

**Northern Tier
Community Action Corporation
Head Start Program**

Parent Handbook



**Northern Tier
Community Action Corporation**

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Welcome To

Northern Tier Community Action Corporation

HEAD START

Northern Tier Community Action Corporation Head Start is a child development program that provides a variety of experiences for your child and you. At Head Start, staff and parents work together to provide six major services for your child, they are:

EDUCATION

SOCIAL SERVICES

HEALTH

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

DISABILITIES

NUTRITION

THESE ARE FURTHER EXPLAINED WITHIN THIS BOOKLET.
WE HOPE YOU AND YOUR CHILD WILL ENJOY THIS YEAR IN HEAD START.

Administrative Office:

Northern Tier Community Action Corporation

HEAD START PROGRAM

P.O. BOX 389, EMPORIUM, PA 15834

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Administrative Assistant - Ext. 219

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Education Manager - Ext. 230

Professional Development Manager - Ext. 222

Education Manager - Ext. 231

Family & Community Manager - Ext. 224

Fiscal Specialist - Ext. 270

Health & Nutrition Manager - Ext. 225

Mental Health &

Disabilities Manager - Ext. 223

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Head Start Site: _____

Hours: _____

Telephone Number Of Site: _____

Home Visitor's Name (Home Base Option): _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Assistant Teacher's Name: _____

Family Service Worker's Name: _____ Phone _____

Bus Monitor's Name (if applicable): _____

Website: www.ntcac.org Facebook: Northern Tier Community Action Corporation Head Start

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Welcome

Welcome to our Head Start family!

Our program will offer your child a quality, comprehensive, preschool experience in a loving, caring, safe environment. Early learning is the root of a child's success. Northern Tier Community Action Head Start strives to provide education, experiences, and opportunities to assist parents in providing a good beginning for their children.

PARENTS ARE A CHILD'S MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER. To assist parents in becoming effective teachers, we work with each family to build and strengthen their parenting skills. We emphasize an individual approach with children and parents. Our goal is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children.

Please take advantage of all that our Head Start Program offers. Read our newsletters, volunteer in our centers, participate in Parent Center Committees, Policy Council meetings, and trainings.

We wish you and your child a successful and rewarding Head Start experience!

A. Program Options

We offer two basic Head Start program options: center-based and home-based.

The Head Start center-based program has centers located in Bradford, Coudersport, Emporium, Johnsonburg, Kane, Eldred, Port Allegany, Ridgway, and St. Marys.

The Home-Based Program Option serves families with children ages 3 & 4 by providing weekly home visits lasting 1½ hours each. Two socialization activities are provided each month. Head Start Home-Based services are available in Elk, Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties.

All Head Start programs are designed to provide children with activities that help them grow mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically. We are a family focused program with the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families. Our program provides a range of individual services in the areas of education and early childhood development, literacy, health, mental health, nutrition, and parent involvement.

B. Parent Participation

PLEASE NOTE: We are a smoke free, drug free, weapon/gun free program.

CLIENT RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PROCEDURES

All Clients have the Right:

1. To be treated fairly and without discrimination.
2. To be treated in a professional, respectful, and non-coercive manner.
3. To confidentiality and privacy, unless NTCAC staff are required by law to share confidential information.
4. To make informed choices and decide for themselves the services they want.
5. To be a part of decisions about the services provided.
6. To review their own record of service provision, have a copy sent to qualified professionals (at their own expense), and to insert a statement in their record.

When a Client is enrolled in a Program or Service, he or she may expect to receive:

1. Information about the rules, expectations, and requirements to participate in the specific program or service.
2. Notification of what behaviors or factors that may result in the withdrawal of services or termination from the program.
3. Information about the days and times when services and staff are available.
4. Information about how to make a complaint or to appeal a service decision, and to expect no retaliatory actions in response to their complaint.

All Clients have the Responsibility:

1. To let the staff know if they don't understand their rights and responsibilities, or any program requirements.
2. To notify staff if they are unable to keep an appointment or scheduled meeting.
3. To actively participate in the services offered.
4. To let staff know if they are dissatisfied with the services(s) and give staff a chance to correct the problem(s).
5. To let staff know if they need alternate forms of communication, including the use of translators, sign language interpreters, TTD machines, and other communication tools.

