



Suwannee Valley 4Cs

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

P.O. Box 2637
Lake City, Florida 32056
(386) 754-2222

PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

Our Mission:

“To advance early childhood school readiness and family self-reliance by providing comprehensive services in a healthy, safe, nurturing, high quality learning environment that promotes education, professional development, family-community engagement and program excellence.”



Like Us on Facebook!



HEAD START



Suwannee Valley Community Coordinated Child Care, Inc.
P. O. Box 2637 • Lake City, FL32056-2637
(386) 754-2222 • FAX (386) 754-2220
Michele Ward, Executive Director

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We are excited to welcome you to Suwannee Valley 4Cs Head Start / Early Head Start program. For some, this will be a new experience and, for others, it will be a continuation of a rewarding relationship. Our goal is to work in partnership with you and assist in meeting the needs of your child and strengthening the family as a whole.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs is the sole grantee for Head Start and Early Head Start in our 4-county area (Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee) serving 374 children (birth- age 5) .

Our program is built on good working relationships between parents and staff as well as a strong family presence in the classroom. Please take time to get to know your child's Teachers and find out what your child is learning each day. Your involvement in your child's classroom and participation in at-home activities will help extend your child's learning experience. School readiness is a strong focus of our program. You and our staff, working together as a team, will provide the support your child needs to succeed in school and in life.

This Parent Handbook has been designed to provide you with general information about the program and the important role you play. We value your suggestions and input, and we ask that you become an active participant in developing the program through your center's Parent Committee and the Policy Council. Staff are readily available to answer any questions you have about the program.

Our Mission:

To advance early childhood school readiness and family self-reliance by providing comprehensive services in a healthy, safe, nurturing, high quality learning environment that promotes education, professional development, family engagement and program excellence.

Overall Program Goals:

1. Enhance children's growth and development
2. Engage and strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children
3. Provide children with educational, health and nutritional services
4. Link children and their families to needed community services
5. Ensure well-managed programmatic and fiscal operations
6. Provide staff with opportunities for growth and professional development
7. Ensure an effective governance system involving parents in decision-making

We look forward to a great year!

Sincerely,

Michele Ward
Executive Director

Funded by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services and the local communities.



Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Program Philosophy	1 -	4. PROGRAM SERVICES: EDUCATION	16 -
Introduction.....	1 -	Your Child's Education	16 -
Courtesy Assurance	1 -	Curriculum	16 -
Statement of Inclusion	1 -	Positive Behavior Support Program:	17 -
Confidentiality of Records	1 -	Tucker Turtle	17 -
Your Phone Number & Emergency Contacts.....	1 -	Responsive Caregiving	17 -
Photographs / Audio / Video	1 -	Assessments and Outcomes	18 -
What Suwannee Valley 4Cs Offers Your Child	2 -	Teacher Home Visits and Parent Conferences	19 -
What Suwannee Valley 4Cs Offers Your Family.....	2 -	Transition Services	20 -
1. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION	3 -	Kindergarten Transition	20 -
Center Information.....	3 -	School Readiness Skills Checklist	21 -
Where to Take Your Questions.....	3 -	Special Activities	22 -
Early Head Start Centers 2020-2021 Calendar	4 -	End of Year Activities	22 -
Head Start Centers 2020-2021 Calendar	5 -	6. PROGRAM SERVICES: FAMILY SUPPORT	23 -
What to Bring	6 -	7. PROGRAM SERVICES: NUTRITION	24 -
What Not To Bring.....	6 -	Family-Style Meals	24 -
No Smoking / Vaping	6 -	Meal Times.....	24 -
Transportation.....	6 -	Menus	24 -
Emergency Closings	6 -	Outside Food/Drink.....	24 -
Additional Program Services Available	7 -	Dietary Restrictions.....	24 -
Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK).....	7 -	8. PROGRAM SERVICES: HEALTH SERVICES.....	25 -
School Readiness	7 -	Well Child Check-Ups.....	25 -
2. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES.....	8 -	Height and Weight	25 -
Availability and Updates	8 -	Health Screenings	25 -
Volunteering	8 -	Oral Health Care.....	26 -
Stay Involved	8 -	Services for Children with Special Needs	27 -
Infants	8 -	Mental Health Services	27 -
Attendance / Tardiness	9 -	Notifying Parents of an Emergency Involving Their Child- 27 -	
If Your Child Is Too Sick to Attend Class	9 -	Medical and Dental Health Emergency Procedures... - 27 -	
General Drop-Off / Pick-Up Information	10 -	If Your Child Becomes Sick at School	27 -
Drop-Off Time- 7:30 a.m.....	10 -	Fevers/Diarrhea	28 -
Pick-Up Times	10 -	If Your Child Requires Medication While at School.... - 29 -	
3. PARENT INVOLVEMENT	11 -	Head Lice.....	29 -
How You Can Help the Program	11 -	Positive Guidance Procedure.....	30 -
How To Volunteer:	11 -	Suspension and Expulsion of Children	32 -
Ways to Volunteer	11 -	Child Abuse and Neglect	33 -
Recording Volunteer Activities	12 -	9. OTHER GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES	34 -
Non-Parent/Guardian Volunteer Information.....	12 -	Community Complaint Procedures	34 -
Parent Committees.....	13 -	Protections for the Privacy of Child Records.....	35 -
Policy Council	14 -	COVID-19 Prevention Strategies.....	38 -
Parent Communication with Policy Council:	15 -	10. COMMUNITY RESOURCES.....	41 -
Health Services Advisory Committee	15 -	Alphabetical Listing	41 -
Job Opportunities	15 -	Community Resources By Category	43 -
Newsletters and Menus	15 -		

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

General Information

Program Philosophy

Suwannee Valley 4Cs believes that, supported by a high quality early childhood program and access to comprehensive services when needed, every parent has the potential to raise successful, happy and healthy children.

We believe that an environment that values and respects each family's culture and strengths, and that supports and empowers families in areas of need, will produce children and families that are resilient, self-sufficient and successful.

We believe that our role is to provide a safe, healthy, nurturing environment in which each child can develop at his or her own rate, supported by developmentally appropriate materials and activities, and to provide support and empowerment to parents as they fill their roles as their child's primary and most important teachers.

Introduction

Suwannee Valley 4Cs serves as the grantee agency for Head Start/Early Head Start programs offered in Columbia, Hamilton, Lafayette, and Suwannee counties. Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded comprehensive child development programs serving families with children from birth to five years old and pregnant women. Families must meet federal income guidelines or have documented special needs or circumstances. The family annual gross income and child's age must be verified to determine program eligibility.

All programs offered by the agency are based on the premise that all children share certain needs, and that children of low-income families, in particular, can benefit from a comprehensive developmental program to meet those needs. Suwannee Valley 4Cs strives to strengthen the family unit by involving you, the parent, in the growth, development and education of your child.

Courtesy Assurance

In our effort to ensure courteous and quality service to the families and communities we serve, Suwannee Valley 4Cs' Code of Conduct directs employees to be

respectful and courteous to the families we serve and to their coworkers.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs expects the same courtesy and respect from all parents/guardians and visitors at our sites. Local law enforcement will be called immediately for displays of inappropriate behaviors such as abusive language (cussing), threats of any nature (by telephone, in person or social media such as Facebook or Twitter), or aggressive physical contact with staff or visitors on agency premises.

Statement of Inclusion

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, all children enrolled participate in an inclusive environment.

Confidentiality of Records

It is often necessary to collect information about the children and families we serve. We maintain strict confidentiality of all information collected. Information collected will be released only after written consent is obtained from the parent/guardian.

Only Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff, special consultants, agencies of referral and Department of Health and Human Services monitoring teams have access to the records. This is to ensure that agency guidelines are being followed. Parents/guardians have the right to review or obtain a copy of their child's records. A request may be made to your Family Support Specialist who will provide assistance. Refer also to the "*Protections for the Privacy of Child Records – Annual Parent Notification*" in Section 9 of this handbook.

Your Phone Number & Emergency Contacts

Be sure your Family Support Specialist and child's teacher have your correct daytime phone number and the correct numbers for your emergency contacts. If any of the numbers change, be sure to let them know.

Photographs / Audio / Video

Not all families give permission for their child's photos to be shared, therefore: If you take **PHOTOS, AUDIO, OR VIDEO** of children in our program, please do not share them on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social networking sites.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

What Suwannee Valley 4Cs Offers Your Child

Suwannee Valley 4Cs provides children with activities that help them grow mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically. Program staff recognize that, as parents, you are the first and most important teachers of your children. Please feel free to visit your child's center at any time. We welcome your involvement in all activities. We will work with you as partners to help your child progress in our program.

Staff members will offer your child love, acceptance, understanding, and the opportunity to learn and to experience success. Children will socialize with others, solve problems, improve their listening and speaking skills, and have other experiences that help them become self-confident.

Children will spend time in stimulating settings where they will form good habits and enjoy playing with toys and working on tasks with classmates. Your child will leave excited about learning and will be ready to succeed.

Health, sensory and developmental screenings are provided, as age appropriate, and the results are shared with you, the child's parent. The health services and teaching staff will work with you and your child if follow-up is required on any screenings.

We Encourage You to Do Things With Your Children

- Take your child to the library, museums, movies, community and sporting events
- Enroll your children in youth enrichment programs, such as sports or music
- Participate in religious or youth groups

What Suwannee Valley 4Cs Offers Your Family

- Help your child grow socially and emotionally
- Give your child individual attention and guidance
- Help your child learn to explore and enjoy their world
- Give you an opportunity to participate in your child's classroom
- Provide an opportunity to participate in a parenting education curriculum
- Give you an opportunity to discuss your child's progress with your child's Teacher
- Give you an opportunity to be involved in decision-making about your child's education

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

1. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

Center Information

Azalea Park (386) 362.1346

405 SW Walker Street, Live Oak, 32064

Site Coordinator: **Victoria Howey**

Family Support Specialists: **Misty Jones and Tasha Morgan (386) 364.2915**

Ft. White Learning Center (386) 497.5944

305 SW Dortch St., Ft. White, 32038

Site Coordinator: **Megan Hewett**

Family Support Specialist: **Meg Misinec**

Jasper Learning Center**Head Start (386) 792.0993****Early Head Start (386) 792.3103**

6211 NW Hwy 41, Jasper, 32052

Site Coordinator: **Briana Kennedy**

Family Support Specialists: **Sandra McDuffie (386) 792.2552**

Jennings Learning Center (386) 938.2538

1432 Turrett Avenue, Jennings, 32053

Site Coordinator: **Jnel Zackery**

Family Support Specialist: **Maria Gallegos (386) 938.2061**

Lake City Learning Center (386) 754.2223

258 SW Columbia Avenue, Lake City, 32025

Site Coordinator: **Pauline Lewis**

Family Support Specialists: **754-2222 Shay Kannady x218, Kimberley Jenkins x302,**

Lawton's Place (386) 752.1734

874 NW Jackson Ave, Lake City, FL 32055

Site Coordinator: **Briana Tanksley**

Family Support Specialists:

Nakita Thomas and Sha'Ron Gaskins (386) 758.3251

Live Oak Learning Center (386) 362.4944

843 SW Mary Mac Street, Live Oak, 32064

Site Coordinator: **Michelle Carroll**

Family Support Specialists: **Shiloh B. Carte and Misty Jones (386) 364.4498**

Mayo Learning Center (386) 294.1903

415 NE Bloxham St., Mayo, 32066

Site Coordinator: **Megan Hewett**

Family Support Specialist: **Meg Misinec (386) 294-3223**

Where to Take Your Questions

Have a question or concern about your child?

Your child's Teacher should be your first contact.

They will make all referrals or give you guidance on who you should contact regarding your concern.

Site Coordinators: See center information to left.

Supervise teachers and center staff and oversee the day-to-day operation of the centers.

Director of Education: (Joye Parker)

Supervises the Education Coordinator, Coaches, Lead Teacher Mentor, and Education Support Teacher Mentor and provides oversight and monitoring of Education Department; assists in the management of the Head Start / Early Head Start programs.

Family Support Specialist: See information to left.

Family advocates are assigned to your family while your child attends our program. (Think of them as someone who can help identify concerns and goals and then help you meet them.)

Lead Family Support Specialist: (Nakia Dye)

Supervises Family Support Specialists and parent involvement activities; establishes links with other community resources.

Early Childhood Behavior Specialist: (Jackie Brooks)

Provides support with Disabilities/Mental Health services.

Health Services Support Specialist: (Kristi Whitener)
Coordinates dental exams and follow-up treatments.

Health Services Coordinator: (Maria Brown)

Oversees the Health Services Department.

Family / Health Services Administrator: (Jeannie Boston)

Provides oversight and monitoring of family services, health services and ChildPlus/USDA services; assists in the management of the Head Start / Early Head Start programs.

Head Start / Executive Director: (Michele Ward)

Oversees the entire program.

