

PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to CAAS Head Start

The CAAS Head Start Program is pleased to welcome you into our comprehensive pre-school program. We offer a variety of services to children and their families in Somerville and Cambridge. CAAS Head Start staff are committed to providing and ensuring children and families receive a quality pre-school experience.

Education



Child Development Philosophy

The CAAS Head Start Program recognizes the uniqueness of each child's growth and development. Based upon a developmental understanding of how children grow and learn, the program strives to offer children a learning environment based on appropriate activities geared to an individual's unique abilities and learning style. The role of play and learning by doing through concrete experiences are basic to the developing child.

The CAAS Head Start Program see parents as the primary educator of their children. The classroom encourages an interest in language and literacy through having many printed materials such as song charts, books and labels and also through the way teachers encourage conversations with the children.

The classrooms have books in English and other languages. Children are encouraged to use words to express their feelings and are given opportunities to develop self-confidence and independence.



CAAS Head Start
66-70 Union Square
Somerville Mass. 02143
617-623-7370 - 617-577-7880
FAX 617-628-2512
Web-Site CAAS HEAD START.ORG

C.A.A.S. HEAD START MANAGEMENT TEAM

Head Start Director- Donna Cabral
Dir. of Family Services- Sandra Ford
Dir. of Children Services- Carol Nolan
Child Development Sup.-Maureen Villa
Parent/Resource Spec.-Ginger Sanders
Family Advocate Sup. - Alba Perez
Health Services Sup. - Marie Evans
Disabilities/Mental Health Supervisor -
Roberta McCluskey
Building Supervisor- Paul Zimmerman
Child Develop/Disabilities Specialists
Lori West- Eidy Williams
Health Services Specialist-
Enrollment Specialist- Maria Bentubo
Parent/Resource Specialist- Lee Pedro
Building Specialist- Juan Portes

Parents are encouraged to participate in the classroom, attend training sessions on early childhood education, health, curriculum planning meetings, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Parent/Volunteer Training, Child Development/Disabilities/ Transition Committee Health Advisory Committee Family/Community Partnerships Comm. Policy Council and Center Meetings.

Each classroom has a Lead Teacher, Teacher and a Family Advocate. Seniors citizens, college students and parents serve as volunteers and interns in many classrooms.

Mental Health

Somerville Mental Health provides consultation services to all Head Start classrooms. Parents are encouraged and welcome to talk to consultants when an issue arises or when staff deems necessary.

Inclusion/Disabilities

At least 10% of Head Start enrollment is made available to children with disabilities. The CAAS Head Start Program is designed to bring children with various strengths and needs together, to foster an understanding of individual differences for all children. The child is the focus, not the difference in ability. Every child should have the opportunity to grow and develop in the best possible inclusive environment.

Head Start staff follows the progress of each child through observations and assessment. Meetings and conferences are scheduled with the parents for the purpose of planning activities for home and school to meet the child's individual needs.

Services: Head Start provides numerous supportive services for children and their families. Such services include:

- Helping parents understand their child's growth and development.
- Ensuring that children receive evaluations and services if needed.
- Helping parents to understand the referral process, including rights and appeal procedures.
- Teaching parents ways to advocate for proper services and placement for their child.
- Information and assistance regarding the transition from Head Start to the public school.



Family Partnerships

Family Partnerships are designed to assist families in assessing their strengths and family needs. The Family Advocates then provide those services that will build upon the individual strengths of the family to meet those needs.

The Family Advocates are available to assist parents, make referrals when necessary to appropriate providers and follow-up on those referrals to ensure that services have been received.

Family Advocates are always available to assist with any problems or concerns that parents may have. Family Advocates make at least two home visits during the program year to each family. Additional home visits are done as deemed necessary.

Family Advocates work closely with parents to encourage them to become involved in all aspects of the program.