PCC (PARENT CENTER COMMITTEE) Every parent is a member of a Parent Center Committee that holds monthly meetings. (More information will be provided when your child begins Head Start.) You'll have a chance to make new friends and share ideas with other parents. Parent committees decide what they'd like to do together during the year. Your ideas are needed to make the year exciting, fun, and worthwhile for all. Plan to attend!

POLICY COUNCIL Policy Council meets the 2nd Thursday of every month. At least 51% of the Policy Council membership must be parents/guardians of currently enrolled children, who are elected at the center level by the Parent Committee. Alternate members are also elected by the Parent Center Committees. If a member is unable to attend the meeting, their alternate attends the meeting to vote in the member's place. Alternate members can only vote if the Policy Council member is not present. Alternate members should attend all Policy Council meetings so that they are up to date on information and are able to make informed decisions when voting. Community Representatives are also involved in the Policy Council. Representatives can be past Head Start parents, local clergy, business people, retirees, etc.

OFFSITE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES Children learn through visiting places of interest in our area. Parents are needed to help plan and carry out these special experiences. Be sure to let your child's teacher know if you'd like to help on offsite educational experiences or have a good idea about places to visit.

TRAININGS Head Start provides support, encouragement, and training to help parents be more effective in their role as their child's first and most important teacher.

SOCIALIZATION DAY PARENT ACTIVITY TIME In addition to the above noted avenues of parent participation, each Home-Based socialization day includes a parent activity time. During this portion of the day, parents will have the opportunity to learn about their child's development and learn skills they can carry over into their home.

ACCEPTANCE Our biggest responsibility is to help children learn while fostering a strong sense of self-confidence and love of learning. We do this by accepting each child and respecting him/her for who he/she is. We set examples through words and actions. When we are consistent, the children are secure and happy.

VOLUNTEERING Your involvement in Head Start is valuable, both to your child and to the program as a whole. Children benefit more from the Head Start experience when parents are involved with the program, sharing their talents and ideas. We look forward to this partnership with families to help us know your child better. By becoming involved at Head Start, you show your child learning and sharing are important. **Each regular volunteer will be required to obtain their volunteer clearances in accordance with Pennsylvania regulations.** This is a requirement to ensure the safety of all children. Volunteer clearances can be completed at NO COST. Your center's Family Service Worker or Home Visitor

will be more than happy to help you with this process. For more information on volunteering, refer to the volunteer job description.

PARENT VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM Parents who sign-up for the Volunteer Training Program must complete 70 hours as a volunteer throughout the school year. Watch for more information in your child's folder!

"IN-KIND" (NON-FEDERAL MATCH SHARE) Head Start programs are funded by the federal government. Head Start must match 20% of total federal funds through community support. In-Kind is the donation of time, goods, or services assessed at a reasonable rate of expense. Through your support and the support of the community, we will be able to achieve our In-Kind goal.

Please talk to your center's Family Service Worker to sign up to volunteer in your child's classroom and to obtain information on other ways you and your family can volunteer.

c. Family Services

The wonderful and rewarding challenge of raising a family today demands more "know-how," thought, and patience than ever before. Head Start wants to help families grow stronger.

After your child is enrolled, your Family Service Worker or Home Visitor will arrange to visit your home. At this time, you can talk over your concerns about your family needs and plan to use your family's strengths to meet these needs.

You will be given a copy of our "Resource Directory". Head Start will provide support, assistance, and guidance to you throughout your Head Start program year.

A "Family Partnership Agreement" between the Head Start Program and each enrolled family will be formed to assist in achieving self-identified and realistic goals. The information you share in developing your "Family Partnership Agreement" is confidential and will never be shared without your permission.

Head Start staff is always ready, willing, and able to assist families. Do not hesitate to ask questions.

d. Education

The program invites your active participation in your child's Head Start experience. Together we will strive to meet these goals:

- To welcome each child and develop a sense of trust and belonging;
- To provide an environment where children may explore, examine, experiment, and discover in their own interest and strength areas;
- To assure each child has experiences that will help develop a healthy self-image by encouraging participation, displaying work, observing progress, planning for each child, and getting to know each one as an individual;
- To work together to establish limits and routines;
- To allow the children to use their own strengths and curiosity to build upon their unique experiences;
- To help the child become accustomed to time schedules, planning and organization of material.