We appreciate that your family has chosen to be a part of our program. Just like you, we care deeply about your child. Your suggestions and comments will receive careful consideration as we strive to provide a program responsive to the needs of your family.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Early Head Start Centers 2023-2024 Calendar

Day and Date	Description
Wed. . Aug. 9	First Day of Classes
Mon. Sept. 4	Closed in observance of Labor Day
Fri. Oct. 13	Suwannee County – Student Holiday
Mon. Oct. 16	Columbia & Hamilton County-Student Holiday
Nov. 20 - 24	Fall Break/Student Holiday
Thurs. Dec. 21	Last Day of Classes before Holidays
Dec. 22 - Jan. 4	Winter Break/Student Holiday
Fri. Jan. 5	First Day of Classes 2024
Mon. Jan. 15	Closed in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Mon. Feb. 19	Closed in observance of President’s Day
Mar. 18 - 22	Columbia/Suwannee County-Spring Break/Student Holiday
Fri. March 29	Closed in observance of Good Friday
Apr. 1 - 5	Hamilton County-Spring Break/Student Holiday
Mon. May 27	Closed in observance of Memorial Day
Wed. June 19	Closed in observance of Juneteenth
Thurs. July 4	Closed in observance of Independence Day
Fri. July 19	Last Day of Classes

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Head Start Centers 2023-2024 Calendar

Day and Date	Description
Wed. Aug. 9	First Day of Classes
Mon. Sept. 4	Closed in observance of Labor Day
Fri. Oct. 13	Suwannee County-Student Holiday
Mon. Oct. 16	Columbia/Lafayette/Hamilton County-Student Holiday
Nov. 20 - 24	Fall Break/Student Holiday
Thurs. Dec. 21	Last Day of Classes before Holidays
Dec. 22 - Jan. 4	Winter Break/Student Holiday
Fri. Jan. 5	First Day of Classes 2024
Mon. Jan. 15	Closed in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Mon. Feb. 19	Closed in observance of President's Day
Mar. 18 - 22	Columbia/Suwannee County-Spring Break/Student Holiday
Fri. March 29	Closed in observance of Good Friday
Apr. 1 - 5	Hamilton County-Spring Break/Student Holiday
Apr. 8 - 12	Lafayette County-Spring Break/Student Holiday
Wed. May 21	Last Day of Classes
Head Start 6 Week Summer Program Lake City Learning Center (TLC) and Live Oak Learning Center (LOLC) ONLY	
Tues. May 28	First Day of Head Start Summer Program
Wed. June 19	Closed in observance of Juneteenth
Thurs. July 4	Closed in observance of Independence Day
Thurs. July 10	Last Day of Head Start Summer Program

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

What to Bring

Shoes – Young, developing children need support and protection for their growing feet. For the safety of your child and to prevent injury to little feet and toes, please dress your child in shoes (such as tennis shoes) that enclose their toes and heels and permit safe active play (*no flip-flops or shoes without backs*). **All items should be LABELED with your child’s name.**

Extra Clothing and a Towel - Children should have at least one change of “play clothing” and a towel at the center at **ALL TIMES**. **All items should be LABELED with your child’s name.** All clothing that becomes soiled will be sent home in a plastic bag. Please take notice of seasonal changes, and bring clothing suitable for the weather, as the children do go outside.

Children should be sent to school in play clothes, as they will be experiencing messy play on a daily basis (*paint, water, sand, mud, play dough, etc.*). **All clothing should be LABELED with your child’s name.**

What Not To Bring

Backpacks/Diaper Bags – Due to limited “cubby” space, we ask that you **not** bring backpacks or diaper bags for your child.

Hair Ornaments or Jewelry – Please do not bring your child to the center wearing hair ornaments (Early Head Start Only) necklaces, bracelets, rings, etc. Safety standards say that children should not have objects small enough to pass through a paper towel roll. This is approximately the size of a young child’s throat. Jewelry and hair ornaments pose a choking hazard for small children. Pacifiers cannot be attached to child’s clothing.

Diapers, pull-ups, and wet wipes. These items are provided for each child. However, donations that you make for your child of any of these items can be counted as “match” for the program and will be gratefully appreciated. See the Parent Involvement sections for more information about match.

Please do not allow your child to bring candy, food, money, pets, toys or any personal items other than one change of clothing and a towel to school. Staff will not be responsible for lost items.

No Smoking / Vaping

Per Department of Children and Families regulations, smoking / vaping is not allowed on the premises of the child care facility (including all outdoor areas).

Transportation

Daily transportation to and from school will not be provided by Suwannee Valley 4Cs. We encourage parents to work together to form carpools.

Transportation will be provided for medical and dental screenings, follow-up health-related visits and pregnant women prenatal and postnatal visits when needed.

Emergency Closings

Living in Florida can be great, but on occasion, we are subject to severe weather. We will always put the safety of your child first and from time-to-time, we may be forced to close the center. Should that occur, we will notify area radio stations, TV stations and, if applicable, schools. In addition, we will try to leave a sign on the door when possible. Sometimes, even those notifications will be ineffective.

If you have any doubt about whether the center is open and cannot make contact with your child’s center, please feel free to call our office at (386) 754-2222.

We do realize that you have job responsibilities, so we will make every attempt to remain open as long as it is safe for the children and our staff.

Emergency Notifications

Emergency notifications may be necessary at times and may include weather closures, evacuations, lockdowns, and any other situation that may affect the health or safety of your child. We utilize a data system that is capable of sending a one-way text message to provide you with emergency notifications. We urge parents and guardians to take advantage of the this emergency text messaging service. If you opt in to receive the emergency notifications, emergency text alerts will be sent to the primary parent/guardian cell phone number listed in our data system.

It is very important to keep your contact information up to date.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Additional Program Services Available

Additional hours of service are available at select Suwannee Valley 4Cs learning centers (as indicated below) through the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) or School Readiness program for families that qualify. You may apply through the Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Gateway.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

Available to children 4 years of age.

VPK is a legislatively mandated program designed to prepare every four year old in Florida for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success.

VPK is FREE for all children who turn four years old on or before September 1 and reside in Florida.

School Readiness

Available to children ages 2 – 5.

The School Readiness program offers assistance to working low-income families for early childhood education and care so families can become financially self-sufficient and their young children can be successful in school in the future.

To qualify, parent must be working 20 hours or more a week or attending school 10 hours or more a week.

HOW TO APPLY FOR VPK OR SCHOOL READINESS:

- 1) Early Learning Coalition’s website at: <http://www.elcgateway.org> (Click on “Apply Now” tab.) **OR**
- 2) Call the Early Learning Coalition office to make an appointment. (386) 752.9770 or (866) 752.9770.

<u>Summary of Documents needed to apply for:</u>	VPK	School Readiness
Proof of Birth (birth certificate or immunization record)	✓ (Child must be 4 years old by September 1.)	✓
Proof of Residency (utility bill, driver’s license with current 911 address)	✓	✓
Proof of Employment or Current School Schedule	n/a	✓
Parent Picture ID	n/a	✓

(If you do not have one of these forms of documentation, please contact the Early Learning Coalition to obtain further information on other acceptable documentation.)

The availability of VPK or School Readiness services at Suwannee Valley 4Cs is not guaranteed, may vary each school year and may not be available at all our centers. **For the 2020-2021 school year, VPK and School Readiness services will be available as follows:**

Center	Pick-up Time	Services Available
Lake City Learning Center	5:00 p.m.	VPK or SR
Live Oak Learning Center	5:00 p.m.	VPK or SR

Once you qualify through the Early Learning Coalition, they will issue you a voucher/certificate. **Bring in the voucher / certificate to your Family Support Specialist to apply for Suwannee Valley 4Cs VPK or School Readiness program.**

If you have questions about applying for VPK or School Readiness, please contact the Early Learning Coalition at (386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770. Your Family Support Specialist is also available to assist you.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

2. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Availability and Updates

- Make sure you and several authorized contacts are always available by phone.
- Notify center staff and your Family Support Specialist if you move, change telephone numbers or change authorized contact telephone numbers.
- Keep your child's health records updated. Your child's health records (immunization records, physicals, etc.) must be kept up-to-date according to Florida state law in order for your child to remain in the program. Parents should bring their child's updated documents to their child's Teacher of Family Support Specialist.

Volunteering

- We need volunteers! Ask your child's Teacher how you can help inside and outside the classrooms. (See Parent Involvement section.)

Stay Involved

- Read and follow program guidelines and procedures outlined in this handbook.
- Read and respond, as applicable, to written notices, bulletins and newsletters sent home.
- Attend parent meetings.
- Be with your child for dental exams and appointments. Keep follow-up treatment appointments.
- Tell us about your likes, dislikes, concerns and ideas about our program.

Infants

- It is requested that parents complete a Daily Care Report each day when you bring your infant into the classroom. Your child's Teacher uses this information to care for him/her.
- We take special sanitary measures in our infant classrooms to ensure a clean, safe and healthy environment in our classrooms. Therefore, we ask parents to please make sure you slip a pair of shoe covers over your shoes when entering infant classrooms. (Ask Teachers for location of shoe covers.) We take this action to prevent outside contaminants from being brought into the classroom and spread onto the flooring. Infants and toddlers spend much of their time exploring/playing on the floor, so it is best practice to keep these areas as clean as possible.

Lastly, please respect our program as a comprehensive early childhood and family development program.

We are not a daycare.

Attendance / Tardiness

IMPORTANT: It is necessary that you contact the Center when your child will be absent or tardy. School begins at 7:30 a.m. at all centers. Children are considered tardy after 8:00 a.m.



There is strong evidence that the more time spent in quality early care and education is associated with positive outcomes for children, especially for disadvantaged children. Research also finds that chronic absence in the early grades is associated with lowered proficiency in reading and math, and increased grade retention. Our program provides high-quality ongoing learning opportunities each day. Missing these opportunities can have short- and long- term consequences for your child. When your child attends the program consistently, they are more likely to benefit from the daily learning opportunities that will provide a strong start for their educational journey.

- Have your child attend school every day.
- Contact the center if your child is going to be absent or late.
- **If your child is absent or late and you have not contacted the center within 1 hour of the center start time, the Family Support Specialist will attempt to contact you to ensure your child's safety and well-being. We will leave a message if we cannot reach you, and will call your emergency contact(s).**

To ensure that children and families receive optimal benefit from the program, it is crucial to maintain regular attendance. All children are expected to attend five (5) days a week, Monday through Friday when school is in session. Regular attendance supports your child's development and kindergarten readiness.

If your child is absent or late and you have not contacted the center within 1 hour of the center start time, your Family Support Specialist will attempt contact. They will complete an Absenteeism/Tardiness Tracking Log to document their attempt to contact you and/or your emergency contacts regarding your child's absence. If your child is absent due to a communicable disease or a medical problem causing an absence of more than three (3) days, a release statement from your child's doctor may be required for re-admittance to the center. An Attendance Plan will be completed with your family as necessary.

If your child has multiple sporadic absences, your Family Support Specialist will contact you to determine the reasons for the absences and will work closely with you to develop an Attendance Plan for your family to ensure good attendance. Once the Attendance Plan is completed, immediate and continuous attendance will be expected within reason.

Although we will work with your family to improve/maintain attendance, if chronic absenteeism continues, it may become necessary for us to place your child back on the waitlist in order to place another child who will benefit from the program.

If Your Child Is Too Sick to Attend Class

You should always call your child's Teacher if he/she will not be attending class because of illness.

Do not bring your child to school if they are ill or running a fever (over 101°).

When a child is running a fever, there is a possibility they could be contagious. Your child will be able to return to school when they are no longer sick.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

General Drop-Off / Pick-Up Information

Please be on time each day to drop-off and pick-up your child(ren).

When dropping off or picking up your child, please:

- make sure you are responsible in providing direct supervision of any other children in your care.
- **do not leave your other children unattended in your vehicle.**
- call the center immediately if you are going to be late picking up your child. (Make sure your contact information is up-to-date.)
- dress appropriately when dropping off and picking up your child(ren). (No sleep/lounge wear.)
- put cell phones away.

Remember – Children under age 5 in your vehicle should be properly secured in an approved child restraint device (child safety seat or booster seat as appropriate for their age). Follow the law!

To ensure the safety of your child, center staff will ONLY release your child from the center to you or one of the persons (16 years or older) you have listed as an authorized emergency contact. Be prepared to show photo identification as requested. **We cannot take release permission over the phone. If your authorized contact information changes during the year, you must come into your center or contact your Family Support Specialist, to make the necessary changes on the authorized emergency contact list.**

Center staff will not release your child to any person who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. We will contact someone else on your authorized contact list to pick up your child.

PLEASE NOTE: Teachers have many responsibilities throughout the day. If you need to meet with your child’s Teacher, please notify the Teacher so that a convenient time to meet can be scheduled that is not disruptive to classroom operations or the responsibilities of the Teacher.

Drop-Off Time– 7:30 a.m.

The school day begins at 7:30 a.m. at all centers. Children should arrive no earlier than 7:30 a.m. Breakfast is served at 8:15 a.m. in Head Start and at 8:30 a.m. in Early Head Start. **Children are considered tardy after 8:00 a.m.**

Your child must be signed in by you or a person 16 years of age or older. To ensure the safety of your child, you, the parent (or a person-16 years or older), must always bring your child inside the center and have your child received by their Teacher.

Infant / Toddler Parents!

IMPORTANT! It is requested that you, the parent, complete a Daily Care Report when you bring your child in each day. Your child’s Teacher uses this information to care for him/her.

Pick-Up Times for Children Participating in:				If your child has not been picked up by 5 minutes after pick up time, the Teacher will attempt to contact you, the parent, and all emergency contacts by phone and will document all calls.
Center:	HS/EHS ONLY	HS & VPK	HS/EHS & SR	
Lawton’s Place	2:00 p.m.	n/a	n/a	If your child is still present at 30 minutes after pick up time and contacts are unreachable by phone, the staff will contact the Department of Children and Families to report your child as abandoned.
Azalea Park	2:00 p.m.	n/a	n/a	
Jasper Learning Center	2:00 p.m.	n/a	n/a	
Mayo Learning Center	2:00 p.m.	n/a	n/a	
Ft. White Learning Center	2:00 p.m.	n/a	n/a	
Lake City Learning Center	2:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	
Live Oak Learning Center	2:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	
Jennings Learning Center	2:00 p.m.	n/a	n/a	

HS-Head Start; EHS-Early Head Start; VPK-Voluntary Pre-kindergarten; SR-School Readiness

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

3. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Our program is family centered and is designed to support you, the parent, as the most important influence in your child's life. The program encourages parents to become actively involved in their child's education, including direct involvement in decision-making groups within the program. We strive to meet the needs and interests of the families enrolled.

