



Serving Barry, Branch, Calhoun, and St. Joseph Counties since 1966

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START/GSRP



2011-2012 Family Handbook

Community Action Main Office
175 Main Street / P.O. Box 1026
Battle Creek, MI 49016
(269) 965-7766
Or Toll Free (877) 422-2726
www.caascm.org

Teachers Name: _____ Asst. Teacher: _____

Site: _____ Classroom: _____

Family Worker: _____ Site Coordinator: _____

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INTRODUCTION

Mission Statment

Dedicated to Helping People Achieve and Maintain Independence



Education and Children's Services (ECS) Mission Statement

With the involvement of the community, we strive to enhance the self-dignity and self-worth of the children and families that we serve.

ECS Philosophy

Give all children an equal opportunity to achieve success. Families, staff and the community are included as active partners in the success of children and the program. For all children to be successful, families need support in achieving their goals.

ECS Goals and Action Steps

- Ensure that children receive medical and dental exams and good nutrition.
- Help children to develop a sense of self, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and self-expression.
- Provide learning activities that maximize children's social and emotional, cognitive, language and physical skills.
- Establish a pattern and expectation of success for children, which creates a climate of confidence for their present and future learning.
- Provide a program for children that builds, independence, encourages children to take risks, use their imagination, creativity, initiative, and promotes a respect for others and for property.
- Ensure that each child is treated as a unique individual capable of achieving his or her full potential.
- Partner with and support the whole family while building lasting relationships and connections.
- Provide links to community resources to enable families to achieve and maintain their goals.
- Value families as the child's foremost teacher; encourage and expect family participation in the program.
- Treat all families and children with respect and dignity regardless of culture, gender or race.
- Partner with the community to provide the best services for families and for the program.

Welcome

To the Community Action Education and Children's Services Program!

The handbook is written to help families and staff to understand the program's philosophy, policies, and procedures. ECS is designed to be a partnership between families and staff members. We take our responsibility to support parents and nurture young children very seriously. We strive to provide a warm, loving environment filled with learning experiences during each child's day.

Community Action ECS staff form the core of our program. We focus on hiring staff dedicated to the care and development of children. Community Action encourages families to work closely with your child's teacher to implement activities to meet your child's developmental needs.

Community Action encourages parent visits and participation at the center. We extend an open invitation for parents to visit at any time. Families are encouraged to participate in center activities and the Head Start Policy Council.

Community Action is glad to have you as a part of our ECS family!

Public Notice

ECS staff are screened through a Michigan State Police Criminal Background Check and Department of Human Services (DHS) Clearance before coming in contact with any child in our care. Contracted personnel with the (Intermediate School District (ISD), Registered Nurse, etc...) complete (DHS) clearance through their employer. A copy of this clearance is on file with ECS.

Parents or legal guardians of ECS children are not required to provide DHS Child Abuse and Neglect Clearance. ECS policy states that parents and guardians are under the direct supervision of ECS staff at all times when children are present. This complies with the State of Michigan Licensing rules. However, parents are required to sign a self-declaration of Non-Abuse and Neglect Form at the time of enrollment, before coming in contact with children in our care.

Parents and volunteers, including Foster Grandparents and ECE students, who work with children at least four hours per week for more than two consecutive weeks, are screened through the DHS before coming in contact with children in our care. All Volunteers are under the direct supervision of ECS staff at all times when children are present.

Immediate family members of ECS children volunteering must be 16 years of age and accompanied by parent/legal guardian when volunteering.

Visitors/vendors and non-Community Action employees must check in upon arrival at the ECS center and must be under the supervision of Community Action employees at all times when children are present.

Confidentiality Policy

By law and common courtesy, the employees and volunteer participants of Community Action ECS are required to hold all information gathered in the performance of their duties (either relating to people requesting services from the agency, or relating to fellow employees/agents) in the strictest confidence. No information will be released to any unauthorized person, inside or outside the agency, without prior signed written release of information from the person the information is regarding. Release of information is mandatory in the event of a court order; threatened harm to self or others; or suspected child abuse/neglect.

COMMUNITY ACTION EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Office Location and Staff

175 Main Street/P.O. Box 1026
Battle Creek, Michigan 49016

OFFICE HOURS: 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

PHONE: (269) 965-7766 or (Toll-Free) (877) 422-2726 FAX: (269) 965-8580

<i>Director of Education and Children's Services.....</i>	<i>Deborah Bedard</i>
<i>Assistant Director of Education and Children's Services.....</i>	<i>Deb Cole</i>
<i>Assistant to the Director of Education and Children's Services.....</i>	<i>Deb Davis</i>
<i>Compliance Manager.....</i>	<i>Marie Wicks</i>
<i>Disability Services and Mental Health Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Angie Shepherd</i>
<i>Disability Services and Mental Health Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Nicole Mansfield</i>
<i>Education Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Rosaland Jones</i>
<i>Education Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Connie Parker</i>
<i>Education Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Rachel Ward</i>
<i>Facilities Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Joyce Cooper</i>
<i>Family Involvement Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Ruth Burns</i>
<i>Fatherhood Involvement Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Brian Fourn</i>
<i>Health and Nutrition Services Coordinator.....</i>	<i>Mary Smith</i>
<i>Mentor Coach/Trainer.....</i>	<i>Daryl Waggoner</i>

All classrooms are equipped with telephone answering machines. Classroom Staff are not available to answer the phone when children are present. Site Coordinator and Family Workers are available during this time.

Please limit phone calls to the classroom to attendance/transportation issues only. Staff will check all messages before leaving the center to assist children and families. If there are questions or concerns, please direct your calls to the ECS Office.

Enrollment

Fee Information

Community Action ECS is a federal, state and locally-funded program. Services are offered at NO COST to participants.

Criteria For Admission and Withdrawal

ECS Admission Policy is as follows:

Early Head Start: Children must be birth to 3 years of age.

Head Start: Children must be three (3) or four (4) years old by December 1 (or date determined by local school district) of the current calendar year to be eligible.

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP): Children must be 4 years old by December 1 (or date determined by local school district) of the current calendar year to be eligible.

Families will be required to meet the income guidelines. Proof of all income is required (Income tax record, DHS or SSI determination letter, wage stubs, unemployment or other as needed for proof of income).

Families must provide children's Immunization Records, Certified Birth certificate, and an up-to-date Physical and Dental Exam.

Special consideration will be given to children with special needs or conditions.

ECS Full Day mandates additional requirements to the above admission policy. To qualify for this program parent/guardian(s) must be:

1. Employed at least 25 hours per week and needing travel time of 5 hours, and/or
2. Attending school/college full time (12 college credit hours)
3. No caregiver can be present in the home.
4. For families working, a copy of the employment verification is required on the first of the month for the previous month.
5. For schooling (full-time status), a school schedule will be required monthly. At the end of a grading period, a copy of the grade report is required for verification of credits received to continue full day placement.
6. School/Employment of parent(s)/guardian(s) will be verified at the time of enrollment and on the 1st of each month thereafter. If no documentation is received, your child will not be able to attend on the 2nd day of the month. Your child's spot will be held until the 6th day of the month, for you to show verification. On the 7th day of the month, your child will be placed back on the waitlist for a spot in part day if available.
7. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide transportation for their child(ren) to and from the center.

Families in the Full Day program agree in writing (Child Placement Contract) to the following prior to their child's first day in class:

I understand that my child can be moved to a part day Head Start program (for Head Start children), or removed from the program (Early Head Start) if my employment/school schedule or my child's attendance pattern shows that my family no longer needs a Full Day program.

Withdrawal from the program is viewed as a misfortune for everyone. We will do our best to help each family be successful in the program. However, if parent/guardian(s) employment and/or school status changes, they must notify the EHS Primary Caregivers/HS Teacher or Family Worker as soon as possible.

Attendance Information

In order for children to be most successful in learning new skills, consistent attendance is important.. Please make every effort to have your child in attendance every day.

When your child will not be able to attend for any reason, including illness, please call the classroom as soon as possible. Also, if you know in advance that your child will not be attending, please inform the classroom staff.

When your child has been absent and no contact has been made, you can expect a call from the classroom staff. If absenteeism becomes excessive, a home visit and/or contact will be made by the Family Worker/Site Coordinator.

Performance Standards dictate that each Center as well as each child in the Program maintains, at minimum, an 85% attendance rate. When attendance falls below the expected 85%, steps must be initiated to determine the cause(s) for this situation. Consultation must be initiated between the staff and family to assist them during this time. Our ECS Attendance Policy exists to remain in compliance with Federal guidelines for the program.

If your child's attendance does not improve, they may be put on the wait list.

