reach his/her potential, Upbring staff create a setting in which children experience the excitement of making new discoveries and mastering new skills. Children will grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.

For more information regarding locations and program services, please visit <https://upbring.org/head-start-preschool>.

## Welcome

We are happy to have you and your child in our Head Start program. We hope your time with us is a rewarding experience for all.

This Head Start Parent Handbook is designed to provide you with information about Head Start/Early Head Start and the important role you play in your child's experience and in the success of our program. You are your child's first and most important educator and you have the primary responsibility for your child's development. It will also highlight the guidelines of our program.

Working together as a team, we will provide the support your child needs to succeed in school and in life through comprehensive services and a high-quality early learning experience

## Enrollment

Enrollment applications are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. Family Advocates complete the enrollment applications with the parent/guardian of each prospective Head Start or Early Head Start student. Each application is reviewed and verified by Upbring family services staff to determine income eligibility as part of the selection process. Categorical Eligibility and Income level, as two of several selection criteria, are assigned a point value and are used to rank applicants in order of priority for enrollment. Head Start programs utilize the eligibility determination record to verify eligibility. However, if provided with extenuating circumstances, documentation may be collected within a week from enrollment.

**Age eligibility**

- Early Head Start: Birth to those under Age 3 and pregnant women.
- Head Start: Ages 3 to under the age of 5.
- Age is determined as the school cut-off date (September 1<sup>st</sup>) for the current year. In stand-alone licensed centers, Upbring will accept children who turn three after September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Operation Schedule**

Upbring Head Start programs operate from August to May, Monday through Friday. Early Head Start program operation from August to August, Monday through Friday.

Children must be signed in and out of the classroom and/or center when arriving or departing at any Upbring Head Start center.

**Operation Hours**

**7:45 AM** Front Doors Open

**3:00 PM** Afternoon Dismissal

**12:15 PM** Dismissal for half-days

*\*Instruction begins promptly at 8:00 AM. Late entry only on an individual basis.*

**Contact Information**

Center Name	
Address	
Center Director Name	
Phone Number	
Email Address	
Family Advocate Name	
Phone Number	
Email Address	

## **WHAT IS HEAD START?**

## **WHAT IS EARLY HEAD START?**

Federally funded, community-based early childhood education programs for qualifying families

- Early Head Start serves infants and toddlers from 6 weeks to 3 years of age.
- Head Start serves children ages 3 to 5.

### **Comprehensive Services**

The following services are available at all Upbring Head Start Centers:

- Education/School Readiness
- Disabilities
- Health
- Mental Wellness
- Nutrition
- Parent Engagement
- Social Services

### **Center-Based Programs**

Upbring has chosen to provide all services to Head Start children and families at the centers.

- Classes Monday through Friday
- Classes are from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Learning activities in large group, small group, and individual settings
- Individual child progress assessed by classroom teachers
- Individualized Developmental and Behavioral Screenings
- Two home visits by teachers
- Two parent-teacher conferences

### **“Open Door” Policy to Parents/Guardians**

Upbring Head Start Centers operate with an “open door” policy to include parent/guardian visitation at any time without the need to secure prior approval from the Center Director or member of the Upbring staff.

### **Confidentiality**

All staff and volunteers sign a confidentiality and ethics statement to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all children and families. Information about your child or family cannot be given out to anyone unless we have received your written permission, a court order, or Child Protective Services is involved. Please do not ask staff or volunteers about other Head Start children or families. By law, staff are prevented from sharing information to protect all families and staff.

### **Upbring Policies and Procedures**

The Upbring Head Start and Early Head Start Policies and Procedures are available for parents/guardians and employees to review at each center. A notice will also be sent home to inform all parents of any changes to the Upbring Policies or Procedures. Please ask the center director should you wish to review them. The Parent Handbook provides a condensed edition.

## Concerns

The Head Start/Early Head Start Program believes in working with parents and staff to address any concerns a parent may have with the program. When voicing a concern, please follow these steps:

- Write down the facts about the concern.
- Make an appointment to speak to the appropriate person.
- Speak in a calm and relaxed tone.

Communicate your concern in the following order:

- Step 1 Speak to the teacher when she is not busy supervising children.
- Step 2 If after step 1 you are not satisfied with the solution, speak to the Center Director.
- Step 3 Finally, if you are not satisfied, speak to the Upbring Head Start Regional Director.

## Regulatory Information

Upbring's services are regulated through both national and state regulations.

### Texas Child Care Minimum Standards

A copy of the Texas Child Care Minimum Standards is available for parent/guardian review at any time. Please ask the Administrative Staff for the location of this manual.

Parents/guardians at any time may contact the local childcare licensing office.

Address for Local Child Care Licensing Office	
Phone Number	

A copy of all Texas Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) inspections are posted on the parent or licensing information board at each center. Copies of all HHS inspections may be obtained from the Center Director.

### Texas Department of Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services information may be found at the following website: [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

### Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Upbring Head Start follows the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Under FERPA, parents have the right to look at and review their student's education records.

The school must have written permission from the parent to release any information from a student's education record unless it is requested by the following parties or under the following conditions:

- School officials with a legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting studies on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and,
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system (specific to State law).

Without parent consent, schools may disclose "directory" information. However, schools must allow parents a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them.

## **EDUCATION**

**Head Start** provides carefully and intentionally planned activities for school readiness. Hands-on learning experiences are created using developmentally appropriate goals for children ages 3 to 5 years of age. Children's readiness for school and beyond is fostered through individualized learning experiences. Through relationships with adults, play, and planned and spontaneous instruction, children grow in many aspects of development. Parents, including grandparents, foster parents, and other primary caregivers, are recognized as children's first and most influential teachers. Their knowledge of their children is central to each child's individualized approach.

