

South San Antonio Independent School District



2026-2027

Head Start Parent Handbook

Welcome to the South San Antonio ISD Head Start Program

Dear Families,

Welcome to the South San Antonio ISD Head Start Program.

We are thrilled about the year ahead and eager to nurture a love of learning in our youngest minds. Our mission is to empower children and families to achieve academic success through high-quality, age-appropriate educational experiences. We are dedicated to providing every child with a safe, nurturing, and positive learning environment in every classroom.

Our Head Start program is a federally funded, comprehensive early childhood development initiative for economically disadvantaged families with children aged three to four years. We serve approximately 288 students annually across four elementary campuses. Our program offers a range of comprehensive services, including health, education, oral health, mental health, disability support, family services, and bilingual education. Through our outreach, resource, and training programs, we equip families with the tools they need to build a better foundation for their children and to participate as policy decision-makers.

I anticipate a year rich in exciting learning opportunities for both our families and students.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Herrera
Head Start Program
Administrator

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide 21st-century learners with high-quality early childhood education and family support services to empower families and children to become lifelong learners and productive citizens in their community.

Vision Statement

South San Antonio ISD Head Start Program's vision is to prepare today's children to succeed in tomorrow's technologically advanced world geared toward college and career readiness. All participating children will enter kindergarten with a strong school readiness foundation, ready to learn and continue to be successful learners. We will accomplish this vision with every child and family. Services provided will be of the highest quality and will constantly be modified to meet the needs of the children and families we serve. The South San Antonio ISD Head Start program will become part of a comprehensive system of integrated community services for young children in the district. We value families and children in all we do.

South San Antonio Independent School District

Head Start is a program of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. It provides comprehensive services to low-income children and their families in education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement. Children receive a positive introduction to school through an inclusive program that allows them to explore, play, and learn about the world around them. Head Start also promotes the engagement of parents, family, and community members in children's learning and development. In addition, it ensures that families are aware of and have access to local resources that can help address their financial, health (e.g., medical, dental, nutritional), and educational concerns.

Academic Calendar 2026-2027

SOUTH SAN ANTONIO ISD ACADEMIC CALENDAR 2026-2027

INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS

1ST 9 WEEKS 8/10/26
42 DAYS 10/8/26

2ND 9 WEEKS 10/13/26
43 DAYS 12/18/26

SEMESTER 1 = 85 DAYS

3RD 9 WEEKS 1/6/27
39 DAYS 3/5/27

4TH 9 WEEKS 3/15/27
51 DAYS 5/27/27

SEMESTER 2 = 90 DAYS

TOTAL DAYS = 175



JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY
S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28
MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

5622 RAY ELLISON
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78242
210.977.7000
SOUTHSANISD.NET

STUDENT/TEACHER HOLIDAY

LABOR DAY SEPT 4, 7
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY OCT. 12
VETERANS DAY NOV. 9
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY NOV. 23-27
WINTER HOLIDAY DEC. 21 - JAN. 4
MLK JR. DAY JAN. 18
DISTRICT HOLIDAY FEB. 8
PRESIDENTS DAY FEB. 15
SPRING BREAK MARCH 8-12
EASTER HOLIDAY MARCH 26, 29
BATTLE OF FLOWERS APRIL 23

STUDENT HOLIDAY/STAFF DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING

OCTOBER 9 JANUARY 5
FEBRUARY 9

BAD WEATHER MAKE-UP DAY

APRIL 23

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL:

AUGUST 10

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL:

MAY 27

NEW TEACHER ACADEMY	TEACHER WORK DAY	DISTRICT CONVOCATION
STUDENT HOLIDAY/ STAFF DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING	BOY STAFF DEVELOPMENT	STUDENT/TEACHER HOLIDAY

Education

Early Childhood Education

The SSAISD Head Start Pre-K program provides a preschool classroom experience for children ages 3 to 4. It follows the school district calendar and operates from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Head Start teachers are Texas-certified teachers who work with parents and community members to ensure that each child finds success within the program and attains the skills and tools needed (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, and physical) for school readiness.

Curriculum

The SSAISD Head Start program uses Frog Street, a Pre-K curriculum approved by the Texas State Board of Education. All instructional goals and objectives are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, which outline the skills and knowledge important for children before entering kindergarten. The five early learning essential domains addressed are (1) Approaches to Learning, (2) Language and Literacy Development, (3) Cognition, (4) Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development, and (5) Social and Emotional Development. Head Start passionately believes in a teaching approach that respects both each child's age and individual needs.

