



COTRAIC Early Head Start Parent Handbook



REVISED 6. 2021

OUR CHILD'S INFORMATION

Classroom Name:	
Classroom Address:	
Classroom Phone Number:	
Classroom Fax Number:	
Classroom Coordinator:	
Teacher Name:	
Teacher Name:	
Family Support Specialist:	
Family Support Phone Number:	
Health Coordinator:	
Kaufmann Offices:	412-431-4339
Kaufmann Fax Number:	412-291-8178

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WELCOME TO EARLY HEAD START!

Thank you for choosing COTRAIC Early Head Start for your child's care and education. Our staff members strive to promote infants' and toddlers' physical, mental, social, and emotional development in a safe and enriching classroom setting. Our low ratios ensure that your child is getting exceptional, personal care throughout the day.

We invite you to share the values and goals you have for your children with your teachers and family support staff. We always keep communication open so that we are all working toward the same end. Through creative and age-appropriate early education and warm, responsive caregiving, we hope to make the most of the many wonderful opportunities presented for raising healthy, happy, responsible, competent, and confident children.

Please read this handbook to familiarize yourself with our policies and procedures. Keep it on hand to refer to for any questions you may have throughout the year. Our education, family support, and health staff are also available to help.

We are grateful and honored to be trusted with your precious children. Every day we get to spend with them is a gift.

COTRAIC MISSION STATEMENT

To promote the socio-economic development of the Native American community and others who experience the same type of socio-economic difficulties in the greater Pittsburgh metropolitan area.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Within the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center Early Head Start (COTRAIC EHS), confidential and sensitive information is only shared with employees of COTRAIC EHS who have a “need to know” in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child.

Confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as COTRAIC strives to protect everyone’s right to privacy.

- Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and HIV/AIDS status or other health-related information of anyone
- Confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared with outside agencies when the parent has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law or Court Order.
- The agency’s Confidentiality Policy protects every child’s privacy. Employees are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.
- Any information learned about a child, family, staff, or potential staff member through participation in any classroom, program, function, committee, Policy Council or Board meeting is confidential information. We will not share this information with other staff, parents, agencies, family, or friends. If there is a need to discuss an incident or question an action, a discussion with a supervisor/director will help determine whether further action is needed.
- When a request comes to the agency from the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth, and Families or the Social Security Office, we are obligated to provide the requested information.

BUILDING SECURITY

Please use the designated doors only. Upon entering any agency building, sign in on the provided sign in sheet. Use your name, not the child's, and place the time you enter and exit the building on the same line. In a building shared with Head Start, please take a visitor tag and wear it visibly during the time you are in the facility.

When you or a designated person drops off or picks up your child, they shall follow the above procedure and must be listed on your child's Code Word Sheet, know the code word, be over the age of 14, and have a photo ID.

If a building is on "lockdown" for security reasons, no one may enter or exit the building except law enforcement until the all-clear is given. Parents cannot pick up children until law enforcement and COTRAIC Leadership determine it is safe to do so.

The building and grounds of COTRAIC are drug, alcohol, and weapon free.

COTRAIC DISASTER PLAN

The Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center Disaster Plan is designed to enhance the safety of the student body and staff in the event of a natural or unnatural disaster. A natural disaster is an event brought on by nature (tornado, severe thunderstorm, flood). An unnatural disaster can include events generated intentionally, such as police incidents or arson, or unintentionally, such as a gas leak or chemical spill. Each site routinely practices fire drills and tornado drills. A comprehensive emergency plan is posted in the parent corner.

If your child's site needs to be evacuated, the entire site will relocate to another location, as listed below. Once all children are safely relocated, program staff will begin to contact parents. Immediate child safety is always the priority.

- a. Dorseyville (both buildings will always evacuate together) will relocate to Rochelle Street.
- b. Hazelwood (both buildings will always evacuate together) will relocate to Rochelle Street.
- c. Rochelle Street will relocate to Churchview.
- d. HEARTH will relocate to Dorseyville.