**Early Head Start** provides a classroom setting for children birth to 35-months with a ratio of one teacher to four children so that teachers can build a relationship with each child. Trust and bonding through a good relationship enables the infants and toddlers to feel secure allowing meaningful learning to take place. Early Head Start also follows the practice of ongoing continuity of care.

### **Classroom Services**

Our goal is for children to grow and develop to their full potential. We want children to experience the excitement of making new discoveries and mastering new skills. It is important for children to grow:

- Intellectually – using higher order thinking skills through discovery learning.
- Socially – the ability to get along with others, taking turns, respecting others, and developing friendships
- Emotionally – be confident, develop healthy self-esteem, deal with feelings, and develop self-control
- Physically – small and large muscle coordination, balance, cut with scissors, and hold a pencil



## **Attendance**

Attendance is the actual presence and participation in the program of a child currently enrolled. Head Start staff will monitor average daily attendance. Once you have enrolled your child in school, you are under the guidelines of the Texas Compulsory Attendance Law. "A child who is required to attend school under this section shall attend school each school day for the entire period the program of instruction is provided."

Upbring Head Start Start and Early Head Start Attendance Policy is as follows:

- A note or tardy/absence acknowledgement must be submitted after each absence.
- The child will not be counted absent or tardy if they have been out due to receiving a Head Start required service (ex: physical/dental).
- If the center does not hear from parents within one hour of the start of the program day regarding your child's absence, family advocates will be reaching out to you.
- If your child's attendance is not consistent or there are numerous (2 or more) unexcused absences, the family services staff will meet with the parent/guardian to discuss absences and if applicable an Attendance Action Plan will be put in place to address the absences.
- On occasions in which Upbring staff cannot contact the family, a home visit will be conducted to ensure the safety of the child and the family.
- Although consecutive tardies may occur at a center, it does not equate into truancy. It will be addressed by the family advocate and the center director.
- Five (5) unexcused or unwarranted tardies will result in a referral to the Family Advocate. The Family Advocate will review attendance for the child and an Attendance Plan or Family Goal will be established.
- In drastic circumstances in which parents/guardians are not communicating or participating in the programming, a meeting will be scheduled with the Center Director and Regional Director for additional solutions.

Should the child's attendance drop below 85%, there will be a review of the child's enrollment to determine continuing participation in the program. Upbring staff maintains a waiting list and want to ensure that the children in the program are fully utilizing the services provided.

## **Curriculum**

Teachers develop a weekly lesson plan, utilizing curriculum for either Infant, Toddler or Pre-K that organizes activities and experiences around a theme. Parents will be given opportunities to provide input into the lesson plans and curriculum.

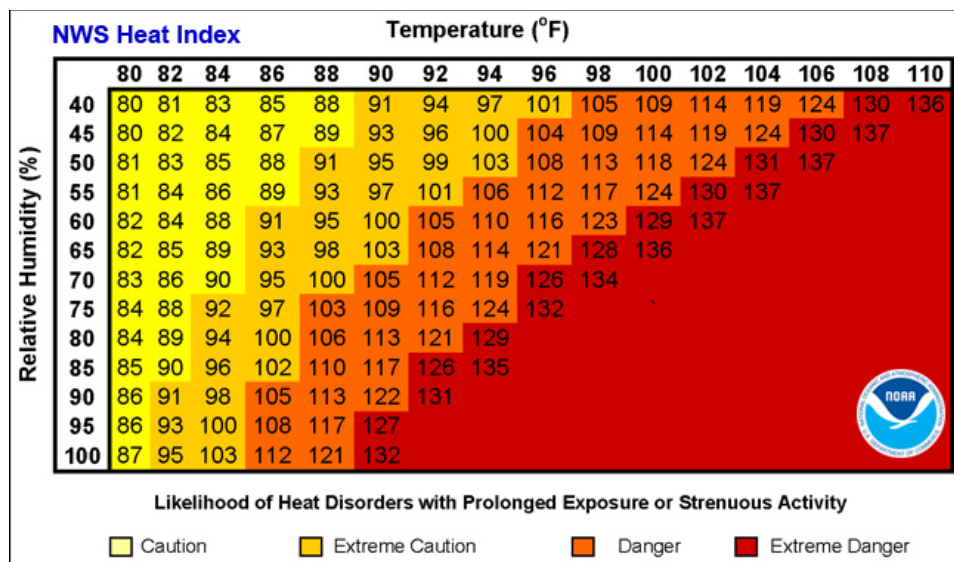
The environment is an important part of the curriculum. The classroom is divided into learning centers. Children learn by choosing, actively exploring, and experimenting. Learning centers generally include:

- Blocks/Building
- Creative Art
- Dramatic Play
- Language/Literacy
- Math
- Science
- Music

## **Daily Schedule**

Children are actively engaged throughout the day. The daily schedule is posted inside or directly outside the classroom. A typical schedule includes:

- Learning Through Play – Children will have the opportunity to choose learning centers and materials that interest them. Indoor and outdoor active and quiet play, which must include moderate to vigorous active play for a minimum of 60 minutes for toddlers. and a minimum of 90 minutes for pre-kindergarten age children.
- Small and Large Group Activities - Head Start staff work with children on a specific activity. It may be a game, a project for the classroom, or a hands-on investigation of an interesting topic.
- Meals - Healthy food choices, good manners, and enjoyment of sharing a family style meal with friends and staff are important parts of the meal, while discussing nutrition.
- Outside/P.E. - Young children's physical and motor development affects their cognitive and social development, readiness for school, and adult health. Gross motor activities for exercise and large muscle development with planned caregiver-initiated activities and unplanned physical activity. THHS requires that all children have outside play time each day (weather permitting). The National Weather Service Heat Index Chart is referenced to ensure the safety of children. Children ages 18m and older get 60 to 90 minutes of outdoor/indoor active play time each day. Infants (birth – 12m) are required outside time however it is firmly on how much time each infant can tolerate.
- In the case of *Caution to Extreme Danger* (temperature and humidity) weather conditions as noted on the chart below, an alternative physical activity will be provided indoors including, but not limited to; balls, parachute play, hula hoops, indoor obstacle course, music and movement, running, jumping, hopping, etc.



- Rest time- children enrolled will be encouraged to rest daily. For Head Start aged children a small travel pillow and a towel or small blanket are permitted. Infants will be placed to sleep on their back to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). HHS form number 2550 will be completed for each Early Head Start student birth through 12 months of age.

Screen time- children under 2 are not allowed any forms of screen time while in our care. If screen time is utilized for children 2 years and up, it must be a pre-planned activity (lesson) and meet an educational goal. All screen-time lessons will be age appropriate, will not exceed 1 hour in the day, will never be used during meal or rest times, and will not display and/or advertise any forms of violence. Healthy habits are encouraged throughout the day. Time is set aside for tooth brushing, handwashing, and learning lifelong healthy habits like staying safe in the home, classroom, and more. We practice emergency drills such as lock down, fire, and tornado, and severe weather in the center.

### Behavioral Guidelines and Discipline

The following rules apply to parents, staff, volunteers, or anyone who comes in contact with the children.

- Discipline is individualized for each child. It is directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.
- Infants and toddlers are redirected to positive activities. Quiet/calming time one on one with the child's teacher may be used.
- Infants must not be seated in any restrictive device for more than 15 minutes, unless the infant is eating.
- A positive classroom management approach will be used. Teachers focus on teaching social skills, appropriate interactions and natural consequences.
- No child is left alone or unsupervised.
- Spanking, hitting, slapping, shaking, threatening or yanking a child is never allowed. Time out is not used.
- No one will be allowed to yell at, put down, or call a child an inappropriate name.
- Food or drink is never withheld from a child as a form of punishment or used as a reward. Children are never denied their basic needs.
- Children will not be expelled or suspended from Upbring Head Start Preschool. Staff

- will work with families to address concerns and create a plan of action.
- Active play must never be withheld from a child who misbehaves (i.e., keeping a child indoors with another caregiver while the rest of the children go outside or making a child sit out of active play in the afternoon for a behavior that occurred in the morning). However, if a child is exhibiting poor behavior during active play, the child may separate from the group, to allow the child time to settle down before resuming cooperative play or activities.
  - Children must not be required to remain silent or inactive for an inappropriately long period of time for the child's age, including coercing a child to remain in a restrictive device.

### **Children with Disabilities**

We offer assistance to families requiring services for their children with disabilities. We promote an inclusive setting for all children. Preschool children with disabilities learn and play with all children in the program. We work with any agency or school district that is currently serving your child. Transition plans are developed for all children to ensure a successful move to a new setting. Ten percent of enrollment space is allotted for children with disabilities.

Talk to your child's teacher if you have any concerns or questions about their development. For more information, please contact the Center Director.

Child day care operations are public accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title III. If you believe that such an operation may be practicing discrimination in violation of Title III, you may call the ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

### **Conferences and Home Visits**

Parents and teachers are partners working together to help children grow and learn. Family contacts are made throughout the year. Your teacher will schedule two (2) home visits and two (2) parent conferences with you. You may request additional conferences with your child's Early Head Start/Head Start teacher at any time. You and your child's teacher will:

- Identify your child's strengths and needs, along with your family's strengths and goals.
- Set goals and plan activities that will help your child develop and be prepared for success in school.
- Evaluate your child's progress.

Review community resources and information available.

### **Releasing a Child / Sign-In and Out**

Your child must be signed in and signed out of class each day by an adult of the age of 18 years or older with a valid driver's license. For someone under the age of 18 years of age, they must possess a written statement from the parent authorizing the pickup and stating the hardship of the situation. Head Start/Early Head staff will only release your child to persons who are on the Authorized Pick-up List.

**\*\*It is important that this list be kept up-to-date at all times\*\***

The Head Start/Early Head Start staff has the right to not release a child if there is reason to suspect the parent or person picking up the child is possibly under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The following procedures will be followed if this should occur:

1. The staff will call the other contact number and describe behaviors, such as slurred speech, dilated pupils, not acting like normal self, staggering, etc.
2. The staff may call the Police Department but will ask police to wait outside. This reduces the possibility of a dangerous situation occurring.
3. The staff may call Child Protection Services (CPS).

Please make arrangements for your child to be picked up at 3 p.m. on school days. If a child is repeatedly not picked up by 3:00 p.m. Upbring Head Start staff will notify the local Police Department for assistance in locating the parent/guardian. A report of neglect may also be submitted to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

### **School Safety**

Head Start/Early Head Start is a smoke-free and weapon-free facility. People must not smoke any e-cigarette, vaporizer, or tobacco product or otherwise use any tobacco product at your child-care center, on the premises, or the playground. Head Start is a gang-free zone. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your child-care center. Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalties.