The Early Learning Outcomes Framework App is available for download on the iOS and Android app stores to help guide families with activities and understanding of developmental milestones.

Daily Schedule

Every school day provides a balance of indoor and outdoor activities that enhance children's development and learning. Head Start children are encouraged to express themselves, develop self-confidence, socialize, and follow classroom rules. The following activities are included in your child's daily learning experience: Phonological awareness activities, read-aloud, Writing, Math concept development, and Language development.

Sample of a Daily Schedule

- Arrival
- Breakfast

- Whole Group Instruction
- PE/Music
- Learning centers/small group instruction
- Lunch
- Tooth brushing
- Rest Time
- Outdoor Play
- Snack
- Departure
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics)

Teacher Home Visits and Parent-Teacher Conferences

It is critical to meet each child's educational needs; therefore, home visits and parent-teacher conferences are an important part of our Head Start program. We are partners in your child's Head Start learning experience. Head Start teachers conduct a minimum of two home visits and two parent-teacher conferences throughout the school year to discuss your child's academic progress. During these visits, Head Start teachers explain the program and encourage parent involvement. Our Head Start classroom teachers have an open-door policy and are always willing to talk with you about your child.

Screening

Head Start requires that every program complete a current developmental screening to identify concerns regarding a child's developmental, behavioral, social, and emotional skills within 45 calendar days of the child's first attendance. The child's teacher and parent/guardian will collaborate to complete all appropriate screenings. The purpose of the screening is to obtain a sample of a child's skills and behavior to identify any child who needs a more comprehensive evaluation. Parents are notified of all results and of any updates regarding further evaluations, if needed.

Assessments

SSAISD Pre-k/ Head Start teachers use the CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System to assess a child's progress in a skill area. The assessment is completed three times a year and provides a reliable data collection, prompting teachers to focus on lessons that target their students' least developed skills. The CPM System helps

teachers understand students' skill levels and individualize instruction to support areas where students are still developing.

Mental Wellness

The Head Start Program promotes wellness support services through the implementation of Conscious Discipline and Second Step Curriculum. Head Start staff collaborate with parents and promote services that address the healthy, social, and emotional development of children. Head Start staff and licensed mental health professionals are available to provide guidance and encourage behaviors that help families and children deal with life's challenges.

The developmental screening results allow Head Start staff to complete classroom observations and meet with parents as needed. When the decision is made to refer a child for further assessment/observation, the Behavior Specialist will work with the classroom teacher by sharing findings from classroom observations and offering behavioral strategies to support the child. The Behavior Specialist consults with the Family and Community Services Coordinator to determine whether a referral for outside supportive services is necessary and will support the campus if MTSS is implemented. Head Start staff meet with the child's parents to inform them of the need for a referral and obtain parental consent. Referrals are made to the Family Services Association, an Early Childhood Intervention program, or another community agency.

Child & Family Support

Head Start works with parents to support the learning and development of both families (adults) and children. This program helps parents identify the goals they want to achieve and develop plans to achieve them. SSAISD Head Start staff supports families during unexpected hardships by connecting them with community resources and services. This way, families can better overcome obstacles and achieve targeted goals.

Family Engagement

Family Partnership Agreement

As a Head Start Grantee agency, parents and families must build unique partnerships to help establish trust and support within the relationship. Parents and families can communicate effectively with SSAISD Head Start staff members at any time. All families are highly encouraged to keep their contact information updated with the Head Start Family Service Facilitators to ensure quality communication and service. Each family member receives a Family Partnership Agreement that includes available services and opportunities for families to establish family goals, strategies for achieving them, strengths, and information on parenting services and leadership opportunities offered by the program.

Family Goal Setting

Head Start is a family-centered program designed to support parents as the primary influence on their child's development. At the beginning of each academic year, Head Start Family Service Facilitators collaborate with parents to develop mutually agreed-upon family goals. Throughout the year, facilitators maintain monthly contact with families via in-person, phone, and/or email to assess progress. Parents have the option to revise their goal if they achieve their goal during the year.