ADULT CODE OF CONDUCT

It is an expectation that all adults, including staff, parents/guardians, and other designated drop-off/pickup persons shall conduct themselves in the following manner:

- Be courteous, respectful, and patient
- Dress appropriately at all times
- Treat people the way you would want to be treated
- Model how we want our children to treat others

- Acknowledge and celebrate the cultures and practices of other people and families
- Refrain from being on your cell phone during drop off and pick up times

Under no circumstances will the following behaviors be tolerated by any adult while in any COTRAIC EHS setting or event:

- Physical or verbal punishment of children
- Threats to children, staff, or other parents/guardians, coercion, harassment, use of force
- Swearing or cursing
- Slurs-racial, gender, ethnic, sexual
- Intimidation
- Smoking or vaping in or near centers or at agency events near/around children
- Quarreling, fighting, throwing objects, yelling at staff, other parents/guardians, or children
- Violation of any of the center safety practices and policies
- Exhibiting any signs of visible intoxication in or around your child's center at any time.
- Bringing drugs, alcohol, or weapons to the center or other settings and events
- Pets on the property
- Violation of the Confidentiality Policy or any program policy

If any of the above behaviors or violations of the adult code of conduct occur, the adult will be asked, privately when possible, by an appropriate staff member to stop the inappropriate behavior. If the adult continues to engage in improper conduct or endanger children or other adults in any way, staff will immediately call the police. Discontinuation of services may be considered.

MANDATED REPORTERS

All COTRAIC staff are mandated reporters and are required by law to report suspected child abuse. Staff who report suspicion of child abuse are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action unless proven that the report was intended to do harm.

All staff and regular volunteers are required to have criminal, child abuse, and sex offender clearances according to Head Start performance standards and Pennsylvania state laws.

CHILD SUPERVISION POLICY

Parent/Guardian Will:

- Hand children over to the teacher on arrival and ensure staff members are informed when departing.

- Inform staff if someone other than the parent will be picking up/dropping off the child. That person must be listed on the emergency contact list and know the code word.
- Ensure that any changes in phone, address, emergency contacts are kept up to date.
- Inform staff of any current/pending court orders affecting the child and providing the center with a photocopy of the most recent court order. Staff will send a copy to the EHS office and keep a copy in the child's center file.
- Adhere to sign in and out procedures.

SCHEDULE

Parents or caregivers should inform the classroom teacher in advance of changes to their daily schedule. Please contact the center within one hour of the scheduled arrival time if your child will not attend or be arriving late that day.

We may be unable to accept your child if you arrive later than 9:00 a.m. without prior notification to staff.

ATTENDANCE

- Regular attendance is essential for your child to gain the maximum benefit of our program.
- Federal Head Start and Early Head Start Performance Standards guidelines require that programs maintain an attendance level of at least 85%, meaning that a child should have no more than three unexcused absences per month.
- Parents are asked to communicate with staff about their child's absences.
- If your child is not attending, call the center by 9 A.M. that day. If we do not hear from you, your teacher will call one hour after expected arrival.
- Parents should also speak with their Family Support Specialist about any extenuating circumstances that may affect their child's attendance in the program.
- If your child is absent for more than two consecutive days without prior notification, your Family Support Specialist will reach out to you.

ARRIVAL TIME

- It is important that children have the opportunity to experience all the planned activities and develop a consistent daily routine.
- All children must be in the center and ready to begin the day's activities by their scheduled time.
- Upon a child's arrival, staff will ask the parent to complete a daily health check on their child.

DROP-OFF / PICK UP PROCEDURES

- ALL CHILDREN MUST BE IN AN AGE-APPROPRIATE CAR/BOOSTER SEAT PER STATE LAW.
- Park your car so other traffic is not blocked and abide by the parking restrictions/procedures at each classroom.
- TURN OFF THE ENGINE AND TAKE KEYS!
- Never leave any child unattended in the car.
- The teacher must accept all children in their room, and the parent must sign the child in with the arrival time according to sign-in procedures.
- Parents must notify the classroom in writing if someone other than a person designated on the code word or emergency contact form is to pick up the child. If a verbal arrangement is made in an emergency, the request must be followed up in writing.
- All adults (including parents) picking up children must show current photo identification.
- Pick-up persons must be at least 14 years of age or older with a current photo ID.
- All children must be signed out by the approved individual that is picking up the child.

LATE PICK-UP

Children are to be picked up at your regularly scheduled time. If you will be late to pick up your child, you must speak to a teacher. If your child is still there after their scheduled departure time, we will make every effort to contact everyone on your code word and emergency contact sheets to arrange for your child to be picked up. If a parent or guardian has not made contact with the program or we are unable to secure a safe pick up for your child when the center closes, the situation may result in a referral to Children, Youth, and Family Services or to the police to report abandonment.

