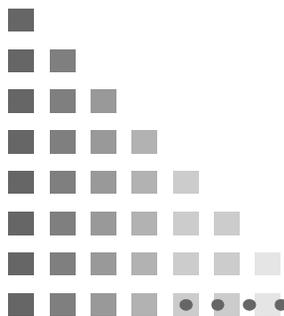




# *Parent Handbook*

TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY



HEAD START PROGRAM

Serving families from pregnancy to age 5

Revised Version 06/5/2015



TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

***Tri-Town Head Start Site Locations***

***Main Office:***

Tri-Town Community Action Agency  
1126 Hartford Avenue, Johnston, RI 02919  
351-2750 x 1927 (Fax: 351-6609)

***Johnston Site:***

1126 Hartford Avenue, Johnston, RI 02919  
351-2750 x 1927 (Fax: 351-6609)

***North Providence Sites:***

79 Waterman Avenue, N. Providence, RI 02911  
232-5444 (Fax: 231-5162)

2204 Mineral Spring Avenue, N. Providence, RI 02911  
231-6788; 231-6748; 231-5261 (Fax: 231-4358)

***Burrillville Site:***

185 Main Street  
Pascoag, RI 02859  
568-8320 (Fax: 567-7979)

TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

INDEX

Index..... 3

A Little About Tri-Town..... 4

Who's Who In Head Start..... 4-5

Volunteering..... 5

Snow Policy/Closings..... 5

**PARENT, FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMPONENT**..... 6

Board of Directors..... 6

Policy Council..... 6

Parent Committee..... 6

Adult Education..... 6-7

Male Involvement..... 7

Family Conferences..... 7

Program Evaluation..... 7

**HEALTH COMPONENT**..... 7

Emergency Preparedness Plan..... 7-8

Accident Procedures..... 8

Emergency Card Information..... 8

Illness Exclusion..... 8

Illness..... 8-9

Medication Policy..... 9

Toilet Training Policy..... 9-10

Biting Policy..... 10

Smoke-Free Workplace..... 10-11

**NUTRITION COMPONENT**..... 11

Food Policy Summary..... 11

**EDUCATION COMPONENT**..... 12

No Cell Phone Policy..... 12

Arrival/Dismissal Policy..... 12

Classroom Environment..... 13

Supervision of Children..... 13

Attendance..... 13

Attendance/Absenteeism Protocol..... 13

Short Term Exclusion/Reduction of Days..... 14

Child Growth and Development..... 14

Playground Use/Clothing..... 14

Special Interest Events..... 14

Celebrations..... 14-15

Newsletters..... 15

Classroom Curriculum..... 15

Child Assessment..... 15

School Readiness..... 16

Photographs..... 16

Bilingual Policy..... 16

Release Policy..... 16

Security Chip Policy..... 16-17

Transportation Policy..... 17

Pedestrian and Car Seat Safety..... 17

Restraining Order Policy..... 17

Use of Social Media Policy..... 18

Discipline Policy..... 18

Child Abuse Policy..... 18-19

**FAMILY DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT**..... 19

**FAMILY SUPPORT COMPONENT**..... 19

Notice of Privacy Practices..... 20

Confidentiality..... 20

**SPECIAL NEEDS COMPONENT**..... 20

Transitioning to Infant/Toddler Care..... 20

Transitioning to Pre-School..... 21

Transitioning to Kindergarten..... 21

Parents' Rights and Responsibilities..... 21

Reports to Parents..... 21

Family Conferences..... 21

Transfer/Release of Records..... 21

Charges for Copies..... 21

Communicating with Staff..... 22

Information Required by the Office of Head Start..... 22

Home Visits..... 22

Copies of Regulations..... 22

**NOTES**..... 22

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

### A LITTLE ABOUT TRI-TOWN

Tri-Town Community Action Agency is a private non-profit corporation serving primarily low-income clients. The mission statement of the Agency is:

*We are a community based multi-purpose organization committed to providing quality, comprehensive social and advocacy services to individuals and families in need while promoting their self-sufficiency.*

Tri-Town's Head Start component, which is only one of the programs offered by Tri-Town, is funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Tri-Town also receives State funds to provide services to children living in North Providence, Johnston, Smithfield, North Smithfield, Scituate, Foster, Gloucester, and Burrillville. The general philosophy of Head Start is to empower parents to be advocates for their family and to provide children and families with the opportunity to learn and continue on the path to social competency and success.

