



Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Head Start Program Performance Standard

§ 1302.61

§ 1302.63

§ 1303.75

§ 1302.13

Policy

Children with special needs participate in all Head Start and Early Head Start activities with their peers and are provided with the same opportunities as their peers in the least restrictive environment. No child is denied services because of a disability or its severity. Community Action Head Start will provide all modifications and/or training necessary to support the full inclusion of children with disabilities.

In Early Head Start and Head Start, at least ten percent of program enrollment slots are made available to children with disabilities. To help meet service requirements, Community Action Head Start annually procures an Interagency Agreement with the Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRES D) to provide Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).

Individual Family Service Plans

Teachers and Home Visitors actively participate in Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings to share their observations of the child's strengths and interests, and to support the parent(s)/guardian(s) as advocates for their children. Teachers/Home Visitors use the **IFSP Guide for Teachers and Home Visitors** to prepare for the IFSP meeting. Behavioral Specialists, MHCs, and Education Specialists may be invited to attend.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are encouraged to actively participate in the IFSP process as the experts and best advocates for their child. To support parent(s)/guardian(s) to plan for the IFSP meeting, Teachers/Home Visitors can make the **Family IFSP Guide** available to help parents organize their questions, concerns, and priorities for their child.

During the meeting the Teacher/Home Visitor will take notes on the **IFSP Meeting Notes Form**. After the meeting, the Teacher/Home Visitor will document the participation of the parent(s)/guardian(s) in the Disabilities Tab of Child Plus and provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) with the **IFSP Meeting Notes Form** either by hard copy or electronic copy.

An IFSP will be completed within 30 calendar days after a child's eligibility for disability services is established. Individualized goals addressed in the classroom will align with goals on the IFSP as much as possible. Any adaptations and modifications to the classroom environment necessary to support the child's development and learning is outlined in the IFSP. The child's teachers and the EI/ECSE Service Coordinator attend the IFSP meeting and work collaboratively to meet the child's developmental needs.

For information about maintaining and storing records for children with IFSPs, see the **Child and Family Records Policy and Procedure**.

Recruitment

The **Developmental and Social Emotional Screening Policy and Procedure** ensures that all children complete a developmental evaluation to determine if they may be eligible for disability services.

Each month the D&MH Supervisor, NWRES D staff, and LifeWorks Northwest staff plan activities to support service delivery and/or recruitment to EI/ECSE services.

Referrals to EI/ECSE services from Community Action Head Start staff and parent(s)/guardian(s) are provided to NWRES D on an ongoing basis in accordance with the **Disabilities & Mental Health Referrals Policy and Procedure**.

Transportation

Children with special needs are enrolled in the Head Start center serving their neighborhood and receive the same transportation services as other children whenever possible.

In some cases, children eligible for ECSE services may use school district transportation or require special transportation services as identified on the IFSP. If a child with an IFSP is unable to use Head Start transportation or is enrolled at a site that does not provide transportation and the parent(s)/guardian(s) are unable to transport, staff will follow the **District Transportation for Children Receiving Disabilities Services P&P** to request transportation from the school district.

Staff and Parent/Guardian Training

The D&MH Supervisor and the EI/ECSE staff have access to training resources about specific disabilities. The D&MH Supervisor will make specific trainings available to staff upon request when a child is enrolled with a disability requiring a special skill or knowledge. Similarly, the D&MH Supervisor will provide resources and information for trainings, mental health support, and other specialized services to parent(s)/guardian(s) of children with special needs through the referral process, newsletters and information highlighting local training opportunities in the community.

Planning Meetings

In order to ensure everything is in place for a child to have a successful start, all elements of support, including items outlined in the IFSP and any additional resources the family is accessing (for example, private therapies, ABA, etc) must be in place prior to the child attending. The change of placement meeting can be combined with the enrollment visit, as long as the D&MH Supervisor and NWRES D coordinator(s) are invited. At this meeting, an appropriate start date will be decided.

Once a child has been referred to EI/ECSE services, or if the child has an active IFSP, the D&MH Supervisor *must* be invited to any meeting in which the child's team will discuss placement options other than Head Start.

ABA Services in the Classroom

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy is a research-based therapy that uses behavioral principles to help people learn and improve new skills. It is often used to help children with autism and other developmental delays. Services can happen at an ABA center, the family's home, or in the community. This may include Head Start classrooms. If a family requests for an ABA therapist to support in a Head Start classroom, they must follow the volunteer process outlined in the **Volunteers in Head Start Centers P&P**. ABA therapists are classified as volunteers and thus cannot be left alone with children. As part of the onboarding process, ABA therapists will receive a copy of the Family Handbook and relevant P&Ps. They will complete the school district background check, provide an attestation of passing their

Forms Referenced:

[IFSP Guide for Teachers and Home Visitors,
Family IFSP Guide, IFSP Meeting Notes]



agency's background check, provide proof of RRCAN or equivalent child abuse reporting training, and sign the volunteer Standards of Conduct. All steps must be completed and they must be cleared by the Disabilities & Mental Health and Professional Development Supervisors prior to starting in the classroom.