SHOES

Children are physically active throughout the day, so shoes should be sturdy and secure to prevent slips and falls.

- Toes and heels should be covered.
- Soles should have traction and be flexible while providing support.
- **Jellies, sandals, flip flops, or Crocs are not permitted.**
- Tennis shoes are preferred for safety reasons.
- If a child comes to the center with inappropriate shoes, you may be asked to take the child and get appropriate shoes so they can remain in the center.

CLOTHING/ACCESSORIES

Children engage in many hands-on experiences throughout the day, including going outside daily. Please send children to the classroom in comfortable casual clothing so that they can run, play, and paint without worry.

- Each child must have two complete weather appropriate changes of clothing in the classroom. This includes a shirt, pants, underpants, socks, and an extra sweater, sweatshirt, or jacket.
- Items must be labeled with the child's name.
- The clothing will remain in the classroom and be used when your child needs to be changed.
- Clothing that is used and sent home must be replaced the following day.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations prohibit staff from rinsing items soiled with body fluids.
 - Soiled items will be sealed in plastic bags and returned to the parent. However, we will continue to do whatever is possible to help your child avoid accidents.
- Jewelry is strongly discouraged due to potential choking and injury hazards.
- COTRAIC EHS cannot be held responsible for damage to clothing due to normal daily activities.

EARLY HEAD START/ EDUCATION

Infant/Toddler classrooms serve children from six weeks to three years of age. Our teachers use *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos and Teaching Strategies GOLD* as guides, using each child's strengths, interests, and experiences to sustain a high-quality program for the care and education of very young children. Children may transition from one age group to another based on development and center capacities. Infant/Toddler staff maintain ratios according to Head Start Performance Standards.

TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training is a task that a child cannot successfully undertake until they are physiologically and psychologically ready. When the child is ready, and the parent initiates the process, staff will reinforce proper toilet training techniques. Parents should meet with the teacher and establish a consistent method of toilet training. Successful toilet training requires the COMBINED EFFORTS of parents and staff.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- All children go outside daily unless we are experiencing extreme weather conditions.
- Fresh air, even cold air, reduces the spread of sharing germs in a classroom.
- Your child cannot be kept back from daily outings because of illness or inappropriate clothing. Please be sure to dress your child in weather-appropriate

clothing. If your child is dropped off without weather-appropriate clothing, you may be asked to bring something for them if the classroom does not have extra clothing.

- Your child must have a jacket, hat, boots, and mittens, as dictated by weather conditions.
- Children should play outdoors when the conditions do not pose any concerns health and safety such as a significant risk of frostbite or heat-related illness

*Weather that poses a significant health risk includes wind chill factor below -15 degrees F and heat index at or above 90 degrees F, as identified by the National Weather Service.

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

Staff supports the social and emotional growth of each child through positive and creative interpersonal relationships using the following classroom management guidelines:

- Gives the child a choice (when you intend to leave the situation up to the child)
- Uses words and tone of voice that help the child feel confident and reassured
- Never shames a child or labels his/her behavior naughty or selfish
- Never compares children to motivate competition
- Redirects child as needed
- Avoids making models (any art form) for the children to copy
- Minimizes helping the child to foster independence
- Reinforces suggestions
- Foresees and prevents problems
- Speaks to children at their level (bends down to talk with children)
- Defines limits and maintains them consistently
- Strategically positions self for most effective supervising (zoning)
- Acknowledges, respects, and incorporates cultural differences

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

- COTRAIC EHS does not permit the use of corporal punishment of any kind in the childcare setting, including threats or any behavior that may intimidate, humiliate, or single out a child.
- Plans and training are supported by professionals within the agency or contracted by the agency.
- Classrooms are observed by Healthy Child to monitor existing behaviors and target new and challenging behaviors immediately.



University of Pittsburgh
School of Education
Office of Child Development

HEALTHY CHILD

HEALTHYCHILD

We promote prevention and intervention supports to help young children develop the "building blocks" for early school success

WHO WE ARE:



Collaborate with parents, caregivers, and teaching staff to support you and the child/children you take care of



Provide on-site or virtual consultation, mentoring, and demonstration/modeling



Engage children in learning through play, small groups, and activities



Provide caregivers with new ideas and resources that strengthen current practices and skills

YOUR HEALTHYCHILD CONSULTANT:

Is an extra support person for your child/family and the Early Head Start staff person who works with you.