Head Start attempts to meet the educational, social, health and nutritional needs of children ages Birth to 5 years while providing parent education and opportunities for involvement to the child's family.

Head Start is free for families meeting federal income guidelines, for families experiencing homelessness or for children in foster care.

Head Start is committed to building relationships with families and community partners that support family well-being and strong parent-child relationships resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school.

We respect and acknowledge you as your child's primary teacher. We need you to help us learn more about your child and we will share with you some of the ways that we teach children. Together you and your child can have a wonderful Head Start experience. In addition, we invite and urge you to come "look us over". Visit the school, observe in a classroom, and join us for coffee. We'll be glad to sit down and talk about your interests and how involved you'd like to be.

### WHO'S WHO IN HEAD START

We welcome you to Tri-Town's Head Start component and hope you have a good year with us. Here is some information we hope you will find useful.

The **Chief Executive Officer** is responsible for the operation of the entire Community Action Agency.

The **Head Start Director** is responsible for the overall program operation.

The **Parents** are their child's first teacher and are considered full partners with the staff in ensuring the best experience possible for the children.

The **Parent, Family and Community Engagement Coordinator** helps organize family and volunteer activities, including socials, trainings, Fatherhood Events, Policy Council, and Center Committee activities.

The **Education Coordinators** oversee the education staff, education curriculum, child assessments, and the work that occurs with families and staff to ensure a high quality early education program.

The **Special Needs Coordinator** helps staff and families find resources for children and families with special needs.

The **Family Development and Support Coordinator** ensures case management follow-up for all families and helps families/staff deal with any issues they may be having at any given time.

The **Family and Community Outreach Specialist** is responsible to ensure that recruitment and enrollment of children and families takes place in a timely fashion.

The **Health Coordinator** is the school nurse and is responsible for the health needs of the clients enrolled in the program.

The **Nutrition Coordinator** is responsible for the nutrition portion of the program.

**TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY**

The **Case Managers** are an available resource for each Head Start family. They can direct you to agencies in the community when you need them. They also take applications for new Head Start participants. They assist each family to establish their independence and become self-sufficient.

The **Home Visitors** provide child development and advocacy services to pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers who are enrolled in the home-based option of the program.

The **Teaching Teams** provide quality educational and school readiness experiences focusing on the intellectual and emotional well being of children and families.

The **Program Support Specialist** calculates daily attendance, submits reports to USDA regarding meals served, monitors monthly attendance, and oversees the computer data entry system for the program.

**VOLUNTEERING**

Families are the most important people in a child's life. Sharing your interests, time and talents with the program shows your child that you value his/her experiences at Head Start. We need you. Come volunteer as a classroom helper, storyteller, office worker, or help with recruitment activities. Your volunteer efforts support Head Start in the form of In-Kind. In-Kind is...your volunteer time. Every minute counts towards assisting Head Start in reaching a 20% match for our grant total. Contact your Case Manager/Home Visitor/Teacher if you are interested in doing any kind of volunteer work.

**SNOW POLICY/CLOSINGS**



Since Tri-Town is committed to providing consistent services to our children and families, we will make every effort to be available to you on inclement weather days. Each of the Head Start Sites follows the weather advisory for the town in which it is located. For example, the Burrillville Site follows the Burrillville school department weather announcements. The North Providence Sites follow the North Providence school department weather announcements. The Johnston Sites follow the Johnston school department weather announcements.