Hours of Operation

Center Hours and Schedule Of Operation

Children in AM/PM sessions attend four days a week, Monday through Thursday. Hours of operation for your child's classroom will be posted and a letter provided during orientation.

Children in Full Day sessions attend five days a week, Monday through Friday. Hours of operation for your child's classroom will be posted and a schedule provided to you during orientation.

Center Closure Information

Community Action ECS observes the following holidays (and will be closed):

Agency Holidays: New Years Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

In addition, centers and sites will be closed for the following:

Community Action Staff Training Days

Two weeks for Winter Break

One week for Spring Break

A calendar will be provided to you during orientation.

A center or site may also close due to inclement weather or other emergencies. Please see "Severe Weather and Emergency Situations" section of this handbook.

ECS Transport Policy

The ECS program's responsibility and insurance only covers ECS students from the time the child enters the classroom or boards the bus until the time he/she leaves the classroom/bus, and is delivered into the parent's or designated person's care.

Transportation Procedures for ECS Sites that are Self-Transports

Families who transport their child to an ECS classroom are responsible for the child until the child enters the classroom and they have signed their child in. Likewise, families who pick their child up from the classroom to transport home are responsible for the child from the time the parent signs the child out and leaves the classroom. Families who transport their child to and from class should be aware that ECS's responsibility and insurance does not cover the child until the child is actually in the classroom. Please keep the following in mind:

1. Please be careful and watch out for small children and families in the parking lots.
2. Please use the marked spaces for loading and parking at the center or school.
3. No Smoking on school property
4. Please keep music volumes down in the school loading areas.

In case of an emergency and when a change in an emergency pick-up person is needed for only a day, it must be in writing, signed and dated by the parent/guardian.

The written change can be pinned on the child's clothing or the parent/guardian may call and inform staff that the note is in a child's backpack, etc. A parent may also come into the classroom or office to add a name to the authorized pick-up list on their child's emergency card.

Please contact the center right away when there is a delay in picking up a child. Every effort will be made to contact the parent and or emergency contact person following the end of class to make arrangements for the child to be picked up. Failure to pick up your child without an explanation is considered a neglect issue. If a parent or emergency contact person is not located within two hours of school dismissal, Child Protective Services may be contacted.

When a family of a self-transport child is late for pick up, they will sign the late pick up form. If the family needs assistance or services to help pick up the child on time, a referral will be made to the Family Worker. If there is a third late pick up, a meeting will be held with the Site Coordinator to address the issue. If the family is late a fourth time, the Assistant Director of Education and Children's Services will meet with the family and a three day suspension of services may occur, with the understanding that it will not happen again. After that if it happens again the child may be placed on the waitlist, full day families may be moved to a part day classroom.

Transportation Procedures for ECS Sites that offer Transportation

The Bus Driver is not allowed to honk the horn due to State of Michigan regulations. Please have your child ready at least **ten** minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time and allow **ten** minutes from drop-off time. Please remember that safety is our first concern.

1. The ECS Staff are not allowed to meet your child at the door of your home or to take your child to the door when dropped off. Please be present at the bus stop to sign your child in and out from the ECS Staff.
2. ECS Staff will get off the bus to assist your child to get on and off the bus and cross the street if required.
3. Children are asked to use the handrail when boarding and exiting the school bus and keep all body parts inside the school bus at all times. All children will be in an appropriate child restraint seat while riding the bus; The ECS Staff will assist your child in securing his/her child restraint seat if necessary. The ECS Staff will check to make sure child's restraint is locked if child hooks it for himself/herself.
4. When riding the bus, children are expected to use quiet, indoor voices and be extra quiet at all railroad crossings.
5. The Bus Driver is not allowed to use the bus cell phone to call the families. The phone is for emergency use and contact with the centers only.
6. No eating, drinking or gum chewing is allowed on the bus.

7. Any items that a child must take on the school bus should be given to the ECS Staff until arrival at the center.
8. Your child will not be allowed to leave the school bus unless you (or someone named on the emergency card) are present and available to sign off that the child was received. Any adult accepting or picking up your child regardless of the setting (Child Care, Church, neighbor etc...) MUST be named on the emergency card. If you need to make a change to the emergency contact list, you must contact the ECS office.
9. If the setting (Child Care, Church, neighbor etc...) has more than one person that might be greeting and signing out your child, you must provide a current and/or updated list to staff prior to the child being released to that person. This updated list will be included or attached to the child's emergency card.
10. On the school bus, we strive for "Safety First." With Directors' approval, children that demonstrate behaviors that put others' safety at risk may have bus privileges suspended.
11. Providing there is seating capacity available, parent/guardians may ride the school buses owned by Community Action ECS

In the case of an emergency, and when a change in an emergency pick-up person is needed for only a day, it must be in writing, signed and dated by the parent/guardian. The written change can be pinned on the child's clothing or the parent/guardian may call and inform staff that the note is in a child's backpack, etc. A parent may also come into the classroom or office to add a name to their child's emergency card authorized pick-up list.

Please note that we cannot change the bus route on a daily basis. Any route changes, (pick up and drop off sites) must be made 24 hours prior to the desired day that you want the change to take effect, and must be approved by the Facilities Coordinator.

If your child has entered the program and then moves to a different address, it is possible that your child will be transferred to another site. If the new location does not have space available, your child will be placed on the waiting list until there is a vacancy. Parents may transport their child daily to and from their original classroom.

Bus Return Procedure

If you know you will not be home when the bus drops off your child, you can pick him or her up early from the classroom. PLEASE NOTIFY ECS IMMEDIATELY IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO BE AT HOME. Your child will be released to individuals that you have noted on their emergency card. All persons listed as emergency contacts for ECS children must possess a valid picture I.D to present to staff when picking up the child.

If the bus takes your child home and no one is available to receive him/her, the child will be brought back to the classroom or designated site in your area. Once again, please notify staff immediately if you are UNABLE to be at home. The following steps will be taken:

- The ECS Staff on the bus will call the classroom staff and notify staff when a child cannot be dropped off.
- The child will be returned to the classroom or designated site at the end of the bus route.
- The classroom staff will contact the child's emergency contact(s).
- A staff person will wait with the child until an individual noted on the emergency card arrives to pick them up.
- Failure to pick up your child without an explanation is considered a neglect issue.

If a parent or emergency contact person is not located within two hours of school dismissal, Child Protective Services may be contacted.

If you have any questions concerning any of the rules stated above, please contact the Facilities Coordinator at 269-965-7766 ext.328 or toll free at 1-877-422-2726 or review Pupil Transportation Act 187 of 1990 by visiting the following website:

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-187-of-1990.pdf>

Late Pick Up/ Late Drop Off/Bus Return Procedure

This procedure will insure consistent follow through with late child pick up, including children returned from bus routes. It will enable staff to recognize possible services that families may need to improve timeliness and attendance and provide documentation needed when further intervention with families is necessary.

1. When a family is late for pick up contact the family/ emergency contact person immediately.
2. When a family is at least 15 minutes late for pick up/drop off or a child is returned on the bus the family must fill out the late pick up/drop off form.
3. Staff fills in the child's name, center information, date & actual time of pick up/drop off time.
4. If an emergency contact person picked up/dropped off the child, have them sign the form.
5. Then have the family sign and fill in the reason why they were not able to pick up/drop off the child at correct time.
6. Staff fills in the referral/meeting section and then initials the form.
7. A copy of the form is given to the Family Worker and Site Coordinator after each entry.

- ❑ All Late Pick Up/Late Drop Off/Bus Return Forms will be brought to the Family Review Meetings.
- ❑ A referral to the Family Worker will be made to see if there are any services that can be offered to the family that can assist them in picking up or dropping off their child on time.
- ❑ When a family is late for pick up/drop off the child for a third time, a meeting with the Site Coordinator is required to discuss the issue. The documentation will be forwarded to the Assistant Director of Education and Children's Services.
- ❑ If the family is late a fourth time, the Assistant Director of ECS will meet with the family and a three day suspension of services may occur, with the understanding that it will not happen again. If it happens again, the Director of ECS may recommend that the child be placed on the waitlist, full day families may be moved to a part day classroom, or bus privileges suspended.

In-Kind Contributions and Donations

What is In-Kind? Supplies and volunteer hours donated to the classroom by families, community and professional volunteers. Education and Children's Services is federal, state and locally funded, and the government funds the basic essentials to run the program. We look to the community and you, our ECS families, for additional support. Parent participation is essential to the process of assisting the ECS program in meeting the required federal match. Read further to learn more about how **YOU** can be involved in volunteer opportunities.

