

2c. Attendance Policy and Procedure

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Policy

Beginning at enrollment, Lower Columbia College Head Start/EHS/ECEAP will promote the importance of attendance and benefits of regular attendance to each family. The trusting relationships established between staff and families strengthens child and family attendance and communication around attendance. The value of consistent attendance is an ongoing conversation from the beginning of the relationship throughout the child's participation in the program.

Procedure

1. Promoting Regular Attendance

- Parents/guardians will be educated of the benefits of regular attendance beginning at the intake process, first home visit, at orientation, and as needed throughout the school year.
- Staff continue to educate parents about these benefits through communications, site bulletin boards (parent boards), home visits, parent/teacher conferences and through the use of SMART goal setting.
- Staff will:
 - Help parents/guardians identify barriers to successful school attendance. Staff will provide strategies, referrals, and resources to eliminate those barriers.
 - Review identified strategies, resources and referrals for effectiveness on a regular basis, and at a minimum of at least once monthly during monthly case management staffing.
 - Utilize approaches such as direct contact with parents via home visits, family emergency contacts, text, email or intensive case management for individual children.
 - Utilizing bus passes, community partners, school district services, connections with other parents, supervisors, and CAST team to assist parents in problem solving.
- Area Managers will monitor for each class and work with their staff on creating plans on how to assist families that are not reaching attendance goals. They will also bring specific children to CAST when needed.
- Attendance will be monitored by Lead Teachers, Family Advocates, Area Managers, Leadership and Policy Council.

2. **Tracking Attendance**

- Staff track attendance upon arrival on the Daily Attendance and Meals Worksheet and in ChildPlus. If a child is unexpectedly absent and a parent/guardian has not contacted the program within one hour of program start time, staff will contact the parent/guardian to determine the reason for absence in order to ensure the child's safety, well-being, and that families are receiving information about the benefits of regular attendance.
- If the family does not have a telephone or is otherwise hard to reach, the staff will then attempt to contact the family at their place of residence or through emergency contacts.
- Teachers will turn in Attendance/Meal Count sheets weekly to the Program Coordinator for data entry.
- Attendance will be reviewed and documented in case management by the staff as absences occur. Attendance percentages per child will be entered into the attendance event in case management monthly and be reviewed by the Area Manager.

3. **Absences**

- The following shall be considered excused absences:
 - Hospitalization
 - Illness
 - Communicable Disease
 - Death in the Family
 - Medical and Dental Appointments/Treatment
 - Family Situations
 - Social Services Appointments
 - Transportation
 - LCC Head Start/EHS/ECEAP may define additional categories or criteria for excused absences.
- Children who are out due to surgery or lengthy illness, with prior CAST approval if over two weeks, staff will provide the parent with a parent/child activity packet to be completed at home.
- If a child's attendance is identified to be at risk of missing 10% (moderate) of days (or more) within a school year, or if the child has multiple unexplained absences, the following steps will be taken:
 - Staff will conduct a home visit, conference or other direct contact with the child's parent/guardian.
 - Staff will use the attendance data to support their concern and provide family support as needed.
 - For a child that is identified with the category of **severe absence level (20% or more)**, a Smart Goal (Family Partnership Agreement) will be established with the parent/guardian to outline:

- Steps to return to successful attendance;
- Possible barriers to successful school attendance;
- Strategies, referrals, and resources to eliminate barriers (How can we promote?);
- Timeline for regular check-in to review strategies, resources, and referrals for effectiveness.
- All contacts will be noted in case management including the agreed upon return date.
- If attendance has not improved within two weeks (minimum 6 class days) or upon an agreed date of return, next steps will be discussed with the Area Manager immediately.
- Staff will contact the Area Manager for additional support as needed.
- **Extended Absence** – If a family situation results in an absence lasting more than two weeks, following discussion with Area Manager (**with prior CAST approval**), the child could be placed back on the waiting list (example: extended vacation). If possible, the discussion regarding the extended absence would occur prior to the child being on an extended absence. Upon return, the child will be placed in a classroom if space is available. All correspondence will be documented in case management and copies of written documents summarizing the action plan will be sent to the address on file and uploaded into ChildPlus.

4. **Tardies**

- Children are considered tardy if they are not in class at the time attendance is taken at meal times (meal count). It is crucial that families are bringing their children to school on time so they don't miss out on connecting with staff and students while they start the day. By being tardy they also miss out on eating with the class at mealtimes.
- Staff will work with families on the importance of building school routines and having their child to school on time.
- If a child continues to have tardies after staff has provided assistance, decisions will be made regarding next steps for enrollment. CAST may decide on alternative placement or waitlisting.

5. **Continued Absenteeism**

- If intensive family support efforts designed to improve attendance are not successful, the following steps will be taken:
 - The staff will inform the Area Manager of the continued absence and complete an attendance letter (ERSEA 2f) to communicate that the child will be placed on the waiting list if attendance is not improved in the next two weeks (minimum 6 classroom

days for center-based). If possible, the letter will also be sent electronically to the parent/guardian.

- Improvement in attendance is demonstrated by attending each day and communicating any extreme family circumstances.
- Continued attendance must be above the moderate attendance category level.
- If there is no response from the parent by the date given on the letter, the family will be withdrawn from the program.
- A copy of the letter will be placed in the child's site file and a copy will be sent to the ERSEA Team.
- Staff will complete a Child-Family File Transfer Checklist (ERSEA 2d), Change of Status Form (ERSEA 1e), and End of Year Enrollment Questionnaire (MSYS 7r) to turn in with the child's file to the ERSEA Team. The ERSEA Team will withdraw the child, unless the family requests the child to be placed back on the waitlist.
- The slot will be considered vacant and offered to the next family on the waitlist if the child's attendance does not resume after intensive efforts.