If the public school in your SITE AREA announces a *delay of one hour*, the Head Start classrooms are OPEN regular hours. If the public school in your SITE AREA, announces a *cancellation or more than a one hour delay*, the Head Start classrooms are closed but the *afternoon Head Start session remains open*. If the public school in your SITE AREA announces an *early dismissal*, the morning Head Start classrooms complete their session and the afternoon Head Start classroom is closed.

<b>Local School District</b>	<b>Head Start</b>
1 Hour Delay	Open Regular Hours
1.5 Hour or More Delay	Morning Closed/ Afternoon Open
Early Dismissal/No P.M. Kindergarten	Morning Open/Afternoon Session Closed
Closed	Closed

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

### PARENT, FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMPONENT



Our vision for you is to create an environment of partnership and mutual respect that engages your whole family in all aspects of our program.

We are committed to:

1. support families as the lifelong educators of their child,
2. honor all efforts as families pursue goals,
3. encourage families as advocates and leaders in the community,
4. plan together so that **all** Head Start participants have the opportunity for significant and meaningful involvement in our centers and
5. respect your position in making decisions and policies about the nature and operation of our program.
6. support families as learners and offer you an opportunity to attend parent trainings and receive child growth and development information.
7. offer you an opportunity to become a paid substitute within the program.
8. develop a comfortable home/school partnership with a focus on school readiness goals.
9. welcome you, at your convenience, to volunteer at your child's site.
10. supporting family engagement in transitions.

We ask you to:

1. obtain all required medical records,
2. keep your child home when an illness/contagious condition exists,
3. send your child to school daily in appropriate clothing,
4. be willing to meet with staff concerning you and your child's program,
5. complete all paperwork requirements mandated by the federal and/or state Governments and
6. help us build an effective family partnership by volunteering in the classroom, attending Parent Meetings, joining Policy Council and attending family events.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The entire Community Action Agency is governed by the Board of Directors. One member of the Board of Directors will be a member of the Head Start Policy Council and one member of the Head Start Policy Council will be a member of the Agency's Board of Directors.

### **POLICY COUNCIL**

The Policy Council is a group of parents and community members who gather each month to make important decisions about the program. It works in close cooperation and conjunction with the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and Head Start Director. Members are elected annually in November by parents/guardians of currently enrolled children. Members serve one year as part of this decision making group, but can only serve for a maximum of three (3) years. Policy Council members help to keep the Head Start Program sensitive to the needs of the families enrolled.

### **PARENT COMMITTEE**

Every Head Start parent/guardian is considered a member of the Parent Committee at their Site. The Head Start Parent Committee meetings are held at each individual Site. Participants in the meetings, in conjunction and cooperation with staff, may schedule speakers on desired topics, discuss classroom activities, and plan educational programs. Staff members are invited to visit Parent Committee meetings to give additional information to parents. A Policy Council Member from each Site gives a report on Site activities/happenings to the Policy Council group at their monthly meeting. The Policy Council Member brings the information from the Policy Council meeting back to the next Parent Committee Meeting. Following Parent Meetings, minutes and handouts are distributed to families.

### **ADULT EDUCATION**

There are many different adult education opportunities offered at the Tri-Town Community Action Agency. These include workshops, support groups, job training classes, and education programs to help parents get their high school diploma.

**TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY**

1. Family events are held throughout the year.
2. G.E.D. classes are offered locally and held at the Community Action Agency.
3. Numerous resources are available on topics of interest to parents/guardians.

For example:

- |                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| -Discipline Techniques        | -Self-Esteem For All |
| -Child Growth and Development | -Substance Abuse     |
| -Stress Reduction             | -Literacy Activities |
| -Transition                   | -School Readiness    |

**MALE INVOLVEMENT**

The entire Community Action Agency recognizes each father’s needs and interests and supports the National and State Fatherhood Initiatives. These Initiatives improve linkages between fathers and the resources they may need. Tri-Town offers a variety of activities for children and significant males in their lives.