Family Involvement and Participation

Families are invited and encouraged to participate in every aspect of their child's educational program through; volunteering in the classroom, attending trainings, regularly scheduled Family Meetings, participating on Advisory Committees and many other creative ways. Ask your child's teacher, Family Worker or Site Coordinator how you can become more involved.

Family involvement and participation in ECS strengthens the connection between each child's home and the classroom. Families can also strengthen their role as the child's first and most important caregiver and help in your child's education by participating in the following ways:

Family Partnerships: ECS classroom staff and family workers form relationships with participating families to develop goals through the process of establishing a Family Partnership Agreement (FPA). Community resources, referrals and trainings are provided to families to assist them in successfully meeting their goals.

ECS Policy Council (PC): PC provides opportunities for families to share responsibility for setting policies for high quality services to children and families in accordance with the Head Start legislation, regulation and policies and Head Start Performance Standards.

Community Action Governing Board and Policy Council work together in the process of making decisions for ECS. This shared governance allows for the voices of the families to be heard, and allows families to be involved in planning for improvement across all aspects of the program. Your involvement at the center level through family meeting and other opportunities is very important to the overall success of this program. You, the families make the decision of who will represent your voice through an election process held in October of each year at family meetings.

There is equal representation from each County and all program options on the Policy Council. Information is shared from PC to the family meeting and from family meeting to PC for discussion and problem solving when families express a common concern that may affect the overall program. These representatives attend monthly PC meetings and take part in on-going training throughout the year, which prepares them to be effective representatives for ECS families.

Family Meetings: Are planned opportunities for families to come together. The team of Parent, Teacher, Family Worker and Site Coordinator organize, plan, and arrange activities throughout the year. Meetings will be about and around community resources, services and the interests of families. Families provide input on activities for the children in the classroom. Family meetings provide ways for sharing the importance of how classroom and home, work together to expand children's learning experiences. The following topics must be included in family meeting each year.

- Mental Health
- Education
- Nutrition
- Transition
- Health

Monthly Home Activity Log (MHAL): Children learn through play and simple activities that reinforce their learning skills. The monthly home activity log records time spent with your child at home and ties into the curriculum and your child's individual educational goals. When families complete a MHAL and return it to the classroom, it counts as in-kind, which is a great way to support ECS when you turn them in at the end of each month. It also provides activities that assist you in your role as your child's first and most important teacher.

Home Learning Link: The Home Learning Link (HLL) provides family activities that link the classroom learning experience to the home environment. The HLL offers activities and suggestions in four developmental areas; cognitive, social emotional, language and physical development. Families are to submit the completed HLL form to the classroom teacher on a weekly basis, which also counts as in-kind.

Head Start Bucks: Are bucks earned by families volunteering in classroom, completing MHAL, HLL and/or attending family meetings. Head Start bucks can be used to purchase items such as:

- Household supplies
- Personal hygiene items
- Children socks and underwear
- Some food items

Classroom Volunteers: Parent participation in the classroom is wanted and welcomed. Families are strongly encouraged to share their cultural heritage, to read stories, and to participate in the children's activities.

Fatherhood and Male Involvement Program

Community Action ECS promotes the involvement of fathers in the services that directly improve educational, emotional, social, and behavioral outcomes for children. The vision of the Community Action ECS Fatherhood Involvement program is to increase and support the engagement of positive, responsible fathers and males. To accomplish this vision, the Community Action ECS Fatherhood Involvement program has the following goals:

Work with staff and families to plan and develop events and classroom activities, and provide classroom resources that engage fathers and positive male figures in the physical, emotional, and intellectual development of children.

- Provide consistent, ongoing training, resources, and events for staff, parents, and volunteers on the process of developing a successful fatherhood and male involvement program.
- Acquire and provide resources for participating fathers and men to enhance their confidence and competence as responsible fathers and positive males.
- Ensure all fatherhood and male involvement efforts work toward fulfilling the guiding principle of ECS, which is to ensure that every child enters school physically, emotionally, and intellectually prepared to begin formal learning.

For more information contact: Fatherhood Involvement Coordinator Brian Fourn at (269) 441-1359.

Volunteer Participant Procedure

Purpose: To ensure the safety of children attending the programs offered through ECS. In addition, ensure compliance status with State of Michigan Licensing Regulations and Head Start Performance Standards. The following is state law and mandated for staff and volunteer participants:

Before staff or volunteer participant may have contact with children while in the care of a childcare center, the staff or volunteer participant shall provide the center with documentation from the Department of Human Services that he/she has not been placed on the central registry for substantiated abuse or neglect. This may be waived for a parent/legal guardian based on Community Action ECS written plan of supervision, which states:

- Children are always in the view of staff while in the care of ECS program.
- Staff and volunteers also provide a signed declaration statement confirming that the individual is:
 - ✓ Aware that abuse and neglect of children is against the law
 - ✓ Is informed of the center's policy on child abuse and neglect
 - ✓ Informed that the law mandates reports of suspected abuse and neglect

Volunteer Participant Health Policy

Purpose: To ensure the health and safety of families and volunteers that have contact with children attending ECS. In addition, ensure the program's compliance status, with the State of Michigan Licensing Regulations and the Head Start Performance Standards.

Scope: This policy applies to **all volunteer participants** who will be in contact with children at least four (4) hours per week for two (2) or more consecutive weeks regardless of age. Volunteer participant will be required to complete and make available the following:

- ✓ Physicals current within 6 months of start of the program year
- ✓ TB screening current within one (1) year

Volunteers will be required to attend an orientation or receive a volunteer handbook where details of the ECS program are shared and questions addressed to ensure a smooth transition into our program.

Ways to Get Involved

- Be a classroom helper
- Take part in Family Meetings
- Represent family centers at ECS Policy Council Meetings
- Prepare items for the classroom
- Accompany children on field trips
- Plan a committee to enhance the appearance of ECS centers
- Repair toys or classroom equipment
- Carpool with other families to your Family Meeting
- Make phone calls to other parents reminding them of upcoming events and Family Meetings
- Participate on ECS program committees that develop plans for the ECS program
- Serve as a representative of ECS on committees or boards within your community
- Share skills or trade with other parents through workshops or trainings (i.e. computer skills, sign language, woodworking, etc)
- Write articles for Classroom Newsletters
- Visit ECS classrooms and read to the children

Expectations of Family and Community Volunteers

- When you are volunteering, please remove your coat and ask staff for a specific location where coats, hats and purses or other personal items are kept.
- For health reasons, we ask that you wash your hands each time you enter, before interacting with the children, and when you leave the classroom.
- We ask that you do not bring any drinking cups, coffee containers or food items into the classroom.
- If you are in the classroom at lunch or snack time, you are welcome to eat with the children (all adults eating in the classroom sit with children and eat what children are served). Please join us in using mealtimes as learning time. *Due to health requirements, volunteers cannot assist with the preparation of food.*
- Feel comfortable joining in whatever the children are doing. Ask questions, such as what is your name, tell me about what you are doing or making? Remember that conversation with children lets them know you are interested in them.
- You may want to think of something you would like to do with the children, you are welcome to bring in a favorite book you read to your children at home. If you play a musical instrument, children would love to see it and hear how it works!
- Please **NO CELL PHONE or TEXTING** conversations when entering or while in the classrooms. In cases where you need to have your phone on for emergency reasons please have it on vibrate and if you need to answer please step out into the hallway.
- All conversations in classrooms should be child friendly. Conversations between volunteers and staff should take place when children are not present.

- If you are not sure how to best participate, ask the teacher if there is something specific you can do with the children.

Remember, children learn from all adults who are interested and involved. You do not need to be trained as a teacher to take part in the learning experience with children!

Parent Communications

Parent involvement includes building a strong communication system between home and center. Parents are encouraged to communicate in the following ways:

- **Parent Conferences and Home Visits:** Teacher/caregivers will meet at least four times per year with parents. The Family Worker will meet with parents at least two times per program year. Your child's development and family-related topics will be discussed during these meeting/home visits.
- **Phone Calls:** A phone system is available. When classrooms are in session, all calls will go directly to answering machines and will only be answered when staff is not with children. In case of an emergency, please call the office. Office staff will be able to communicate emergency messages.
- **Resolving Parent Concerns:** ECS encourages communication to discuss concerns directly with teacher/caregivers. On-going communication is important to resolving issues. Most concerns can be addressed at the classroom level, however, if you and your child's teacher/caregiver are not able to reach an agreement, the Site Coordinator or Family Worker, are available to discuss your concerns. If you feel more comfortable speaking with another parent, contact your Policy Council Representative their contact information is located on the family communication board on site or in the classroom.
- **Parent Resources:** ECS families receive a Community Resource Guide with detailed information about services or programs in their area. Many sites provide locations where information can be accessed on various topics of interest to our parents. Some centers have a computer available with internet connection for families to do job searches, resume building, etc.
- **Community Referrals:** ECS has established community partnerships with area agencies. Consultants are available to work with families on nutrition, mental health, medical needs, and special needs. Your family worker can refer you to these partner agencies as needed or call 211 Referral System

Community Partnerships

ECS develops community partnerships with programs, organization and businesses in each of the counties we serve. ECS takes an active role in community planning to encourage strong communication, cooperation and sharing of information to improve and increase the delivery of services to children and families.