Parents and families will receive resources and referrals to community-based programs to help them achieve their goals. Additionally, families will receive periodic updates, flyers, newsletters, and school messenger notifications about the Head Start program.

Family and Community Support and Referrals

Child and family well-being is important to us. All SSAISD Head Start families will have additional family support to help them when challenges arise. The role of SSAISD Head Start Staff is to recognize and help assess changes within the family. In some cases, there will be families in need or experiencing a crisis. SSAISD Head Start Family Service Facilitators assist and guide families in need by referring them to resources in the community. Referrals can be made to help families with transportation, housing, clothing, emergency food, WIC, Medicaid, and other community resources.

Home Visits

Home visits in Early Childhood can significantly benefit children and their families. These visits provide support, address needs, and are crucial for building strong relationships with our families and the community. Head Start Family Service Facilitators and teachers conduct home visits throughout the academic year. These visits are especially important for addressing attendance and truancy issues when necessary.

Fatherhood Initiative Campaign

The Fatherhood Initiative Campaign is a national effort that began in 1994 to promote increased participation of fathers in their children's lives. SSAISD strongly encourages family engagement, with a particular emphasis on fathers and other male family members being active in their children's lives. Successful father engagement helps create strong bonds, enhances the child's learning and development, and contributes to overall school readiness and success.

SSAISD aims to increase father participation in our parental activities and volunteer opportunities. Our program offers fathers the chance to engage in Fatherhood Initiative activities throughout the year.

Family Engagement Activities

SSAISD Head Start family engagement activities are offered year-round. The family engagement program encourages and enables parents to become successful leaders and educators in their children's lives. Aligned with the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) framework, parent workshops and classes are offered at each early childhood campus.

The following topics are included, but not limited to:

- Family Well-being
- Parent-Child Relationships
- Families as Lifelong Educators
- Families as Learners
- Family Engagement in Transitions
- Family Connections to Peers and Community
- Families as Advocates and Leaders

In addition, parents and families can engage in community events, continuing education classes (i.e. GED and ESL), financial literacy classes, and other activities offered at our campuses. Parents and other community participants will all receive certificates of completion recognizing their commitment to parental engagement.

Volunteering

Head Start Performance Standards require volunteers to attend a "Volunteer Training" session before volunteering on a campus. These training sessions will be offered throughout the school year, and written notices will provide the date, time, and location.

For the safety of all children, SSAISD Head Start requires all visitors, volunteers, and parents on campus to show a picture ID, which will be scanned into the RAPTOR system located in the front office. RAPTOR instantly screens out registered sex offenders from campuses with children while managing visitors and volunteers.

What can you gain through volunteering?

- Learn new skills
- Make new friends
- Meet your personal goals
- Gain confidence
- Become aware of community resources
- Build your support system
- Have fun
- Learn job/employment skills
- Support the school district and the campus
- Show your family that you care about education

How can you help in the classroom?

- Read or tell a story
- Serve food
- Help with field trips
- Get materials ready to use
- Take a project home
- Play a game
- Supervise kids in an activity
- Work with a small group
- Take pictures
- Share your family's culture
- Supervise on the playground

- Repair toys, books, or equipment
- Sew dress-up clothes
- Help with tooth brushing time
- Attend special events
- Work with the teacher to meet your child's educational goals

How can you be an active partner in Head Start?

- Serve as a member of the Policy Council
- Serve as a member of the Head Start Parent Committee of your home campus
- Sign up to serve on the annual program self-assessment
- Read to students
- Volunteer to assist in planning field trips
- Participate in fatherhood involvement activities
- Serve as a member of the Health Advisory Committee

In-Kind

The Federal Government mandates that 20 percent of the Head Start grant be matched with contributions from parents and the community, known as "in-kind" contributions. These contributions include volunteering, participating in activities, serving on the Policy Council, and assisting in the classroom. Parents and family members will be asked to complete in-kind forms at the time of service. All in-kind forms will be collected at the end of each month.

Enrollment, Recruitment, Selection, Eligibility, and Attendance Component (ERSEA) Eligibility

1. Age

To be eligible for Head Start services, a child must be at least 3-4 years old by September 1st, the date used to determine age eligibility for public schools in SSAISD.

2. Determining Eligibility for Participation

Income eligibility for participation in the Head Start Program at South San ISD is determined by the HHS Poverty Guidelines and Section 645 of the Head Start Act. The ERSEA Coordinator and Family Service Facilitator (FSF) staff use these resources to assess eligibility.