**FAMILY CONFERENCES**

Parents/Guardians are provided a variety of opportunities to meet with their child’s teachers to discuss progress and concerns. In Head Start, teachers visit your home at least three (3) times per year to share your child’s classroom experiences. Three family conferences are scheduled and held each year to discuss your child’s academic progress. In Early Head Start, teachers visit your home 6 times per year to discuss your child’s development and classroom experiences. In addition, we encourage parents/guardians to stop in and visit, and/or call for a time to meet with the teachers whenever you have questions or information to share. You can easily reach the teachers before the children arrive or after the children have left for the day.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Each year we ask parents/guardians to help us look at Head Start in order to improve our services to both you and your children. Participants are asked to complete the Program Evaluation survey that is sent home and to participate in the annual Program Self-Assessment.



**HEALTH COMPONENT**

\_\_\_\_ Parent’s Initials

Our program is committed to the health and wellness of each child. In order to assess the medical status of each child and determine if any child needs additional health-related treatment services, the Health Coordinator reviews the completed Health History, Physical, and Dental result forms of each participant. Each child must be seen at least yearly by their primary physician and dentist. For children under the age of 3, physical exams and dental exams are required more often. The Health Coordinator and staff ask that families take primary responsibility in obtaining all required medical records and forward them to the Health Coordinator for review. A Head Start Physical Examination Form and Dental Health Exam form are provided to families at the start of each school year. Parents/Guardians are asked to maintain them in a safe place and have your child’s physician and dentist complete them following their child’s exam. You may forward the completed forms to either your child’s Teacher, Case Manager, or directly to the Health Coordinator. The Prenatal Health Risk Assessment along with the Prenatal History Tracking forms are completed and reviewed by the Health Coordinator. The Health Coordinator will obtain this information from prenatal clients.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN**

\_\_\_\_ Parent’s Initials

There is an Emergency Preparedness Plan in place in the event of a major disaster or crisis. Provisions have been made in the event that the children must evacuate or are unable to leave the Head Start Site. Phone relays and relocation sites are part of this Plan. For direct access to the Emergency Preparedness Plan, please contact your Case Manager.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Three Emergency Preparedness Drills are conducted yearly. One drill is to practice evacuating to the safe zone farthest away from the school building. Another drill is to practice gathering in a central room in the school (shelter in place) in the event the children are unable to leave Head Start. The third drill is an in-class sheltering drill. Parents are notified prior to each scheduled drill.

### ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

In an emergency, your child will be transported to the nearest hospital. The parent/guardian is informed of the emergency and instructed to meet the child at the hospital emergency room. If the parent/guardian cannot be contacted, emergency numbers are called.

### EMERGENCY CARD INFORMATION

During recruitment, you must complete an emergency card that includes important information Tri-Town needs if an emergency arises. If there are changes in any information, please contact your Case Manager/Home Visitor immediately.

**PLEASE REMEMBER:** We need accurate emergency telephone numbers for your family and/or neighbors who have permission to take your child home with them when you cannot be reached. Therefore, it is the policy of this program to assist families in updating this information at Parent Registration and again during a mid-year home visit.

In the event that the parent is the child's sole Emergency Contact, it is the policy of this program to contact RI DCYF in an emergency if the parent is unable to be reached. Parents are strongly encouraged to indicate at least two Emergency Contact names.

### ILLNESS EXCLUSION

\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

The health and well being of you and your child is important to us! While attendance is important, please **DO NOT SEND A SICK CHILD TO SCHOOL!** If your child has had a fever greater than 100 degrees, diarrhea, vomiting, and/or a colored discharge from his/her eyes or nose, within the past 24 hours, they should not be sent to school. If your child becomes sick at school, you will be called to pick him/her up. They should remain at home 24 hours after being sent home.