- The ECS Health and Education Advisory Committee (HEAC) meets twice a year to discuss, plan and organize services for the children and families we serve. HEAC includes professionals from health agencies and services, local education programs, and parents from the counties we serve, along with key ECS staff members.
- ECS staff members are actively involved, and collaborate and serve as members on other boards and committees within the communities we serve.
- ECS includes community partners on the decision making body "Policy Council" to assist in the development of policies and to oversee that policies are followed.
- ECS Staff act as resource agents for referrals, advocate for the needs of families in the community, and act as liaisons between community programs and services to children and families.
- ECS encourages their families to sit on and participate in other boards, committee's and activities in their communities to keep the needs of children and families a priority.

Education, Mental Health, and Disability Information

Curriculum

The Community Action Early Head Start, Head Start, and Great Start School Readiness programs have chosen "**The Creative Curriculum.**" This curriculum is research-based, and provides children with essential experiences and activities for their success. It meets all the requirements of our Head Start Performance Standards, and the State of Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality.

The Creative Curriculum encourages our staff to create an interesting environment to play and learn in four major areas of a child's growth and development. These areas are: Social-Emotional, Physical, Cognitive, and Language development.

The Creative Curriculum builds on what we know about how children learn at each stage of their development. It includes concepts and skills in math, literacy, science, social studies, art and technology, in addition to learning through daily routines.

The teaching staff plans for individual children and the group using information from the family members and observations of the children at work and play. Lesson plan forms are posted in each classroom and are documentation of the opportunities provided for children in each area of the classroom. Families are encouraged to review lesson plans and give the teaching staff ideas for additional activities that may interest their children.

In our ongoing efforts to prepare our children for kindergarten and school readiness, we have added a literacy curriculum to our programming that compliments the Creative Curriculum that we have in place. Please speak with your child's teacher about the wonderful literacy opportunities that are provided to your child through both curriculums on a daily basis.

Name Tags

In all of our Head Start classrooms, teachers have prepared nametags for the children to wear each day. This is a great help and teaching tool used daily, for a variety of reasons. In Head Start, many Content Area Specialists visit our classrooms. These specialists may include the Director, Assistant Director, Education Coordinator, Disabilities Services/Mental Health Coordinator, etc. When children wear nametags, these specialists can more easily interact with children and have meaningful experiences in the classroom. Nametags are also a great way to assist children in daily name recognition, writing their name and those of others in the classroom, and they feel proud of themselves in doing so. They can be used as an interactive attendance activity as well, and the children love to wear nametags just like their teachers! Nametags will be worn only in the classrooms, not on field trips. Information on the nametags is limited to the children's names, and any decorations that the classroom may like on the tag.

ECS Programs

ECS programs and classrooms provide individual presentations according to your child's developmental stage and individual needs. Classroom activities are planned to allow children opportunities to make choices and to exercise their independence. Teachers and caregivers encourage children to use their self-help skills in order to build confidence and self-esteem. Each child develops at his/her own pace, and we encourage development on an individual basis.

Home Based Program

Early Head Start provides a developmentally appropriate home based program that builds on the curriculum developed by Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy and is called "*Partners for a Healthy Baby*" and *Creative Curriculum*. This

option is also provided during the summer months and/or when a newborn child cannot be immediately placed into an Early Head Start classroom. The Family Worker and parent together arrange weekly home visits.

In addition to the home visits, we provide at a minimum, two group socialization activities each month. The content of the group experience incorporates the goals of the program and participating families. Such as: helping parents to better understand child development; encouraging parents to share their parenting challenges and joys with one another; providing activities for parents and children to enjoy together; offering structured and unstructured learning opportunities for both children and parents; and modeling successful strategies for engaging children and supporting their development.

ECS Infant and Toddler Programs

Our infant and toddler rooms accommodate eight children with two primary caregivers. The infant room provides an environment that facilitates the sensory-motor stage of cognitive development for the children. Age-appropriate toys are provided to assist the children in their individual growth and development. Children are exposed to art, music, physical movement and challenges, and to a great deal of social interaction. Language is a very important component of the program. Caregivers continually speak with children during diapering, feeding, and while helping them fall asleep. Toddlers are given the opportunity to explore their independence and make choices. Parents are an important part of our infant and toddler programs, are able to nurse infants at the center, and are welcome visitors whenever their schedule allows. Each infant's routine will vary according to individual needs. An individualized care plan will be developed for each infant.

Center-based infant and toddler children will be home-based during the summer months and during conference weeks. During these times, weekly home visits and bi-weekly socializations will be scheduled with the family in order to meet the requirements for the program.

Toilet Training

Children must be ready to participate physically and emotionally if the process of learning to use the toilet is to be positive and successful. Otherwise, toilet training can be a battle of wills and a source of frustration for children and their caregiver. In the ECS Program, our goal is for parents and caregivers to plan together to make each child's toilet training experience an opportunity for children to feel successful and competent.

How Parents and Caregivers Work Together

Parents and caregivers are both in a position to be observers of children's growth and development. Parents and caregivers respond to individual children's cues and signs of

readiness. At some time between sixteen and twenty-four months, the child will begin to develop an interest in using the toilet.

Some children show interest earlier in group care settings because they see other children learning to use the toilet. For successful toilet training, children must be physically ready, as well as emotionally ready.

When a child begins to show an interest in using the toilet, parents and caregivers should meet together and discuss the following:

- Does the child stay dry, for longer period of time?
- Does the child use words or gestures to indicate that the diapers are wet or soiled?
- Can the child remove clothing with minimal assistance?
- Does the child have muscle control to "hold" their urine or bowel movement until they can get to the bathroom?
- Is the child interested in sitting on the toilet?

If the parents and caregivers agree that the child is showing these signs of readiness, it is time to develop an individualized plan for the child. The following items should be included in the plan:

- Toilet training is usually most successful when parents begin the plan at home and then gradually add the center to the routine.
- Parents and caregivers should agree on the words they are using to discuss toileting with the child ("pee", "urinate", "poop", "BM", etc.).
- Parents and caregivers should agree on the methods of toileting, especially for boys (will they be sitting or standing to urinate? If sitting, facing the toilet or facing the caregivers?).
- When a child begins to stay dry between changes and use the toilet, the transition can be made from diapers to underwear. "Pull-Ups" are not recommended because children in Pull-Ups do not feel wetness.
- Appropriate clothing that encourages independence. Sweat pants and other elastic waist pants are easy for children to handle. Overalls and clothing with buttons and snaps take longer for children to take off and put back on.
- Changes of clothing: A child who is toilet training should have at least two complete changes of extra clothing each day (including socks), in addition to several pair of underwear. Plastic shopping bags for wet clothes are helpful too.

Car Seats and Diaper Bags

Because car seats, diaper bags, and overnight bags may be exposed to allergens such as cigarette smoke and pet hair, we do not recommend these items be brought into infant and toddler rooms. If you need to leave car seats or children's belongings at the center for another parent or grandparent to pick up, please make arrangements with your child's teacher/caregiver for storage at the site.

Back to Sleep

ECS follows the recommendations of Michigan's Safe Sleep coalition for infants. All children under 12 months of age will sleep in cribs with firm, tight fitting mattresses and tight fitting bottom sheets. ECS provides and launders crib sheets. For the safety of each infant, our staff members have been trained to place babies on their backs and to remove all soft items such as pillows, blankets, comforters and stuffed animals from cribs. Babies should sleep in clothing that is appropriate for the room temperature. Blankets may be used when infants are awake and playing or when babies are being rocked and cuddled.

ECS Infants' Daily Routines:

- Greeting and sharing of daily information. Routine care (diapering and feeding morning meals, napping), self-directed play in activity areas, small group/individual activities with caregivers.
- Routine care (diapering, feeding lunch meal, tooth brushing, napping). Lunch clean up.
- Routine care (awake from napping, snack feeding, diapering). Small group/individual activities with caregiver. Self-directed play in activity areas. End of day, share information with parents. Clean up.

