

Coordinating Services with the Department of Human Services and Child Welfare for Foster Children

Head Start Performance Standards

§ 1302.53 (a) (2) (iii)

Policy

Community Action Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) staff members will maintain a good working relationship with the Oregon Department of Human Services Child Welfare Division. Staff will coordinate with Child Welfare to ensure the safety and well being of the children we serve.

Procedure for Coordinating Services

Eligibility criteria

A child is automatically eligible for enrollment in EHS/HS if the Oregon Department of Human Services Child Welfare Division (DHS/CW) has provided documentation of the child's status as a foster child. EHS/HS enrollment staff review the application and documentation to obtain information from the caseworker. As the child's legal guardian, the caseworker has all the rights and responsibilities of a parent.

Contact with a child's caregivers

Before contacting any other involved adults, such as the child's foster parent or relative foster parents, EHS/HS staff must first contact the child's legal guardian, which may be the DHS caseworker, to introduce themselves and to establish the lines of communication for this child. Establishing a relationship with the caseworker is essential to providing a successful EHS/HS experience for the child and facilitating the work of EHS/HS program and staff.

After making the initial contact with the caseworker, and **with input and guidance from the caseworker**, the EHS/HS Teacher, Home Visitor or Coffee Creek Family Advocates will contact the person(s) who has physical custody. These may be non-relative foster parents or relative foster parents (such as grandparents, aunts or uncles) who may either be paid or unpaid for their services. **Staff members are guided by the caseworker as to the extent and depth of their contact with foster families.**

The child's legal guardian is the person who is authorized to sign documents on behalf of foster children. Caseworkers can grant foster parents' specific authorization to sign documents for certain situations. Each case is decided individually.

If the child's placement letter from the caseworker does not include clarity around what the DHS/CW expectations are of the foster family's involvement in EHS/HS, the Teacher, Home Visitor or Coffee Creek Family Advocate will contact the caseworker to request clarification regarding their expectations. These expectations must be in writing and should be uploaded under the Enrollment tab of ChildPlus.

Resolving problems

If EHS/HS staff observes an indicator of abuse of a foster child, they will call the Oregon Department of Human Services child abuse hotline prior to contacting the child's caseworker. See the **Child Abuse Reporting Policy and Procedure** for more information.

If barriers to child participation develops for the child or the foster family, the EHS/HS Teacher, Home Visitor or Coffee Creek Family Advocate is directed to contact the caseworker immediately to discuss the

Community Action Head Start Washington County, Oregon

problem and formulate a solution. Again, the caseworker is the legal guardian and staff must take guidance and direction from him or her as to how to proceed. Caseworkers should be invited to Coordinated Care Meetings that affect the child, and staff members should be invited to attend DHS/CW Family Decision Meetings that concern the child.

If the EHS/HS staff cannot satisfactorily establish and maintain contact with DHS/CW, they must immediately inform the Family Services Supervisor. This includes a caseworker's failure to return calls, to complete necessary documentation, to attend a Coordinated Care Meeting, to inform EHS/HS staff of changes affecting the foster child, to notify EHS/HS Start staff of meetings that affect the foster child's attendance or to report a change in legal status or a change in caseworker.

If any of these situations occur, send a secure email to the Family Services Supervisor to schedule a Coordinated Care Meeting. Make sure to use secure email and CPID whenever discussing child or family needs by email. Do not use the child's name in the subject line or the body of the email. The CPID can be in the body of the message along with the necessary details for follow-up.

EHS/HS staff can contact the Worker of the Day or the DHS/CW Case Worker's Supervisor in a time sensitive situation or when the Case Worker is not able to establish or maintain timely and consistent contact.

Any irresolvable difficulties arising between EHS/HS staff and DHS/CW staff must be referred to the Family Services Supervisor who will contact the supervisory staff at DHS/CW for follow-up.

Ongoing communication with DHS/CW

There may be times that Child Welfare may contact you as a source of information/collateral contact about a child's safety and welfare. If this happens, ask for the name and contact information of the Child Welfare worker and ask to call them back. Confirm the number is DHS Child Welfare and call the Worker back at the Child Welfare office to ensure the identity of the caller. If DHS Child Welfare is the current guardian of the child, then you may share detailed information about the child as it relates to the child's health, safety and treatment.

If you are called as a source of information/collateral contact by Child Welfare, contact the Family Services Supervisor to inform of the request.