A DAY AT A HEAD START CLASSROOM (Home-Base Socialization days mimic a typical center day so the following information applies.) Every day in every class is different as we customize our program to each child’s individual needs. Classroom times will vary by site. A typical Head Start day includes:

Arrival	Welcoming the children, health checks, toileting, washing, attendance
Large Group Time	Review calendar, rules, schedule, job chart
Breakfast	Set tables, eat, clean-up
Choice Time	Structured play including free choice activities in all learning centers
Lunch	Set tables, eat, clean-up
Small Group Time	Focused small groups working on developmental skills
Gross Motor Time	Indoor or outdoor play
Recap-Departure	Reflect on learning that took place throughout the day, depart for home

BEGINNING ADVENTURES AT HEAD START Here are some things you may do to help your child feel better about being at the center for the first few days:

- a) Talk to your child about school - discuss his room, the playground, the teacher, new friends, eating, and rest time.
- b) Involve the whole family - going to school becomes more real to your child when all the important people in his life share in this new experience. You could say, “Let’s walk past the center and see your new sliding board.”

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT At the beginning of the year, Seneca Highlands IU9 will complete a developmental screening on each child using the Ages & Stages Developmental Screening. This screening will show whether or not a child would benefit from receiving specialized services from the IU9. The teaching staff also continuously collects observations throughout the year to plan for each child’s learning and to assess development.

MEAL TIME Breakfast and lunch will be served to all children daily.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES Parent/Teacher Conferences are held two times per year. The teaching staff will let you know how your child is progressing at Head Start. Your teacher will contact you prior to the conferences to arrange a time with you. It is very important for you to attend these conferences.

FREE CHOICE OF ACTIVITY TIME A child may select the area and kind of materials or equipment with which to play or work. Children may decide to work alone or be part of a small group activity. The staff carefully plans a variety of activities. Play is an important part of every child’s growth and learning process.

The classroom space is divided into separate learning areas with changing, interesting materials, equipment, and “props” for meaningful, expressive play. A large portion of each day is spent this way.

MUSIC Children sing songs, experiment with rhythm instruments, and whole body movements to music. They learn to express themselves creatively and to enjoy various types of music.

STORYTIME The teaching staff and volunteers read or tell stories. Children are encouraged to enjoy books. The selection changes to correspond with the weekly studies and children’s interest.

HOME VISITS The teachers plan to visit you at your home at least two times during the year to share information about your child and make plans with you. In the Home-Based option, Home Visitors work with you each week and regular discussions about your child’s progress are ongoing.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES (Limited Areas) Bus times will be announced for those areas that have transportation services. Please be ready for the bus. The bus will not wait for you to get your child ready to board the bus. Parents are expected to take their child to the bus at the scheduled time and greet

them at the bus when they arrive home. If a child is not picked up from the bus by you or a person on your release form, Children and Youth Services will be contacted.

If you know your child will not be riding the bus, please call the center as soon as possible.

OUTDOOR PLAY Weather permitting, the children will spend some time each day outdoors. Fresh air and exercise help the children grow and stay healthy. On bad weather days, games, marching, dancing, or exercises are done indoors.

CLOTHING Washable clothes, in which the children can freely play, are best. They should be designed so children can easily care for their own toilet needs. Please dress your child warmly in cold weather. Each child needs to have a change of clothes at the center in case of an accidental spill.

TRANSITION ACTIVITIES Transition meetings will be held for each child who is transitioning to kindergarten toward the end of the year. These meetings will include our Head Start staff, parents, and school district staff. You will be contacted prior to the meetings to arrange a time with you. It is very important for you to attend these meetings. These meetings can provide information on what to expect in kindergarten, how to prepare yourself as well as your children for kindergarten, indicators that may help determine readiness for kindergarten, what type of information the school district needs, and information that will be transferred to the schools.

Your center or home-base site will offer a variety of transition activities for both you and your child. Some example include a "Meet and Greet Night," with local elementary school staff and a field trip to Kindergarten.