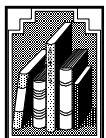


Family Literacy

Literacy is an important part of the Head Start program. Children receive books each year from the Somerville Kiwanis Club. Kiwanis members go into classrooms, read to the children and distribute books for each child to take home. The program also has Jump Start and Raising a Reader Programs that provide reading materials and one on one assistance in classrooms.

Family Literacy opportunities and activities are made available for children and their families.

Adult Education classes are made available to parents through referrals and on-site conversational ESOL.



Literacy Lending Library

There is a Literacy Lending Library located in the Parent/Staff Resource Center 14 Roosevelt Towers.

This room is made available to Head Start families. Please feel free to come in and borrow books to use at home.

Knowledge is the Key to Success !!

**CAAS Head Start
Parent/Staff
Resource Center
14 Roosevelt Towers
Cambridge MA 02141**



This center offers a variety of additional services to families in the areas of Literacy, and Employability.

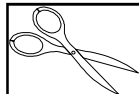
The center is a safe and comfortable place for parents to come to meet with other parents, utilize computers, sewing machines, crafts materials, and access the literacy lending library.

The center also has a comfortable space which has audio and video equipment and training materials available for parents use.



Computers

Computers are available in the CAAS Head Start Parent/ Staff Resource Center. The Parent/Resource Supervisor Ginger Sanders and the Parent/Resource Specialist, Lee Pedro are available to assist parents at the center.



Sewing/Crafts

There is a sewing and crafts room located at CAAS Head Start Parent/ Staff Resource Center, 14 Roosevelt Towers. Parents can use the sewing room to repair clothing.

For additional formation call Ginger Sanders, Parent/Resource Supervisor. 617-577-7880

Parent Trainings

The CAAS Head Start Program offers A variety of training opportunities to parents throughout the program year.

Parents are encouraged to participate in workshops, trainings sessions and parenting groups, to take full advantage of the program. Head Start is not just a pre-school program for children, it's also a program for the whole family.

The program offers training to parent and community volunteers. These trainings are designed to give parents the opportunity to learn more about Child Growth and Development and to become a paid substitutes within the program.

For more information please contact Maureen Villa at ext 151.

The program provides parents with training and information for children in need of services with disabilities. For more information contact Roberta McCluskey at ext. 160.

Exploring Parenting Training is a series of trainings offered for parents to explore parenting issues. For more information contact Ginger Sanders 617-577-7880 or your Family Advocate.

The program offers a Fathers Group, call FACE IT (Father's Are Critical Educators Impacting Tomorrow). This group is designed for fathers to become actively involved in their child's educational experiences.



Field Trips

Children participate in field trips several times during the school year.

Field Trips are usually local trips in the Cambridge/Somerville communities, these trips are to help children gain a better understanding of the local fire dept. police dept, or other community service providers.

All parents must sign a permission slip in order for their child to attend.

Parent Involvement Family Partnerships

Parent Involvement and Family Partnerships is one of the most important components of the CAAS Head Start Program. Parents have the most influence on a child's development. Head Start's goal is to have parents involved in their child's education, as well as involved in program planning. Head Start offers various ways to participate.

1. **Decision Making:** Parents and staff join together in making decisions about the content and operation of the program and how they and their child will participate in it. There is also a formal decision making process which involves the policy making, and the operation of the program itself.

Policy Council



The Policy Council is a governing body which is made up of at least 50% of parents of children currently enrolled in the program. The remaining members are past parents, community people, and representatives from local community agencies and the CAAS Board of Directors.

The Policy Council is involved in: community issues, development of budgets, work with other community agencies, have input and involvement in the hiring and firing of staff, and assisting in the assessment and evaluation of the Head Start Program.

All parents are encouraged and welcome to attend Policy Council meetings,

Parents are an important part of the Head Start Program. All Head Start staff encourage all parents to get involved in some aspect of the program. Training sessions and workshops to become paid substitutes are offered to all parents.

