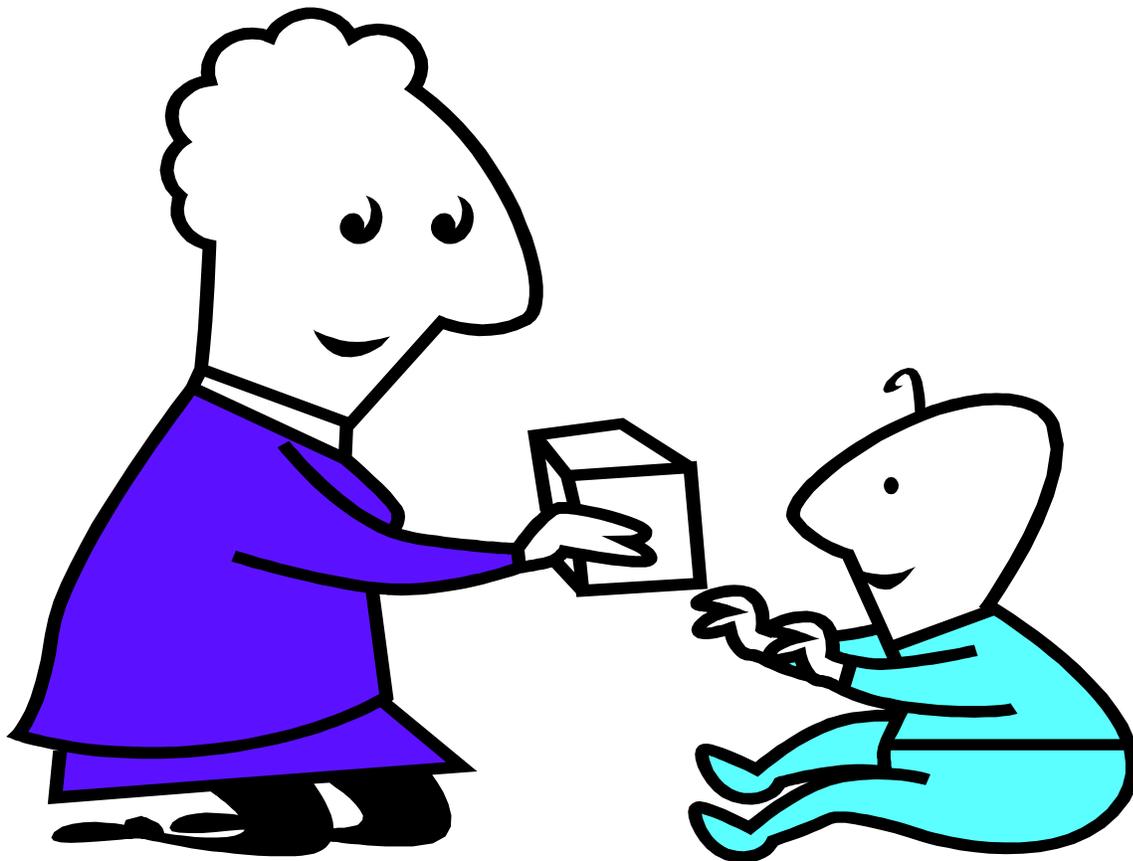


New Castle County Head Start, Inc.
256 Chapman Rd., Suite 103
Newark, DE 19702
(302) 452-1500 Fax # (302) 452-1509

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



This handbook is intended for use by all those who volunteer with New Castle County Head Start, Inc.; parents, corporate employees, community members and students as part of an internship. It is important that you review this handbook to help ensure that your experience with New Castle County Head Start, Inc. is positive and productive.

What is Head Start?

Head Start is the nation's premier early childhood education program. Since 1965 Head Start programs have provided comprehensive services to low-income children and their families as part of the War on Poverty. New Castle County Head Start, Inc. is funded through the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the Delaware Department of Education and is a full member agency of the United Way of Delaware. New Castle County Head Start, Inc. serves 615 children in nine centers throughout New Castle County.

Mission Statement

New Castle County Head Start, Inc. is dedicated to enhancing the cognitive, social, emotional and physical well being of children and families in New Castle County, Delaware. The Agency provides quality early care and educational programs for preschool children, as well as, supportive family services in partnership with parents and their communities.