We are able to help provide developmental, behavioral, and mental healthcare support for any needs or concerns you may have.

There are no fees for service.

Please contact your Early Head Start support staff if you are interested in how you can utilize HealthyCHILD

www.facebook.com/healthychild.pitt

PARENT AND PROGRAM COMMUNICATION

Parents are anxious to know what and how their child is doing throughout each day. Feel free to visit your child at the classroom anytime; advance notice is not needed. In the event of a health emergency, CDC guidelines will take precedence over agency policy. You are always encouraged to call or talk to your child's teacher anytime you have questions about your child or the program. If you need more than a few minutes, please schedule a conference so that the Teacher or Classroom Coordinator can be available without disrupting the children's daily routine.

- Teachers will provide a written Daily Report every day, highlighting your child's activities of the day.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences/Home Visits will be scheduled four times a year to review your child's progress and teachers' observations.
- Quarterly Parent Meetings are held at every classroom. A light meal or refreshments are served for parents, children, and other family members.
- Parents/Guardians should not request personal contact information from any staff member.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Home visits and parent conferences are scheduled four times during the year. Conferences and home visits are scheduled to share ideas, discuss your child's progress, and to respond to any questions you may have. Your child's developmental and behavioral assessments and screenings will also be addressed during conferences.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Staff will attempt to resolve any complaint or concern as quickly and efficiently as possible. We recommend that you address your concerns to the most immediate person. Your child's Teacher, the Classroom Coordinator, and your Family Support Specialist will assist you in any way they can. If you still have concerns, please contact any of the management staff at Kaufmann. Phone numbers are listed at the front of this handbook for your convenience.

NUTRITION SERVICES

COTRAIC EHS participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). CACFP funding comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is administered in Pennsylvania by the Department of Education. CACFP enables COTRAIC EHS to be reimbursed for partial meal costs for families who meet eligibility requirements. All children are served the same meals and are served at no charge.

SPECIAL DIETS

If your child needs a special diet, your EHS Family Support Specialist will work with you to get documentation from a doctor. A written statement from a Doctor must be submitted to the Classroom Coordinator if a child requires a special diet. The classroom supervisor will work with the parents, Nutritionist, Health Coordinator, and Food Service Worker to accommodate dietary needs. We cannot make changes to meal menus based on preference unless a Food Exemption form is included in the child's file. We ensure your child is served nutritious and appropriate foods.

FOOD POLICIES

COTRAIC EHS will provide all meals and snacks for your child. Parents/guardians are not permitted to bring any food into the center. We will not accept outside food for celebrations (holidays, birthdays, end of the year parties).

CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAYS/CELEBRATIONS

In place of food for birthdays and celebrations, we encourage parents or guardians to volunteer in the classroom. Options for volunteering can include planning an activity or game for the classroom. Children feel special and experience a sense of pride when their family members or friends visit and interact with teachers and peers. We also encourage you to donate a book or new toy for the classroom in honor of your child's birthday or other special events. The donation of a book or new toy for the classroom supports the concept of sharing and community that is the foundation of the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center mission.

INFANT NUTRITION

FORMULA and BREASTFEEDING

- COTRAIC EHS offers a choice of formulas as determined by CACFP requirements and a child's medical needs as determined by his/her doctor.
- Mothers who breastfeed may send in their expressed milk in labeled and dated bottles.
- Mothers may also breastfeed their infants in the classroom in a location that affords some degree of privacy. (See your classroom coordinator for the location in your classroom.)

INFANT FOODS

- All foods must be introduced to the child at home before they are offered in the classroom.
- Food from the menu is pureed or cut into very small pieces for infants from six to twelve months.
- The classroom will supply jars of baby foods for classroom use until they have weaned to table food.
- The classroom will provide infant cereals, mixed with formula or breast milk, and served with a spoon to infants 4 to 12 months of age after previously being introduced at home. We will not offer infant cereal in bottles.
- A doctor must document food allergies before entry into the classroom or as soon as identified.