ECS Toddlers' Daily Routines:

- Greetings and sharing of daily information
- Routines (breakfast, cleanup, diapering and toileting)
- Choice play in areas, outdoor or indoor large motor play, small motor activities, small group times, stories and language experiences.
- Routines (hand washing, lunch, clean up, diapering and toileting, tooth brushing, napping and resting)
- Wake Up and Routines (snack, clean up, diapering and toileting). Choice play, large motor. End of the day information sharing with parents. Clean up.

ECS Preschool Part Day (AM or PM) Schedules

- Greeting, open activities, Hand Washing, Breakfast or Lunch, Clean Up, Tooth Brushing.
- Group Activities, Transitioning.
- Interest Area activities, Small Group activities, Outdoor activities.
- Clean Up, Transitioning, Story and Language activities.
- Hand Washing, Snack or lunch, Large Motor activities (indoors or outdoors).

ECS Preschool Full Day Schedules

- Greetings, Open activities, Hand Washing, Breakfast, Clean Up
- Group Activities, Transitioning
- Interest Area activities, Small Group activities, Outdoor activities
- Clean Up, Transitioning, Story and Language activities
- Hand Washing, Lunch, Clean Up, Tooth Brushing
- Rest and Napping, Quiet activities on cots
- Wake Up, Hand Washing, Snack
- Interest Areas, Outdoor Play, Small/Large Group activities. End of day, sharing information with parents

Indoor and Outdoor Clothing and Outdoor Play

All children should come to school dressed to play. Children will play outside every day, weather permitting. Please send appropriate outdoor clothing (coat, mittens, hats, boots, etc.) every day. Please follow these guidelines:

- Tennis shoes are the preferred and safest footwear for children in the classroom. Sandals and flip-flops are unsafe when children are playing. Children need to arrive to school wearing closed-toed appropriate shoes.
- Adult shoes are not worn in the infant classrooms. Infants will need shoes inside (and out) when they begin to walk.
- Children who wear boots in the winter must also have shoes for indoor play.
- Parents are expected to send a sweater or sweatshirt if your child tends to get cold.
- Winter clothing includes coat, boots, hat, gloves/mittens and snow pants.
- Early Head Start will provide diapers for your infant or toddler while they are at the center.
- Please send a complete change of clothes for children of all ages (pants, shirt, onesie, socks, underwear, rubber pants, as appropriate), so that your child can be changed if needed during the day.
- Please mark your child's clothing on the inside with his/her name.

Since 1997, clothing with drawstrings is no longer being manufactured. If your child has clothing with drawstrings, please cut the drawstrings off for your child's safety.

Outdoor Play Letter to Parents

The outdoor play area is considered an outdoor classroom and an extension of the learning environment.

Each of the Community Action ECS classrooms has an outdoor play area available to them. These areas are licensed by the State of Michigan Department of Human Services just as our indoor areas are.

- The equipment is age-appropriate and in good condition.
- The space chosen for the outdoor play area is located in a safe area and is an appropriate size for children to play safely.
- Outdoor play areas are inspected daily to ensure that no hazards are present.

We will be going outdoors every day unless the weather conditions are dangerous. Dangerous conditions include lightning storms, weather watch situations and intense heat or cold. Always assume your child will be going outdoors and **please dress your children appropriately for the weather so that they will be comfortable, safe and can spend their time enjoying the outdoors.**

Children will always be supervised during outdoor time.

Teachers will position themselves so that all areas of the outdoor space will be visible. Children need to be able to run, jump, climb and enjoy nature while playing outdoors. Our program provides materials for children to use outdoors such as tricycles, helmets, balls, pails, shovels, chalk, outdoor easels, jump ropes, as well as outdoor play equipment. Classroom staff uses outdoor play as an opportunity to observe children growing and developing in many of the areas that our curriculum monitors while they play and interact with the environment.

Toys

Please do not send toys from home.

The program supplies the toys and play materials your child will need while at school. If children bring toys from home, they will be placed in their backpacks or cubbies.

If your child attends a full day program, and uses a small special comfort item, such as a soft blanket, he/she may bring it to the center to be used during nap/rest time. EHS follows "Safe Back to Sleep" practices, therefore blankets will not be used in cribs.

Small toys, which may be choking hazards, are not permitted.
Toys such as guns or weapons are not permitted.

At times, special "share and tell" days may be planned and if so, your child is encouraged to share books or toys from home. Please check with your child's primary caregivers/lead teacher about sharing toys.

Field Trips

Field trips are an important part of the Head Start program. Children are naturally curious about the world around them. Participating in field trips provides hands-on activities such as new sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and vocabulary words. Field trips help provide meaning to classroom activities. The ECS staff plans the locations of field trips with input from parents and families.

Parents and guardians are welcome to attend field trips; they will not be able to ride the bus but are welcomed to drive themselves to the field trip location. When accompanying children on field trips, please do not bring siblings or other children that are not enrolled in ECS. This helps ECS remain in compliance with all licensing rules. During field trips, we ask that you and your child remain with the group, so that your child can experience the field trip with their peers.

Each field trip is unique, and your child's classroom teacher can answer any questions during the planning process!

How We Celebrate at ECS

Celebrations and holidays are a part of most children's lives. At home, holidays, birthdays and other celebrations are important family events. Children begin to understand these celebrations gradually, and they help them learn about their family and family traditions. In our ECS classrooms, we observe events that are meaningful in a classroom setting and make sense to children. Rather than focus on traditional holidays/birthdays, etc., classroom activities focus on the changes children notice around them. We respect what is real to children: things that they are able to touch, see, hear, smell and observe.

We will not celebrate traditional holidays and birthdays in Community Action ECS classrooms. To respect children's developmental levels, the classroom celebrations revolve around milestones and children's interests, such as a first tooth, tying shoes, writing names, transitioning and making friends, and things we notice around our communities. This supports our curriculum and is respectful to all families that we serve. We encourage families to be involved in our program, and give input into classroom activities. Many families may want to share traditions from home. If you are interested in doing so, you may work with your child's classroom teacher to plan appropriate experiences for children. **Please remember, no outside food may be brought into classrooms.**

Mental Health

A Mental Health professional visits all classrooms twice during the program year. They share observations of children and have ongoing dialogue with ECS staff. If there are concerns and referral recommendations, they will be shared with families, along with information on appropriate area service agencies.

Families and staff develop trusting relationships. Input about children's growth, development, and any possible concern is gathered at time of enrollment and continuously throughout the school year to ensure each child is provided with individualized services that match their developmental levels, learning style, and temperament.

Mental Health Observations- Contracted Mental Health Professionals conduct observations twice a year and provide overviews to ECS staff. They also provide a list of children found to be At-Risk for future mental health concerns. Recommendations from observations are provided to families and tracked by Disabilities Services/Mental Health Coordinators. Our contracted Mental Health Professional is available for follow up observations and/or consultations with families.

Information on how to strengthen nurturing and supportive environments is provided to families on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.

Families are assisted in accessing community resources for mental health concerns. Mental Health resources information is provided to every family in the Community Resource Book. Additional support is available to assist with finding transportation, childcare, or payment for interventions.

Families and ECS staff work together to develop Child Guidance Action Plans, when needed, to support positive guidance of children's behaviors. Disabilities Services/Mental Health Coordinators collaborate with classroom staff to develop mentally healthy classrooms. Mental Health concerns are discussed and updated during monthly Family Review meetings.

Child Guidance and Discipline

For Children Birth through Five

Community Action staff encourages self-control and appropriate social behavior in children. Family input and positive methods of developing these behaviors are used in the center. Per State of Michigan Licensing requirements, staff, volunteers, and parents visiting our classrooms may not use corporal punishment, frightening, or humiliating disciplinary techniques at any time. This policy applies to licensed centers, family meetings, agency sponsored events and any off-site activities, such as bus rides and field trips.

In ECS early childhood settings for children ages 0-5, expectations are reasonable (developmentally appropriate) for children. Our Child Guidance Policy focuses on knowledge of child growth and development, an interesting classroom environment, and predictable daily schedules that help children feel secure, confident, and excited to participate in activities and explore their environments. Classroom staff build relationships with children, assist in pro-social relationships (making friends), redirect bullying behaviors, and create rules that maintain safety. Children are encouraged to respect the rights of others and care for the classroom environment (Creative Curriculum, pg. 103-108).