Though your Doctor may give you permission to return the very next day, we may not allow this and require your child to remain home for 24 hours after they were sent home.

### ILLNESS

When should you keep your child home? Here are a few guidelines.

Nausea/Vomiting: Keep a child home 24 hours after symptoms subside. Consult your doctor if symptoms persist.

Diarrhea: Keep a child home 24 hours after symptoms subside. Consult your doctor if symptoms persist.

Fever: A child should remain at home if they have a fever greater than 100 degrees, particularly when accompanied by a sore throat, earache, or nausea. Most pediatricians advise parents/guardians to keep the child home during the course of the fever and another 24 hours after the fever has passed.

The following are considered communicable school-age diseases. A child having any of these must not come to school.

Chicken Pox: Students are required to either be immunized or have a signed Medical or religious note verifying exemption. In accordance with State regulations, exempt students, who are not immunized or have not had the disease, will immediately be excluded from school for as long as there is a risk for disease or until those who are able are vaccinated. Unvaccinated children may return to school two weeks after the onset of a rash in the last reported case of Chicken Pox.

Strep Throat: A child may return with a Doctor's note after 24 hours of antibiotic medicine before returning.

Impetigo: A child may return with a Doctor's note after 24 hours of medication.

Ringworm: A child may return with a Doctor's note after 24 hours of medication.

Scabies: A child may return with a Doctor's note after 24 hours of medication.

Head Lice: Children with evidence of nits (eggs) remain in school. Children are sent home with evidence of active head lice. A child may return when all lice are removed. Parents must provide confirmation of treatment with an anti-lice shampoo

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

(i.e. empty box or bottle). Daily head checks take place for all children during an outbreak of head lice.

Conjunctivitis: A child may return with a Doctor's note after 24 hours of medication application.

For any communicable disease, a note from your child's Doctor is required in order for him/her to return to school.

### MEDICATION POLICY

\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials



### Birth to 3-year-old Option:

Head Start recognizes that teething problems and diaper rashes may be a problem for infants/toddlers. Therefore, over-the-counter (OTC) items may be dispensed provided that the following guidelines are met and paperwork is completed:

1. Instructions from the physician must be written clearly, detailing administering procedures. **This must be renewed annually.**
2. The medication or over-the-counter item must have already been administered at home.
  - a. We should receive it in its original container, to be kept at Head Start.
  - b. The parent must sign permission to administer the medication/item at Head Start.
3. Staff document daily if medication/item was administered.
4. The medication/item is kept out of the reach of children.

### Birth– 5-year-old Options:

It is the policy of Tri-Town not to allow medication to be given during Head Start hours. Antibiotics, cough medicine and such can be scheduled to be given before/after school hours. The only exception to this rule is if a child has a condition that poses a serious threat to his/her health. In order to dispense this type of medication, the following guidelines must be met and paperwork is completed:

1. The physician must complete the physician's order form.
2. The physician's name and instructions must be on the original medication container.
3. The child's name must appear on the original medication container (with the exception of diaper rash and over-counter items necessary to care for infants and toddlers).
4. The name of the medication must be clearly indicated on the original medication container.
5. The amount of each dose and when it should be administered must be clearly stated.
6. The medication is kept out of the reach of children.

### TOILET TRAINING POLICY

#### (Birth-3 year old option)

A Toilet Training Plan is completed cooperatively with staff and parents for children who begin to express an interest in independent toileting. Formal plans are not developed for children under two years of age. The purpose of the Plan is to ensure consistency for the child in terms of the toilet training procedures being used (language, reminders, etc.). The Plan is kept in the child's file for reference. The Toilet Training Plan is reviewed with the family every four weeks.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