PETS Pets are not allowed in the classroom. Exceptions, with permission, are made only for service animals and those associated with an insured, educational program.

F. Special Needs - Special Services

We work closely with Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit 9 to provide initial developmental screenings in addition to speech, occupational, physical, and other therapy needs and services.

If you feel your child has special needs, please contact your local center staff or our Disabilities Manager ext. 223. Head Start works with other service providers to obtain the most appropriate services possible. Please contact us if you or someone in your family needs special accommodations in order to participate in our program. A Community Services Directory is available to all Head Start families. Use this directory as a guide to the services and resources available in your county. Your Family Service Worker and Home Visitor keep a directory in their office for your use and is happy to help you.



G. Health and Wellness

All children attending Head Start must have an immunization record, a physical, and dental examination.

When your child is selected to attend Head Start, you will receive notice by mail, and the necessary forms will be included. Pay particular attention to the must be completed list for the physical as this is information we are mandated to have. Should your child need follow-up at the dentist, they (dental office) will sometimes keep the form until the work is completed; inform your Family Service Worker or Home Visitor if this happens and be sure to keep the necessary appointment(s).

Physicians and dental providers are now charging their patients to have forms filled out IF the form is

not provided on the first visit. If you are in need of a form, please contact your Family Service Worker or Home Visitor PRIOR to your scheduled appointment.

Children accepted into the program will be screened (if not done previously) for vision, hearing, blood pressure, hemoglobin, speech, mental health, and development at the various sites. For the Home-Based option, children are screened during a socialization day or during the first few home visits.

Family Service Workers and Home Visitors will be making home visits. At this time, they will ask you for the following information:

1. Health and nutrition history of your child and family
2. Primary health coverage (for example: Access, CHIP, other)
3. You are required to provide a copy of your child's immunization records within the first 60 days of enrollment. Your child will be removed from the classroom if a copy of their immunizations is not received within that timeframe. If your family does not vaccinate, you must turn in an exemption form within sixty (60) days.
4. Please schedule a physical and dental appointment if needed. A physical and dental form are required within the first 90 days of enrollment.
5. Emergency Procedure Card
6. Nutritional Concerns for Children with Food Allergies or Intolerances
7. Permission to Screen

It is our responsibility to protect the health of other children and staff from avoidable illness.

You should observe your child on a daily basis before sending her/him to the center. Look for any signs of the following symptoms and if noted keep your child home.

1. Flushed face, chills, abnormal temperature
2. Runny nose, (heavy, colored discharge) severe cough, nasal or chest congestion, inflamed eyes, earache
3. Skin rashes, peeling sores, sores around the mouth and nose
4. Enlarged glands or sore throat, difficult or rapid breathing
5. Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
6. Fatigue, unusual paleness, unusual behavior (crankiness, etc.)
7. Any contagious (chicken pox, pink eye, impetigo, etc.) or parasitic disease (head lice, scabies, etc.)

If any communicable disease is diagnosed by your doctor, please let the center know. The child cannot return without a note from the doctor stating it is safe to do so. The center will use flyers to notify other families of the possible exposure. Confidentiality will be maintained in any and all illnesses of this nature.

When your child becomes ill at Head Start, the parent/guardian or designated emergency person will be notified to come for your child. Readmission will depend on the seriousness and length of the illness.

In the case of head lice, a child must be treated and found "free of live bugs" before returning to the center.

No medication will be given to any child unless a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner has stated that the child must be given the medication within the time frame of the child's attendance at the center. When this is necessary, the staff must be informed, and they will assist with the proper forms.

Home-Based Families and Staff: The above guidelines apply to Home-Based families. The Home-Based Visitor will not make visits to a home where he/she is at risk of contracting an infectious or communicable disease. Please contact your home visitor if you, your child, or another family member have any of the above symptoms.

H. Mental Health

Mental Health, in its simplest form, is the ability to love, work and play. Everyone needs to feel that they have the capability to form meaningful relationships and have positive self esteem. They need to be and feel productive and know that they contribute to society. We all should develop the ability to play, relax, and use leisure time in a manner that renews energy.

Head Start emphasizes prevention through the collaboration of all components and community resources. We will strive to enhance the self esteem, self sufficiency and independence of each family member. Our aim is to provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment so that each individual may develop mental wellness skills, abilities and strategies to support them through life's journey.