Vision Statement

New Castle County Head Start, Inc. strives to be a model collaborative, early education agency promoting individual growth and personal achievement of children and their families.

Core Values

The following core values reflect the agency's relationship with our children, parents, staff, Board of Directors, Policy Council members, collaborative partners, volunteers and community.

CHILD, PARENT AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

We embrace and support the growth and self actualization of everyone involved with New Castle County Head Start, Inc.

RESPECT

We strive to treat all with care, compassion, dignity, equality and trust.

COMMUNICATION

We encourage on-going, open and honest expression of all points of view.

DIVERSITY

We welcome a broad representation of experiences, perspectives and cultures.

Services offered to children:

- Activities that promote growth-socially, mentally, cognitively, emotionally, and physically
- Comprehensive curriculum that is scientifically based
- Opportunities to socialize with other children
- Activities that prepare children for success in Kindergarten
- Mental Health services for those in need
- Nutritional breakfast and lunch (snack for full day program)
- Individualization for each child within the curriculum, including those with disabilities

Services offered to families:

- Opportunities for involvement in the decision making process
- Training and workshop opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities
- Assistance with GED or English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Referrals for needed services and follow-up assistance
- Opportunities to serve on a variety of committees
- Home visits
- Educational opportunities

Hours of Operation:

Half-day comprehensive program

9:15 a.m. – 1:15 a.m.

Monday-Friday

September-June

Guidelines for Volunteers

- Volunteers who are not parents, must be approved by the Center Coordinator prior to program participation
- Volunteers are non-paid persons assisting New Castle County Head Start, Inc.
- Volunteers must adhere to all agency employee policies and procedures
- Volunteers may not be counted in the adult/staff ratio
- Volunteers must always be in the presence of a full-time staff member when working with children
- Volunteers may not supervise children alone
- Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age

- Assist in the classroom with activities and special events
- Filing, typing, answer the telephone and perform other clerical duties
- Assist kitchen manager in preparing, setting up and delivering meals to children
- Help make education materials for classroom use
- Facility Maintenance
- Advisory Committee member
- Board of Directors member
- Policy Council member
- Internships (education, social services & health/nutrition services)
- Participate on field trips

Classroom Volunteers

Volunteers can be actively involved in the classroom assisting with activities and special events:

- Talk and play with the children
- Get as close to their level as you can, sit in a low chair or bend down
- Talk gently and quietly with the children
- Sit with the children and eat. Please eat only foods provided by the Head Start program
- Talk politely and positively with other parents and staff
- Treat all children with respect
- Share cultural experiences

Curriculum

All New Castle County Head Start, Inc. classrooms use the Creative Curriculum, Doors to Discovery, and tools from Partners in Excellence as their curriculum. The primary goal of the Creative Curriculum is to help children use the environment productively and to see themselves as capable learners. The following lists the importance and goals of the interest areas available to children in the classroom:

Blocks – Block building is important to cognitive development. Playing with blocks gives children the opportunity to recreate the world around them. Blocks are designed in mathematical units so that children playing with them learn about sizes, shapes, numbers, order, area, length, and weight as they select, build and clean up blocks. The block corner is a place for children to play together and share experiences.

House Corner – The house corner is the area of the classroom dedicated to “playing house.” The work children do in the house corner is called dramatic play, pretend play, or make-believe; it involves taking on a role and engaging in imitative behavior. Children learn about themselves, their families, and society around them. Children also learn from one another, they learn to ask and answer questions and they work together to solve problems.

Table Toys – Table toys are games, manipulatives, and collectibles that children can play with at a table or on the floor. Children develop confidence in their abilities when they complete a task successfully and use puzzles and other self-correcting toys. Children learn to cooperate with one another by sharing and taking turns. Table toys offer extensive opportunities for children to work on emerging math skills such as seriation, matching and classification. Physical development is enhanced as children practice eye-hand coordination while completing puzzles or placing pegs in a pegboard.

Art – Working with art materials offers children opportunities to experiment with color, shape, design, and texture. Using art materials such as paint, clay, markers, crayons and collage materials, children express their individual ideas and feelings. The process of creating is what’s most important, not what they actually create. Children experiment with color, line, shape, and size. They learn about cause and effect when they mix colors. Making lines and shapes with markers and crayons helps children develop the fine motor control they will need for writing.

