



MRDC HEAD START

Parent Handbook

Virtual Learning Edition



MRDC Head Start Mission Statement

MRDC Head Start and its community partners provide low income families and their children the emotional, physical, and academic support to become more self-sufficient and prepare their children for school.

MRDC Head Start Vision Statement

Thriving children and families are created by making communities safer and more successful through academic, emotional, social, and physical support. Families are involved through participation, volunteerism, and contributions in partnership with the community. Future generations will add to the continued growth of the community through active leadership, strong advocacy, educational success, and economic stability.

MRDC staff is committed to a program of excellence. Strong bonds are created with children, family, and communities by providing leadership, advocacy, and supportive services. Staff thrive through personal growth, mentoring and continued education. Staff embody teamwork, possess positive attitudes, and are positive role models. They are confident, accountable, and nurturing. MRDC Board, Policy Council, and Leadership support staff by providing resources, training, and guidance in keeping with the mission statement of MRDC Head Start.

1319 Woodbridge Station Way
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Dear Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of the entire staff, I would like to welcome you! We are happy to have you join the Maryland Rural Development Head Start family!

Please take the time to read this book in its entirety; you will find it very useful and informative. This Head Start Parent Handbook is designed to provide you with information and help you understand our program.

We at MRDC Head Start know the important role you play in the success of our program and your child's experience in preschool. We believe that you are the most important educator for your child and that you have the primary responsibility for your child's development. We strongly encourage you to actively participate in our program. You and the staff, working together as a team, will provide the support your child needs to succeed in school and in life.

Sincerely,

Marisol Rodriguez
Director





Health Requirement

At MRDC Head Start, we promote and encourage families to connect with accessible medical and dental organizations to ensure that they are receiving appropriate health, dental, and nutritional care for their children. Screenings such as height, weight, speech, vision, and hearing are completed annually, within your child's first 45 days of school, in order to detect and begin to address any potential issues. The Health Services Manager and your Family Advocate will work with families to ensure that necessary follow-up care by medical and dental professionals is performed. The Maryland Office of Child Care requires that all children have a completed health inventory, lead assessment, and immunization record before their first day of attendance.

Head Start requires that all children have a physical exam, which must be updated annually. Physical exams should also include lead testing results, tuberculosis testing/screening, and hemoglobin or hematocrit testing. Physicians should perform hearing and vision testing as well as height and weight screenings during the physical exam; children are entitled to the full Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) screenings each year. Physical and dental exams will expire one year from the date of the exam. Updated information must be provided once the exam expires.

Immunizations – Special Cases

In the case where immunizations are not recommended for a child for medical reasons, the parent/guardian must submit to the Head Start program a written statement from a health care provider documenting the reason and the specific time period in which the immunization is medically not recommended. In the case where the parent/guardian has chosen not to have their child immunized, the parent/guardian must submit a signed written statement to the Head Start program explaining that they have chosen not to have their child immunized.

Dental Examinations and Treatment

Head Start requires that all children have a dental examination within 90 days of enrollment. It is recommended that this examination be updated every six months but must be updated at least annually. Dental examinations help to identify dental needs early so that they can be addressed before they affect the child's overall health. When dental needs are found, Head Start requires that they be addressed in a timely fashion to ensure that the need does not become a dental emergency in the future. Head Start will assist families with locating dental providers when necessary.

When back in the center, children will brush their teeth daily in the classroom in order to reinforce the importance of dental care. Head Start offers children foods that are low in salt, sugar, and fat to promote tooth-friendly diets.

Nutrition/Food Delivery

Head Start offers children healthy foods, nutrition education, and other resources for a healthy lifestyle. During this period of remote instruction, MRDC Head Start will deliver the meals normally served in a classroom to individual homes. Your local Head Start will provide you with details about days and times.



Early Childhood Curriculum

MRDC Head Start uses the highly rated *Creative Curriculum*. This curriculum is based on the most up-to-date research on how young children develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. It also offers the best framework for individualizing the program, and embraces the “learn by doing” approach. MRDC Head Start has worked hard over the summer to adapt the *Creative Curriculum* to the online environment so that we can continue to support your child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Additional Services

MRDC Head Start respects the uniqueness of each individual in our care, and seeks to honor families and cultural backgrounds as well. Therefore, we adapt our activities to meet the needs of every child. When more support is needed, families work with the Mental Health and Disabilities Manager to develop appropriate strategies. The MHDM can attend your IEP/IFSP meetings to assist in the assessment and plan development process. He will work with teachers and parents to help children meet their individual objectives as described in the IEP. If you already have an IEP for your child, please alert your child’s teacher as soon as possible and keep her apprised of updates as well.

Family and Community Partnership

MRDC Head Start will help you identify your family's strengths, goals, and everyday challenges. We have strong partnerships with a large array of community agencies in every county, and help connect your family with the resources you need.

We offer a variety of trainings and events in formal and informal settings throughout the year. Topics are chosen according to interests and needs you have identified. Some examples are: parenting skills, job search techniques, and understanding child development. These will be held virtually for the time being.

Parent Committee/Policy Council

Each center has a parent committee, which meets at least once a month. These meetings will be virtual during the pandemic. As a parent/guardian, this parent committee belongs to YOU. The parent committee helps (1) advise our staff about local activities, services, and policies and (2) plans, conducts, and participates in activities for parents and staff.

Our Head Start program also has a policy council, which meets at least once a month as well. Annually, each parent committee elects one representative per classroom. These parents will, together with community representatives, assist the Head Start Director, management staff, and the Board of Directors in making important decisions.

MRDC Head Start Transportation

Due to the continuing pandemic situation, MRDC Head Start centers remain closed and we will not be transporting children at this time. Once the decision is made to reopen the centers, transportation will resume for applicable sites and specific information will be provided to you to help you prepare.