The program works with the family as a whole and provides opportunities for parents to learn and grow. Workshops and training sessions for parents are held on a regular basis throughout the year. Staff will work with families to achieve educational goals, such as receiving a high school diploma/GED or learning English as a second language (ESL).

How You Can Help the Program

Matching funds must be raised every year to keep the program open. You are helping the program reach its obligation to raise "matching" funds when you spend time:

- Volunteering in your child's classroom,
- Working with your child at home on a parent/child activity, or
- Attending a parent meeting or workshop.

IMPORTANT: Any time you participate in any meeting, activity or volunteer at your child's center or classroom be sure to ask your child's Teacher for a "Volunteer Sign In Sheet". When attending meetings, be sure to sign the "Meeting Sign-In Sheet" Your signature on sign-in sheets is the only way your participation in the program can be counted towards match.

- **Donate Supplies** (*See #6 on next page*)
Examples...
 - Art and craft supplies for a learning activity
 - Toys used in the program
 - Diaper/Pull Up Donation (Early Head Start)
 - Cleaning supplies

How To Volunteer:

- Request permission from Teacher to volunteer
- Sign Volunteer Acknowledgement Form and return it to Teacher
- Read Classroom Volunteer Reference Manual
- Attend Volunteer Orientation
- Complete volunteer sign-in/sign-out sheet

If you are interested in volunteering in the classroom, please contact your child's Teacher or your Family Support Specialist. Your involvement in the program is what makes our program a family program. Your educational training and skill level does not make a difference in whether you can volunteer!

In whatever way you decide to help, your contribution of time goes a long way in helping the program reach the "match" goal each year.

Ways to Volunteer

At Home:

- **Parent/Child Activities** -Doing curriculum-oriented activities with your child (Ask your child's Teacher about the home activities and the Parent/Child Activities form.)
- **Towel Washing** – There will be a sheet to sign if you took your child's towel/blanket home to wash and dry. *Please sign only if you washed your child's towel/blanket.*

In the Classroom:

- Helping your child's Teacher in the classroom
- Reading stories to children
- Showing cultural activities, sharing a special talent or hobby with your child's class
- Helping watch children on playground
- Serving and cleaning up after meals in the classroom
- Cleaning toys, tables, chairs, and other miscellaneous items in the classroom
- Preparing materials for learning activities (cutting, coloring, drawing, gluing, etc.)
- Preparing bulletin boards for the program
- Assisting with set up, stations, cooking etc. for special activities

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

At the Center:

- **Attending and supporting the monthly Parent Committee meetings / workshops**
- Planning, developing and attending parent activities
- Serving as an officer of your center's Parent Committee or as representative on Policy Council
- Assisting your center's office staff
- Assisting with food service at your center's kitchen

For the Program:

- **Attending Policy Council meetings as your center's Policy Council representative or alternate**
- Attending and serving on the Health Services Advisory Committee

Recording Volunteer Activities

Please see your child's teacher or the site coordinator to record your volunteer activities. Recording your volunteer activities is very important to the program and is how we get 'match'.

Non-Parent/Guardian Volunteer Information

PLEASE NOTE: Non-parent/guardian volunteers who volunteer 10 hours or more in a month are required to have background screenings completed. When a volunteer is referred for a background screening, they cannot be allowed to volunteer until the Teacher receives screening results and approval through the Site Coordinator and HR department. Non-parent/guardian volunteers are responsible for paying for their own background screenings.

Program staff supervises all volunteers, and works closely with them to make sure that program standards are followed.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Parent Committees

All parents, (parent, for this purpose, means a Head Start or Early Head Start child's mother or father, other family member who is a primary caregiver, foster parent, or guardian), who have children participating in Head Start or Early Head Start are automatically members in the center's Parent Committee.

Parent Committees meet bi-monthly at a time most convenient for the majority of parents at the center.

At the September Parent Committee meeting, parents will elect parent committee officers parent committees (chairperson, vice chair and secretary) who will serve for the remainder of the year and select their representative(s) to the Policy Council.

The main functions of the Parent Committees are to:

- Advise staff in developing and implementing local program policies, activities and services.
- Plan, conduct and participate in informal as well as formal programs and activities for parents and staff.

Participating in parent committee meetings is a great way to share ideas and give input regarding your child's classroom and the program.

How Can I Participate and Help the Program?

- **Most importantly, attend parent meetings!**
- **By Electing Policy Council Parent Representatives**

Your representative attends Policy Council meetings and shares information with you at your Parent Committee meeting. They also bring important information from the Parent Committee meetings to the Policy Council meetings. **If you are interested in serving as your center's Policy Council Parent Representative, you must attend the September Parent Committee meeting. Verbal or written nominations are not acceptable.**

- **By Electing Community Representatives**

Community Representatives are also voting members of the Policy Council. The maximum number of Community Representatives selected for the Policy Council shall equal no more than three (3) representatives. Community Representatives shall be elected by parents

of children who are currently enrolled in the program and submitted to the Policy Council for approval.

Community Representatives bring with them experience, either personal or professional, which relates to the needs of the families served by the program. They must be drawn from local community businesses; public or private, community, civic, and professional organizations; and others who are familiar with resources and services for low-income children and families. Community Representatives may include parents of children who were formerly enrolled in the program.

Community members seeking election as your center's community representative on Policy Council must be present at the parent committee meeting. Verbal or written nominations are not acceptable.

- **Being Involved in activities for the children;** input regarding the curriculum (i.e.: suggestions for storytelling, reviewing lesson plans, giving suggestions and sharing your observations with staff concerning children's development, behavior, strengths, interests, learning styles, etc. and developing activities together).
- **Locating resources for program activities**
- **Bringing parents together to share common interests**
- **Working with the Policy Council** to support program development and implementation regarding program systems or services
- **Planning programs and activities for parents and staff**

Parent Committees are encouraged to discuss what educational activities parents would like to learn and together with their Policy Council Representative develop a plan to carry it out.

Your attendance and participation gets you directly involved in your child's education.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Policy Council

The Policy Council represents an important part of our program's program governance structure. The Policy Council provides parents and community members with the opportunity to participate in shared decision-making for our program.

At the first parent meeting of the school year, each center is responsible for electing a parent from among their center's parents to represent them on the Policy Council. Policy Council representatives serve from October of this year until October of next year. **If you are interested in serving as your center's Policy Council Parent Representative, you must attend the September Parent Committee meeting. Verbal or written nominations are not acceptable.**

The Policy Council meets once a month, on a day and at a time that is convenient for the majority of representatives. Meetings are held in the main office conference room across from the Lake City Learning Center and typically last an hour to an hour and a half.

Newly elected representatives are invited to attend the September Policy Council meeting but do not begin serving until the October meeting. Orientation training for newly elected representatives is held early in October before their first official meeting. It is very important that all representatives and alternates attend trainings.

Policy Council Representatives' responsibilities are very important. Some of them are:

- ***Involvement in program policy decisions***
- ***Participating in Parent Committee Meetings*** and center and parent involvement activities
- ***Encouraging parent participation*** at the center and recruiting volunteers for the program
- ***Assisting their Parent Committee in planning programs and activities*** for parents and encouraging parents to discuss what they are interested in learning and how to carry out these ideas
- ***Participating in the interview process*** Policy Council members are invited to participate in the interview process - that way, your site is

- participating in the decision-making process regarding new hires. The Policy Council is also involved if a non-probationary employee is recommended for termination.
- ***Participating in the Annual Program Self-Assessment*** (February/March) Each year the Board of Directors and Policy Council Representatives participate in an evaluation of our program systems and services. Suggestions are made for program improvement.
- ***Approval/disapproval of new hire*** and termination of program employees
- ***Approval of funding applications*** each year
- ***Involvement in resolution*** of any community complaints

How the Policy Council Representative Works with the Parent Committee:

Parent Committee Officers and the Policy Council Representative work together to:

- Encourage all parents to participate in center parent activities and may have a goal for volunteer hours at their center. Although, parents are never required to volunteer in order for their child to participate in the program, all volunteer hours count towards the program's 'match' goal.
- Address ways to improve the center,
- Plan parent educational activities / trainings based on the interests of parents at the center.

Parent Committee Officers and the Policy Council Representative will keep folders that include program fliers/handouts, and Family Focus newsletters. This information will assist you in being a resource for parents.

By participating in these activities, parents will have the opportunity to not only build up their self-confidence, but strengthen their communication, organization and goal setting skills also. And much more! As you can see, a Policy Council member's role is very important to the program.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Parent Communication with Policy Council:

Parents can communicate via:

- Parent Committee meetings;
- direct contact with a Policy Council representative;
- message to Policy Council through a staff member;
or
- other methods, as appropriate.

Policy Council representatives bring important information and feedback from parents and Parent Committee meetings to the Policy Council meetings.

As you can see, each of you has an important role in our program. We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

If you have any questions regarding Parent Committees, please feel free to contact your Family Support Specialist or Nakia Dye, the Lead Family Support Specialist at (386)754.2222 x 342.

Health Services Advisory Committee

The Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) includes parents, community representatives and program staff who assist and monitor the health component of the program.

The committee meets 2 times each year or as needed throughout the year. HSAC determines how best to meet health-related needs of children and families in the community. The HSAC is also involved in the planning, operation, and evaluation of Head Start and Early Head Start health services.

If you would like to be a part of this committee, please call Maria Brown, the Health Services Coordinator at (386) 754.2222 ext 208.

Job Opportunities

Parents are encouraged to apply for vacant positions for which they are qualified. Open positions are posted at each center.

Newsletters and Menus

Parents will receive a monthly Family Focus newsletter. We encourage you to read the newsletter. It contains information that may be beneficial to your family.

Monthly menus are posted on each center's Parent Board. Parents may ask for a copy to take home.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

4. PROGRAM SERVICES: EDUCATION

Your Child's Education

Our program addresses all of your child's needs - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. The education component is designed to meet the individual needs of all children. Every child is offered a variety of learning experiences regardless of cultural background or special need.

Each day's activities and learning experiences build upon each other. This is why it is so important to have your child attend each day. Children participate in indoor and outdoor activities and are introduced to new concepts. They are encouraged to express their feelings, and to develop self-confidence and learn how to get along with others. This variety of experiences lays the groundwork for your child's individual success.

Because parents are the most important influence in their children's development, our program places heavy emphasis on involving parents in all phases - especially the classroom.

Each child in our program receives developmental and sensory screenings. The staff will share the results of these screenings with you in a timely manner. The teaching staff will also administer an ongoing assessment (TS Gold) to track the progress of your child during the school year. Assessment information is shared with you during Parent/Teacher conferences and home visits. These conferences occur throughout the year and may be requested by either the teaching staff or parents/guardians at any other time it is determined to be necessary.

We recognize you, the parent, as your child's "first" teacher, and look forward to working together as a team to support the growth and development of the children and families in our program.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff members are required to make home visits during the school year. Please welcome them, as they are there to assist you and your family.

Curriculum

Our program has classroom curriculum that is designed to meet each child's individual needs.

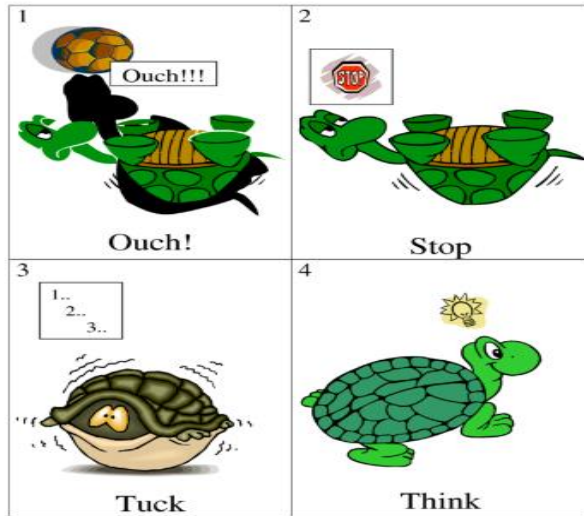
Children receive a variety of learning experiences to foster their intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth.

Our program implements the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, Twos, and Preschoolers along with a series of well-planned units that promote language, literacy, math, science and exploration, creative arts, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, physical health and development. Development of good health and nutritional habits, personal safety habits and self-help skills are also individualized. Children also participate in indoor and outdoor play.

Children are encouraged to express their feelings, to develop a good feeling about themselves, and get along with other children. Children are free to choose activities from a variety of learning interest centers located in each classroom.

**Positive Behavior Support Program:
Tucker Turtle**

Think like Tucker Turtle



What is Positive Behavior Support (PBS)?

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is for children who persist in challenging behavior and do not respond to general child guidance procedures. The positive strategies used to change behavior include teaching new skills, preventing the occurrence of challenging behavior, and supporting the child in achieving meaningful, long-term outcomes.

Our program utilizes the Tucker Turtle approach from the PBS system. Each classroom should have a Tucker Turtle puppet, Tucker Turtle scripted book along with small and large solution cards.

The story of Tucker Turtle shows how to use his -stop, -tuck, -breathe and -think philosophy. **“Tucker Turtle,”** teaches children to act like a turtle by going in their “shell” and taking three breaths to calm down. Then they can think of a better way to act or a solution.

The goal is to teach children how to cope with negative emotions in a positive way before the negative emotion takes over. Children will learn how to stop, tuck, breathe and think before acting. They will learn how to solve problems by coming to a solution everyone can agree on.

Children will be able to try different solutions to the problems by using a solution kit. The solution kit will allow the children to choose different options to solve

the problem. Through repetition and guidance, the children will be able to increase social skills, problem-solving skills and deal with negative emotions in a positive manner. Over time, children will use these skills without the aid of an adult or tools available in the classroom.

Responsive Caregiving

When dealing with different emotions and temperaments of infants and toddlers, our staff focuses on using comforting techniques and positive redirection. Staff appropriately guides children’s behavior according to each child’s age and ability.

Staff will use the following methods to guide our children.