Sand and Water – By sifting sand and scooping water, children improve their physical dexterity. By joining other in blowing bubbles or making a sand castle, they develop social skills. They enhance their cognitive skills as they explore why certain objects sink in water and others float. Sand and water play can be used effectively to challenge and soothe children’s minds and bodies.

Library – The classroom library is a place to get away from more active interest areas. In the library children can expand their imaginations and creativity, learn about the importance of print as a means of communication, gain information by listening to stories and learn to deal with difficult events. Acquiring a love for books is one of the most powerful incentives for children to become readers.

Music and Movement – Music naturally delights children. Singing or chanting can help make routine activities and transitions, such as gathering children into a circle for a group activity, smoother and more enjoyable. Music helps to set a mood. Music and movement provides an outlet for children’s energy and high spirits and benefits their large muscle development.

Cooking – Cooking enables children to experience the world of food firsthand. They learn not only how food is prepared but how it contributes to their health and well-being. Cooking offers children opportunities to experiment with food, to be creative, and to prepare nutritional snacks.

Computers – Computers can provide highly effective learning opportunities for children. Social development can be promoted through the use of computers when they are arranged so that children can work in pairs or small groups. Including computers in the classroom provides opportunities for children to learn in a variety of ways at a pace that meets their individual needs.

Outdoor Play – Outdoor play is fun for children and important for their growth and development. Opportunities to climb, run, jump, skip, hop, throw, catch, and use their “outside” voices provide children with a healthy release and break from the quieter activities of the classroom. Being outside allows children to stretch their muscles, breathe in fresh air, take in sunshine, and enjoy the freedom of space.

Taken From: The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood Education; Third Edition; D. Dodge & L. Colker, 1999, Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.)

The goals of Doors to Discovery are to increase children’s speaking and listening vocabularies- the words children know and use, knowledge of letter sounds, ability to identify the 26 alphabet letters, and understanding of why people read and write. This portion of our curriculum accomplishes its objectives by providing –

- Extra time for children to learn through one-on-one support
- A program for parents to educate them about the important role they play in their child’s language and early reading development
- A powerful professional development program to guide classroom staff in the use of best practices, reflective of the current research, to teach language and early reading
- A new early language and reading program to support the teachers’ instruction of language and early reading
- A transition from New Castle County Head Start, Inc. to our school districts to help ensure children’s success in kindergarten

The Partners in Excellence curriculum is also used to support the children in their development of self discipline skills. Staff work cooperatively to promote children’s social and emotional development as the foundation of early learning and to prevent challenging behaviors. The screening tool used by parents and teachers is Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA).

Behavior Management Policy

While volunteers are not expected to handle any behavior issues with children, they should be aware of the program’s Behavior Management Policy. If you, as a volunteer, do find yourself in a situation where a child’s behavior is of concern to you, always inform an employee. If an employee is not immediately available, (this should be an extremely rare occurrence) follow the guidelines described below in the policy.

New Castle County's Behavior Management Policy is based on the commitment to enhance the potential, self-esteem and dignity of children and their families. Discipline is valued as an ongoing learning process that supports children with guidance and encouragement in achieving the following goals:

- Enhancing the self-image and self-control of each child
- Facilitating problem solving skills
- Developing the ability to understand and respect boundaries

The following are recommended strategies for implementing the Behavior Management Policy:
Develop positive and clear expectations

- Be consistent with rules and routines while being sensitive to the needs of each individual child
- Reinforce positive behavior
- Ignore or redirect negative behavior as appropriate
- Give children appropriate choices
- Involve children in problem solving activities
- Children should be encouraged to use verbal expression

The following tactics are not to be used:

- Physical punishment
- Shouting at children
- Food as a means of reward or punishment
- Terms that demean or make children feel inferior
- Comparing one child to another
- Threats or ultimatums
- Time Out
- Negative notes, reports, or symbols (sad faces)

(Please see Center Coordinator with any questions about this policy)

Regulations

Performance Standards

The Head Start Program Performance Standards are the mandatory regulations that all grantees and delegate agencies (Head Start Programs) must implement in order to operate a Head Start program. The standards define the objectives and features of a quality Head Start program. They describe a vision of service delivery to young children and families and they provide a structure for the monitoring and enforcement of quality standards. Every three years each Head Start program undergoes a thorough assessment by a regional team to ensure that all Head Start Program Performance Standards are being met. Annually, individual Head Start programs must also perform an internal assessment to ensure that the Head Start Program Performance Standards are being met.