Children ages three to five from families with incomes below the poverty guidelines are eligible for Head Start services. Additionally, children from homeless families, families receiving public assistance such as TANF, SSI, SNAP, and foster children (regardless of their foster family's income) are eligible.

Families whose income exceeds the HHS Poverty Guidelines may still apply, but will be selected based on the program's Selection Criteria. These criteria are established using data from the program's Community Needs Assessment (CNA) and are designed to identify families with the greatest need for Head Start services.

Recruitment

SSAISD Head Start utilizes a variety of methods to inform families about our services and encourage them to apply for admission. We recruit through social media, advertising, flyers, annual recruitment events, referrals from community resources, community events, and word-of-mouth. Our goal is to reach as many eligible families as possible within our recruitment area and prioritize those with the greatest need for services. We also use our ChildPlus Platform to reach eligible applicants from previously enrolled families or interested families.

Enrollment

Once a child has been selected and enrolled in the Head Start program, they remain eligible for the duration of the current school year. Enrolled children are also eligible for a second year of Head Start, provided there have not been any significant changes to their income, and there is no child on the waitlist with a greater need for Head Start services. If a child drops out during a school year and wants to return, the family must reapply and meet eligibility requirements.

Attendance & Tardy Policy

School begins at 7:30 a.m. and dismisses at 3:00 p.m. If your child will be absent or tardy, please notify your family service facilitator as soon as possible. Children must be dropped off before the tardy bell rings at 7:35 a.m. and picked up no later than 3:00 p.m.

Head Start staff will monitor classroom attendance daily by verifying records in Skyward and contacting the classroom teacher between 8:45 and 9:00 AM. This process ensures the safety and well-being of each child.

If a student is absent without prior notice to the campus or facilitator, the facilitator will attempt to contact the parent. If the parent is unreachable, the Family Services Facilitator (FSF) will make a second attempt to contact the parent by 2 PM on the same day. If the parent does not respond, the FSF must conduct a home visit.

Once a student reaches **(3) absences**, within a six-week period, the **FSF** will issue an **Attendance Contract** as part of the early intervention process to establish accountability and support improvement. (This process will repeat every 6 weeks if needed.)

Student Withdrawals/Transfers

If a family decides to withdraw their child from the Head Start Program, they must contact their Family Services Facilitator (FSF) in advance. The FSF will meet with the family to offer support and assist in finding another PreK program for their child.

Termination of services may result if:

A parent or guardian provides false information or withholds information regarding any of the following:

- A child's age
- Family Income
- Employment status
- Training/school status
- Continuous poor attendance

Transportation

Head Start offers transportation to all South San ISD students, including those who live within two miles of their assigned school. Students are dropped off and picked up at the approved bus stop of the student's residence of record. Students are expected to ride their assigned bus and load/unload only at their designated stop. The designated parent or authorized person must sign the student out upon pickup. Head Start student riders will be identified by using a tag on their backpacks and will be seated in a booster seat or five-point harness seatbelt. Any bus behavior issues will be handled by campus administrators and/or District Transportation Services and will be discussed with the Head Start Transportation Specialist.

For transportation services to go smoothly, please be aware that:

- Being on time for pickup and drop-off is essential.
- Children may only be released when an adult is present to pick them up. Authorized adults must present a valid ID and sign their child out at pickup.
- If no adult is present to receive the child, or the parent does not have their ID, the child will be taken back to their home campus, where the parent will need to arrange pickup.
- Drop-off/pick-up times are subject to change.

- Emergency information must be updated on time with your FSF.
- Any behavioral concerns will be referred to the District Transportation Department for follow-up and appropriate action.

Pedestrian & Bus Safety Procedures

Pedestrian Safety

- Always stop at the curb before crossing the street.
- Walk, do not run, across the street.
- Whenever possible, cross at intersections with traffic signals and crosswalks.
- Walk facing traffic.
- Ensure drivers see you by communicating with them verbally or through body language before crossing in front of them.
- Minimize loose clothing items such as long drawstrings that may become tangled or cause a child to trip.
- Wear reflectors or white clothing when visibility is limited, such as early morning and late afternoon, or when rain or fog is in the forecast.
- Reinforce the meaning of red, green, and yellow colors as indicated at the traffic light.
- Parents will park in designated areas when picking up/dropping off their child.
- Always be alert and cautious when traveling near a school or childcare center, avoid rushing, and look out for other motorists who may be in a hurry or distracted.