When dropping off or picking up your child, please ensure that you park in a designated parking area and no children under the age of 7 are left unattended in your vehicle. Doing so is a class C misdemeanor. Leaving a child unattended in a car is also a form of neglectful supervision as per the Texas Department of Protective Services.

Texas law requires that all children younger than eight years old, unless they are taller than 4 feet 9 inches, be secured in a child safety seat whenever they ride in a vehicle. As a child-care provider Head Start staff have a legal obligation to protect and care for each child in our care and acknowledge it is unlawful to release a child to a parent who is driving a vehicle without a child safety seat. If a child safety seat is needed, please contact our Family Services department for assistance.

Upbring Head Start centers will follow the ISD for their respective locations pertaining to severe or inclement weather. If an ISD is closed or has a delayed start time the Head Start center will follow that schedule as well.

The Head Start/Early Head Start staff are required by law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect. If you suspect a child has been abused or neglected, call 1-800-252-5400 or make an online report: [www.texasabusehotline.org](http://www.texasabusehotline.org).

All parents, including parent volunteers, are expected to show respect for Head Start/Early Head Start children, staff, as well as other parents. Outbursts of anger, obscenities, and attacks will not be tolerated. Law enforcement will be contacted if needed to provide support. At the discretion of the Center Director or designee a parent or family member displaying inappropriate behaviors may be barred from entering an Upbring Head Start center.

### **Accidents/Injuries/Emergencies**

If a child is injured at an Upbring Head Start Preschool center or Early Head Start center, the first priority will be the care and safety of the injured child and other children. As part of our commitment to ensuring the children's safety and well-being, Head Start Staff are trained to administer pediatric First Aid and CPR. First aid will be administered as necessary by teaching staff, as soon as possible. If the child requires further direct medical care, the parent/guardian will be notified immediately and medical care sought, including calling 911 if warranted.

An Incident/Illness Report will be completed by the staff member who witnesses the accident or injury. You will be asked to review and sign the form and will be provided a copy.

### **Emergency Plan**

Emergency plans are posted in each classroom and each classroom has a first aid kit. Emergency drills are routinely conducted. Each center and school district has its own Emergency Preparedness Plan that is to be followed in the event of an emergency. For licensed centers, please see the attached Emergency Preparedness Plan with relocation diagram for specific procedures.

## **GUIDANCE FOR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Environmental risks—factors in the life of an infant or child—may interfere with the child's development. Child abuse, lack of adequate nutrition, insufficient medical care, and other conditions have been proven to impact a child's development. Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment or any other kind of child abuse, neglect or exploitation by any adult or child is required to report any concerns about child abuse or neglect to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) at 1-800-252-5400 or <https://txabusehotline.org>.

## **Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Upbring staff will be provided with annual training that focuses on prevention, recognition and a report of child abuse and neglect. Directors and staff will ensure that parents are made aware of:

- Issues regarding child abuse and neglect, including warning signs that a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect.
- Prevention techniques for child abuse and neglect; and
- Actions that the parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should take to obtain assistance and intervention.

Centers will reach out to appropriate community organizations for awareness and services available to center and parents.

## **Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect**

### **Neglect (Texas Administrative Code Rule § 745.8559)**

Neglect is an act or omission that is a breach of a duty by a person working under the auspices of an operation that causes or may cause substantial emotional harm or substantial physical injury to a child. The breach of a duty includes:

- (1) Failure to take an action that a reasonable member of that profession, reasonable caregiver, or reasonable person should take in the same situation.
- (2) Taking an action that a reasonable member of that profession, reasonable caregiver, or reasonable person should not take in the same situation.
- (3) Placing a child in or failing to remove him from a situation that a reasonable member of that profession, reasonable caregiver, or reasonable person should realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities.
- (4) Leaving a child in a situation where a reasonable member of that profession, reasonable caregiver, or reasonable person would expect the child to be exposed to substantial physical injury or substantial emotional harm without arranging for necessary care for the child;
- (5) Failure to seek, to obtain, or to follow through with medical care for a child;
- (6) Failure to provide a child with food, clothing, and shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child;
- (7) Placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which a reasonable member of that profession, reasonable caregiver, or reasonable person should know exposes the child to the risk of sexual conduct;
- (8) A violation of any law, rule, or minimum standard that causes substantial emotional harm or substantial physical injury to a child;
- (9) Repeated (two or more) violations of any law, rule, or minimum standard, after notice and an opportunity to correct the violation, that may cause substantial emotional harm or substantial physical injury to a child;
- (10) Failure to comply with an individual treatment plan, plan of service, or individualized service plan that causes substantial emotional harm or substantial physical injury to a child; and
- (11) Repeated failures (two or more) to comply with an individual treatment plan, plan of service, or individualized service plan, after notice and an opportunity to correct the failure, that may cause substantial emotional harm or substantial physical injury to a child.

### **Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (Fam. Code § 261.001)**

The term 'abuse' includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

- (1) Sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offense of continuous sexual abuse of young child (§ 21.02, Penal Code), indecency with a child (§ 21.11, Penal Code), sexual assault (§ 22.011, Penal Code), or aggravated sexual assault (§ 22.021, Penal Code).
- (2) Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child.
- (3) Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct (as defined by § 43.01, Penal Code), including conduct that constitutes an offense of trafficking of persons (§ 20A.02(a)(7) or (8), Penal Code), prostitution (§ 43.02(a)(2), Penal Code), or compelling prostitution (§ 43.05(a)(2), Penal Code).
- (4) Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene (as defined by § 43.21, Penal Code) or pornographic.
- (5) Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child (as defined by § 43.25, Penal Code).
- (6) Knowingly causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a child to be trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under § 20A.02(a)(5), (6), (7), or (8), Penal Code, or the failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent a child from being trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under any of those sections.