The goals of the Northern Tier Community Action Head Start Mental Health effort are to:

1. Provide activities whose primary focus is prevention. Conduct the **PATHS Social Emotional Curriculum** in addition to other mental health programs and activities (Positive Solutions for Families).
2. Assist families in completing **Ages & Stages Social/Emotional Screening**.
3. Provide the means for identification, referral and treatment of mental health concerns. Develop a partnership relation with a qualified Mental Health Consultant. They will observe, consult and assist in referral to assure all families in need have a Health/Mental Wellness home.
4. Provide families and staff with the necessary skills, through information and trainings, so they can establish comprehensive care after leaving the Northern Tier Community Action Head Start Program.
5. Assure all the comprehensive components of Head Start are involved in the integration of the holistic approach to mental health.

Your Head Start staff is available to explain the various services that are in place and to assist you in accessing them in a caring, confidential and timely manner.

I. Nutrition

Each day your child will receive breakfast and lunch at the Head Start center. There is no cost to the parents for these meals.



Breakfast is generally served shortly after the children arrive in the morning. The breakfast menu follows the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program minimum requirements, including servings of:

- a) 1% Fluid Milk (6 oz.)
- b) Fruit or Vegetable or Fruit Juice or Vegetable Juice (1/2 cup)
- c) Bread (1/2 Slice) or Cereal (1/2 Cup) or Hot Cereal (1/4 Cup)

Lunch also is planned to meet the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements which include:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| a) Fluid Milk (6 oz.) | b) Meat/Meat Alternate (1 1/2 oz.) |
| c) Vegetable and Fruit (1/4 Cup) | d) Bread or Bread Alternate (1/2 Slice) |

It is the aim of the Head Start center to serve foods high in nutritional value. Overly sweet and excessively salty foods are avoided.

We ask parents not to send snacks to the center with your children as your child's nutritional needs will be met through breakfast and lunch served at the center.

On special occasions you may want to send a special treat to school with your child to share with the center (for instance, a birthday). Please talk to the staff prior to doing so. They can suggest ideas for nutritious snacks and treats. We discourage sending candies or sweets; only pre-packaged foods are acceptable to bring into the classroom.

During classroom socials and other functions, food brought into Head Start must be in unopened packages. Food prepared at home will not be allowed. Teachers must be aware of food allergies in the classroom, and when the case arises, give prior approval for foods brought in. Fresh fruit and vegetables may be brought in; however, they must be washed in the center before being prepared and served.

Any and all questions pertaining to the meals provided at your center must be directed to the Program Health/Nutrition Manager. Contact can be made through your Family Service Worker or Home Visitor.

Our centers are in compliance with the following nondiscrimination statement:

In accordance with Federal Civil Rights Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (state or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.

To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- Fax: (202) 690-7442;
- Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

J. Head Start Program Policies

NTCAC Head Start conducts a program conducive to an early childhood philosophy leading to the total development of the child. The unique personalities of the staff and children at each center are taken into consideration by allowing each center to set up their classrooms and enrich the curriculum within the guidelines of the **NTCAC Service Plan**. Established early childhood principles are applied at all times.

1. Confidentiality

I. GOAL

The specific goals of our confidentiality policy are:

1. To ensure that all Head Start families can participate in the Head Start program without concern of information being given to other agencies or individuals without a proper release of information, except in the case of child abuse or neglect, or court mandated file submission.
2. To develop open communication between Head Start staff and families.
3. To maintain the individual's right to privacy.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers are the most important resource to our program. You help us provide children with great experiences in Head Start.

Confidentiality is essential to maintain each individual's right to privacy. In order to develop open communication between Head Start staff and families, confidentiality must be upheld.

Any violation of this policy will result in you as a parent being denied access to the classroom.

1. No names or events concerning Head Start children or families may be discussed outside of the program.
2. No parent or child should ever be talked about with your family, friends, or anyone outside of Head Start.
3. Parents and other volunteers are prohibited from reviewing records other than those of their own children.
4. If a family begins discussing another family or child, inform them that it is a violation of confidentiality.
5. No names or pictures of children, families, staff or descriptive situations of Head Start participants should be posted on any Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media site.
6. Do not answer the center telephone.
7. Desks, filing cabinets, computers, fax machines, and mailboxes are off limits to volunteers.