Bus Safety

Safety Procedures for Boarding and Exiting the School Bus

- Children should always be escorted by an adult when crossing the street, in a parking lot, and entering a school.
- Children should hold hands with the adult and walk beside, not in front of or behind the adult.
- Adults escorting children to school should position themselves between traffic and the child.
- Teach children to look left-right-left as they approach the street's edge to identify oncoming vehicles.
- Assist children to and from the bus stop. This is a critical transition from home to school.
- Teach children to look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the street.
- Parents ensure loose clothing items, such as long drawstrings, do not get tangled.
- Children and their parents should stand at least ten feet from the bus stop.

- Children and their parents should stand still until the driver opens the door.
- Parents should teach and remind children to hold onto the handrail and walk one step at a time.
- Buses should stop to the right of the traffic lane when loading/unloading about two feet from the road edge.
- A bus monitor or other adult must accompany preschool children crossing the street.
- Explain the meaning of red, green, and yellow traffic lights.
- Talk to children about the dangers of the bus. Use the diagram on the next page (School Bus Danger Zones).
- Front of the bus (most dangerous).
- Back of the bus.
- Left side
- Standing, waiting, and leaving or entering the bus.

Safe Ride Practices

- Children must remain in the booster seat or keep their seat belts on until the driver says they can remove them and exit.
- Children remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Only adults can open and close windows.
- Children must sit in a seat facing forward and keep their bodies and legs inside the vehicle and away from the aisle.

Railroad Crossing

- When approaching a railroad crossing, the driver always tells the children they are approaching a railroad crossing.
- The driver always instructs the children to remain quiet until they are told they can talk again.
- The driver must stop at all railroad crossings, never closer than 15 feet to the nearest rail. The bus driver will open the driver's window and the passenger door and look and listen for an approaching train.
- The driver closes the passenger door before driving across the tracks (while staying in the same gear).
- The driver will let the children know they can talk again. After thanking them for being quiet, they will explain why they did what they just did.

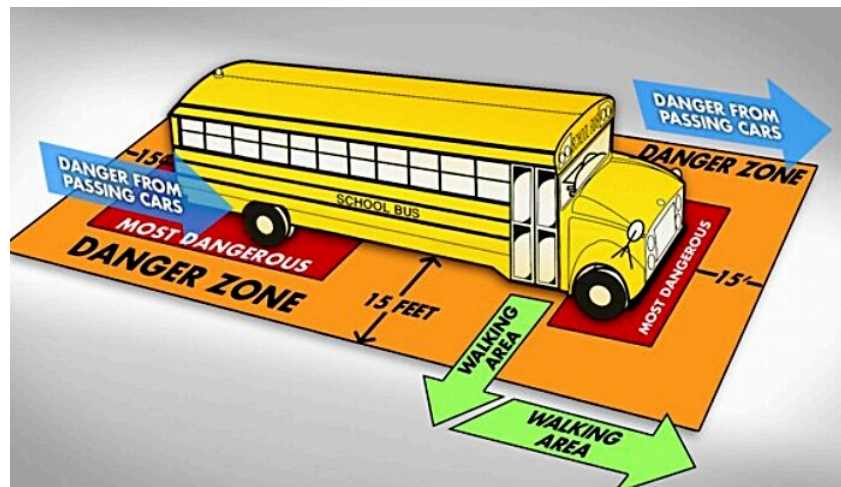
Harness, Car Seats, or Seat Belts

- Children should remain buckled in seat belts, harnesses, or car seats until the driver says to unbuckle.
- Harnesses, car seats, and seat belts should always be tight.

- Children will be seated in height-and weight-appropriate child restraint seats.

Evacuation of Bus and Emergency Equipment

- Children should be taught the location of emergency exits (doors and windows).
- Children should know where the emergency equipment is located (identify the fire extinguisher and first aid kit).
- Children will know where they should exit in the event of an emergency.
- Children will recognize the exit sign.



Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Health and Nutrition

Upon enrollment in Head Start, the Family Service Facilitator will assist the parent in completing a child health history/nutrition assessment. This is based on information collected from the family. It is the Parents' RESPONSIBILITY to inform the family service facilitator/teacher/school nurse if their child has any medical conditions. The parent is to get medical documentation regarding medical conditions/action plans to ensure all staff are aware of accommodations/ medications needed for the child. Head Start staff will implement a nutritional program designed by the South San Antonio Independent School District Child Nutrition Department. This program adheres to the new nutritional standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The standards are part of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2012, championed by First Lady Michelle Obama. The standards

are based on recommendations from the Institute of Medicine and align with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The standards will increase the amount of fruits, vegetables, and grains in school meals while lowering trans fats and sodium. SSAISD complies with all USDA and Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) guidelines that meet children's regular and special dietary needs. SSAISD Nutrition Services provides healthy meals at no cost to all students enrolled in preparation and learning.

Family Style Meals

Head Start children eat breakfast in a family-style setting in the classroom and lunch in the school cafeteria. Meals and snacks are served at appropriate servings and are high in nutrition and low in fat, salt, and sugar. In addition, parents are provided with opportunities to learn about and/or receive food preparation tips, nutritional counseling, and family resources and referrals for health issues. A variety of foods will be served to broaden the child's food experience. Family-style meals are used as a learning experience to introduce healthy foods and table manners, promote socialization, and model healthy behaviors. Staff also stimulate language development. Children will be responsible for setting up and cleaning up the eating area. The SSAISD Nutrition Director and Head Start Health/Safety and Nutrition Specialist will be consulted regarding any medically based diet, food allergy, food intolerance, or special diet request. Such requests will be reviewed and accommodated on an individual basis, with documentation from a medical doctor.

It's the PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY to inform the family service facilitator/teacher/school nurse if their child has food allergies or is on a special diet. If a child has a special diet, the parent must complete the Child Meals - Parent Request Statement Form to be allowed to bring outside food. If the child has food allergies or a special diet, this form must be completed by the parent and submitted, along with a doctor's documentation, to the school nurse and the Health/Safety and Nutrition Specialist. The teacher is responsible for communicating with the Nutrition Director and Head Start Health/Safety and Nutrition Specialist to ensure the child receives the appropriate food. Parents should also receive a copy of the child's dietary needs. The teacher should also ensure that the child is seated away from any allergen-containing foods.

Special Occasions

To celebrate special occasions in their children's classrooms, parents must obtain approval from the teacher. All special events must include store-bought, pre-packaged food.

Procedures for the Release of Children

To sign out your child from school, a legal guardian must present a photo identification, such as a Driver's License or Passport, before the child is released.

- ✓ Campus staff ensures your child is released only to you or to an adult designated by you who is listed as an emergency contact in Skyward.
- ✓ Campus staff will ask for a current Identification Card and verify the name on the ID card matches the name on the Emergency Contacts in Skyward.
- ✓ No child will be released to anyone whose name does not appear on the Emergency Contacts in Skyward.
- ✓ If you or the person picking up the child appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, campus staff will notify the proper authorities (i.e., SSAISD Police Department) and your child will not be released.
- ✓ If a child is not picked up 30 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time, all emergency contacts will be contacted. Your child will be taken to the office until picked up by a parent/guardian.

Well Child Care to include Physical and Dental Exams

Head Start is committed to promoting a "healthy child". The goal is that all participating children will be healthy and ready to learn. All students need a medical home to provide ongoing health care services. SSAISD teachers and Head Start FSF will conduct a home visit within 30 calendar days of the child's first day in the program. They must consult with parents to determine whether each child has ongoing sources of continuous, accessible health care. During the Parent Orientation, a current physical, including lead screening results and dental exam from their health care provider, must be submitted to the Head Start Family Service Facilitator. If the physical or dental exam forms have not been submitted during the Parent Orientation process, a copy must be provided within 90 days of the child's enrollment date. Should any barriers have prevented medical and/or dental care in the past, please let your H.S. Family Service Facilitator know, and assistance will be provided to assess a source of care.

Physical exams must be conducted by the Texas Health Steps Medical Periodic (EPSDT), and the services must include the following:

- Height/Weight
- Vision/Hearing (Equipment used must be identified for screening to be valid.)

- Lead
- Blood pressure
- TB Screener

Immunizations must be up to date according to CDC guidelines. Head Start staff work with families to ensure that their children are up to date on all required immunizations by the time they enter Head Start.