### **Abuse (Texas Administrative Code Rule § 746.8557)**

Abuse is any intentional, knowing, or reckless act or omission by someone working under the auspices of an operation that causes or may cause emotional harm or physical injury to, or the death of, a child that the operation serves. Intentional, knowing, or reckless acts and omissions include:

- (1) Any act such as striking, shoving, shaking, or hitting a child, whether intended as discipline or not;
- (2) Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent abuse by another person;
- (3) Causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use alcohol or a controlled substance as defined by Health and Safety Code, Chapter 481 (other than a prescription drug that is prescribed to the child and used as prescribed);
- (4) Using alcohol or a controlled substance in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical injury or emotional harm;
- (5) Sexual conduct that constitutes the offense of indecency with a child as defined under Penal Code, §21.11, sexual assault as defined under Penal Code, §22.011, or aggravated sexual assault as defined under Penal Code, §22.021;
- (6) Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct;
- (7) Failure to make reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct to a child;
- (8) Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knows or should know that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Penal Code, §43.21, or pornographic; and
- (9) Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child as defined by Penal Code, §43.25.



### **Emotional Abuse (Fam. Code § 261.001)**

The term 'abuse' includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

- (1) Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning
- (2) Causing or permitting a child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning 'Severe emotional disturbance' means a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder of sufficient duration to result in functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits a person's role or ability to function in family, school, or community activities.

### **Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

Upbring staff responsible for the health and welfare of all children participating in the program, and, as such, are mandated reporters of any suspected child abuse or neglect, either in environments outside the center or within the center.

When there is an incident of suspected abuse or neglect, the person who witnesses the incident, suspects or receives a verbal declaration from a child will do the following: An employee may not delegate the responsibility to make a report, and you may not require an employee to seek approval to file or notify you that a report was made

1. Notify the Center Director/education lead, Regional Director immediately or as quickly as opportunity permits, keeping in mind the supervision and safety of the children. If the Center Director/education lead, Regional Director is not immediately available, the person can alternatively notify the Center Director/education lead of an alternate location or the director of Head Start services.
2. The Center Director will notify the Regional Director, he/she notify the Assistant Superintendent of Operations within the same business day.
3. Within 24 hours and with administrative support, the person will
  - a. Complete an Upbring Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Form outlining the alleged actions and submit a scanned copy via email to the Assistant Superintendent of Operations. The Center Director shall retain the original copy.
4. The person who witnessed the incident will notify Children Protective Services (on the Child Abuse Hotline) to make a report. The phone number in Texas is 1-800-252-5400. The following information should be available when calling in a suspected incident:
  - a. Child's name and birth date
  - b. Home address
  - c. Parent's full name and telephone number
  - d. Time of incident
  - e. Where it took place
  - f. Any other relevant details
5. For more information on how to identify cases of abuse and neglect, staff can ask their Center Director or call the Child Abuse/Neglect hotline for guidance and coaching or refer to the state licensing manual.

If an allegation of child abuse and/or neglect by Upbring staff member is submitted, they will be immediately placed on suspension without pay. Should the allegations be proven to be true, his/her employment will immediately be terminated. Should the allegations be proven

false, he/she will receive pay from the date of suspension to the date of the decision.

Confidentiality is essential. Information given about the allegations and/or investigation results shall not be shared with friends, other parents, one's own family or other staff members who do not have a need to know.

### **Staff Communication**

In all cases of reporting suspected child abuse or neglect, the Center Director may choose to inform key staff members that a report has been submitted (although not necessarily the details of the report). This includes staff working most closely with the child and family at the site level, as well as key leadership staff:

- Teaching team in child's classroom (as deemed appropriate by the Center Director)
- Family advocate for child's family
- Family Services and Education Coordinator
- Mental Health Director and Special Programs Director
- Regional Director
- Program Director
- Superintendent of Head Start
- Assistant Superintendent of Operations
- Assistant Superintendent of Family Services
- Assistant Superintendent of Education

Staff is expected to keep the facts of the report and all relevant information confidential from all other parties, possibly including the child's family members as per the policy below.

### **Parent Communication**

The decision to notify parents that a report was made to DFPS will be determined on a case-by-case basis. If, after an investigation, a determination is made that corrective action is necessary to protect the child, Upbring Head Start will carry out the Division's recommendation for corrective action.

In addition, staff shall advise parents of any unusual incident that occurred at the center and that might indicate possible abuse and/or neglect involving the child, such as unusual sexual activity; violent or destructive behavior; withdrawal or passivity; or significant changes in the child's personality, behavior or habits. Such notification shall be made on the same day on which the incident occurred, and documentation of the incident and of parent notification will be kept on file.

## **HEALTH**

The goal of Head Start Health Services is to help meet each child's physical, dental, and nutritional needs by identifying concerns, making referrals, and following up as needed. Family Advocates will also work with families to ensure they have an established medical and dental home. Health and safety practices are followed throughout the Head Start Program. Immunization requirements for children, including tuberculosis screening and testing if required by your regional Texas Department of State Health Services or local health authority.