Guidance is part of the learning experience for all children. Our staff is trained to observe children, to design an environment that minimizes conflict, to use clear language and directions, and to anticipate challenging situations. However, occasional issues requiring intervention may arise. In these cases, staff and families will try strategies that are positive and appropriate for each child's age and developmental stage. Techniques include: ignoring behaviors that are not causing safety issues, distracting/redirecting children's behaviors, giving choices and setting limits (see below), problem solving (see below), role modeling appropriate behaviors, using encouraging language, giving visual cues, social stories, and encouraging use of feeling words. Sometimes, a child may need to be separated from other children for short moments (time away from the group), to help him/her regain self-control. If so, the child may rejoin the group as soon as possible.

Setting Limits (Giving Choices)

A staff member (or volunteer) will calmly approach a child and address at eye level.

- Acknowledge the child's wishes and feelings.
- Clearly state the limit (rule).
- Say what behavior is acceptable in choices.
- Offer a final choice.

Problem Solving for Younger Children

- Approach calmly/stop hurtful or inappropriate behavior.
- Acknowledge feelings.
- Provide redirection.

Problem Solving for Older Children

- Approach calmly/stop hurtful or inappropriate behavior.
- Acknowledge feelings.
- What Happened? Collect information. Restate the problem.
- What should we do about it? Generate possible solutions. Evaluate consequences of solutions.
- Carry out solution and give support to follow through.

If a child develops a pattern of inappropriate behavior, staff will meet with the parent and work together to develop an individualized action plan ("Child Guidance Plan") for the child. It is our goal to work with families to help each child develop self-control and to keep all children safe.

When working together to guide the child in the positive direction and to keep the child and other children safe, it may be necessary to limit the number of days the child comes to the center and provide a combination of home based and center based services.

In every case, we view discipline as a positive, solution-oriented process in which children learn appropriate behavior without damage to their physical or psychological well-being. ECS does not permit, nor will it tolerate under any circumstances, the use of abusive or degrading disciplinary methods.

Disability Services

ECS is committed to serving children confirmed to have special needs/disabilities. ECS works closely with families, the Intermediate School District and their Specialists serving your child, to ensure every child is participating in all of the classroom opportunities and receiving the appropriate services as indicated in their program plans. ECS is required to reserve ten percent of total enrollment slots for children with identified disabling conditions, as determined by state special education diagnostic criteria or Early On criteria. Conditions of special education qualifying disabilities include impairments of health, speech, hearing, vision, physical disability, autism, learning disability, developmental delay, brain injury and others. Additionally, Early On identifies those children 0-3 years old with qualifying conditions defined as a developmental delay or as an established condition.

Soon after school starts, speech screening by a speech therapist will begin for those children suspected of having speech difficulties and having been referred by parent, physician, teacher or other staff. Families are notified if the screening indicates a recommendation for speech evaluation. All evaluations and therapy require family involvement and signed parent permission. If you feel your child may have a special need, please let your child's teacher or other involved ECS staff person know or call the Disability Services and Mental Health Coordinator at the main office in Battle Creek (269) 965-7766 or (877) 422-2726.

Health and Safety

Health Requirements

Family Workers implement and follow-up on health requirements while making sure time frames and deadlines are met.

Immunization

ECS staff members work collaboratively with families and providers to ensure that all children's immunizations are on an age-appropriate schedule. At the time of enrollment, parents of children who are not up-to-date on immunizations are assisted in developing a plan to bring their child up-to-date, and in developing a follow-up plan. In the event of a communicable disease outbreak, any child having an immunization waiver for that disease will not be allowed to attend school until the outbreak is over.

Physical Examination

Children will not be allowed to be in the program without providing documentation of a physical/Well Baby Check. A current physical exam/ Well Baby Check must be turned in or completed within the first 30 days of enrollment in accordance with the State of Michigan Licensing Requirements. Physicals need to be done in accordance with the State's Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Program and will reflect whether the child is up-to-date on a provided schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary health care. All children entering the ECS program will receive required screenings for developmental, sensory and behavioral concerns. If you have further questions regarding the EPSDT requirements or the screenings, please contact ECS Health Services.

Dental Health

Oral health is important in your child's development. Children over the age of one are required to have a dental exam performed by a dentist and completed within 90 days after school has started and every 6 months thereafter. Please inform us of routine check-ups and treatments. Children brush teeth at school and we provide each child with their own toothbrush for use after mealtime at school.

Hearing and Vision Screening

Your child will have a hearing and vision screening done within 45 days of the beginning of the school year if not conducted as part of the physical exam. You will receive notification of the results.

Medication Administration Procedure

Your Family Worker or a member of the classroom staff can assist with this process. Requests for the dispensation of medication will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. As often as possible, please dispense medicine at home.

We do understand that there may be instances that require medicine to be given during the school day. At that time, you will be given a copy of our Medical Administration Procedure.

There are steps that need to be followed before medication can be administered in the classroom.

If at any time during the year, your child begins taking medication at home or at school, please inform the ECS staff at once. So, that we are aware if we see any difference in child's behavior.

Administering Medication Policy

Requests for the dispensation of medication will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

It is the intent of Community Action-ECS to accommodate medication administration for a child who is disabled, or for a child with unusual or severe health conditions that would otherwise preclude the child from attending the program. Certain conditions apply toward identification and a plan of action once the need is identified.

In the event that a child's health condition is life threatening, or the failure to administer medication would adversely affect the child's long-term health, or prevent the child from attending the program, information regarding this condition should be identified during the enrollment process by the family.

When a health situation is identified, it will require further investigation and a doctor's statement regarding the severity of the condition must be provided and on file prior to the child entering the classroom.

A determination regarding the responsibility of administering medication will be made by, the parent/caregiver and the ECS staff.

If parent cannot make arrangements for the administering the medication, an ECS staff member will be trained to administer the medication. The families will provide staff with detailed instructions explaining how procedures and dispensing of medication will be carried out.

The following items are a requirement for medication to be administered in an ECS classroom.

- (1) Families must sign a waiver, absolving ECS staff of liability for dispensing medication.
- (2) A written statement from the parent must be on file regarding the child's health condition and the request for administering of medication. A doctor's statement regarding the severity of the condition and the need for medication must accompany the parents' request.

- (3) The family will be the primary responsible party for ensuring that medication is available to be administered in a timely manner for the benefit of the child's health condition.
- (4) If a parent is working and arranges for another party to administer the medication, such as a relative or another childcare provider a written/signed document stating this will be in the child's file.
- (5) The child may monitor their own condition and self-medicate only with a parent's authorization and a statement to that effect from a physician. The parent must also sign a statement that absolves ECS staff and ECS as a whole for responsibility.
- (6) ECS staff (must) monitor the child's self-medication to (ensure) that the child is not overmedicating. Staff will also (ensure) that medication is out of the reach of the other children and available only to the child in need.
- (7) As per Michigan Child Care Licensing Regulations, when medication is administered on a center site, the following provisions apply:
 - a. Medication, including tranquilizers, sedatives, aspirin, dietary supplements or individual special medical procedures, shall be given or applied only with prior written permission from the parent. Prescription medication shall have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name; child's name, instructions, strength and expiration date of the medication and shall be given in accordance with those instructions.
 - b. A caregiver shall maintain a record as to the time and amount of any medication given or applied.
 - c. The medication shall be in the original container, stored according to the instructions and clearly labeled for the specific child. ECS staff will ensure that the medication is out of the reach of children, and shall return the medication to the family when the contents have expired or container is empty.

NO MEDICATION WILL BE ADMINISTERED, IF THE DATE ON THE ORIGINAL CONTAINER HAS EXPIRED.

Health surveillance measures will be as per State Licensing Requirements and include notifying the family of any observed changes in the child's health condition.

Community Action ECS Stipulation: The record-keeping task will be the responsibility of the adult (parent, parent representative or ECS staff person) that administers the medicine. They will note this information and sign on a log kept in the classroom. In the event that the child is self-medicating, the lead teacher will have the responsibility of accurately documenting this information.

Health Plan

Dear Parents,

For the sake of your child and others in your center, please keep your child home if they are too ill to participate in daily activities. In order for us to prevent the spread of illness, if it appears that your child does not feel well or may have a contagious disease, please contact your health care provider. If we inform you that we suspect that your child has a communicable disease, please contact your child's physician for further instructions. If your child is seen by his/her physician we will need you to bring a note telling us what the illness is, the treatment prescribed and whether it is safe for your child to return to childcare or school.

PLEASE FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES BELOW AS RECOMMENDED BY THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS. IF ANY OF THESE SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS ARE PRESENT, PLEASE KEEP HIM/HER AT HOME AND NOTIFY YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER, PLEASE LET US KNOW SO THAT WE CAN ASSIST YOU IN FINDING ONE.