DelaCare Regulations

Early Childhood Programs/Childcare Centers in the State of Delaware must be licensed through the Department of Children and Families. The DelaCare regulations ensure that each program provides a safe and healthy environment for children. The Department of Children and Families monitors each program's compliance at least annually through scheduled or unannounced visits.

Child Abuse/Neglect

It is the legal obligation of New Castle County Head Start, Inc. to report any suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect. If at any time you suspect, that a child in the program has been abused or neglected you are also obligated to report it. Delaware law requires every citizen in the State of Delaware to report child abuse and neglect. Any person, agency, organization or entity who knows or in good faith suspects child abuse or neglect shall make a report. The child abuse report line is 1-800-292-9582.

Confidentiality

It is of the utmost importance that all nonpublic information remains confidential. Information acquired while volunteering for New Castle County Head Start, Inc. is not to be disclosed to other staff members or outside of the agency. Nonpublic information is: personal information about families and children and includes but is not limited to:

- Names of families/children enrolled in the program
- Addresses or telephone numbers of families/children enrolled in the program
- Developmental information of individual children
- Behavior information of individual children
- Financial information of families enrolled in the program
- Goals/strengths/needs of individual families/children enrolled in the program

It is also important to keep all adult conversations appropriate and professional when volunteering with the organization.

Holiday Celebrations

Holidays are times of tradition, fun, family and friends. Each family varies in the types of holidays celebrated and in the ways they are celebrated. It is important that each child learn about and participate in activities that are appropriate to his/her family's beliefs and traditions. Respecting differences in cultures and family traditions is why New Castle County Head Start, Inc. is not involved in the celebration of religion based holidays. We believe that these celebrations should be unique to each individual family.

New Castle County Head Start, Inc. does welcome the celebration of:

Birthdays	Labor Day	Thanksgiving
Ground Hog Day	Arbor Day	Earth Day
Independence Day	New Years Day	

Multi-Cultural Activities

It is the belief of New Castle County Head Start, Inc. that the everyday environment and activities are to be inclusive and reflective of the cultures of our families and communities. Since history and geography are not developmentally appropriate topics of study for preschool children “special” cultural days or activities are not planned.

Concerns

Any problems or concerns that you may have should be discussed with the Center Coordinator. If additional information or resolution is necessary please contact a Program Coordinator.

Tracking Volunteer Hours

New Castle County Head Start, Inc. receives 80% of its funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. Head Start must generate the remaining 20% of its funding through in-kind donations.

The Center Coordinator will provide you with an appropriate form and will show you how to complete it (See attached sample “A”). Please maintain a record of all of your volunteer time, donations and/or financial contributions. Be specific with your occupation and the value of the goods and services on the forms as it is used for donation valuation purposes. All donations and contributions are tax deductible. The Donation Receipt Form must be completed for all donations and contributions. (refer to sample “B”).

Volunteer Luncheon

A luncheon to thank and honor volunteers is held annually in the spring. It is the program’s way of thanking all of you who have volunteered your time to help children and families.

Have a great volunteer experience!!!

New Castle County Head Start, Inc. Statement of Confidentiality

As an employee/volunteer of NCC Head Start, Inc., I understand that some of my work will involve access to information/records that are confidential.

I acknowledge my responsibility to respect the confidentiality of student, family or department records, to follow agency procedures in order to protect privacy, and to act in a professional manner, both to the public and over the phone.

I further understand that if I am found acting indiscreet with confidential material or not protecting privacy of a student, family, or others through my actions, I will be dismissed as an employee or volunteer immediately. I understand this action be necessary in order to maintain high professional standards of the office and integrity of the Agency.

I understand that if I intentionally misuse personal information or data, I may be subject to disciplinary and/or legal action up to and including termination.

Signature of Employee/Volunteer

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Date