## **Health, Dental, and Nutrition Screenings**

Head Start emphasizes the importance of early identification of health concerns. Head Start arranges for every child to receive, if needed, comprehensive health care, including:

- Physical Examination
- Dental Examination
- Nutrition Assessment
- Vision and Hearing Screenings

Physical/dental exams are not provided on-site. The parent/guardian is expected to make an appointment with the physician and/or dentist to have the exams completed and provide a copy to Head Start. This documentation is requested upon enrollment and updated as necessary to accommodate the 45 and 90-day requirements for Head Start regulation. Head Start staff is available to assist you.

## **Illness/Exclusions**

Please check your child before he/she comes to school. Do not bring your child to school if your child has any of the following:

Fever over 100°	Severe Cough
Eye infection	Unusual Skin Rash
Bleeding	Open Wounds
Vomiting/Diarrhea	

If Head Start/Early Head staff notices any of these, you may be asked to pick up your child. If your child is sent home, they must stay home until they are symptom free for **24 hours** or cleared by the appropriate Head Start staff.

As of *August 11, 2022*, the Centers for Disease Control, made the following changes to the COVID-19 protocol for Early Childhood Centers:

- Changed recommendation to conduct screening testing to focus on high-risk activities during high COVID-19 Community Level or in response to an outbreak
- Added detailed information on when to wear a mask, managing cases and exposures, and responding to outbreaks

The center will follow CDC guidelines as well as Upbring Policy when determining COVID-19 prevention strategies as well as classroom and center closures. It is recommended per THHS and CDC regulations, to follow local health department guidelines. It is also highly encouraged that students and staff stay up to date on routine vaccinations to protect our children and keep our learning environment safe.

### *COVID-19 exposure:*

If a child is positive for COVID- 19, we ask you to keep your child home. They must be isolated for a minimum of 7 days after symptoms onset, and 72 hours after their fever resolves without fever-reducing medicines. (For example, if symptoms and fever resolve on day 7, the person can return on day 10.) For most, this will be 14 days after the household contact with COVID-

19. We ask that all parents and staff let us know of any potential exposure immediately. A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID- 19 for at least 10 minutes. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 in a child or an adult who has been present in the childcare center, we will inform THHS, the CDC and our parents.

### **Good Morning Health Check**

Each day your child will receive a visual check-up by teaching staff for:

- General Appearance
- Rash
- Obvious Signs of Illness, Bruises, Cuts, Sores
- Complaint of Illness by Child or Parent, Vomiting or Diarrhea
- Hair (clean, free of lice)
- Eyes (red, matted), Bowel, or Bladder Concerns
- Runny Nose or Severe Cough
- Changes in Behavior
- All observations are recorded and kept for reference.

**IF THE CLASSROOM STAFF HAS ANY CONCERNS, YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED AND, IF NECESSARY, ASKED TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD. PROTECT ALL THE CHILDREN. IF YOUR CHILD IS ILL, PLEASE DO NOT BRING HIM/HER TO CLASS.**

### **Immunizations**

Both the Texas Department of Health and local school districts require immunizations to be current for all children enrolled in Head Start/EHS. A current immunization record for each child must be kept in their school file. Please check with the Public Health Department or your physician to make sure your child's immunizations are up-to-date. When your child receives any new shots, please bring a copy of the updated shot record to school.

Employees are not required to be vaccinated for any preventable diseases other than the COVID-19 vaccine. While the requirement for tuberculosis tests is at the discretion of the local health departments, they are required of all Upbring Head Start employees prior to employment.

For additional information regarding immunizations, visit the Texas Department of State Health Services' website at [www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/public.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/public.shtm).

### **Medication- Prescribed or Non-Prescribed**

We prefer that prescribed or non-prescribed medication be given at home. If medication, including non- prescribed medication such as sunscreen or insect repellent must be given at school, the parent must:

- See Head Start staff/school nurse for required Individual Health Care Plan to be completed by the physician and parent.
- Bring the medication in its sealed original container with the child's name, date, doctor's name and directions.

- The medication should remain sealed until administered.

All medications will be returned to the parents/guardian at the end of the school year. After June 30<sup>th</sup> of the school year ending medication not picked up will be turned in to your local pharmacy for proper disposal. Upbring Head Start does not maintain nor administer unassigned epinephrine auto-injectors to Head Start students.

## **NUTRITION and MEALS**

Head Start children are served a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack every day that follows the meal patterns established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) that is administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture. It is required we serve enough food to allow children second servings from the vegetables, fruit, grain, and milk groups. If your child has a special medical dietary need, a new requirement from THHS requires written approval from a physician or health-care professional with **prescriptive** authority if the diet is related to a disability restricting the child's diet. If your child has a specific need that is not related to a disability restricting diet, then written approval from a health-care professional or registered or licensed dietitian is required. The center may serve meat alternatives to accommodate vegetarian diets without special authorization from a health-care professional or dietitian.

Parents are encouraged to be a part of menu planning and a copy of the monthly menu will be posted in the classroom. Parents are welcome to join us for mealtimes. Please notify the teacher in advance if you will be eating a meal with us.

Due to strict health and safety guidelines, **no outside food will be allowed to be brought into Head Start classrooms**. All foods offered at Head Start must be purchased and provided by Head Start. Formula and infant foods are also provided for children under 12 months of age based upon the baby's nutritional needs. Breastfeeding mothers may supply breast milk. A comfortable place with an adult sized seat will be provided for a nursing mother if she prefers to breastfeed at the center or in the classroom.