2. Child Abuse & Neglect

All Head Start staff are trained Mandated Reporters of child abuse and neglect, required by law to make an immediate report to ChildLine if they feel, that abuse or neglect is occurring. Head Start does not make a judgement of seriousness or conduct any investigations of possible child abuse/neglect. We make a report to ChildLine and that agency and the local Children and Youth Services investigate to assure children are safe and not in harm's way.

Staff Clearances - All Head Start Staff must submit a Report of Criminal History Record Information from the Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance and FBI Fingerprint. All personnel from outside "helping agencies" are required to submit all of the above clearances to Head Start before providing any services in the classroom.

3. Offsite Educational Experience Policy

Offsite educational experience within the local community are encouraged throughout the year. Parents will be notified at least one week in advance and must give written permission for their child to attend. The smoking policy also applies to offsite educational experiences. Home-Based parents are required to accompany their child on all offsite educational experience trips.

4. Outdoor Play

Outdoor play allows children to strengthen their motor skills and provides a change of scenery and fresh air. We request families to provide gloves, hats, and warm coats.

5. Inclement Weather

Classrooms will delay 1 hour or close for inclement weather based on the local school district's determination. Home-Based situations will be evaluated by the Home Visitor. Group Socialization activities will be cancelled and rescheduled in case of extreme weather. The Home Visitor may choose to reschedule home visits in the case of severe weather.

6. Challenging Behaviors in the Classroom

Head Start staff are trained in Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS) and work hard to create a positive and supportive learning environment. If a child shows challenging behaviors in the classroom, the teaching staff and management team will use strategies specifically for that child to try to decrease the behaviors. If individualized strategies do not help the child's behaviors improve, Head Start staff will work with the parent to develop a plan of action. In some cases, a referral to an outside agency for extra support may be necessary.

7. Smoking Policy

Smoking is prohibited by staff, volunteers, or visitors in the center, on the bus, on offsite educational experiences, and on the Head Start premises.

8. Parent/Guardian Grievance

Decisions are made by Head Start staff to reflect the policies and procedures of our program. If you feel a decision is inappropriate or if there is a conflict, it is critical to follow the proper chain of command. First, discuss the situation with the teacher, family service worker, or home visitor. If you feel the situation has not been resolved, you may then contact the education, family services, or Home-Base supervisor. If you feel the situation still has not been resolved, you may then contact the Head Start Director at Central Office.

9. Attendance

In order for your child to get the most out of his/her Head Start experience, regular attendance is essential! The Head Start Program Performance Standards require the program maintain at least 85% attendance.

NOTIFY YOUR CENTER STAFF IF YOUR CHILD IS GOING TO BE ABSENT. Head Start staff are required to contact you if you do not contact the center. Your child's enrollment may be affected if you do not contact the center. Your child must provide an excuse from doctor or parent upon returning to class.



TARDINESS/ EARLY PICK-UP Children are to be present at Head Start during the hours set for Head Start services. You will be contacted by your Family Service Worker if attendance issues arise. It is our program's responsibility to work with your family to resolve attendance issues and have children in class on a daily basis.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL AT THE CENTER Please keep in mind the hours of your child's classroom. Children should not arrive to class early. The teaching staff have a great deal of preparation before class begins.

It is also vital that your child be picked up promptly at departure time. If a child is not picked up from class by you or a person on your release form, Children and Youth Services will be contacted.

In the Home-Based Option, families are expected to make a commitment to a weekly home visit. If a home visit needs to be cancelled for any reason, parents/guardians are asked to contact the Home Visitor with enough notice as possible. The visit will be rescheduled for a date and time later on that week or the following week. Families are discouraged from cancelling their home visits so that they receive the full benefits of the Head Start experience. Each enrolled child, and at least one parent/guardian of that child, are expected to attend socialization day twice per month. If a child will be absent for any reason, the Home Visitor should be notified in advance.

If the person designated to pick up your child from Head Start appears to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, Head Start staff will arrange alternate transportation for your child by someone on the child's "Release to Others" form. If the person designated to transport insists on leaving with the child, the local authorities will be notified.