A child may be too sick to attend if the child:

- Doesn't feel well enough, to participate in the daily classroom routine.
- Has a fever of 101 degrees or more. (Fever suppressants such as Tylenol may reduce a temperature, but do not eliminate a fever, and may mask other symptoms of illness.)
- Has undiagnosed symptoms such as wheezing, excessive crying, unusual drowsiness, or pink eyes with a discharge.
- Has diarrhea (diarrhea is defined as changes in the child's usual stools, stool that runs out of diapers/clothing, or that the child cannot get to toilet on time more than once per day.)
- Has vomited more than once in a day, or vomits and has other symptoms.
- Has an undiagnosed rash with a fever or behavior changes.
- Has yellow or green mucous along with other symptoms of respiratory illness severe enough to interfere with the child's ability to eat, sleep, or play.
- Live lice/nits - if live lice are found at school, you will be called to pick up your child.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to call the main office at 269-965-7769 to speak with the Health and Nutrition Services Coordinator.

"MANAGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN CHILD CARE AND SCHOOLS" PROVIDED BY AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Prevention of Disease Transmission

Baseline routine frequency of cleaning and sanitation can be found on the "Cleaning and Sanitizing Cart." Frequency of cleaning and sanitation should be increased when there are

- Outbreaks of illness
- Known contamination
- Visible soil, blood, or other body fluids
- Recommendations by the health department to control certain infectious diseases.
- Environmental Surfaces and Equipment

Because children will touch any reachable surface (including floors), all surfaces may be contaminated and can spread infectious disease agents. Therefore, all surfaces must be properly sanitized.
- Shoes

Infants put their hands in their mouths after touching play surfaces; therefore

 - Shoes worn either outside of the infant play area or on surfaces contaminated with disease-causing agents may transfer infectious material to the infant play area.
 - Shoes worn in toilet or diaper changing areas and/or play area of other groups of children, and outdoors should not be allowed in the infant play area.
 - Shoes/slippers worn only in the infant play area are allowed.
- Toys
 - All toys can spread disease when children mouth or touch them after putting their hands in their mouths during play or eating or after toileting with inadequate hand washing.
- Mouthed Objects

Pacifiers, teething toys, and similar objects should be cleaned and reusable parts should be sanitized between uses. Pacifiers should not be shared. Pacifiers should be cleaned and sanitized daily.
- Bedding, Personal Clothing, and Cribs

Sleep equipment should be used only by one child, cleaned and sanitized before use by another child, and stored separately from others.
- Toilets

Toilets should be kept visibly clean and separate from the children's activity area.
- Hand Washing

Because many infected people carry communicable diseases without having symptoms and are contagious before they experience symptoms, caregivers/teachers need to protect themselves and the children they serve by carrying out hygienic procedures on a routine basis.

 - Moisten hands with water and apply liquid soap to hands.
 - Rub hands together vigorously for twenty seconds.
 - Rinse hands under running water until free of soap and dirt.
 - Dry hands with a clean disposable paper towel
 - Turn taps off with a disposable paper towel.
 - Discard paper towel

Hand washing should occur

- When arriving for the day or when moving from one group of children to another

- Before and after
 - ✓ Eating, handling food, or feeding a child; especially important for children who eat with their hands to decrease the amount of saliva (which may contain organisms) on their hands
 - ✓ Administering a medication
 - ✓ Playing with water that is used by more than one person
- After
 - ✓ Diapering and toileting
 - ✓ Handling body fluids (e.g., mucus, blood, vomit)
 - ✓ Wiping noses, mouths, and sores
 - ✓ Handling uncooked food, especially raw meat and poultry
 - ✓ Handling pets and other animals
 - ✓ Playing in sandboxes (to prevent ingestion of zoonotic parasites that could be present in contaminated sand and soil)
 - ✓ Cleaning/Handling Garbage
 - ✓ When leaving for the day

Assisting Children With Hand Washing

Encouraging and teaching children good hand washing practices must be done in a safe manner. Washing infants' hands helps to reduce the spread of infection. Washing under water is best. Staff should wash their own hands after assisting children with hand washing.

Prevention of exposure to Blood and Bodily Fluid

Caregivers/teachers follow the OSHA guidelines for cleaning and disposing of blood and bodily fluids.

- Affected area will be properly cleaned and sanitized.
- Contaminated materials will be placed in a plastic bag (securely tied) and disposed of in a trash container.

Diaper Changing

Caregivers/teachers routinely follow the correct steps to changing a child's diaper.

- Nonabsorbent paper liners are used.
- All soiled clothing is placed in a plastic bag.
- Disposable gloves are used.
- Soiled wipes and diapers are disposed of properly.
- Diaper change is recorded on the daily log along with any problems, (e.g., diarrhea, unusual color or odor, blood in the stool, any skin irritation).

Links to further resources:

www.healthychildcare.org

eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov

www.michigan.gov/mdch

Nutrition

No outside food can be brought into classrooms by staff or families.

Federal regulations require that all food consumed by children must be prepared/purchased through our ECS kitchens. There are absolutely no exceptions to this rule. These measures help us to follow health and safety regulations and avoid allergic reactions in young children. If staff or families, have special requests, contact kitchen operations for assistance.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

This childcare center is a participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program. The CACFP provides cash reimbursement to childcare centers for nutritious meals and helps children develop healthy eating habits. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) administers the CACFP. Through the Child and Adult Care Food Program, you can be assured that your child is getting balanced, nutritious meals and developing healthy lifelong eating habits. Proper nutrition during the early years ensures fewer physical and educational problems later in life.

Where Healthy Eating Becomes a Habit

Weekly calendars are given to families showing meal and snack plans for the week. Changes in menu are to be with at least 24-hour notice to parents. Any changes in the food/meals to be served will be made to the posted menu in the classroom and available for the families to review daily. If your classroom is canceled on one day, we may serve that day's meal on the following day, if it still meets our health and safety guidelines.

Parent Information Sheet

Nutritious meals and snacks are an important part of your child's day. We serve family-style meals that allow your child to learn during mealtime. Family-style meals promote a time for children to socially interact with the staff and other children in their classroom. Parents receive a copy of the menus in advance for review.

Children less than one year old: Foods in the infant meal pattern vary according to the infant's age. If your child is less than one year old, please request the infant meal pattern requirements from our center.

ECS as a participant in the CACFP, your childcare center receives reimbursement for serving nutritious meals and snacks. Meals and snacks must meet the USDA meal pattern requirements listed here:

Breakfast	Lunch and Supper	Snack (serve 2 from the 4 food groups below)
Milk	Milk	Milk
Fruit, Vegetable, or Juice	2 Fruit/Vegetable servings	Fruit, Vegetable, or Juice
Grain/Bread	Grain/Bread	Grain/Bread
	Meat or Meat Alternate	Meat or Meat Alternate

Michigan Department of Education (MDE), is required to verify the enrollment, attendance and meals/snacks typically consumed by children while they are in care. MDE staff may contact you regarding your child's participation in our childcare center.

If you have any questions about the Child and Adult Care Food Program, please contact:

Community Action
Education and Children's Services
175 Main St. P.O. Box 1026
Battle Creek, MI 49016
(269)965-7769

Michigan Department of Education /Child and Adult Care
Food Program
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909
(517)373-7391

Additional Policies and Procedures

Licensing Requirement Parent Notification

All childcare homes and centers must maintain a licensing notebook which includes all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans (CAP).

All childcare providers must notify parents of the notebook and that it is available for review during regular business hours. Parents of children currently enrolled must be provided with this notification; prospective parents must also be informed of the notebook.

For **childcare centers**, to comply with the legislation, centers must assure that **each parent sign a document** that includes all of the following statements:

- The center maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans.
- The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours.
- Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from the past two years are available on the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at www.michigan.gov/michildcare

Severe Weather and Emergency Situations

If a **TORNADO WATCH** (conditions are favorable for a tornado but a tornado has not been sighted) is issued after a class has started, buses will return children home as scheduled. However, if the **WATCH** extends into sessions that have not started, that class will be cancelled. Children will be sent home via their normal mode of transportation i.e. the bus or pick-up at the Center. During a **WATCH**, parents are welcome to come to the classroom and pick up their child(ren), but are not required to do so. If the National Weather Service changes a **WATCH** to a **WARNING** (see **TORNADO WARNING** below), then children will not be sent home on the bus until the "all clear" signal has been given.

If a **TORNADO WARNING** (a tornado has been spotted in the area) is issued, children will be kept in the Center and will go to their designated "safe place". **PLEASE NOTE:** in this situation, each Center will be "locked down", and staff will not be available to answer the phone or open doors to let parents into the Center. Staff and children will remain in their designated "safe place" and the building will remain "locked down" until the "all clear" signal has been given. Only after the "all clear" signal has been given will children be available for pick-up and/or release to a parent/guardian.