### (3 – 5 year old Option)

1. No child is excluded from the Head Start Program due to the fact that they are not toilet trained.
2. The parent of the 3 – 5 year old non-toilet trained child may be required to get a note from the child’s medical provider stating that he/she is aware the child is not toilet trained. This note assists Head Start staff in their awareness of any medical condition that may be preventing the child from accomplishing this task.
3. Proper facilities for changing the child, which adhere to NAEYC sanitary guidelines, are provided. Staff also changes the child in a manner that takes into account a child’s self-esteem.
4. The parent is viewed as the primary teacher for this task. Parents/Guardians are required to take an active role in this process. They are encouraged to come into the classroom and to be available for the child. Head Start provides families with instructional tapes and literature regarding suggestions for successful toilet training. A case conference may be scheduled monthly to evaluate this issue. A Toilet Training Plan may be developed in partnership with the child’s Teachers and parents.

### BITING POLICY

The following steps are taken:

1. Staff comforts the victim and apply ice if necessary.
2. Staff complete an Accident Report for the child that did the biting and the child or staff member who was bitten, describing what happened and the actions taken. In the event that the skin is broken, the parent is contacted immediately. The identity of the children involved is confidential.
3. Both children’s Accident Reports should state, **“Check with your own medical provider for any necessary follow-up”**.

4. Parents of both children sign their child’s Accident Report when they pick up the children at the end of the day.

Copies to: Parent, Teacher (kept in child’s file), Health Coordinator, and the Chief Executive Officer.

5. If biting becomes an on-going problem for any child in particular, a Case Conference meeting may be held. The parent(s) and any pertinent staff may attend. Every effort is made to get to the root of the issue. The Parent, Teacher, Case Manager, and the Education Coordinator work toward resolving this issue and develop a written plan of agreement. If this remains an on-going, constant problem, short-term exclusion may be considered.



### SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE

Tri-Town is dedicated to providing a healthy, comfortable and productive work and learning environment for its employees, children and families. Smoking is prohibited within all buildings, cars/vans and any other property utilized by staff and/or clients. This includes classrooms, staff offices, kitchens, restrooms, parent and staff meeting rooms (used in the evenings as well as during the day), hallways, parking lots and outdoor play areas. This policy applies to all employees, parents, contractors, volunteers, and visitors.

There is to be no smoking by staff on home visits or program sponsored family activities. It is required that parents refrain from smoking during these times also.

Copies of this policy shall be distributed to all employees at staff orientation and will be posted in all Head Start centers. “No Smoking” signs shall be posted at all building entrances and throughout the buildings.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

The success of this policy depends upon the thoughtfulness, consideration, and cooperation of smokers and non-smokers. All employees shall share in the responsibility for adhering to and enforcing the policy. Anyone who smokes, and would like to participate in smoking-cessation programs, should contact the Head Start Health Coordinator.

### NUTRITION COMPONENT



Breakfast and lunch are provided daily to enrolled children ages 12 months to 5 years. Formula and baby foods are provided to all infants enrolled in the center-based program as well. Our Nutritionist monitors the nutritional health of every child and conducts training focusing on providing nutritious meals and snacks.

The foods provided to the children follow the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Guidelines. These USDA guidelines limit the amount of sugar, salt and fat while providing plenty of fruits, vegetables, grains and fiber. Children are encouraged to try all foods, but are never forced to eat.

Children with medically-based dietary modifications are accommodated according to their special dietary needs. When a parent/guardian states that a child needs a dietary modification, medical documentation must be obtained (except for those children who require dietary modifications due to religious reasons). If the parent/guardian does not have a medical statement completed by the Primary Care Provider, the program will not be able to make the appropriate menu substitutions, which may put the child at risk. Since Tri-Town will not put any child at risk and does not allow food to be brought from home, the family may be offered home visits according to the pre-determined schedule in the Head Start Performance Standards.