INFANT MENUS

- Birth – 6 months: Three 4-6 oz. bottles of infant formula or breast milk
- 6-8 months: Three 4-8 oz. bottles of infant formula or breast milk, & up to 3 T. infant rice cereal & fruit/vegetable combination for lunch
- 8 – 12 months: See chart below:

Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
Formula or breast milk Infant cereal Fruit or cooked vegetables	Formula or breast milk Infant cereal Ground cooked meat, egg, or cheese Fruit or vegetables	Formula or breast milk Bread/cracker/grains

*Infants are fed on demand and follow the parents feeding schedule

TODDLER NUTRITION

MEALS

- All meals meet the requirements of the CACFP and Head Start Performance Standards.
- The combination of meals meets at least 2/3 of the daily requirements of each child.
- Foods are prepared and served in various ways to introduce children to new and different kinds of foods.
- The teachers and children share meals, eating the same foods, and engaging in mealtime conversation.
- During nutrition lessons, children help with simple preparation of foods in the classroom.

MENUS

- Monthly menus are sent home with the children.
 - Monthly menus are posted in the center.
 - Menus are subject to change due to the availability of items or other extenuating circumstances
 - Whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables are used whenever possible
- The daily menu includes the following:

Breakfast	Snacks	Lunch
All components are served: Bread/grain Eggs (at least once a week) Fruit Milk	Two components are served: Bread/grain Fruit or vegetable Meat or meat alternative	All components are served: Fruit and vegetable Bread/grain Meat or meat alternative Milk

*Whole milk is served to children 1-2 years of age.

*Nonfat milk is served to children from ages 2 and up.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

Screenings in early childhood programs help to detect conditions that could inhibit a child's ability to grow and develop optimally.

With parental consent, all children six weeks through 3 years will receive screenings throughout the year while enrolled with COTRAIC EHS. Screenings may be conducted by the child's teacher, agency support staff, or in conjunction with a collaborating agency. These screenings include:

- Hearing
- Behavioral/ Social & Emotional Development

- Nutrition
- Vision
- Cognitive Development
- Motor Development

HEALTH AND SAFETY

COTRAIC EHS maintains a safe and healthy environment for all children per local, state, and federal rules and guidelines. Please note the following health and safety items to ensure the health of your child and other children enrolled with COTRAIC EHS.

HEALTH ASSESSMENTS AND DENTAL EXAMS

- A Child Health Status Review must be completed by the parent or legal guardian at enrollment to identify any health or developmental concerns.
- A Well Child Health Assessment must be completed by a licensed physician, CRNP, or PA and turned in within 60 days of enrollment.
- Every Well Child Health Assessment must be submitted according to the Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis Treatment (EPSDT) schedule when your child is 3-5 days, 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, 30 and 36 months.
- Age-appropriate immunizations are required under the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) immunization schedule.
- Dental exams are recommended every 6 months beginning at 1 year old. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) encourages parents and providers to help every child establish a dental home.
- The Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form must be signed by the parent or legal guardian granting permission to take a child for emergency medical treatment or provide minor first aid treatments if necessary.

MEDICATION

- A written order from a licensed physician and a signed permission form from the parent is required before staff can administer some over-the-counter and all prescribed medication.
- Medication must be in the original container and can only be given to the child whose name is on the label and in the manner prescribed. Medication logs must be completed by parents and staff each time medication is given.
- We do not administer PRN (as needed) medications.

DAILY HEALTH CHECKS

- Parents and center staff complete a brief health check for each child upon arrival in the classroom.

- A classroom staff member looks for the following: rashes, bruises, or other marks appearing on the child's body; indicators of infectious diseases; early symptoms of upper respiratory illness; and other signs which may indicate that a child is ill or has been injured.
- The daily health check is an opportunity for parents to discuss any recent changes or concerns with staff.
- Parents (or any other adult) who bring the child to the center MUST stay for the few seconds it takes to complete this brief assessment and ensure the child is able to participate in the program.
- Findings are documented by staff on the Health Check Log.
- *Classroom staff may refuse a child's admittance due to illness or concerns expressed during the daily health check.*

GUIDELINES FOR KEEPING A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL

Even with the best preventive measures, children become ill with various childhood diseases, common colds, and other kinds of conditions. When your child is ill, it becomes necessary for them to remain at home not only for the safety of others but for your child's protection as well. A child will be excluded or sent home from school if they are too ill to participate in regular classroom activities or if any of the following conditions are observed:

- Illness that prevents your child from participating comfortably in program activities.
- Illness that results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- Symptoms of possible severe illness: may include elevated body temperature over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, lethargy (sluggishness/sleepiness), irritability, persistent crying, and difficulty breathing.
- Diarrhea that is not contained within the diaper/pull-up.
- Bowel movements that contain blood or mucus.
- Vomiting more than twice in the previous 24 hours.
- Any unidentified rash or sores on the body or in the mouth.
- Severe congestion.
- Persistent cough.
- Pink eye or suspicious skin conditions (i.e., ringworm, impetigo, scabies, etc.),. *Please note any unexplained rash requires a note from the child's healthcare provider, which states that the rash is not contagious.*
- Suspected contagious diseases and/or bed bugs (some examples are: any unidentified rash, the flu, MRSA which has not been treated or is exposed and/or draining, chickenpox, bed bugs, whooping cough, ringworm, etc.).

GUIDELINE FOR RETURNING TO THE CLASSROOM

After your child misses three consecutive days due to any illness, a note from a doctor will be required upon return, stating that your child may return to the classroom.

Your child needs to be symptom-free or receiving treatment for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Illness	Child May Return
Strep Throat	24 hours after antibiotic treatment
Head Lice	After treatment begins
Chicken Pox	One week after rash begins or until all pox are scabbed over
Pink Eye	When there are no secretions from the eye; usually 24 hours after the start of treatment
Diarrhea	24 hours after the last loose movement
Fever	24 hours of normal temperature
Vomiting	24 hours after the last vomitus
Impetigo	Until all skin lesions are healed

COMMUNICATION

- Quality care is promoted through open communication between parents and providers. Please notify your child's teacher or Family Support Staff of any illnesses, accidents or medical conditions that may occur for staff to be sensitive to any effects on your child.
- Health Files are kept up to date through parent communication and documentation provided from health care practitioners, and all documents provided remain part of the child's file. Parents may have supervised access to this file.
- If you have special health concerns we will be happy to work with you to arrange a convenient time to discuss these by phone or in person.

INCIDENT REPORTS

- A report is completed in case of an accident or an incident involving behavior that is threatening toward others, unusual for that child, or developmentally inappropriate.
- Staff who witnessed or became aware of the incident completes the report including all pertinent information about the child.
- Parent or guardian must sign the form and receive a copy
- No other child's name may appear on a child's report

TRANSITIONS

As children develop from birth throughout childhood, they move, or *transition*, from one learning environment or setting to a new one. The transition might be from one age group to another within the same building. Or, it could be moving from COTRAIC EHS to Head Start. Often, these transitions involve a process of change that requires a period of adjustment for the child and family. To help families adapt to change, staff need to provide as much continuity of education and care as possible. This is accomplished when staff from the old setting and new setting work together.

When your child is ready to transition from one room to another, the teacher will discuss with you a plan for your child's transition activities. This will include visits to the new classroom, a review of goal sheets, and a discussion of developmental screenings. COTRAIC EHS arranges visits to preschool classrooms for the children and their parents whenever possible.

AGENCY POLICIES

PARENTAL ACCESS AND RESTRICTIONS

Both parents shall be afforded immediate, equal access to their child without notice, while in the care of COTRAIC EHS without a Court Order, as stipulated by law. COTRAIC EHS cannot limit the access of a parent without a Court Order. COTRAIC EHS cannot, at the request of anyone except the issuing judge, allow a Custody Order, Protection from Abuse Order, and/or a Restraining Order to be violated.

Exceptions include:

- An individual that has been convicted or is awaiting trial on charges involving a crime of child abuse, child neglect, physical violence or moral corruptness is not permitted in any childcare center.
- In cases where the child is the subject of a Court Order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order), COTRAIC EHS must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent Order and all amendments thereafter.

If conflicting Court Orders are presented, the most recently dated Court Order will be followed. Parents/guardians are not permitted to change any detail to court orders without having an amendment from the issuing judge. Once presented with a Court Order of any type, COTRAIC EHS is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Parents may be required to provide additional documentation from the Court if the Orders are unclear.