When there is severe/inclement/winter weather or other emergencies, your child may have to go home early. If this is necessary, the staff or designated call parent will call to inform families.

FOR SEVERE WEATHER AND CLOSING INFORMATION, PLEASE WATCH THE FOLLOWING TELEVISION CHANNELS: 3 (WWMT), 8 (WOOD)

Or log on to www.wwmt.com for weather information and click on school closings.

Pesticide Control Policy

Community Action ECS is committed to providing children a safe environment. It seeks to prevent children from being exposed to pests and pesticides. While pesticides protect children from pests that may be found in classrooms and the surrounding grounds, under some circumstances they may pose a hazard to children. Therefore, pest control practices at our sites and in classrooms may involve a variety of chemical and non-chemical methods that are designed to control pests effectively while minimizing potential pesticide exposure to children.

When there is a need for the use of pesticides at an ECS site, advance notice will be posted three (3) days in advance at the entrance of the site where the pesticide will be applied. In addition, a notice will be sent home with all attending children three (3) days in advance.

If a child is absent on the day that the advance notice is sent home, the child's Family Worker or Lead Teacher/Primary caregiver will contact parents/guardians by phone. Every attempt will be made to provide advance notification of pesticide usage. The advance notice will include the following:

- *Target pest or purpose*
- *Approximate location*
- *Scheduled date of application*
- *Site contact information*
- *Toll free number for a national pesticide information center*

Parents/guardians can also request notification by first class mail postmarked three days before the application. Please obtain a Request for Written Notification Act of Pesticide Use from your Site Coordinator or Family Worker.

The Pesticide Control Policy does not apply to application of the following types of pesticides:

- *Germicides, disinfectants, bactericides, sanitizing agents, water purifiers and swimming pool chemicals used in normal cleaning activities; personal insect repellents when self applied; human or animal ectoparasite control products administered by qualified health professionals or veterinarians; manufactured enclosed paste or gel bait insecticides where students do not have access to the bait.*

ECS Adult Behavior Policy

ECS provides a safe working environment for children, families, and staff. This includes all persons involved in Community Action events during work hours, socialization, home visits and family meetings. In order for the program to be effective, communication must be handled in a respectful and professional manner.

Parent/Guardian will not be permitted to threaten staff or family members of other ECS participants. Threatening behavior includes, but is NOT limited to the following:

- Physical
- Verbal threats
- Verbal threats with intent to do bodily harm
- Excessive swearing
- Or hostile behaviors that arise

If a parent/guardian verbally threatens staff or family members of other ECS participants, the following steps will be taken:

1. Parent involvement in the program will be suspended. Parent may request to be reinstated after a review by ECS Director and Governing Board
2. With the assistance of the Site Coordinator and Family Worker arrangement for a neutral person to be identified as the contact person for the child. This person will:

- Be available to take phone calls
- Put the child on and off the bus or transport the child

Accompany the child on field trips, individual situations may vary and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Obstructive hostile behavior can lead to discontinued services.

All involved staff and families will follow the policy and the Behavior Action Plan that is developed by ECS Staff and/or Director and person involved. Parent(s) will be given a copy and offered an opportunity to seek clarification.

ECS Weapons Policy

It is our intent to provide a positive and successful preschool experience for children attending the ECS program. Staff and children need to feel they are in a safe environment. ECS has adopted a zero tolerance No Weapons Policy. Weapons are defined as anything that is brought onto ECS property with the intent to cause bodily harm. ECS staff are mandated Child Protective Service (CPS) reporters. Federal law mandates that ECS reports weapons brought by children or adults to CPS or law enforcement.

Drug Free Zone

The possession, consumption, purchase or sale of alcohol or illegal drugs on Agency premises is prohibited, and violate state and federal statutes. Any violations will be reported to law enforcement.

Smoking Policy

In the interest of supporting a healthy work environment and limiting our employees, clients and visitors from secondhand smoke, all areas of the workplace are tobacco free without exception. Tobacco use **is not permitted** on Community Action properties or premises at any time.

Custody Order Procedure

Except when courts have determined otherwise, any person listed as a parent of the child on the child's official birth certificate has rights to the child, regardless of whether or not they are on the ECS Child Information Card (emergency card). ECS will follow this law unless we have been provided with court certified papers stating otherwise.

In a joint custody situation, both parents share responsibility and authority with respect to the children. This involves **parental consultation and agreement**. Each parent should fill out his or her own set of Child Information Cards.

Each parent has the right to name his or her own emergency contacts on the separate Child Information Cards. If ECS receives a current written copy of a court order barring a named person from contact with the child, ECS will not consider that person as an authorized contact and will inform legal authorities if the person attempts to make contact with the child at any time.

If not on the birth certificate, the parent must prove joint custody rights by providing written copies of parental rights by court order. When this written copy is on file, the following guidelines apply:

- ECS uses the most recent Custody Orders on file.
- It is the parent's responsibility to provide ECS with the most recent Order.
- Custody Orders are to be easily accessible for staff (i.e. in the child's file).
- ECS does not deviate from the most recent written Order, even upon parent request.
- Staff should consult with Supervisor if they are unclear about the intent of the Order.
- Staff does not monitor the specifics of Joint Custody Orders. Staff members are required to adhere to the following:
 - A parent or legal guardian of a child in an ECS center **may visit** the child at the center at any time.
 - A parent or legal guardian of a child in an ECS center **may pick up** the child from the center at any time.

Education and Children's Services does not serve as the "supervision" for any required supervised visitation for any parent/guardian due to custody orders, divorce agreements etc... ECS does not "track" assigned days or other specifics in a joint custody situation.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Referral Policy

The following information is from Act No. 238, Section 3 (State Of Michigan Child Protection Law) to report to the Child Protection Services Workers, concerns of neglect or child abuse as observed during the child's participation in the program. Michigan State Law mandates Community Action ECS employees to report all suspected cases of non-accidental physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment and child neglect to the Child Protective Services of the Department of Human Services. The law mandates that all personnel engaged in the intake process, care or treatment of children carry out such reporting. This includes all staff, nursing, medical, nutritionist, social worker, home visitors and everyone else. Reporting in good faith frees the staff member from any liability if the report proves to be unfounded. On the other hand, willful failure to report opens the staff member to criminal or civil liability.

Suspect is a key word in Act 238. ECS does not substantiate abuse and/or neglect of a child. ECS does not determine the outcome of CPS referrals.

The Michigan Child Protection Law, 1975 PA 238, MCL 722.621 et. seq., requires the reporting of child abuse and neglect by certain persons (called mandated reporters) and permits the reporting of child abuse and neglect by all persons. The Child Protection Law includes the legal requirements for reporting, investigating, and responding to child abuse and neglect. This document is to assist mandated reporters in understanding their responsibilities under the Child Protection Law. For copies of the Child Protection Law, contact the local DHS office or go to <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs>.

Client Complaint Procedure

ECS encourages communication to discuss concerns directly with staff. On-going communication is necessary in resolving issues. Most concerns can be addressed at the classroom level, however if you and your child's teacher/caregivers are not able to resolve a concern, the Site Coordinator, Family Worker or Fatherhood Involvement Coordinator is available to discuss your concerns. If the issue is not resolved, please use the following steps to make your concerns known.



COMMUNITY ACTION ECS CLIENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

PURPOSE OF THE PROCEDURE:

To ensure parent(s)/families have an established procedure for registering concerns with Community Action Education & Children's Services (ECS) Program. We ask that the procedure stated in the Family Handbook on Resolving Parent Concerns is followed before completing the Client Complaint Form.

PROCEDURE:

- Parents may register their concerns verbally or in writing using the client complaint form.
- The form may be mailed or dropped off at the office or given to any member of the CAASCM, ECS staff but preferably with an administrator such as the Site Coordinator, Education Coordinator, Health Coordinator, Mental Health Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, Assistant Director or Director of ECS.
- Parents may also register concerns verbally or in writing directly with the Community Action-Chief Executive Officer.
- Any staff so notified of concerns, if not the CEO, Assistant Director or Director of ECS will immediately report the concern to one of these people.
- Concern will be handled in a timely fashion with the goal being resolution to the mutual satisfaction of all parties whenever possible.
- The Assistant Director or Director of ECS will respond in writing within five (5) business days following receipt of complaint form.
- Documentation of discussion and resolution will be in writing and signed by parent and appropriate staff.
- If client is dissatisfied with the decision, the complaint may be forwarded to the Community Action Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

You can obtain a client complaint form on site or at your