Infants

If an infant is upset or crying, staff will try to comfort the baby by:

- Changing diaper if wet or soiled
- Feeding the child if hungry
- Burping the child
- Checking clothing for comfort
- Talking to, cuddling and rocking the child to build interest
- Playing soft music
- Wrapping child snugly in blanket to provide sense of security
- Walking or strolling child

Toddlers/Preschoolers

- Using positive ways to tell the child what he/she can do
- Encouraging decision-making
- Setting limits
- Offering alternatives
- Providing enough material and activities at developmentally appropriate levels
- Allowing the child to express negative feelings in an acceptable manner

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Assessments and Outcomes

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (for children birth to five years old) guides the curriculum planning to ensure future school success. A variety of activities is planned, and assessments are aligned with the curriculum to gather information on each child’s progress in the five domains of learning. Through this process, children are assessed by direct assessment, checklists, developmental screenings, and Teacher observation. Results from these assessments are shared with parents throughout the year and are used to plan educational experiences based on children’s strengths, needs, and interests.

There are three (3) formal assessments during the Head Start school year and four (4) formal assessments during the Early Head Start school year.

Teachers meet with parents after each formal assessment and together with the parent prepare goals for the child on the Family Conference Form. This meeting is an opportunity for you to partner with your child’s Teacher to share ideas and plan specific developmental goals that can also be targeted at home. The Family Conference Form also highlights new skills your child has mastered since the last conference.

CENTRAL DOMAINS					
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
			Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	

The first five years of life is a time of wondrous development and learning. Children grow from infants communicating through babbling and crawling on all fours—to toddlers speaking short sentences and beginning to run—to preschoolers telling detailed stories and kicking a ball to a friend. All young children learn in the context of caring, responsive, and stimulating relationships as they explore the world around them.

Yet, the quality of their early experiences can vary dramatically, and this can influence their learning and development. For example, by three years of age, some children have large vocabularies and others have much smaller ones. These differences usually reflect the everyday language experiences that children have with adults as well as other experiential and developmental factors. Such differences can have a lasting impact on later school success. Head Start and Early Head Start create stimulating learning environments and implement intentional teaching strategies that ensure all children are ready to succeed in school.

Teacher Home Visits and Parent Conferences

Please note: Conducting home visits and parent conferences is a federal requirement of our program.

Home visits are valuable in building respectful relationships and in developing a broad understanding of our program.

Home visits provide opportunities for:

- Making a connection between the home and program settings
- Developing positive relationships, as you and program staff to get to know each other
- Identifying learning opportunities in the home environment
- Focusing attention on family strengths, interests and goals

Home Visits

2 per year for each child

- **Initial Home Visit (within the first two weeks of child's start date in the program):** Welcomes your family to Suwannee Valley 4Cs, explains the operation of the program, discusses results from screenings. Goals are also discussed for both Teacher and parent.
- **Final Home Visit (in April for Early Head Start and May for Head Start):** Highlights the progress over the school year and compares the progress of the combined assessments; also a time of sharing ideas and summer activities for parents to do with their children.

Parent Conferences

2 per year Head Start children

3 for Early Head Start children

- Parent conferences are completed as a follow-up of the ongoing assessments.
- Parents are asked to share their observations, discuss expectations, or express concerns. These opportunities are to identify ways to improve your child's learning in the home and program environment.
- Parent Conferences are conducted at the center. (Parent conferences do not take the place of the home visit.) Parent conferences are a time for an in-depth discussion of your child's development, and progress in the program.

Transition Services

Transitions from one center or option to another may be difficult for children. The goal of Transition Services is to help all families move successfully into their next educational environment. Most Early Head Start families transition into Head Start, while some may choose other preschool programs. Head Start families transition into Kindergarten. We also work with agencies providing early intervention services to assist families in transitioning from early intervention to Head Start. Our program will be working with the parent and the local schools and agencies to help the parent and their child with this transition. This process will continue throughout the program year. Children with an IFSP/IEP will have an individual transition plan developed with the involvement of parents and staff or in some cases a preschool program other than Head Start or the child's home school district.

Early Head Start to Head Start Transition

Family Support Specialist will begin the transition process when your child is 30 months of age. They will schedule a meeting with the family to complete the Early Head Start Transition Checklist.

Visits to the Head Start centers will be scheduled with specific days and times when you can take your child to visit. Flyers will be posted.

A Transition to Preschool workshop will be scheduled at your child's center in the summer prior to leaving Early Head Start. Information regarding workshops will be available prior to workshop. The Workshop will help parents get a better understanding of the preschool environment and what their child will be learning in the preschool classroom. Parents will receive materials that will assist them in helping their child learn school readiness skills at home.

Kindergarten Transition

Each year transition workshops are held for parents with 4-year olds entering Kindergarten the coming school year. These meetings are conducted in the Fall and the Spring.

The Fall workshop helps parents get a better understanding of what their child will be learning throughout the year and how it relates to the expectations of kindergarten. Parents will receive materials that will assist them in helping their child learn school readiness skills at home.

The Spring workshop provides parents with local school information, activities that will keep their child learning throughout the summer and the opportunity to ask the participating school representative any questions they may have to ease the transition.

Both workshops are extremely beneficial in order for parents to have a clear understanding of what is expected from their child once they enter kindergarten. The information provided at each workshop is different and therefore parents are *encouraged to attend both*.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

School Readiness Skills Checklist

The skills checklist below is just one of the tools used to evaluate a child's school readiness.

School Readiness Skills Checklist						
Shapes Identified	Circle	Square	Diamond (Rhombus)	Rectangle	Oval	Triangle
Colors Identified	Yellow	Gray	Blue	Purple	White	Brown
Numbers Identified	0	1	2	3	4	5
Letter Recognition	A	B	C	D	E	F
Letter Sounds	A	B	C	D	E	F
Identify Name	Yes	No	Sorting Objects		Color	Size
Write Name	First Only	First & Last	Patterning		ABAB	ABBABB
Holds Pencil Correctly	Yes	No	Left	Right	Cuts	
Onset & Rime	Script: <i>What would the word be if I say...</i>					
Rhyming	Script: <i>I am going to say 2 words that rhyme, that means they sound the same at the end.</i>					
Name Writing	Script: <i>can.....fan mop.....dig lake.....bake</i>					

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Special Activities

Special activities should focus on providing opportunities for children to develop an appreciation for celebrations while honoring cultural and religious differences of families. Special activities should encompass a variety of developmentally appropriate experiences.

Holiday activities will reflect the customs of the children enrolled in the program as well as the introduction of new holidays and celebrations. Each family varies in the types of holidays celebrated and in the ways they are celebrated. It is important for each child to learn about and participate in activities that are appropriate to his/her family's beliefs and traditions.

Reminder: Outside food / candy is NOT allowed in the center. (The program will purchase food approved for special activities.)

End of Year Activities

PLEASE NOTE: Graduation ceremonies are not considered an acceptable activity. It is inappropriate to require children to "rehearse" a graduation ceremony and/or sit for long periods of time.

Television Use in Head Start Classrooms

Television is used on rare occasions in our classrooms. In order for television to be used, it must be noted on the lesson plan and approved. Videos should be no more than 30 minutes long, educational, and related to the current theme.

Television Use in Early Head Start Classrooms

Our Early Head Start's classrooms do not have televisions. Children today receive exposure to various forms of video entertainment regularly. In our Early Head Start classrooms, we want to expose children to other forms of hands on activities that meet the child's needs developmentally. The children in the transition rooms may have limited exposure to video type activities on a computer. This activity is teacher directed and happens in a small group setting (usually one or two children) that are ready to understand how to use the computer with meaning.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

6. PROGRAM SERVICES: FAMILY SUPPORT

The primary role of the Family Services staff is to support families in their growth and development. Our program serves as a link between families and the community. Each family entered in the program is assigned a Family Support Specialist according to the center their child attends.

Your Family Support Specialist is available to:

- Support your family in setting and reaching goals
- Help your family identify and overcome challenges
- Inform you of community resources and how to access them
- Encourage you to volunteer in the program
- Transport you to scheduled appointments when needed
- Help you in crisis or emergency situations – please call in times of crisis
- Help you obtain special services, such as learning about nutrition, good health, appropriate childhood development, etc.
- Keep you informed of parent involvement opportunities
- Work with you on your child’s attendance and develop a plan to ensure good attendance, if absenteeism becomes an issue
- Provide information about early childhood development

Family Support Specialists will meet with families at least one time per enrollment year in a home visit. The home visit will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for parents/primary caregivers. The purpose of the visit is to build a relationship with families that allows for identification of family strengths and areas for support and growth. All families are encouraged to develop a Family Partnership Agreement to work toward achieving personal and/or family goals.

Family Support Specialists can assist families by providing confidential referrals to local agencies for those who request assistance for services, such as obtaining food stamps, clothing, housing, mental health or substance abuse counseling, etc.

Parent and family engagement is about building relationships with families that support family well-being; supporting strong relationships between parents and their children; and nurturing ongoing learning and development for both parents and children.

Parenting Curriculum

Our program offers opportunities for parents to participate in a parenting curriculum that builds on parents’ knowledge and offers parents the opportunity to practice parenting skills to promote children’s learning and development.

Our program has implemented the *Make Parenting A Pleasure* Curriculum that is evidence/research based and builds on recent research in child development, parent-child relationships, family well-being and behavior management. This parent education program focuses on raising young children from birth through 6 years of age. The learning materials incorporate hands-on, inter-active learning activities with a unique “parent activity book” for each lesson. The curriculum focuses on understanding and practicing the fundamental aspects of raising children that lead to stable, responsive relationships and safe, supportive environments.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

7. PROGRAM SERVICES: NUTRITION

The goal of the Nutrition program is to provide tasty, well-balanced meals and encourage healthy eating habits by exposing children to a variety of food. We include foods from all the basic food groups in our meals with milk being served at each meal.

Formula is provided for infants.

For Parents of Infants - Important:

It is requested that you, the parent, complete a Daily Care Infant Report when you bring your baby in each day. Our program is required to track all food changes. Please note that the nutrition section at the top of the Daily Care Infant Report asks you to list foods that you have stopped giving your baby or new foods introduced to your child. It is important that you complete this part of the form. This information will assist the Teacher in watching for any concerns with your child (i.e., allergic reaction to foods, upset tummy, etc.).

Family-Style Meals

Our program implements snack and meal times in ways that support development and learning. Snack and meal times are structured and used as learning opportunities that support teaching staff-child interactions and foster communication and conversations that contribute to a child's learning, development, and socialization.

As part of our Nutrition program, we encourage learning about the way new foods look and taste, the different ways food is served, and the introduction of ethnic and cultural foods so essential in the communities we serve. This is an opportunity for our parents and our children to be introduced to the benefits of healthy eating. We have found that in this setting children teach each other and share with each other what they have learned.

Meal Times

Meal times are posted on the classroom schedule at each site. Breakfast is served at 8:15 a.m. (Head Start) and 8:30 a.m. (Early Head Start). Children who arrive after a meal has been served will be offered a meal.

Menus

Menus are posted at each site. Parents may request a copy to take home. Any substitutions/changes to the menu are recorded on the posted menu. Parent input regarding the nutrition component is welcome at any time and should be directed to the Health Services Coordinator. If at any time you have suggestions or ideas to enhance or improve the quality of our menus, please let us know. In addition, we welcome ethnic and cultural meals to introduce to the children. These ideas can also be used in the classroom as part of the curriculum for nutritional activities.

Parent Responsibilities

CANDY: Due to the non-nutritional value of candy and the program's promotion of good oral health and proper nutrition, candy for children is NOT allowed in the centers.

Outside Food/Drink: Teaching staff, parents and children are **NOT** allowed to bring outside food into the classrooms. Outside beverages are permissible (Adults only) if in nondescript containers (*i.e. no soda cans, fast-food/store logo cups, etc.*) Water bottles are acceptable if they are filled with plain, clear water.

Our program provides healthy meals and snacks to children. Due to food allergies, nutritional value and safety of foods, parents may not bring outside food to share at ANY activity. Parents may discuss other options (non-food) with their teacher if they wish to help celebrate a special occasion.

Dietary Restrictions: If your child has special dietary needs that require substitutions to the normal center menu a Medical Statement completed and signed by your child's medical provider must be on file upon the child's enrollment. The center kitchen will be advised of the food restriction/allergies and will provide all food substitutions. If your child's dietary restrictions change, e.g. no longer has an allergy, you will need to provide an updated Medical Statement from your child's medical provider.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

8. PROGRAM SERVICES: HEALTH SERVICES

The purpose of the Health Services program is to ensure that all children are linked with a primary care provider who can meet their health care needs. Parents play a central role in this process because you know your child best and can share with us the most valuable information about your child's health. **We encourage you to participate in all health-related activities that our program will be providing this school year.**

Some of the services provided by our Health Services Staff include:

- assist you in linking to primary care provider;
- assist you in applying for Medicaid or other health insurance;
- follow-up with you if well child check-ups/immunizations are not current;
- arrange dental appointments, if referral is given, provide transportation and accompany you and your child to appointments;
- provide you information on child health and development, upon request;
- assist you in obtaining special services if your child has special needs.