## **MENTAL HEALTH / MENTAL WELLNESS**

Our Head Start program helps provide mental wellness support for its students and families. The Mental Health Director, Family Service Coordinators, and Family Advocates will assist staff and parents to find resources to meet identified behavioral, developmental, or educational needs for each child. Special Programs and Family Advocates, alongside the teachers, will work together to establish appropriate support for the student. Partnerships with Mental Health and Wellness agencies will allow for consultants to observe each classroom to ensure that positive behavior supports are used to promote a positive learning experience. If you are concerned about your child in any of these areas, please talk with your child's teacher. Assistance can be provided for children as well as parents. Objectives for mental health include:

- Identify and provide assistance for social skills needs
- Provide behavioral intervention and classroom observations
- Provide consultations for children, families, and staff
- Help families link to community resources

- Provide awareness and self-help techniques in the areas of personal safety
- Convey to every child that they are valued and important

Children are naturally curious as they learn to interact with other children and follow class rules. In keeping with our philosophy of a positive environment, the staff will use positive methods of reinforcement to encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction. There will be no corporal punishment.

Positive reinforcement strategies may include:

- Providing age-appropriate and hands-on activities
- Positive redirection of inappropriate behaviors
- Offering choices
- Clearly stated expectations/class rules
- Individual plans for each child.

In early childhood, children learn to:

- Build attachments and relationships with others.
- Explore and try new things on their own.
- Understand and manage emotions.

**YOU are the most important role-model in your child's life.**

## **FAMILY SERVICES**

Head Start helps each family build on their individual strengths and learn to meet their own needs. The family services staff will partner with you to develop the Family Partnership Agreement (FPA). The FPA will identify your family's strengths and assist in setting goals for your future. You will have continued support to meet your goals during regular contact with the family services staff. Family Advocates will conduct 2 home visits per year. This is to help support the partnership process. Other home visits may be conducted if a family is experiencing a family crisis, needs emergency services, or to reinforce attendance policies.

The staff can . . .

- Assist in identifying the family's interests and needs.
- Link families to community resources.
- Provide assistance for adult education: GED and college information.
- Serve as an advocate or spokesperson.
- Provide emergency assistance or crisis intervention.
- Provide assistance with the Medicaid, CHIP and SNAP application process.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES**

Head Start helps each family build on their own individual strengths and educates them on how to meet their own needs. Head Start social services staff can:

- Provide referrals for emergency assistance or crisis intervention.
- Serve as an advocate for Head Start families.

- Identify the social service needs of the family.
- Work with other community agencies to address these needs.
- Provide a community resource list for Head Start families and staff.

## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Parent involvement is the cornerstone of a successful Head Start program. Parents are their children's first and foremost teacher. You know your child's strengths, needs, and interests better than anyone else. Your input is essential and needed.

### **Parents, Become Engaged in Your Child's Education!**

- Listen to and talk with your child.
- Play with your child.
- Read with your child.
- Attend your child's Parent/Teacher Conferences.
- Be involved in the education planning.
- Encourage independence.
- Have open communication with your child's teacher, sharing any information that might be helpful for your child's development.
- Participate in parent education classes and other parent sessions.

Positive male role model involvement plays a significant role in the child's development (i.e., father, neighbor, family friend) by:

- Lowering levels of disruptive behavior, acting out and depression.
- Obeying parents, being kind to others and being responsible and respectful.

Research shows that when males are involved:

- Boys especially have fewer behavioral problems.
- Girls are happier and more confident.

There will be many opportunities for parents to support the program. Please plan to get engaged in your child's education.

### **Family Partnership Agreement**

With your assigned Family Advocate, you will:

- Initiate the Family Partnership Agreement.
- Identify your family's needs, interests, strengths and goals.
- Receive support from staff to meet your needs and goals.

### **Parent Leadership**

- Attend monthly Parent Council meetings at your site.
- Serve as a Parent Leader.
- Serve as a Policy Council member.
- Attend monthly Parent Engagement trainings.

### **Other Opportunities for Parent Engagement**

- Participate in home visits.
- Participate in parent-teacher conferences.
- Attend trainings.
- Attend your child's medical/dental appointments.
- Use the take-home library and read to your child.

**Tell your Teacher, Center Director or Family Advocate if your family needs help.**

### **Dressing Your Child for Head Start**

Early Head Start children should keep at least three sets of clothing with the child's name in permanent marker and they **MUST** be kept at the center. If your child is potty training, please bring six or more changes of clothing in case of accidents. Most students enrolling into Upbring Head Start can toilet themselves with minimal supervision, however, if your child is not currently fully able to toilet him/herself, a toilet training program will be developed between you and the classroom staff to ensure that your child is on a plan of success. This toilet training program must be enforced both in the home and in the classroom setting. This helps encourage consistency and reinforcement for your child. Your participation in this program is essential to produce a smooth, successful toileting program.

Your child **MUST** wear closed-toe shoes with non-skid soles. **Cowboy boots, open-toed sandals, jellies, and slick-soled shoes are NOT ALLOWED.** In addition, nightshirts, sleepers, and other pajamas are **NOT PERMITTED.** Your child **MUST** be brought to Upbring Head Start in a clean diaper.

Your child's day includes active, and sometimes messy, play. Please dress him/her in comfortable and easy to clean clothes. Children should be dressed to play outside. Please watch the weather and dress accordingly.