Immunization Policy

Our program requires all children to be up to date with immunizations at enrollment and during the year.

Screening requirements

Screenings are part of a physical exam or well-child visit and should be performed by your child's doctor.

Dentals (including fluoride varnish): 2 per year, as mandated by Medicaid/CHIP/Community First/ Superior. Head Start requires that all children have a dental home to ensure proper oral health for children. A child's oral health is essential for a child's speech, behavior, language, and overall development. SSAISD Head Start will assist parents in establishing a dental home, if needed, within 30 days and will help identify necessary oral follow-ups and treatment. Ongoing dental care is every 6 months, or at least annually, from the date of the last examination.

SSAISD Head Start requires parents to submit a copy of both exams every six months to their Head Start Family Service Facilitator. SSAISD Head Start has partnered with Brident Dentistry to ensure all children have a thorough screening.

Tooth brushing

Children are provided with fluoride toothpaste and an individual toothbrush, which is replaced as needed. Children brush their teeth after a meal with SSAISD staff as role models. Healthy habits such as daily toothbrushing and proper handwashing are established in the classroom.

Special Education Services

Special Education Services for Head Start students who are diagnosed with a disability are provided through the district's Special Education Department. Parents are notified of all screenings, evaluations, and individualized services so they are well-informed about program specifics and better able to help their children achieve classroom success. All students are educated with modifications to meet their individual needs in the least restrictive environment. If you have any prior special education documentation from another school district, such as an IEP

or a physician's diagnosis, please provide a copy to the Head Start Disability Specialist.

Speech Concerns

Parents of children with speech concerns before the school year begins must contact the district's Child Find Liaison at **210-977-7000**. Once your child is enrolled in school, it will be up to the teacher to make a speech referral if need be.

Program Governance

Program governance is a responsibility shared by families, the district, campus governing bodies, and Head Start staff. The ideas, opinions, and concerns of all members are heard and respected according to the bylaws and Robert's Rules.

Policy Council

The Head Start Policy Council consists of 4 members and one community member. The membership consists of one parent representative from each campus and a community member. The purpose of the Policy Council (PC) is to provide a formal means for parents to be involved in the SSAISD Head Start program planning and decision-making processes. In partnership with the SSAISD Head Start School Board Members and SSAISD Head Start staff, the PC has a vital leadership role as a representative of their program location, receiving information, training, and reports, which they take back to share with other parents at the monthly Campus Parent Committee meetings.

Who participates in the Policy Council?

Representatives who serve on the Policy Council are elected from each classroom at the first Campus Committee Meeting, which is held in conjunction with the initial Parent Orientation. These representatives are charged with carrying information to and from the Policy Council meeting for their campus. Meetings are held monthly at a date and time set by the Council. They are open to anyone who wants to attend; however, only elected Policy Council members may vote.

What is the process to become a Policy Council Representative?

Parents will receive information on the Policy Council at the beginning of the school year year via Meet and Greet and Parent Orientations. Parents may nominate themselves or be nominated by another parent to serve as the Policy Council campus representative. Once nominated, each nominee will

complete an application form. If the nominee meets the eligibility requirements on the application, then his/her name is placed on a ballot to be voted on as the campus representative. Elections are held in October, and classroom parents vote on their respective campuses. This process is overseen by the Family Service Facilitators. Once the voting stops and the ballots have been collected, they are submitted to the Director of Early Childhood. The Director, along with a Coordinator, will tally the ballots and contact the winning representative. (Only one representative per campus will be elected.) New representatives will be required to attend the Governance and the Importance of Roles and Robert's Rules of Order trainings. After the new members have been trained with Governance Policies and Robert's Rules of Order, the existing Policy Council members will be dissolved at the next scheduled meeting, and the new members will be sworn in.

What is the role of the Policy Council Representative?

- The Policy Council representative is the link between the Policy Council and the SSAISD Head Start Campus Parent Committee Meetings.
- The Policy Council representative attends monthly PC meetings to receive information and program updates, and reports back to their local Campus Parent Committee Meeting.
- The Policy Council representative reviews, advises, and participates in planning program goals and objectives, policies and procedures, program monitoring, and program funding proposals.
- The Policy Council representative receives training in program areas such as health, child development, special needs, nutrition, family services, advocacy, and program governance.
- The Policy Council representative ensures that information from the PC meeting is shared at the Campus Parent Committee meetings.