Health Services Department Contact Information:

Health Services Coordinator

Maria Brown (386) 754-2222 x 208

Health Services Support Specialist

Kristi Whitener (386) 754-2222 x 204

Early Childhood Behavior Specialist

Jackie Brooks (386) 754-2222 x 336

Health Services Office Clerk

Raeann Robertson (386)754-2222 x 209

Well Child Check-Ups

Timely check-ups and immunizations are required for your child to attend. Our program will assist you to ensure that your child receives timely well child check-ups and immunizations. If help is needed in order to keep scheduled appointments, the following staff members are available to assist you:

- Family Support for transportation to or from the medical provider for appointment
- Family Support or Health Services for assistance in applying for Medicaid or other health insurance programs
- Family Support or Health Services for assistance in locating a physician or local health care professional for your child

When you take your child for a well-child check-up, they will be evaluated by your healthcare provider to determine if they are developing and growing, as they should be. **This is also the time your child will receive proper immunizations, if needed. If appointments are missed, it is very difficult to catch up. During the first few years of your child's life, you will need to schedule well-child check-ups with your healthcare provider, as follows:**

- Birth or Neonatal Examination
- Two to four days for newborns discharging less than 48 hours after delivery
- By 1 month ♦ 2 months ♦ 4 months
- 6 months ♦ 9 months ♦ 12 months
- 15 months ♦ 18 months ♦ 24 months
- 30 months ♦ 36 months
- **Once every year for ages 4-21 years old**

You may also request a child health check-up at other times if you think your child needs it. No one understands the importance of your child's health better than you, the parent/guardian. This is why we are here to assist you in any way we can. Well child check-ups are not only important - they are necessary. Thank you for allowing us to assist you.

Height and Weight

Height and weight is required for Head Start children **within the first 30 days of entry into the program.** If your child is underweight or overweight, the Health Services Coordinator will send home information regarding nutrition and additional services that are available.

Health Screenings

During your child's first couple of months in the program, they will participate in a series of screenings to determine their health care needs. These screenings may include a developmental screening, dental exam, vision, hearing, speech and language screenings, anemia, lead screening (finger stick) and/or risk assessment and tuberculosis risk assessment.

Before each screening or exam, you will be notified of the screening date and time. At the conclusion of the screenings you will be provided with a result letter. We will be available to answer any questions you have and you may call Health Services (386.754.2222 x 208) at any time for more information. After the screening process is complete, we will work with you to determine if your child needs follow-up health care. If so, we will help you find a provider that meets your needs.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Oral Health Care

Children should have their first dental/oral visit by the age of one (1) year or after the first break through of the first tooth.

For dental referral information, call our Dental Hotline at 386-754-2230.

If your child requires follow-up dental care, we urge you or a family member to come with them to all dental appointments.

Basic Dental Care:

Infants

- Gums need to be cleaned once or twice a day with a soft piece of clean gauze or washcloth. This helps to form a healthy oral environment for the child's teeth.
- Infants should be introduced to the toothbrush when the first tooth erupts.
- A smear of children's toothpaste should be used up to age (3) years.

Preschoolers

- TOOTH BRUSHING - Twice a day, all areas of the mouth (outside, inside, top & bottom). After the age of three (3), a pea size of children's toothpaste should be applied to the child's toothbrush. Brushing removes food particles and plaque that forms in a matter of minutes.
- FLOSSING - A wax thread used between the teeth for cleaning to help remove unreachable toothbrush areas.

Dental Visits

Dental exams for all three to five year olds are REQUIRED within ninety days of their enrolling in Head Start. Some children may require follow-up dental treatment after their exam. Health Services staff will send you a letter letting you know if follow up treatment is being suggested for your child and will contact you to arrange follow-up dental appointments if you do not have a dentist. If your child requires follow-up dental treatment, we urge you or a family member to come with them to all dental appointments.

Talking to your child about the dentist:

A visit to the dental office can be a pleasant experience. If your child wants to talk about the visit, **talk about it in a positive and matter-of-fact manner.** Children usually accept a new adventure if they know what to expect and

understand the reason for it. The following are some questions children commonly ask. The answers provided are suggestions to help prepare you for these questions.

"Why do I have to go to the dentist?"

"The dentist helps you to take care of your teeth. He/she will show you how to brush your teeth and he/she knows how to find the teeth that need his/her help."

"What is the dentist going to do?"

"The dentist will look in your mouth, count how many teeth you have, and see if any of your teeth need special care. The dentist may clean your teeth with a little soft sponge that goes around and around. He may put a special gel on your teeth to make them stronger."

"Is it going to hurt?"

"No, visiting the dentist usually doesn't hurt. The dentist does everything possible to make sure your teeth feel good. If you feel pain or it hurts, tell the dentist and he/she will try to make it feel better."

Some notes for parents:

- Be honest with your child about what will happen. Trust is an important bond between any two people and especially between children, their parents and their Teachers. By answering your child's questions truthfully, you will help strengthen the bond of trust.
- Use the visit to the dentist as an adventure and never use it as a threat.
- Encourage friends and family to be positive about the dental visits in front of your child and not to discuss unpleasant dental experiences that may make the child afraid to go to the dentist.

Dental Terms:

- CARIES.....A term for cavities or decay. It is caused when children's teeth are exposed to sugary liquids (milk, fruit juice and other sweetened liquids such as tea & kool-aid) and starches for long periods of time.
- PLAQUE.....A thin sticky film that covers the teeth. Bacteria in plaque use sugar to produce acid, which attacks the tooth enamel.
- FLUORIDE.....A mineral that strengthens teeth and protects them from decay.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Services for Children with Special Needs

Our program is committed to providing services to children who have special needs. Children with special needs may include those who are developmentally delayed, hearing or visually impaired, have speech, emotional, mental, physical, or other health related impairments. We work collaboratively with the Early Steps program, FDRLS and each county school system to ensure that children with special needs receive the services they need.

If you suspect that your child may need some special services, we will assist you by referring your child for further testing. If your child's Teacher has any concerns about your child's development, they will consult with you and share their concerns.

A successful program for children with special needs requires close coordination between teachers, parents and health professionals. We are committed to providing your special needs child with the best possible care and quality of services.

Social and Emotional Well Being

The promotion of positive social and emotional health is a major goal of the program, for children, their families and staff, both in the classroom environment and in the home. The program strives to provide a nurturing program, which promotes feelings of competence, success, problem-solving skills, making new friends, positive self-concept and respect for individual differences.

Mental Health Services

The overall goal of our program is to bring about a greater degree of social skills and self-worth in children. This can be accomplished through early identification of problems and referral to the appropriate resources.

Our mental health services are designed to identify and target services to children and families that would benefit from additional social services. The mental health consultant performs classroom observations of the children and Teachers and makes recommendations for appropriate classroom intervention.

The focus is on the development of appropriate social skills, positive self-esteem, and respect for individual differences.

In some cases, through assessment, it may be decided that a child and/or family could benefit from services. When that is the case, the family, Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff, and the mental health consultant will develop a plan of action.

Mental health services are also available to assist your child and/or family in the event of a death, divorce or other separation event in the child's and/or family's life. Our mental health consultant will work with the family as a unit or on an individual basis, as needed.

Notifying Parents of an Emergency Involving Their Child

- You will be notified by phone regarding the accident or incident. ***(Please be sure your child's Teacher has your current phone number.)***
- The emergency or incident will be documented on the Accident or Incident Report forms.
- You will be required to sign the form and any comments made by you will be noted on the form. These will be placed in your child's file.

Medical and Dental Health Emergency Procedures

- First Aid Kits are located at each site and kept well stocked.
- Emergency medical and dental procedures are posted in each classroom.
- A list of emergency phone numbers is visibly posted at each telephone *(including the local hospital and emergency dental health professionals in each county)*.
- Emergency evacuation plans are posted at each exit. Please be familiar with your center's evacuation route.

If Your Child Becomes Sick at School

In some cases, it may be necessary to exclude a child from the classroom temporarily when they have a short-term injury or illness that cannot be readily accommodated. *Temporarily excluding a child from program participation protects the health of the affected child, other children and staff.*

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

We request that parents inform us of their child's health or safety needs so that we can make necessary accommodations. However, such disclosure is voluntary and information between staff should only be shared on a need to know basis.

Our program cannot allow children with any of the following symptoms to be at, or remain in, the classroom:

- Fever of 101.0° (or above)
- Sore throat with fever
- Unidentified rashes or sores with fever
- Ringworm that does not get better within 1 week of beginning over the counter medication will require a visit to the child's health care provider. Ringworm will be properly covered (e.g. bandage/clothing) during school hours.
- Children with open oozing sores, **will not** be allowed to be in the classroom until:
 - His/her health care provider sees the child and sores are properly covered by a bandage or their clothing.
- or**
 - Sores are scabbed over, as when diagnosed with Chicken Pox
- Vomiting on two or more occasions within a 24 hour period
- Diarrhea of two or more watery stools (or one bloody stool) and is not associated with a change in diet, breast-feeding, formula, teething or medication.
- Excessive, continuous coughing – child's face becomes red or blue, or cough is followed by high pitch
- Eye discharge or redness (after medical diagnosis to rule out bacterial infection **or** 24 hours on an antibiotic treatment, child may be re-admitted.)
- Continuously and unusually irritable, difficult to wake, confused, not able to fully participate in all program activities, or requires too much attention to allow for the provision of safe care to the other children
- Lice or Scabies - Children may be re-admitted after treatment **and** if no nits are visible

If staff has concerns about your child's ability to safely return to the classroom, your child may be removed from the group **and** a note from the child's health care provider **may be requested.**

Fevers/Diarrhea

Do not bring your child to school if they are running a fever over 101°.

Parents will be contacted to pick up their child, when:

- 1) Child has a fever above 101°;
- 2) Diarrhea occurs two or more times (above normal frequency) which is abnormally loose/watery and is not associated with a change in diet, breastfeeding, formula, teething or medication;
- 3) Child is exhibiting other signs of illness.

Fever is an important part of the body's defense against infection. While a fever in a child signals to us that a battle might be going on in a child's body, the fever is fighting for the child, not against them.

While 98.6° Fahrenheit is considered the normal core body temperature, this value varies between individuals and throughout the day. Body temperature, especially in children, is normally raised by physical activity, strong emotion, eating, heavy clothing, elevated room temperature, and elevated humidity. If a child is playful and comfortable, drinking plenty of fluids and able to sleep, we will provide care until the parent is available to pick up the child.

Diarrhea can be caused by reaction to medication the child may be taking, any type of stress, or a viral and/or bacterial infection.

Staff will call 9-1-1, if child's temperature is 104 or higher and staff is unable to lower temperature with cool compresses or prescribed fever reducer, and staff is unable to contact the parent/guardian.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

If Your Child Requires Medication While at School

Our program must insure that we comply with the Federal and Florida state laws when administering medication to children. Only authorized program staff will administer medication to your child while your child is on our premises.

Parent Responsibilities

To ensure the safety of your child, the first dose of a newly prescribed medication, is to be given at home in order to observe any side effects that need to be reported to the physician. **If your child requires any medication (including over-the counter) while on our premises, you must provide the following to your child's Teacher:**

- ▶ Each medication requires its own completed and signed Consent for Medication Administration and Record of Administration Form each time a new bottle is brought in.
- ▶ Medication dosage amount and dosage times during the school day must be written on the Consent for Medication form.
- ▶ When the medication is brought in, it must be ready to be administered to the child.
- ▶ Tablets cannot be crushed or mixed with food at school unless stated in the prescription.
- ▶ In cases when PRN ("as needed") medication is prescribed, it is administered only if the teaching staff feels the child meets the prescribed criteria. Medications prescribed "as needed" (PRN) must have specific instructions for dispensing including:
 - the minimum time between doses,
 - maximum number of doses in a day, and,
 - criteria for administering.
- ▶ Written authorization (prescription) from a medical provider is required.
- ▶ Complete and sign a 'Consent for Medication Administration' and a 'Record of Administration Form' for each medication your child requires. These forms will be kept on file in the classroom.
- ▶ You should instruct your pharmacist to separate your child's medication into two properly labeled containers- one for home and one for school. (See information that follows for labeling details.)
- ▶ For medications that cannot be separated (eye drops or ointments), you will be required to complete the 'Consent for Medication Administration' and 'Record

of Administration' form, sign, and date it each day the medication is brought in or taken home.

- ▶ You are responsible for splitting pills, if necessary, prior to bringing to the center for your child.

Head Lice

Head lice infestations are a nuisance, but not a health threat. Suwannee Valley 4Cs staff will use the following guidelines recommended by the Health Services Advisory Committee, when dealing with head lice in the classroom.

Classroom Staff Guidelines and Procedures:

- 1. When classroom staff suspect a child has or has had lice, they will:**
 - a. Inspect the child and all classmates for lice and nits, especially the area behind the ears, at the crown of the head, and the back of the neck.
 - b. Notify the parent/guardian to pick up the child if nits or lice are present.
 - c. If the child has a sibling in the program, notify the Site Coordinator.
 - d. Notify the Health Services Coordinator.
 - e. The child may not return to school until treated and is free of lice and nits.
- 2. Classroom dress-up clothes, pillows, and stuffed animals will be laundered or placed in a sealed plastic bag for at least 10 days. Rugs and upholstered furniture will be vacuumed and the vacuum bag should be disposed of after use. Non-washable items will be placed in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.**
- 3. If a family is having difficulty getting rid of lice, the Family Support Staff and the Health Services Coordinator will work with the family. Assistance may also be requested from the Public Health Department.**
- 4. Returning to the classroom:**
 - a. When the child returns to school, he/she will be rechecked before the parent/guardian leaves the child. If lice or nits are present, repeat Step 1 items b, c, and d.
 - b. Parent/guardian will be required to sign a Child Medical Exclusion form stating treatment completion date.
 - c. The child should be rechecked in 10-14 days after returning to school free of nits and lice. If nits are present, a second treatment is required. Classroom staff should then repeat Step 1 items b, c, and d.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Positive Guidance Procedure

In the event that a child has a behavioral issue while attending our program, the following procedure will be utilized to assist the child, parent/guardian and teachers with an appropriate intervention plan.

Our goals are to work with children to provide a safe and healthy learning environment and to encourage high self-esteem while developing positive and productive achievers. Staff strive to redirect inappropriate behavior in a positive manner. In the event that a child has a behavioral issue at our centers, the following procedure will be utilized to assist the child, parent/guardian, and teachers with an appropriate intervention plan.