REFUSAL TO RELEASE

No child will be released to any parent or guardian who exhibits any signs of visible intoxication or appears to be under the influence of any substance in or around any COTRAIC EHS centers. If any staff member smells alcohol or other drug substances or feels any parent or guardian is not fit to drive, an emergency contact person will be contacted to pick up your child. Authorities will be called if a parent/guardian does not comply.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Young children do not always recognize danger or react to it appropriately. They often believe that if they can see a driver, the driver can see them. Children under the age of 8 years may think that cars can stop instantly. They have difficulty judging how fast traffic is moving. Children learn pedestrian safety by watching and doing. Adults should be role models and set positive examples by practicing safe habits.

Please practice these rules with your child.

- Children under 10 years should never cross a street without an adult
- When crossing the street, stop at the curb or edge of the road. Never run into a street.
- Listen and look for traffic. Look left, then right, then left again for moving cars before crossing. Children that do not know left and right can be taught, "Look this way, that way, this way"
- Wait until the street is clear
- Keep looking left and right until you are safely across the street

CELL PHONES

Please be courteous and abstain from using your cell phone while in the classroom so that we can communicate with you regarding your child. Cell phones **may not be used to take photos** of children, staff, or other adults in classrooms or on agency property.

CIGARETTES/E-CIGARETTES/VAPORIZERS

It is against policy to smoke in front of or around the children while on COTRAIC EHS property. Cigarette butts are not permitted on the grounds. Any use of tobacco must be

a minimum of 200 feet from Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center buildings and must NOT be within the view of children.

ALTERNATE CARE

- Parents must be available or have a responsible emergency contact (alternate care) available to pick up the child immediately if there is a reason for the child to be sent home.
- It is critical that we know where to reach you while your child is in our care.
- Work hours and home and work phone numbers must be kept up to date.
- Names and phone numbers of responsible relatives or friends to call in case you can't be reached in an emergency must be on file and up to date.

CLASSROOM CLOSINGS

Upon enrollment, all parents receive a listing of all scheduled classroom closings. This list should be reviewed frequently for the exact dates of specific center closings.

HOLIDAYS

All classrooms are closed for the observance of the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Spring Break (Typically Good Friday and Easter Monday)
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and the following day
- Winter Holiday (At minimum Christmas Eve through New Year's Day)
- Scheduled Professional Development days

EMERGENCIES

On a rare occasion, a classroom may need to close temporarily in order to handle an emergency situation such as frozen water pipes or lack of heat. Every parent is required to have his/her own alternate care available in such situations. Parents will be notified by phone anytime a classroom has an emergency closing.

SEVERE WEATHER

Due to severe weather conditions, the program may be on a delay or closing. It will be announced on WTAE news and their website. The announcements will be made as early as possible to allow for parent planning.

WEAPONS

Toy or real weapons are not permitted in centers at any time.

PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Partisan political activities are not permitted on COTRAIC EHS premises.

PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center is governed by a Board of Directors, composed of professionals, former COTRAIC parents, Native Americans, and concerned citizens from Allegheny County. They meet monthly to review and monitor agency programs as well as make policy and fiscal decisions. The administrative, operations, and fiscal staff are responsible for implementing Board policy. These staff members ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local standards as they apply to early childhood education and services.

PARENT POLICY COUNCIL

The Policy Council, composed of parents of currently enrolled children and representatives from the community, is the parent governance working in conjunction with the Board of Directors and the Program Directors of the Early Head Start and Head Start. The Policy Council is the formal structure in which parents participate in policy making and program operations that affect the entire agency. Policy Council Representatives are elected in centers through parent meetings. Each center has the responsibility to identify candidates for Policy Council and vote in their representatives annually. Those representatives are then invited to the Policy Council meeting where they are seated as voting members. Policy Council meets monthly.

Policy Council members have the opportunity to share their knowledge and develop new skills as they provide guidance and participate in:

- Annual self-assessment
- Budget and grant applications
- Approval of EHS and HS Selection Criteria
- Communicating with parents & encouraging participation in the program
- Community events for young children
- Curriculum and program planning
- Efforts to recruit eligible children
- Interviewing of new employees
- Local, state, & national meetings/conferences, if desired and if budgets permit.

Prior experience is not a requirement of Policy Council members. The Parent and Community Involvement Specialist will assist Parent Policy Council members to develop new skills, and train members specifically to gain the insight and knowledge necessary to act as council members, as well as follow guidelines and bylaws and objectively represent their center on Policy Council.