Head Start Parent Committees

These meetings are held monthly at each local campus or campus cluster location. All enrolled parents/guardians are welcome and encouraged to attend. Parents will receive a Policy Council report from their elected Policy Council representative and can offer feedback for the representative to take back to the Policy Council. Parents can become involved in developing their program's curriculum and designing program activities. Parents will be encouraged to identify what they would like their children to learn and to share ideas about community resources.

Health/Nutrition & Education Advisory Committee

Parents are highly encouraged to participate in the Health/Nutrition & Education Advisory Committees. These advisory committees discuss and propose policies, procedures, and health topics that will impact the district and families served by the program. These meetings are held four times a year in September, January, March, and May. Notices will be posted on the Parent Bulletin Board located near the Head Start classroom at each elementary school. This will inform parents of upcoming committee meetings. Successful school programs require broad-based efforts by program staff, parents, students, and the surrounding community. The following policies address a range of program topics and issues.

Additional Policies: Clothing Accident

Students who have "accidents in their pants" will be guided and assisted, if needed, by their teacher or paraprofessional. The staff will wear gloves to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and the child will change clothing under the teacher/paraprofessional's supervision. The parents will be informed of the accident. Soiled clothes will be placed in a plastic bag in their backpack.

Parents should send an extra set of clothes to school so their child can change into dry clothes in case of an accident. Diapers are prohibited. Teachers will work with parents on potty training if needed. Pull-ups and wipes can be used during this process.

Child Guidance

Head Start teaches children social skills that help them succeed in school and life. Head Start teachers are observant and maintain preventive discipline. They address unacceptable behavior, take appropriate action, and maintain communication with parents about behavior and behavior plans, if necessary.

Fundraising

Parents may be asked by the campus to participate in school fundraisers, and participation in the fundraising events is your decision. Please keep in mind that the Head Start program provides all school supplies, teacher supplies, classroom supplies, and funds for field trips for all Head Start students and families. Your participation in fundraising events is your decision.

Confidentiality

All enrollment information provided to Head Start staff is kept confidential. Every Child/Family File is kept in a locked cabinet, and only authorized personnel have access.

Field Trips

Parents are notified in advance of field trips and can volunteer as needed. Volunteers are required to attend a "Volunteer" training session. Please inquire with the teacher about the number of chaperones allowed. Parent chaperones are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from the destination and paying their entrance fee. The bus is only for SSAISD employees/students. Checking out students at the field trip is a principal decision.

Inclement Weather

Safety is always a priority. Head Start classes follow the school district's decision to cancel school on bad-weather days. Parents can listen to the radio or a local news station for updates.

Medical Emergencies

All Head Start staff follow emergency medical procedures, which include staying with an injured child, administering first aid as needed, and seeking proper medical assistance from a campus nurse, a physician listed on a child's emergency form, an emergency medical service, and/or other medical agency. Parents/guardians will be contacted.

Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect

What is Child Abuse?

To prevent child abuse, you must first understand what it is. Child abuse is any mistreatment of a child that results in serious harm or injury. There are four major types of child abuse, though children often experience more than one kind of abuse.

- **Physical abuse** - Physical abuse is generally defined as any non-accidental physical injury to a child and can include sticking, kicking, burning, or biting the child or any action that results in a physical impairment of the child.
- **Emotional abuse** - Emotional abuse is a typical language used in these definitions, which is an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child, as evidenced by an observable or substantial change in behavior, emotional response, or cognition, and injury as evidence of anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior.

- **Sexual abuse** - Sexual abuse is any act of sexual contact that a person suffers, submits to, participates in, or performs as a result of force or violence, threats, fear, or deception, or without having legally consented to the act.
- **Neglect** - Neglect is the failure of a parent or other person with the responsibility for the child to provide needed food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision to the degree that the child's health, safety, and well-being are threatened with harm.

Knowing the signs of abuse

Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs, or they may show sudden changes in their behavior or school performance. These signs do not prove that children are being abused, but they could be a signal that children or their families need help.

What is IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) clearly defines and protects the rights of parents of children with disabilities to participate in decisions about children's education. These rights include informed consent, which means that parents must clearly understand and agree to the evaluation of their children and to the program decisions made for their children.