10. Known or Suspected Child Abusers Exclusion and Child Release Policy

Northern Tier Community Action Head Start reserves the right to bar any individual from the premises of Head Start facilities and/or attending any Head Start function or event who is or has:

- Been convicted as a perpetrator of violent crimes or offenses against children and/or adults;
- Considered to pose a danger to children, volunteers, or staff;
- Acting in such a way that they would be considered detrimental to the provision of quality services to children and families (ie. inappropriate language, breach of confidential information, inappropriate discipline of children).

11. Releasing Your Child to Someone Other Than Parent/Guardian

A child will only be released to an adult who is on the release to others form. Staff will not release a child unless you have granted permission for your child to leave with that person. For this reason, we have included a blank "Release To Other" form at the end of this handbook. If you wish to change or add someone to your list, use this form. Please discuss this form in detail with your Family Service Worker. Individuals listed on the Megan's Law website cannot be on the "Release To Others Form."

In addition, please provide Head Start with a recent copy of any custody agreement for the enrolled child. If we do not have the necessary paper work, we have no option but to allow your child to go home with his/her natural parent. If a child will be leaving the center with someone different than usual, or if not riding the bus on a particular day, you must send a signed note. A written note must be provided to the teachers when you are making a long term change to your child's pick up and/or drop off location.

If parents or authorized pick-up person comes to retrieve a child in an altered state, alternative transportation arrangements will be made. If he/she chooses to leave with the child, authorities will be contacted.



Northern Tier Community Action Corporation

Head Start Program

Center and Home Base Locations

Site	Phone Number
Bradford I	368-4809 or 368-9150
Bradford II	368-8551 or 368-9150
Bradford III	363-9265 or 368-9150
Coudersport	274-7017
Eldred	225-2200
Emporium	486-4000, Ext. 2054 or Ext. 2077
Johnsonburg	965-5627 or 965-3389
Kane I	837-9392 or 389-5720
Kane II	837-8068 or 389-5720
Port Allegany I	642-2807
Port Allegany II	642-9557, Ext. 3018 or 642-2807
Ridgway	772-4030 or 772-0261
St. Marys	781-7776
Elk & Cameron County Home-Base	781-6666
McKean County Home-Base	225-4018
Potter County Home-Base	274-7132



NORTHERN TIER COMMUNITY ACTION HEAD START

RELEASE TO OTHERS

CHILD'S NAME _____ PRIMARY ADULT(S) _____

This information is for Enrolled children Only the person(s) listed here _____

Contacts					
Contact 1	Name	Phone Type	Phone Number	Phone Note	Relationship to Child
	Address	Home	()		
	Address	Cell	()		
	City	Work	()		
	State Zip	Msg.	()		
Contact 2	Name	Phone Type	Phone Number	Phone Note	
	Address	Home	()		
	Address	Cell	()		
	City	Work	()		
	State Zip	Msg.	()		
Contact 3	Name	Phone Type	Phone Number	Phone Note	
	Address	Home	()		
	Address	Cell	()		
	City	Work	()		
	State Zip	Msg.	()		
Contact 4	Name	Phone Type	Phone Number	Phone Note	
	Address	Home	()		
	Address	Cell	()		
	City	Work	()		
	State Zip	Msg.	()		
Contact 5	Name	Phone Type	Phone Number	Phone Note	
	Address	Home	()		
	Address	Cell	()		
	City	Work	()		
	State Zip	Msg.	()		
Contact 6	Name	Phone Type	Phone Number	Phone Note	
	Address	Home	()		
	Address	Cell	()		
	City	Work	()		
	State Zip	Msg.	()		

My child will not be released to any other person without my written consent. I will update this form when necessary. I also understand that the information in this application will be held in strict confidence within the agency and is accessible to me during normal business hours. No person listed on Megan's Law Website can be used as an emergency contact.

Parent/Guardian signature _____ Date _____

Verifying Staff Member _____ Date _____

**Northern Tier
Community Action Corporation**

HEAD START

MISSION STATEMENT

Northern Tier Community Action Head Start is committed to providing quality services that promote learning, growth, development, and the enhancement of self-worth and dignity for the children and families that we serve.