Positive Guidance:

Teaching staff will utilize appropriate behavioral interventions, including but not limited to the Positive Behavior Support System, to assist the child in changing a negative behavior to a positive one. The guidelines are:

Step 1: Positive Reinforcement:

The teacher will talk to the child about the unacceptable behavior and create an environment and awareness of desired behavior.

Examples:

- A. What is the rule about _____ ?

Do you know why we have that rule?

(Discuss rule – for example: Please use walking feet. We use walking feet to keep us safe.)

Show me how you can follow the rule.

- B. Show me the right way to _____ .

(Use your words, use your hands or feet, wash your hands, brush your teeth, sit in your chair at the lunch table, etc.)

- C. Tell me what you are supposed to be doing.

Can you do that? Thank you.

- D. Can you tell me what you want?

What are you doing to get it?

What is a better way to get what you want?

If he does not know, then help him with problem solving.

Let the child know if this behavior happens again that he will be choosing to

(State the next consequence, for example, the child may: be redirected to another center; not be allowed to use an item for a designated time; explain he/she could possibly hurt him/herself or others, etc.).

Help the child to reflect on their choices and motivate them to make changes in their behavior.

* Remember – consequences are not meant to punish the child, they are meant to help the child learn.

Step 2: Redirection:

The teacher will remove the child from the situation, redirect him/her to another area, and verbalize/model desired behavior.

Example:

- A. Remove the child from the area where there is a problem.

Ask him what happened. If another child is involved, ask them too.

Talk about a better way to solve the problem and explain why it is better.

Make sure the child(ren) understand(s) the plan.

Help the child find another area that interests him to play in. Model appropriate behavior.

Let the child know if this behavior happens again that he will be choosing to

(State the next consequence, for example, the child may: be redirected to another center; not be allowed to use an item for a designated time; explain he/she could possibly hurt him/herself or others, etc.).

Step 3: Documentation of Inappropriate Behavior:

The behavior Incident Report form will assist staff in gathering information regarding the incident which may be helpful in addressing continued inappropriate behavior.

Teachers are required to document incidents. Incidents may include, but are not limited to, aggression, inappropriate language, property damage, and unsafe behaviors. The teacher will review the Behavior Incident Report form with the parent on the day of the incident. If the parent/guardian does not pick up the child on the date of occurrence of the incident, the individual authorized to pick up the child must sign and be provided a copy of the incident form.

A staff or parent conference may be requested at any time by checking the box at the bottom of the Behavior Incident Report Form. If a staff or parent conference is requested, Teachers must fax or scan form by end of day and call or email the Early Childhood Behavior Specialist to verify receipt.

Staff Conferences:

A staff conference may be requested at any time by the Teacher or other staff as necessary. The purpose of a staff conference would be to review a child's Behavior Incident Reports; review observations by the classroom

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Teacher(s) and/or other staff; discuss techniques utilized to attempt to work with the child regarding the behavior; and discuss additional suggestions or strategies. The teacher will attempt to assist the child according to suggestions made at this meeting.

The Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will follow up with teachers within 10 days to document progress or need for further assistance.

Parent Conferences / Social/Emotional Referral:

A parent conference will be scheduled if prior interventions are not consistently successful or at parent request. The Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will work with the parent to schedule the conference within 5 days. The Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will then contact the Site Coordinator, Education Coordinator and all other appropriate staff to request their attendance at the parent conference. Staff will meet with parent/guardian to discuss steps taken and request additional suggestions from parent/guardian. The Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will review Behavior Incident Reports with the parent/guardian and staff will share information regarding their attempts to work with the child to improve the behavior. At this time, the Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will also discuss the option of a Social/Emotional Referral and other program services as necessary. The teacher will attempt to assist the child according to the suggestions made at this meeting. The Early Childhood Behavior Specialist follow up with all staff involved via email within 5 days to document progress or need for further assistance.

If no progress is made, another staff conference will be scheduled followed by a parent conference to recommend a Social/Emotional Referral. The Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will work with the parent to schedule the conference within 5 days. If a Social/Emotional Referral was signed at the initial parent conference, the Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will follow up with the contracted consultant to ensure intake has taken place. If not, the Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will contact the parent and/or request a parent conference to be scheduled. After the consultant meets with parent and starts services, the Early Childhood Behavior Specialist will follow up with staff on a regular basis. Additional staff and/or parent conferences will be conducted as any party deems necessary to work toward a positive outcome for the child and their family.

The purpose of the Social/Emotional Referral is to connect the family and staff with a licensed consultant

who will work to assist the child, family and staff with positive intervention.

It is important for parents to understand that our local elementary school systems follow stringent conduct policies. The goal of our program is to ensure that children are prepared socially, emotionally and academically to enter Kindergarten ready to learn. We want to help children become familiar with what is considered acceptable behavior. Parents are strongly encouraged to work closely with our program staff regarding behavioral issues.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Agency Work Plan **Policy ID ERSEA 1302.17 on** **Suspension and Expulsion of Children**

Ref HSPPS 1302.17 Suspension and Expulsion

a) Limitations on Suspension

- 1) The program must prohibit or severely limit the use of suspension due to a child's behavior. Such suspensions may only be temporary in nature.
- 2) A temporary suspension must be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications.
- 3) Before the program determines whether a temporary suspension is necessary, the program must engage with a mental health consultant, collaborate with the parents, and utilize appropriate community resources – such as behavior coaches, psychologists, other appropriate specialists, or other resources – as needed, to determine no other reasonable option is appropriate.
- 4) If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, the program must help the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety by:
 - i. Continuing to engage with the parents and a mental health consultant, and continuing to utilize appropriate community resources;
 - ii. Developing a written plan to document the action and supports needed;
 - iii. Providing services that include home visits; and,
 - iv. Determining whether a referral to a local agency responsible for implementing IDEA is appropriate.

b) Prohibition on Expulsion

- 1) The program cannot expel or un-enroll a child from Head Start/Early Head Start because of a child's behavior.
- 2) When a child exhibits persistent and serious challenging behaviors, the program must explore all possible steps and document all steps taken to address such problems, and facilitate the child's safe participation in the program. Such steps must include, at a minimum, engaging a mental health consultant, considering the appropriateness of providing appropriate services and supports under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the child who satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. 705(9)(b) of the Rehabilitation Act is not excluded from the program on the basis of disability, and consulting with the parents and the child's teacher, and:
 - i. If the child has an IFSP or IEP, the program must consult with the agency responsible for the IFSP or IEP to ensure the child receives the needed support services; or,
 - ii. If the child does not have an IFSP or IEP, the program must collaborate, with parental consent, with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to determine the child's eligibility for services.
- 3) If, after the program has explored all possible steps and documented all steps taken as described above, the program, in consultation with the parents, the child's Teacher, the agency responsible for implementing IDEA (if applicable), and the mental health consultant, determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines the program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, the program must work with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Child Abuse and Neglect

All Program Staff are Mandated Reporters

Mandated Reporter Requirements

All child care personnel are mandated by law to report their suspicions of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment to the Florida Abuse Hotline in accordance with Section 39.201 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.). This material is covered in Part I of the Introductory Child Care Training course which is mandatory for all child care personnel.

“Child Abuse or Neglect” is defined in s. 39.201(e), F.S., as “harm or threatened harm” to a child’s mental or physical health or welfare by the acts or omissions of a parent, adult household member, or other person responsible for the child’s welfare, or for the purpose of reporting requirements by any person.

Reports must be made immediately to the centralized Florida Abuse Hotline Information System at 1-800-962-2873.

All reports are confidential. Any person, when acting in good faith, is immune to liability in accordance with s. 39.206(1)(a), F.S.

Child care personnel must be alert to the physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse and neglect.

Categories Include:

Physical Abuse

(i.e. unexplained bruises, burns...)

Physical Neglect

(i.e. hunger, poor hygiene, lack of supervision)

Sexual Abuse

(i.e. withdrawal, excessive crying, physical symptoms)

Mental Injury

(i.e. impairment in the ability to function, depression...)

Chapter 415, Florida Statutes, protects children and disabled or aged adults from abuse and/or neglect. Section 415.504 provides for a central abuse registry (1-800-96-ABUSE) in the Department of Children and Families to receive, investigate and act upon reports of abuse and neglect.

Our program ensures that cases of child abuse and neglect are reported in accordance with the provisions of applicable state and local law. The confidentiality of all records relating to child abuse and neglect will be preserved.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs offers child abuse detection and prevention training annually for staff and parents.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

9. OTHER GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Community Complaint Procedures

This procedure describes how community members and/or program participants (parents/guardians) may present complaints about the Head Start or Early Head Start program. This complaint procedure is a problem-solving mechanism in which every attempt is made to resolve issues at the level where the complaint originated with the least possible amount of program disturbance. Each step must be taken in the correct order to ensure proper chain of command and to ensure a timely and effective response to concerns. The goal is for program staff and the person with the complaint to work together to reach a resolution that serves to enhance or improve program systems and services. Most complaints are resolved by informal discussions.

Step 1: Informal Resolution of Complaints

Before a formal complaint can be filed, the parent or community member with the complaint must first discuss the issue with the staff person most directly involved in an attempt to resolve the matter. The parent or community member making the complaint must make at least one (1) attempt to resolve the issue at this level. The person making the complaint should note the dates and times of discussions. If the matter is resolved, no further action is necessary.

If the complaint is not resolved, the person making the complaint must then address the issue with the staff person's supervisor. At least one (1) meeting with the supervisor must be held before a formal complaint is filed. The supervisor will document the meeting(s). If the matter is resolved, no further action is necessary.

If the complaint is not resolved within five (5) working days of meeting with the supervisor, a formal complaint may then be filed.

Step 2: Formal Filing and Resolution of Complaints

General Guidelines:

1. Anonymous complaints are not accepted or considered.
2. Witnesses will be called when necessary.
3. The content of all meetings is confidential.
4. The goal is for program staff and the complainant to work together to reach a resolution that serves to enhance or improve program systems and services.

A. Responsibility of Person Filing Complaint:

Detailed information regarding the complaint must be submitted in writing on the Suwannee Valley 4Cs Community Complaint Resolution Form and must include complainant signature and date.

The complaint should be submitted to:

Executive Director, Suwannee Valley 4Cs
Post Office Box 2637
Lake City, Florida, 32056-2637

If the complaint involves the Executive Director, it should be submitted to the Board of Directors.

B. Responsibility of the Executive Director Regarding Formal Complaints:

The Executive Director, and staff as designated, will review all documentation regarding the complaint and will conduct a thorough investigation. The Executive Director and/or other staff as designated will meet with all parties involved, as necessary, within ten (10) working days of receiving the Complaint Resolution Form. If the concern is resolved, no further action is necessary. The Executive Director, or designee, will document the resolution on the Complaint Resolution Form and provide a copy to the complainant.

If the complaint is not resolved within ten (10) working days of this last meeting with the complainant, the formal complaint will be submitted to the Policy Council. A request will be submitted to the Policy Council Chairperson to add the complaint to the next regularly scheduled Policy Council meeting agenda or if necessary, to call an emergency meeting within ten (10) working days of receipt of the Complaint Resolution Form.

C. Responsibility of the Policy Council Regarding Formal Complaints:

The Policy Council will review all documentation regarding the complaint. If a majority of the quorum of the Policy Council agrees upon a resolution to the complaint, no further action is necessary. The minutes of the Policy Council meeting will reflect the Policy Council resolution of the complaint. The Policy Council Chairperson, or designee, will document the resolution on the Complaint Resolution Form and provide a copy to the complainant.

Responsibility of the Board of Directors Regarding Formal Complaints:

The Policy Council decision regarding the complaint may be appealed in writing to the Suwannee Valley 4Cs Board of Directors Executive Committee, Post Office Box 2637, Lake City, Florida 32056-2637. If an appeal is received, the Board Executive Committee or designees will meet within ten (10) working days of receiving the appeal and review the complaint. The decision of the Board Executive Committee or designees is final and will be reflected in the minutes of the meeting. The Board President, or designee, will document the resolution on the Complaint Resolution Form and provide a copy to the complainant.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Protections for the Privacy of Child Records

Annual Parent Notification

In accordance with Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR Part 1303 - Subpart C, [Protections for the Privacy of Child Records] Suwannee Valley 4Cs (hereinafter referred to as "Program") has established the following procedure to protect the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information (hereinafter referred to as "PII") in child records.

DEFINITIONS:

Child records means records that: 1) are directly related to the child; 2) are maintained by the program, or by a party acting for the program; and 3) include information recorded in any way, such as print, electronic, or digital means, including media, video, image, or audio format.

Disclosure means to permit access to or the release, transfer, or other communication of PII contained in child records by any means, including oral, written, or electronic means, to any party except the party identified as the party that provided or created the record.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) means any information that could identify a specific individual, including but not limited to a child's name, name of a child's family member, street address of the child, social security number, or other information that is linked or linkable to the child.

1. When the Program serves a child who is referred to, or found eligible for services under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), then the Program will comply with the applicable confidentiality provisions in Part B or Part C of IDEA to protect the PII in records of those children, and, therefore, the provisions in this procedure would not apply to those children. (HSPPS 1303.21)
2. **Disclosure of information with parent's written consent.**
The Program is required to obtain a parent's written consent before the Program may disclose PII from the child records (subject to the exceptions in 4 and 5 below). Consent will include:
 - A. what child records may be disclosed;
 - B. reason why the child's records may be disclosed;
 - C. whom (party/parties) the record may be released to; and
 - D. parent signature and date.
3. The granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time. If a parent revokes consent, that revocation is not retroactive and therefore it does not apply to an action that occurred before the consent was revoked.
4. **Disclosure of information without parental consent but with parental notice and opportunity to refuse:**
In a situation where a child seeks or intends to enroll or where the child is already enrolled in another program, school, or school district, the Program may forward child records related to the enrollment/transfer (ONLY) to the program, school, or school district after the Program:
 - A. notifies the parent about the disclosure;
 - B. provides the parent, upon the parent's request, a copy of the PII from child records to be disclosed in advance; **and**
 - C. gives the parent an opportunity to challenge and refuse disclosure, before the Program forwards the records to the program, school, or school district.