6. **Supporting Attendance of Homeless Children**

- If the program has determined that a child is eligible for enrollment based on the McKinneyVento criteria for homelessness, a child may remain enrolled for an additional 30 days from date of entry while supports are put into place to assist this child and family with a plan to attend.
- Children who are determined homeless have 90 days to provide required enrollment documentation such as: income verification and immunizations.
- If a family becomes homeless within the school year, staff will assist in attendance planning and supports can be put into place. Supports may include referral to their upcoming grade school McKinney-Vento District Liaison.

7. **Classroom and Center Attendance Analysis**

- The analysis will include at a minimum the following:
 - Review the Attendance and Meal Count Forms for the month and ensure all absences are documented in case management.
 - Review individual patterns of absences for each child, including reasons and numbers of absences occurring on consecutive days.
 - Review any closure days or scheduled day off in the month.
 - Review any transportation concerns.
 - Review homelessness status for any enrollment needs.
 - Review of communicable disease trends/concerns.

- Review Report 2309 for review of Absence Reason trends.
 - The program will begin the analysis of children at risk of missing 10% of school days per school year beginning no less than 60 days from enrollment start date.
 - Staff is to review the ChildPlus report 2306P that identifies children at risk of missing 10% of school days per school year. ChildPlus report 2330 that will also identify children missing consecutive days of school that families will need contact from staff.
 - For each child at risk of missing 10% or more classroom days per year, run a case management report for Individual Attendance. Analyze the documentation and ensure specific reasons for absences, communication with parents, and specific steps needed to improve attendance are documented. Follow-up with parents as needed and document your communication.
 - Once documentation is current, print the ChildPlus reports and submit them to the Area Manager.
 - Refer to section 34 Absences or FS/PE 8e Head Start/EHS/ECEAP Family Partnership Agreement Policy & Procedure to support the family with completing a Smart goal to support and increase attendance.
 - The Area Manager will review the reports and follow-up with staff as needed. Area Managers document written updates/clarifications/action steps on the ChildPlus and End of Month reports as needed and file with monitoring.
8. **Attendance Monitoring**
- At the end of the week, Area Managers review each classroom's attendance to look for patterns of absences.
 - Family Advocates and EHS Home Visitors will track their Attendance Family Partnership Goals on the Classroom Family Tracking form in ChildPlus.

Early Head Start Home-Based Visits

1. Families/guardians will be informed at enrollment that the home-based program requires an adult, immediate family member and home visitor meet a minimum of 46 weekly home visits per family, per year. Prenatal home visits will be offered two times per month. They will be informed of, and reminded by home visitors, of the expectation that they cancel visits with the home visitor in the event of illness or scheduling conflict and provide as much notification as possible. Families/guardians will be offered make-up visit options, by the home visitor, for missed visits.
2. One Missed Visit Without Contact

- a. A note will be left at the home informing the family they have missed a visit and providing information necessary for them to call and schedule a make-up visit.
 - b. The home visit will be documented in the ChildPlus home visit event as a no-show.
 - c. An attendance SMART goal will be written to support the return to total attendance.
 - d. The home visitor will follow-up with the family via text, call or email to ensure safety and verify understanding of regularly scheduled date and time.
- 3. Two Consecutive Missed Visits Without Contact
 - a. A note will be left at the home informing the family they have missed a visit and providing information necessary for them to call and schedule a make-up visit.
 - b. The home visit will be documented in the ChildPlus home visit event as a no-show.
 - c. The home visitor will reach out to the families' emergency contacts.
 - d. An attendance letter will be written and left at the residence that includes:
 - i. A timeline for reconnecting with Early Head Start to remain in active status, which is 4 business days.
 - ii. If after 4 business days, there is not contact from the family, the site file will be returned to the office and the family will be withdrawn from the program.
 - iii. Instruction for how to contact the home visitor to schedule a visit and make-up visit.
- 4. Inconsistent Attendance at Home Visits
 - a. If a family continually misses or reschedules home visits, the home visitor will meet with the Area Manager to complete an attendance analysis. Based on the analysis, individualized strategies will be considered including:
 - i. Attendance Letter
 - ii. Attendance SMART Goal
 - b. Area Manager Intervention with the Family
 - i. CAST discussion to problem-solve with staff on how to assist this family.
 - ii. In the event a family has missed 2 weeks of consecutive home visits (without prior CAST approval or an excused absence reason given), they will be placed back on the waitlist.
- 5. Attendance Tracking
 - a. Attendance will be tracked in the ChildPlus EHS home visit event. All visits, make-up visits, and offers of make-up visits will be

- documented. Strategies, concerns, and interventions will be documented in monthly staffing.
- b. Ongoing attendance concerns will be brought to the attention of the Area Manager, which includes:
 - i. Extended Absences
 - ii. Patterns of Absences
 - iii. Pending Absences for Attendance Analysis
 - c. The area manager will monitor home visit attendance through review of ChildPlus Report 4120, site file reviews and end of the month reports.
 - d. For families that have attendance concerns, these families will be brought to CAST by the Area Manager or home visitor to help find solutions.

Extended Absence – If a family situation results in an absence lasting more than two weeks, following discussion with Area Manager (with prior CAST approval), the child could be placed back on the waiting list (example: extended vacation). If possible, the discussion regarding the extended absence would occur prior to the child being on an extended absence. Upon return, the child will be placed in a classroom if space is available. All correspondence will be documented in case management and copies of written documents summarizing the action plan will be sent to the address on file and uploaded into ChildPlus.