Volunteering in classrooms is an important part of our program. It gives parents the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what Head Start offers their child, and what their child

is doing at school. Parents are also encouraged to participate on field trips. Being involved in your child's new learning experiences will make those experiences more valuable to your child.

3. **Parent Activities:**

Parents are encouraged to get involved in planning activities which give them opportunities to learn, share and grow in areas of interest to them, such as: health issues education, community concerns, etc.

4. **Involving Parents in Home Activities with their Children:**

Through home visits by teachers and suggestions for activities which parents and children can do together, Head Start guides and assists parents in encouraging their children's development. This kind of participation reinforces and supports the child's total Head Start experience.

Parents are encouraged to become partners with the Head Start Program. Since Head Start recognizes that parents are the child's primary educator, it is imperative for us to work together.

Parents are Partners



Working together will make your families Head Start experience more valuable to both you and your child.

Our classrooms have an **Open Door Policy**. Parents are welcome to come to observe and volunteer in the classrooms.

Becoming partners with teachers

will: assist children to grow to their fullest potential. Parents are encouraged to meet with their child's teacher on a regular basis to discuss the child's development and share strategies. Teachers will provide ideas and materials for activities that parents can do at home with their child for further development.

Becoming partners with a Family

Advocate: gives your and your family the support and assistance you may need to meet your family goals.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher Conferences are designed to enhance the home/school connection. The teachers inform parents of the progress of their child, develop activities for both home and school, and set goals with the parents to individualize the curriculum for their child. Parents are encouraged to meet with their child's teachers at least three times during the year, in addition to home visits.

Center/Meetings

There are meetings for each center. These meetings **are for parents, with parents, by parents.**

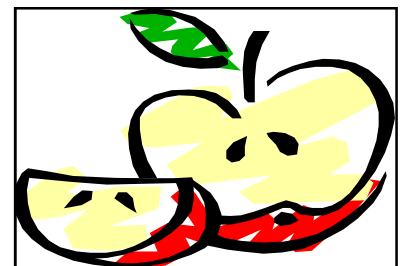
These meetings are designed to give you an opportunity to have input into the program, ask questions, share any news, discuss accomplishments, concerns, etc.

The first half of the meeting is for business. The second half is designed to provide a variety of parent workshops or activities.

You will find these meetings to be very informative, educational, and sometimes, lots of fun.

We always welcome parents input and suggestions for topics. Remember these are **YOUR** meetings.

If you would like to suggest a topic for trainings for parents please contact Ginger Sanders at 617-577-7880.





Important Information



Parents Role

As a parent, you have the primary responsibility for your child. You are required to care for and supervise them. You have the right to accept or reject any services offered to your child and your family.

Parents Responsibility

The CAAS Head Start Program requires parents to do the following:

1. Your child needs a change of clothes (labeled) in the classroom, in case they get wet due to rain, snow or water play.

Labeling: It is very important for you to label your child's clothes, as it is impossible for teachers to distinguish each child's things. **Please label everything!** .

2. Your child should wear play clothes to school because they use finger paints , paste, sand, etc. Sometimes these paints do not wash off clothing.
3. Your child needs to wear closed shoes or sneakers to school. Sandals, flops, thongs, etc. are not safe in classrooms or at the playground.
4. Your child needs to be appropriately dressed according to the weather. This includes hats, mittens, etc. Children go outside every day for 45 minutes weather permitting.
5. When walking your child to school you need to bring them into the classroom and sign them in. Your child should never be left outside of the building or a classroom.
6. Your child should not be brought into school before their scheduled time as teachers are preparing for the day.

7. Children should always be picked up on time at the end of the day, as teachers need to attend required afternoon meetings and plan for the next day.

8. It is imperative that your child be picked up on time at the end of the day. Picking children up late is very stressful for them. Children need security and consistency and timely pick-ups help children become more secure.