(As an alternative to parent notification without consent, the program may just seek parent's written consent.)
5. **Disclosure of information without parental consent will occur ONLY when:**
 - A. Officials within the program or acting for the program, such as contractors and sub-recipients, if the official provides services for which the program would otherwise use employees, the program determines it is necessary for Head Start services, and the program maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement;
 - B. Officials within the program, acting for the program, or from a federal or state entity, in connection with an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs, or for enforcement of or compliance with

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

- federal legal requirements of the program; provided the program maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when authorized by federal law or by the responsible HHS official;
- C. Officials within the program, acting for the program, or from a federal or state entity, to conduct a study to improve child and family outcomes, including improving the quality of programs, for, or on behalf of, the program, provided the program maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the disclosure;
 - D. Appropriate parties in order to address a disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or a serious health and safety risk such as a serious food allergy, if the program determines that disclosing the PII from child records is necessary to protect the health or safety of children or other persons;
 - E. Comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, provided the program makes a reasonable effort to notify the parent about all such subpoenas and court orders in advance of the compliance therewith, unless:
 - (i) A court has ordered that neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information provided in response be disclosed;
 - (ii) The disclosure is in compliance with an ex parte court order obtained by the United States Attorney General (or designee not lower than an Assistant Attorney General) concerning investigations or prosecutions of an offense listed in 18 U.S.C. 2332b(g)(5)(B) or an act of domestic or international terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. 2331.
 - (iii) A parent is a party to a court proceeding directly involving child abuse and neglect (as defined in section 3 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101)) or dependency matters, and the order is issued in the context of that proceeding, additional notice to the parent by the program is not required; or,
 - (iv) A program initiates legal action against a parent or a parent initiates legal action against a program, then a program may disclose to the court, also without a court order or subpoena, the child records relevant for the program to act as plaintiff or defendant.
 - F. The Secretary of Agriculture or an authorized representative from the Food and Nutrition Service to conduct program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, if the results will be reported in an aggregate form that does not identify any individual: provided, that any data collected must be protected in a manner that will not permit the personal identification of students and their parents by other than the authorized representatives of the Secretary of Agriculture and any PII must be destroyed when the data are no longer needed for program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements;
 - G. A caseworker or other representative from a state, local, or tribal child welfare agency, who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement, when such agency is legally responsible for the child's care and protection, under state or tribal law, if the agency agrees in writing to protect PII, to use information from the child's case plan for specific purposes intended of addressing the child's needs, and to destroy information that is no longer needed for those purposes; and,
 - H. Appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child maltreatment and is consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws on reporting child abuse and neglect.
6. When the Program establishes a written agreement with a third party, the agreement must be reviewed annually to update any information.
- A. If third party violates the agreement they can be given an opportunity to self-correct, or the
 - B. Program can prohibit the third party from access to records for a set period of time as established by the Board of Directors and Policy Council.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

7. The Program will annually notify parents of their rights in writing regarding the protections for the privacy of child records and disclosure of PII (1303.20-1303.24 and definitions) including a description of the types of PII that may be disclosed, to whom the PII may be disclosed, and what may constitute a necessary reason for the disclosure without parental consent as described in number 5 above.
8. The Program will only disclose the information that is deemed necessary for the purpose of the disclosure.
9. Parent rights regarding child records:
 - A. A parent has the right to inspect their own child's records.
 - B. If a parent requests to inspect their child's records, the Program will make the child records available within a reasonable time, but no more than 45 days after receipt of the request.
 - C. The Program will ensure that the parent only inspects information that pertains to the parent's child.
 - D. The Program will not destroy child records with an outstanding request to inspect or review the records.
 - E. The parent has the right to ask the Program to amend information in the child record that the parent believes is inaccurate, misleading or violates the child's privacy.
 1. The Program will consider the parent's request and, if the parent request is denied, will provide a written decision to the parent within 30 days that informs the parent of the right to a hearing.
 - F. If parent requests a hearing to challenge information in child record:
 1. The Program will schedule a hearing within 30 days of initial notification to the parent of right to a hearing.
 2. Parent must be notified, in advance.
 3. Person conducting the hearing does not have direct interest in the outcome.
 4. Hearing affords the parent full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to issue.
 5. If evidence presented is determined to be inaccurate, misleading or violates the child's privacy, the information will be amended or removed and the parent will be notified in writing.
 6. If evidence presented is determined to be accurate, does not mislead or does not violate the child's privacy, the parent will be informed and given the right to place a statement in the child records that either comment on the contested information or state why the parent disagrees with the decision, or both.
 - G. The Program will provide to the parent (free of charge) upon request an initial copy of the child's record that was disclosed to third parties with the parent's consent, unless disclosure was for a court that did not order either the subpoena, its contents, nor information furnished in response be disclosed.
 - H. Parent has the right to review any written agreement with third parties <involving their child>.
10. Child records will be maintained:
 - A. that assure only parents and officials within the program or acting on behalf of program have access.
 - B. for as long as records are maintained, information on all individuals, agencies, or other organizations to whom a disclosure of PII from the child records were made and why the disclosure was made.
 - C. when a web-based data system is utilized, child records are adequately protected and maintained according to current industry security standards.
 - D. when a parent places a statement in child records, must be part of the record for as long as the program maintains the records.
 - E. in accordance with Program record retention policies.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

COVID-19 Prevention Strategies

In accordance with the Office of Head Start Program Instruction ACF-PI-HS-23-01, Establishing An Evidence - based COVID-19 Mitigation Policy, the following prevention strategies was developed in consultation with Suwannee Valley 4Cs Health Services Advisory Committee.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs is committed to the health and safety of our staff, children and families. We will regularly monitor COVID-related guidance from the Office of Head Start, the Center for Disease Control, the Florida Department of Health and our local Health Departments to ensure that we are following the most up to date recommendations.

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Suwannee Valley 4Cs utilizes the following strategies for staff and families. These strategies may be revised if there are significant changes in guidance from regulatory agencies or evidence of high transmission of COVID within our centers or community. Suwannee Valley 4Cs will monitor local conditions as well as guidance from all applicable agencies.

STRATEGIES FOR EVERYDAY OPERATIONS

VACCINATION

Vaccination is still the leading public health prevention strategy to prevent severe disease. Staff, children and families are encouraged to stay up to date on all vaccinations. The Florida Department of Health recommends that K-12 schools and childcare providers encourage families to vaccinate their children in consultation with their health care provider. Staff and families of the program, are provided resources within the community and encouraged to talk to their health care provider on how to obtain accurate information regarding all vaccinations – including COVID-19, if applicable.

At this time, the state of Florida is one of twenty-four states that is part of the permanent court injunction and is not required to comply with the federal vaccine requirement.

STAYING HOME WHEN SICK

Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infectious diseases, including COVID-19, to other people. Staff, children, volunteers or contractors who have symptoms, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, or other symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home, and get tested if applicable. Those who are at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 who test positive should consult with their healthcare provider for individual guidance and care.

Screening:

- Enrolled children are screened upon arrival and follow program Exclusion Policy.
- Stay home when sick (children or staff). If a child or staff is sick while on site, they will be sent home as soon as possible.
- Anyone sick will be kept separate from others until they can be sent home.
- Follow-up with their medical provider, if needed.

VENTILATION

Ventilation is one of the most important COVID-19 prevention strategies. Good ventilation can reduce the number of virus particles in the air, thereby reducing the likelihood of spreading COVID-19. To optimize ventilation Suwannee Valley 4Cs will:

- Maintain and support necessary improvement to ventilation through repairs, upgrades and necessary

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

replacement of heating and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems through regular ongoing maintenance monitoring and services.

- When possible and safe, windows and doors will be opened to allow fresh, outdoor air in.
- When possible and appropriate, daily activities will be conducted outdoors to allow for fresh air.

HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

All staff will continue to encourage and practice frequent hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette to prevent spreading and contracting COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Respiratory etiquette means practicing healthy habits that prevent the spread of germs, including:

- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throwing used tissues in the trash, or
- If a tissue is not available, coughing or sneezing into an elbow, not hands.
- Washing hands immediately after blowing nose, coughing or sneezing.

Hand Hygiene means practicing proper handwashing, defined as using soap and water or using hand sanitizer, at key times of day (according to assigned position) :

- Upon arrival for the day, after breaks and upon returning from outside.
- After toileting or assisting a child with toileting.
- After each diaper change or pull-up change.
- After contact with bodily fluids or cleaning up spills or objects contaminated with bodily fluids.
- After cleaning, sanitizing, or using any chemical products.
- Before eating, serving or preparing food.
- Before and after completing a medical procedure or administering medication.
- When visibly soiled (must use soap and water).
- Permanent sinks as well as hand sanitizer stations is located throughout the buildings.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Keeping the environment clean is the responsibility of all staff. Staff will clean surfaces daily to reduce the risk of germs spreading by frequently touched surfaces. Additionally, center staff will follow the TSRM procedures for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting in the classroom setting such as before/after diapering, feeding, and exposure to bodily fluids. Classroom cleaning checklists will be used with additional attention to other areas, as necessary.

COMMUNITY RISK LEVEL STRATEGIES

CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels are another resource that assists the program in making decisions about what COVID-19 prevention strategies to use based on whether our counties are classified as low, medium, or high. These levels take into account COVID-19 hospitalization rates, healthcare burden, and COVID-19 cases. We also consider guidance from local health officials, the actions of our local school districts and center-specific data such as absenteeism rates or number of COVID cases, when considering other local conditions and factors that affect prevention strategies.

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

The CDC COVID-19 Risk Level Guidelines as follows (These guidelines are recommended, not required):

Low	Medium	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear a mask indoors in public (recommended) Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms Additional precautions may be needed for people at high risk for severe illness

REPORTING OUTBREAKS/COMMUNICATION

Suwannee Valley 4Cs will notify the local county health department upon a suspected outbreak of any suspected communicable disease, including COVID-19, and follow the local health department’s direction.

A suspected outbreak is considered when two or more children or staff have the onset of similar symptoms within a 72-hour period in the same direct setting.

- An informational flier will be posted for parents, as applicable;
- Staff will reference the Child Medical Exclusion Procedure for children experiencing symptoms

MANAGEMENT OF CASES AND EXPOSURES

In accordance with the COVID-19 [Guidance](#) issued by the Florida Department of Health on February 24, 2022, the following guidance is provided for facilities providing child care services in Florida.

COVID-19 Isolation Guidance

- 1) If a staff member or a child at your child care facility **tests positive** for COVID-19 and is **symptomatic**:
 - The staff member or child should stay at home and away from others for five (5) days from the date the symptoms began (if the staff member or child is experiencing symptoms).
 - The staff member or child can return to the child care facility on day 6 if they have been fever-free for 24 hours and symptoms, if any, are improving.
- 2) If a staff member or a child at your child care facility **tests positive** for COVID-19 and is **asymptomatic**:
 - The staff member or child should stay at home and away from others for five (5) days from the date of the COVID-19 positive test.
 - The asymptomatic staff member or child can return to the child care facility on day 6.
- 3) If a staff member or a child at your child care facility **is exposed** to someone with COVID-19:
 - If symptoms of COVID-19 develop, stay home.
 - If asymptomatic, the staff member or child does not need to quarantine, however, continue to monitor for symptoms for 10 days after exposure.
 - Exposure = within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes within 24 hours.
 - Follow the guidance in section 1 if the staff member or child tests positive for or has symptoms of the virus that causes COVID-19.
- 4) Unlike [CDC guidance](#), this guidance **does not** rely on wearing facial coverings in a community setting, including child care facilities.
 - There is not [strong evidence](#) that facial coverings reduce the transmission of respiratory viruses.
 - Whether or not a child wears a mask in a child care facility should be up to the child’s parent or legal guardian.

10. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Alphabetical Listing

ACCESS Healthcare Enrollment Center
(386) 951-5444

Adult Literacy Council, Columbia County
(386) 758-2111

Alcoholics Anonymous Hotline
(800) 870-3795

Another Way
(386) 719-2700 or (386) 792-2747

Broome Eye Care & Optical
(386) 466-1062

Child Birth Classes (*See Health Departments below.*)

Children’s Medical Services (CMS)
(800) 523-7545

Christian Service Center
(386) 755-1770

Crisis 24- Hour Help Line
(800) 330-5615

Department of Children & Families
(866) 762-2237

Domestic Violence Hotline
(800) 500-1119

Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Gateway
(386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770

Early Steps (for children with special needs)
(800) 334-1447

Express Employment Professionals
(386) 269-1055

Florida Abuse Hotline
(800) 96-ABUSE

Florida Gateway College (386) 752-1822

FDLRS/NEFEC
(800) 227-0059 or (386) 792-2877

G.E.D. Tests
(386) 755-8190 or (386) 364-2750

Guardian Ad Litem
(386) 758-1170

Health Departments

Columbia County
(386) 758-1068

Suwannee County
(386) 362-2708

Lafayette County
(386) 294-1321

Hamilton County
(386) 792-1414

Hospitals

Gainesville (Shands-UF)
(352) 265-0111

Jasper (S. Georgia Med. Ctr)
(229)433-1000

Jennings (S. Georgia Med. Ctr)
(229)433-1000

Lake City (Lake City Medical Center)
(386) 719-9000

Live Oak (Suwannee ER)
(386) 339-6200

River Valley Medical Center (Mayo)
(386) 294-1226

Jobs & Benefits- Career Source Florida Crown
(386) 755-9026

Lad’s Soup Kitchen
20 NE Escambia St, Lake City (386) 758-2217

Libraries

Branford (386) 935-1556

Ft. White (386)497-1108

Jasper (386) 792-2285

Jennings (386) 938-1143

Lake City – Main Branch (386) 758-2101

Lake City – West Branch (386) 758-1321

Live Oak (386) 362-2317

Mayo (386) 294-1021

White Springs 3(386) 397-1389

Meridian Behavioral Healthcare
(386) 758-5744

North Florida Eye Care (Lake City)
(386) 752-1722

North Florida Eye Care (Live Oak)
(386) 362-5055

NorthStar Family Resource Center (Lake City)
(386) 758-3319

Parent Helpline
855-427-2736

POISON CONTROL 800 222-1222

Prescription Assistance
(800) 477-2669

Pregnancy Care Center (Columbia)
(386) 755-0058

Pregnancy Care Center (Suwannee)
(386) 330-2229

Pregnancy Care Center (Hamilton)
(386) 792-1182

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Public Housing Authority
Columbia County
 (386) 752-4227

North Central Housing Authority
 (386) 935-1198

Northwest FL. Regional Housing Authority
 (850) 263-4442

Renewed Thrift store (Clothing & Food Pantry)
 (386) 319-7161

Resolutions Health Alliance
 (386) 754-9005

School Boards
Columbia County (386) 755-8000
Suwannee County (386) 647-4600
Lafayette County (386) 294-1351
Hamilton County (386) 792-1228

Subsidized Child Care (Early Learning Coalition)
 (386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770

Suwannee River Economic Council
(SHIP, Home Winterization, Home Repairs)
Columbia County (386) 752-8726
Suwannee County (386) 362-4115
Lafayette County (386) 294-2202
Hamilton County (386) 792-2941

Suwannee Valley Transit
 (386) 362-7433 or (386) 362-5332

Three Rivers Legal Services
 (386) 752-5960
 (866)256-8091

United Way of Suwannee Valley
 (386) 752-5604

Vivid Visions
 (386) 364-5957

Vocational Rehabilitation
Columbia County (386) 754-1675
Suwannee County (386) 362-5461

VPK Registration (Early Learning Coalition)
 (386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770

River Oaks Technical College
 (386) 364-2750 or (386) 294-1701

White (Henry & Rilla) Foundation
 (386) 752-7813

W.I.C.
 (800) 342-3556

If you have a need to connect with a resource that is not listed, please contact your Family Support Specialist for assistance and additional resources.

The telephone number for my child’s center is: _____

My child’s Teacher’s Name is: _____

Our center’s Site Coordinator is: _____

Our Family Support Specialist’s name is: _____

Our Family Support Specialist’s telephone number is: _____

OTHER IMPORTANT NUMBERS	
Name	Address/Phone Number

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Community Resources By Category

ABUSE	
Child Abuse (800) 422-4453	Elder Abuse (866) 363-4276 or(800)962-2873
Florida Abuse Hotline (800) 962-2873 or (800) 458-5145 (TDD)	Peaceful Paths (352)377-8255 (Gainesville)
Another Way (800) 500-1119 (Florida Domestic Violence Hotline) Outreach (386) 719-2700 or (386) 792-2747	Refuge House (850) 973-4144 (Madison) (850) 584-8808 (Taylor)
Vivid Visions (386) 364-2100 (Hotline) (386) 364-5957	Victim Services, Inc. (State Attorney) (386) 362-2320 Crisis: (800) 262-9799
Hamilton County Alcohol & Drug Prevention Coalition (386)792-9388	Suicide Crisis Hotline (800) 273-8255
Pregnancy Care Center (Lake City) (386) 755-0058	Pregnancy Care Center (Live Oak) (386) 330-2229
Pregnancy Care Center (Jasper) (386) 792-1182	Self-Abuse/Self harm 1-800-366-8288

AFTER SCHOOL CARE	
Annie Mattox Recreation Center (386) 755-5076	Boy Scouts of America (800) 232-0845
Boys Club of Columbia County (386) 752-4184	Girl Scouts of Gateway Council (USA) or (800) 4787248
Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Gateway (386) 752-9770	Girls Club of Columbia County (386) 719-5840
Suwannee County Police Athletic League (386) 364-3422	

CHILDREN SERVICES	
Center for Children with Disabilities (800) 695-0285	Guardian Ad. Litem/Voices for Children (386) 758-1170 (Columbia) (386) 364-7720 (Live Oak)
Child Birth Classes: Call your county’s Health Department for this information.	Henry & Rilla White Foundation (386) 752-7813
Child Support Hotline (800) 622-5437	National Center for Missing/Exploited Children (800) 843-5678
Children’s Home Society (352)334-0955 (Gainesville) (904)493-7744 (Jacksonville)	Partnerships for Strong Families (386)243-8800 or (866)832-5562 (Lake City) (386)364-7774 or (866)850-8133 (Live Oak)
Interface Youth Program (386) 487-0190	Runaway Switchboard (800) 621-4000 or 1-800-RUNAWAY
Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Gateway (VPK, Subsidized Child Care) 1104 SW Main Blvd, Lake City (386) 752-9770 or (866) 752-9770	Suwannee Valley 4Cs (386) 754-2222
	Youth Line Crisis (877) 968-8491

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

CLOTHING SOURCES	
Hopeful Baptist Closet (386) 752-4135	LOVE INC. (386) 364-4673 (Live Oak)
Christian Service Center (386) 755-1770	Melody Christian Center Live Oak Thrift Store (386) 688-6611
First Baptist Church of Live Oak (386) 362-1583	Renewed (386) 319-7161

CONSUMER / BUSINESS SERVICES	
Attorney General, Florida (866) 966-7226	Consumer Services, Fla. Division of Scams, Frauds & Alerts (850) 410-3800
Better Business Bureau (904) 721-2288	Office of Citizens Services (800) 321-5366
Blind Services (352)955-2075	Prescription Assistance (800) 477-2669
Consumer Complaint, Business & Professional Regulation (850-487-1395)	Vital Statistics (904) 359-6900 (Jacksonville)
Consumer Product Safety (800) 638-2772	Free Items Online www.freecycle.org
Credit Consumer Counseling (800) 245-1865	IRS Problem Resolution Office (800) 829-1040
Poison Control (800) 222-1222	

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES	
Columbia County (386) 752-9212	Suwannee County (386) 362-2222
Hamilton County (386) 792-1001	Lafayette County (386) 294-1222

CRIMINAL	
Crime Stoppers (Report Crime Anonymously) Columbia: (386) 754-7099 Hamilton: (386) 792-8477 Lafayette (386) 232-8477 Suwannee: (386) 208-4377	
Department of Corrections Adult Probation Suwannee County:(386) 362-2869 Columbia County:(386) 755-9419 Hamilton County:(386) 792-3447	Public Defender Columbia County:(386) 758-0540 Suwannee County:(386) 362-7235
Department of Juvenile Justice Suwannee County:(386) 362-6838 Columbia County:(386) 758-1448	Application for Expungement Department of Law Enforcement (850) 410-7870
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Inc. (305)573-1106	

DENTAL HEALTH	
Acorn Dental Clinic (352) 485-2772	Miles of Smiles (386) 752-9914
Kids Only Dental Place (352) 335-7777	Palm Dental (386)752-5904
Lafayette County Health Dept. (386) 294-1321 ext 223	Dr. Jerry Smith, Jr. (386)792-1197
Madison Dental Associates (Dr. Rogers) (850)973-6621	Suwannee County Health Dept. (386)362-2708
Madison Health Dept. (850) 973-5000 ext 3	UF College of Dentistry (352)273-6701 (352)273-7643

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES (DCF) (Child Abuse – Food Assistance (EBT) – Medicaid – TANF)	
Client Relations Coordinator (Complaints) (800) 342-9004	Food assistance/Medicaid/Cash Assistance Customer Care (866)762-2237
Protective Services Investigations Lake City:(386) 243-6067 Live Oak: (386) 243-6129	National Medicaid/Case Fraud Hotline (800) 447-8477 or (800) 633-4227

ELDERLY SERVICES	
Aging & Adult Services Columbia:(386) 755-0235 Suwannee:(386) 364-5814	Area Agency on Aging North Fla. (850) 488-0055 Mid. Fla. Area Agency – Elder Options (352) 378-6649 (Suwannee, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison Counties)
Elder Helpline (800)-262-2243	SHINE (Elder Helpline) (800) 963-5337
Human Rights Advocacy Committee (800) 342-8170	Adult Protected Services (386) 209-2611

EMPLOYMENT / EDUCATION / LITERACY	
Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities (800) 342-0823 or (TDD) (800) 346-4127 (Spanish/Creole) (800) 350-4566	G E D Classes (386) 755-8190 or (386) 364-2750 (386)792-7805 (Hamilton County) (800) 342-8170 (Human Relations) (386) 758-2101 Lake City Library
Columbia Adult Education(Literacy) (386)758-4888	Worker’s Compensation (800) 342-1741 or (800) 342-5860
Employment Connection Suwannee & Hamilton Counties (386) 362-7000	Florida Crown Workforce Columbia County (386) 755-9026
Lafayette County GED Information (386) 294-1701	Northeast Fl. Library Information Network School@neflin.org Fafsa.ed.gov 800-433-3243
AMI Kids (386)792-0955 (Hamilton County)	Northeast Fl. Library Information Network School@neflin.org Fafsa.ed.gov 800-433-3243
North Florida Workforce Development Board (Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, & Suwannee County) (850) 973-2672	

EYE CARE	
Broome Eye Care & Optical Lake City (386) 466-1062	
North Florida Eye Care Lake City (386) 752-1722 Live Oak (386) 362-5055	
Dr. Eduardo Bedoya Lake City (386) 755-7595	

FAMILY SERVICES / PARENTING EDUCATION / DIVORCE	
Parents, Children, Divorce (Taylor County) (850) 838-3509	Children’s Home Society Visitation Center (386) 758-0591
Chances For Children (386) 752-4453 (provides services in Columbia, Hamilton, Suwannee, Lafayette)	

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

FOOD SOURCES	
Catholic Charities (386)754-9180	Lad’s Soup Kitchen (386) 758-2217
Christ Central Ministries of Live Oak (386) 208-1345	Live Oak Church of Christ (386) 364-5922
Christian Mission in Action Ministries (386) 364-4560	Melody Christian Center Live Oak (386) 364-4800
1st United Methodist Church (386) 362-2047	New Bethel A.M.E. (386) 792-2323
First Baptist Church of Live Oak (386) 362-1583	New Life Center (386) 755-7847
LOVE INC. (386) 364-4673 Suwannee and Hamilton)	
GENERAL LAW	
Three Rivers Legal Services (Serving Columbia, Suwannee, Lafayette, Madison, Hamilton & Taylor) (386) 752-5960 or (800) 495-0039	Division of Worker’s Compensation (800) 342-1741
	Court Administrator/Mediator (386) 758-2163
Florida Bar Referral Service 1-800-342-8011	Americans for Immigrant Justice (305) 573-1106
Florida Call a Law (850) 561-5839	Consumer Product Safety Commission (800) 638-2772
State Attorney’s Office (386) 362-2320 or (386) 758-0470	Florida Department of Financial Regulation (800) 848-3792
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services 1- (800) 435-7352	Florida Department of Transportation (850) 617-2606
Department of Legal Affairs-Citizen Services (850) 414-3990	Immigration and Naturalization Service (800)375-5283
Office of Citizen Services (800) 321-5366	
HEALTH / MENTAL HEALTH	
POISON CONTROL (800) 222-1222	
Advent Christian Village (assisted living facility) (800) 647-3353	Lions Club (provides vision assistance & hearing aids) (386) 755-3831
American Diabetes Association (800) 342-2383	CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services (family counseling, youth shelter) (386) 487-0190
Florida Diagnostic Learning Center (child diagnostics) (386) 792-2877 or (800) 227-0059	Meridian Behavioral Health (386) 487-0800 or (800) 330-5615
Florida Health Line (800) 451-2229	National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (703) 524-7600
Kindred at Home (386) 364-4593	Resolutions Health Alliance (Mental Health Consultants) (386) 754-9005
Green Leaf Center (mental health assistance) (800) 247-2747	Shands Home Care (800) 999-2189
	Suwannee Valley Nursing Center (386) 792-1868
Haven Hospice (386) 752-9191	Shepard’s Hands of Suwannee Valley Inc. (386)362-1837 (monthly health clinic at St. Luke Episcopal Church)

Suwannee Valley 4Cs Parent Handbook 2023-2024

SHELTERS / HOUSING	
Domestic Violence Shelters: Another Way (386) 719-2700 Vivid Visions (386) 364-5957 Interface Youth Shelter: Lake City: (386) 487-0190	Housing Authorities: Columbia (386) 752-4227 Hamilton (800) 365-9527 Lafayette (800) 365-9527 Live Oak (386) 362-2123
Suwannee River Economic Council (Help with Home Ownership, Repairs)	
Columbia (386) 752-8726	Lafayette (386) 294-2202
Hamilton (386) 792-1136	Suwannee (386) 362-6079

POLICE DEPARTMENTS	SHERIFF DEPARTMENTS
Jasper : (386) 792-1130	Columbia County: (386) 752-9212
Lake City: (386) 752-4344	Hamilton County: (386) 792-1001
Live Oak: (386) 362-7463	Lafayette County: (386)294-1222
White Springs: (386) 397-2222	Suwannee County: (386) 362-2222
Suwannee County Crime Stoppers: (386)208-4377	

SOCIAL SECURITY AND DISABILITY	
Disability Rights Florida (800) 342-0823 or (800) 346-4127 (TDD)	Medicare Hotline (800) 633-4227
Disability Determination (800) 772-1213	Social Security Administration (800) 772-1213 or(386) 755-3227 (Columbia Co.)

Transportation
Suwannee Valley Transit Authority (800) 258-7267