CLASSROOM PARENT MEETINGS

Parents have the opportunity to interact with other parents and staff and provide input into programs and services at their classroom's Parent Meetings, held throughout the year. Refreshments may be provided at meetings. A survey is used to identify topics of interest to parents. Parent activities are designed around the topics identified.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This social media policy applies to parents/guardians, staff members, community members, and volunteers at Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center Early Head Start. This policy includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites including, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc. As part of our duty to safeguard children, it is essential to maintain the privacy and security of all our families. We, therefore, require that:

- No photographs are taken within the classrooms or at special events and outings with the children, are to be posted for public viewing, except those of your own child. Parents are advised that they do not have a right to photograph anyone else's child or to upload photos of anyone else's children. (This **excludes** those photographs taken by staff for the children's educational files, for identification purposes in the classroom, or for use on the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center website and in other advertising material if parental permission is given).
- No public discussions are to be held or comments made on social media sites regarding children, staff, or agency business that could be construed to have any impact on the agency's reputation or that would offend any member of staff, parent/guardian, volunteer, or community member.
- Staff are advised to manage their personal security settings to ensure that their information is only available to people they choose to share information with
- Staff should not accept parents/guardians as friends due to it being a breach of expected professional conduct unless they already know them in a personal capacity before their child starts at Council of Three Rivers American Indian

Center. Staff should avoid personal communication, including on social networking sites, with the parents/guardians with whom they act in a professional capacity.

- In the event that staff names the agency in any social media capacity, they do so in a way that is not detrimental to the agency or its service users.
- Staff observe confidentiality and refrain from discussing any issues relating to work on social networking sites
- Staff should not share information they would not want children, parents, or colleagues to view.
- Staff should report any concerns or breaches to the supervisor or management.

Any staff member or volunteer found to be posting remarks or comments that breach confidentiality, disrespect Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, or that are deemed to be of a detrimental nature to the agency may face disciplinary action.

Any comment or picture posted that is not approved or deemed to be inappropriate is to be reported to the supervisor and management team and action will be taken at their discretion.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

- Personal security settings should be managed to ensure that information is only available to people you choose to share information with.
- Remember that no information sent over the web is totally secure. If you do not wish the information to be made public, refrain from sending it through social media.
- Maintain professionalism, honesty, and respect.
- Apply a “good judgment” test for every social media post you make.

Staff should not friend or follow parents/guardians unless the relationship existed before their children were enrolled.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why must my child go outside every day?

Best practice for child development recommends gross motor outdoor play daily.

Why must my child be in the Classroom at the time designated in my Agreement?

A regular routine is best practice for children. Thus, starting their day with their classmates at breakfast and following the daily schedule will lead to well-adjusted children. Coming into the classroom late and in midstream causes your child to suffer stress. We need all children to be present in class no later than their scheduled time. At the preschool and elementary levels, the child's reporting time is earlier. Being on time for class gets your children ready for kindergarten at a young age.

Why are health assessments so important?

Regular medical and dental visits help keep children healthy which enables them to grow and learn. Early Head Start Performance Standards require the program to have copies of each well-child visit starting at program entrance.

Why are dental exams so important?

Early dental screenings and examinations are important to our children because they can identify problems in early stages and aid in building strong teeth and gums. Oral health is important for overall health.

Why does my child have a different teacher in the morning and afternoon?

Most classrooms are open from 7:00 in the morning to 5:30 in the evening. Staff typically work an 8-hour shift; therefore your child may be with another teacher at the beginning or end of the day.

Why are health checks completed daily and why must I stay until they are completed?

Our policy is designed to identify injury, recognize illness, and control infectious disease. This policy protects children, parents, and staff. Also, it is an opportunity for parents to share concerns about sleeping, eating, toileting patterns, etc.

What are the best times to communicate with my child's teacher?

Please feel free to communicate with your child's teacher at all times, but know that when she is in the classroom, conversations may be difficult. You may schedule an appointment, attend a parent-teacher conference, or leave a message to have the teacher contact you at her convenience.

COUNCIL OF THREE RIVERS AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER, INC.
PARENT HANDBOOK RECEIPT

By signing below, I acknowledge receipt of the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc. Parent Handbook.

Parent Signature

Date