9. Children should not bring toys to school on a regular basis. Bringing one toy occasionally to share with the classroom should be discussed with the teachers. It is easier for children to learn to share with school toys. **(Guns and action toys are never allowed in school).**

Back Packs

If your child is bringing a back-pack to school it is your responsibility to ensure they are not bringing anything unsafe into the classrooms.

Attendance

Attendance is an important part of your child's educational experience. Being in school regularly is very important for your child.

When children miss too many days or their attendance is sporadic, it causes confusion for them and they have difficulty learning routines and building friendships.

Regular attendance makes their pre-school experience more successful.



Candy/Sweets

Birthday cakes, candy, gum, donuts, and any sugar-based sweets are not allowed in classrooms. If you would like to send something in to celebrate you may send in a healthy snack.

In Service Training

The Head Start Program closes the classrooms during the program year for In-Service training days. These days are used to offer training to all Head Start staff to enhance their skills in working with children and families.

Holidays

The program will be closed on the following days:

September	Labor Day
October	Columbus Day
November	Veterans Day
November	Thanksgiving Day
November	Day After Thanksgiving
December	Christmas Day
January	New Years Day
January	Martin Luther King
February	Presidents Day
March	Evacuation Day
April,	Patriots Day
May	Memorial Day

Holiday Celebrations

Holidays Celebrations are important to children and families. We encourage you to celebrate your families traditions and special holidays at home.

To respect individual families, we do not celebrate holidays in our classrooms.



Balloons

Balloons are never allowed in our classrooms, as they are very dangerous for young children. Small pieces of a broken balloon can cause choking.



Snow Days

During a snow storm parents should call 617-623-7370 and listen to the recorded message. This will tell you whether there is school or not.



Important Information



Discipline Policy

CAAS Head Start's Discipline Policy is to ensure the safety of the children and the group and to do this by helping children build self-control. Building self-control is a normal part of a child's social and emotional development. Therefore, discipline is seen as a way to help maximize a child's growth and development and is not viewed as, or used as, punishment. Since each child is unique you may see teachers use different techniques.

- Among the techniques used :
 - redirecting the child to an alternative activity.
 - encouraging children to talk about their feelings.
 - providing an example for children by speaking and interacting with children in a positive manner
- We guide behavior of children for their protection and growth, and to help each child develop self-control and assume responsibility for his or her actions through clear and consistent rules and limits appropriate to the age and development of each child

CAAS Head Start Program abides by the following:

- Corporal punishment will not be used, including spanking.
- No child will be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse.
- No child will be denied food as a form of punishment or force fed.
- No child will be punished for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.

Confidentiality Policy

Head Start guidelines require us to keep records on children enrolled in the program. These guidelines also mandate that parents are aware of all records that are kept. They are kept confidential, yet accessible to parents upon request. Confidential information will only be shared with appropriate Head Start Staff.

The CAAS Head Start Program has parents sign a permission form to share information with our program consultants from Somerville Mental Health, CASPAR, the Somerville Public Schools and for licensing, Office of Child Care Services, and our Funding Sources.

The Head Start Program will request a specific permission form to be signed when information needs to be shared with other provider outside of the program.

The only time the Department of Social Services can access information is during an investigation without a signed permission form.

Discrimination Policy

No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be discriminated against under this program, including employment, because of race, religion, sex, national origin, cultural heritage, age, disability, sexual orientation, or marital status.

Termination Policy

The Head Start Program would only terminate a child if the program was an inappropriate placement.

Or after every effort is made for a family to participate and the child is still not attending regularly.

Protection of Children

The CAAS Head Start Program is committed to the well-being and safety of children. Parent education and support are important factors in keeping children healthy and safe. By providing education and support we hope to have a role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

If abuse or neglect is suspected, the law requires a report to the Department of Social Services (DSS). **All staff are mandated reporters.** They are required to document and report any concerns to the Director of Family Services. Family Advocates, whenever possible, will talk with the parents before making a report.

CAAS Head Start's goal is to work with the parents to help them access services which will improve their family lives.