**Caution:** *Please dress your children in weather appropriate clothing. Jewelry such as necklaces, bracelets, rings, anklets, hair clips and other accessories are choking hazards and are NOT ALLOWED.*

### **Communication**

Communication is very important. It is key that parents and guardians maintain consistent communication with Head Start staff. We will try in every way possible to communicate with you as to what is happening. We hope you will communicate freely with us. In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please inform the school. We are here to help and support you and your family. All information is confidential. Common causes of distress which might affect children include:

- Parents away from home
- New people living in the home.
- Illness or death of a family member
- Accident
- Separation or divorce
- Family conflict
- Help with resources.



Center staff utilize various modes of communication to relay information to parents. Information may be relayed via telephone call, text, or by utilizing a mass notification system such as Remind.

## **ORGANIZATIONS FOR HEAD START**

### **Texas Head Start Association**

The Texas Head Start Association (THSA) is committed to providing strong leadership and advocacy to promote quality programs and services for the Head Start community. The Association's membership is comprised of Head Start directors, staff, parents, and friends.

Annual THSA membership assists us in our continuing goal of providing a powerful voice for Texas low-income children and their families. The families of Head Start greatly benefit from the wide spectrum of services and quality education that each program supplies.

Your membership in the Texas Head Start Association entitles you to:

- Membership with the Region VI Head Start Association
- Reduced registration fee for the state conference
- Subscription to the association state newsletter
- Scholarships from the national, regional and Texas association.
- Vote for candidates for the THSA Board of Directors and for THSA officers

If you wish to join, please complete the application and return it to your center at no cost to you. This gives you membership in both the Texas Head Start Association and the Region 9 Head Start Association for a five-state area. See attached application for further details.

<http://www.txhsa.org>

**National Head Start Association**

You also have the opportunity to join the National Head Start Association. If you wish to join, please, complete the application and return it to your center at no cost to you. NHSA offers a wealth of information and resources to our members and members can access all our publications online! You are certain to stay current on Head Start issues and the early care and education field. The "Member Only" section of our site also includes valuable marketing resources, important advocacy information, the NHSA Career Center, and more. See attached application for further details. <http://www.nhsa.org>

**Addendum**

The following items are not applicable to Upbring Head Start.

- Transportation Services
- Water Activities
- Field Trips
- Animals in the classroom
- Outside Foods

## COVID-19 Guidance

While fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared with adults during the pandemic, children can be infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, can get sick with COVID-19, and can spread the virus to others.(1,2,3,4) Most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, and some have no symptoms at all.(5) The symptoms of COVID-19 in children are similar to symptoms of other common illnesses, like colds, strep throat, influenza, or allergies. Like adults, children who have COVID-19 but have no symptoms can still spread the virus to others.(6) For more information, visit [COVID-19 in Children](#).

Children with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Although the number of children who have been hospitalized with COVID-19 is low compared with adults, one third of hospitalized children with COVID-19 are admitted to the intensive care unit.(6) Additionally, a small number of children might develop a rare but serious condition associated with COVID-19 called Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children ([MIS-C](#)). Although the risk for death among children is low compared with adults, some children in the United States have died from COVID-19.(7)

Reports have shown that children in child care settings can become infected and spread COVID-19 to others in the child care program, at home, and in the community.(8,9) Some staff and household family members might be at increased risk of severe illness. For example, people who are older and have underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. For information about who is at increased risk, visit [People at Increased Risk](#).

However, child care programs support children's social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health while fostering early learning development. Child care programs can also help serve children in need through nutrition programs, special education services, and after-school programs. In addition, child care programs support parents with reliable and safe care so they can return to work. The benefits of keeping child care programs open should be weighed against the risks posed by COVID-19 spread in the child care program and community.

Additional information has shown that a comprehensive, multipronged approach for COVID-19 prevention strategies might help slow transmission in the early care and education setting.(10) Child care programs should make decisions about reopening and continuing operations based on available [data](#) including [levels of community COVID-19 transmission](#) (spread) and the child care program's ability to implement appropriate prevention strategies (risk reducing actions) to stay open safely and protect children, staff, and administrators.

Your child care program might need to implement short-term building closure procedures **if an infected person has been at the facility [during their infectious period](#)** and has close contact with others. CDC guidance will continue to be monitored and is subject to change.

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARENT HANDBOOK**

Child's name / *Nombre del Nino*: \_\_\_\_\_

School / *Escuela* \_\_\_\_\_

I have:

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have received the Parent Handbook. I understand and will follow the policies outlined in this handbook. I understand that there will be someone available to answer any questions that may arise.

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have reviewed and understand the attendance and tardy policy (p. 9).

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have received and reviewed the CACFP Building for the Future flyer (CACFP locations only).

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have received the CACFP non-discrimination statement (CACFP locations only).

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have received the CACFP WIC flyer (CACFP locations only).

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have received the CACFP Meal Income Benefit Letter to Households (CACFP locations only).

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have reviewed and understand the discipline and guidance policy.

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have received and reviewed information on Infant Safe Sleep policy.

(initial)\_\_\_\_\_ I have received and reviewed information on emergency/evacuation procedures.

As a volunteer of the Upbring Head Start program, I agree to adhere to the following code of ethical conduct:

1. I will respect and promote the unique identity of each child, family, and staff member and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.
2. I will follow the program confidentiality policies concerning information about children,
3. families, staff, and/or internal operating procedures.
4. I will adhere to the program's policies and procedures for filing a community complaint.
5. I will refrain from accepting or soliciting personal favors, gratuities, or anything of significant value from contractors or potential contractors and employees or potential employees of the program.
6. I will share my skills, talents, and expertise to promote and improve the quality of the program.

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**Signature of Parent/Guardian**

**Date**