If a 51A is filed against the program we are required to notify the Office of Child Care Services immediately and the Administration for Children and Families.

Child Care Fees

Child Care fees are assessed for each family enrolled in our Child Care Program. Each child enrolled is required to pay a small fee. Fees are determined on family income according to a Sliding Fee Scale. **Child Care Fees** are to be paid at the beginning of each month.



Nap-Time

Children enrolled in our Child Care classroom take naps everyday. Children are required to rest for at least 45 minutes each day. Blankets will be washed once a week and parents are asked to take them home on Friday and return them on Monday.

Suspension Policy

The Head Start Program does not suspend children from the program.

Health

The CAAS Head Start Program's Health Services recognizes that a child's health and well-being affects their ability to develop and learn. Head Start works closely with parents to ensure your children have comprehensive and preventative health care.

Parents are required to take their child for an annual physical and 6 month dental exam.

Documentation must be promptly submitted to the Health Services Supervisor at the CAAS Head Start office 66-70 Union Square Room 203.

Children must have an annual lead test, hematocrit/hemoglobin test, hearing and vision, test and a T.B.risk assessment.

Head Start requires that all children be fully immunized for Diphtheria, Tetanus Pertussis, Polio, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, HIB, Hepatitis B and varicella.

Children's height and weight is measured twice during the program year. Head Start meets all of the individual health and nutritional needs of children in the program.



Health Policies

Children should not come to school when they are sick. If your child has a fever, sore throat, cough, ear infection, runny nose, diarrhea or vomiting, they should be kept home until they are feeling better. Children need rest for their bodies to fight off an infection. Infections may spread to other children and staff if you send your child to school when they are sick.

Children who arrive at school sick will be sent home. Parents will be called at home or work to come pick up their children.

There are many contagious diseases that children may contract while in school. Parents must notify the school if your child has any of the following: Chicken Pox, Strep Throat, Scarlet Fever, Hepatitis, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Scabies, Pinworms, Ringworm, Conjunctivitis, and Impetigo.

Head Lice

Head Lice are contagious and increasingly common in early childhood programs and schools.

Do not send your child to school if they have head lice. If your child is sent home with head lice they must be treated and completely free of nits before returning to school.

When your child is nit free, a parent or emergency contact person must accompany them to school to be checked and admitted in to the classroom by the teacher.



Medication

All medications must be prescribed by a doctor and can only be dispensed with written authorization from the parent.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for administering newly prescribed oral medications and monitoring their child's reaction for the first 48 hours.

The Lead Teacher shall administer the appropriate medication to the child in the classroom. The Teacher will assume this responsibility in the Lead Teachers absence.

All medication is kept in the original labeled container with the child's name, the name of the medication and directions for usage.

All medications will be stored in a locked metal box and refrigerated if necessary.



Smoking Policy

Smoking is not allowed in or around any Head Start Center at any time.

Staff and parents are prohibited from smoking in the presence of Head Start children.

Head Start staff model healthy behavior for children in our care.



Nutrition

Head Start children receive a nutritious breakfast and lunch each day. The meals provide two thirds of the children's daily nutritional needs. Parents receive a menu for each month that includes the required meal patterns and quantities and notes on nutrition.

CAAS Head Start has a Nutrition Consultant that assists the Health Services Supervisor in assessing children's health and determining their individual nutritional needs.

The Nutrition Consultant is available for parent consultation and provides trainings and workshops for parents and staff.

Head Start is committed to providing children with a variety of healthy and seasonal foods that reflect their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Parents are welcome to contribute ideas for the programs meal and snack menus and are encouraged to participate in the Health /Nutrition Advisory Committee.

For more information, please contact Health Services Supervisor at 623-7370-ext.126



Tooth-Brushing

Tooth brushing is part of the daily curriculum in Head Start classrooms. Children brush their teeth twice a day after breakfast and lunch.

Teachers supervise children as they brush their teeth and teach them the importance of good dental hygiene and how to brush properly.