Placement options for a child that is diagnosed with a food allergy or dietary modifications during the school year are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

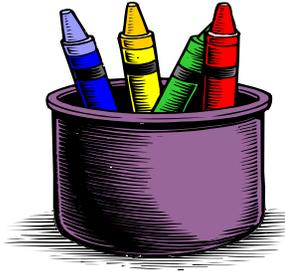
Meals are prepared for, and delivered to Head Start by a licensed caterer under safe food handling procedures. Meals are served by staff trained in Food Safety procedures. Foods made outside the Head Start Site, unless prepared by a licensed caterer, are not allowed to be brought in and served at parent or family programs.

The Nutrition Coordinator reviews the children's height, weight, hemoglobin and lead levels. In addition, the Nutrition Coordinator reviews the Nutrition Questionnaire that parents completed during the registration process. In the case of pregnant women, the Nutrition Questionnaire is reviewed to ensure appropriate nutritional intake for the mother and developing fetus. Based on the above information, a Nutrition Assessment is completed for every participant on a yearly basis (within 45 days of enrollment). The results of the Nutrition Assessment are shared with parents.

### **FOOD POLICY SUMMARY**

1. Tri-Town Community Action Agency's Head Start classrooms are nut free environments.
2. No food may be brought into school that is prepared in any private home setting.
3. No food may be cooked on-Site by any staff person unless that staff person is certified in food safety and handling. Staff members are aware of all reported food allergies and dietary modifications in the classroom.
4. Food items purchased at a grocery store by staff, not requiring cooked preparation, are acceptable in the classroom as long as proper procedures are followed to ensure safe food handling. Staff compares the ingredients in all foods used for food preparation with known food allergies in the classroom.
5. Documentation of food allergies and dietary modifications must be posted in the classrooms and medical documentation readily available.

**EDUCATION COMPONENT**



Head Start offers three program options called the center-based, home-based, and combination options. For the center-based option there may be a choice of sessions, depending on the Site location and the age of the child.

In the center-based option, children attend the center up to 5 days per week for 3 ½ hours per day. The Early Head Start classrooms are in session for 6 hours each day. During this time, children receive a balanced breakfast and lunch or lunch and afternoon snack. The staff plans a variety of educational experiences in the classroom environment. A research based curriculum is used in both Early Head Start and Head Start. Both are based on sound child development principles. Teachers conduct home visits and Family conferences throughout the year to ensure parent input into the curriculum. All classrooms are open to parents, for observation and visits, whenever the program is in operation.

In the Early Head Start home-based option, a Home Visitor provides weekly home visits. The Home Visitor shares developmentally appropriate activities for you and your child to enjoy together using the Parents as Teachers curriculum. Prenatal clients receive information on their developing child and upcoming delivery. In addition, you are required to attend socialization experiences as scheduled. These activities are planned with you and may be held at your local Head Start site or locations within the community.

In the Combination option, the children attend two (2) or three (3) days per week. The number of home visits conducted with each family is dependent on the number of days the child is scheduled to attend the center. The curriculum follows that of the center-based option.



**NO CELL PHONE POLICY**

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

Families are asked to refrain from cell phone use when entering Head Start classrooms at arrival and dismissal time.

**ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL POLICY**

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

Head Start classroom sessions begin and end at specific times. Teachers plan many exciting educational experiences for the children and arriving late takes away from your child receiving the most out of their Head Start day. Late dismissals prohibit staff from accomplishing their job responsibilities once the children leave. Agreement to on-time arrival and dismissal is sought through the completion of the Health Permission/I Agree To form.

As part of your placement in the Head Start Program, an agreed upon schedule was developed with your child's individual strengths in mind. According to your child's Head Start schedule, you are expected to arrive at school on time and to pick your child up promptly at the end of their session. If late arrival and/or dismissal become an issue, please refer to the Policy below:

1. A documented verbal warning is issued
2. A documented written warning is issued.
3. Your child may be asked to remain at home. In this case, an educational activity is provided by the staff.

TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The program provides for learning experiences that promote the growth of the whole child. It provides for activities and interactions based on the age and the developmental stage of each child. There is a wide range of equipment and materials for children of all ages. Some of the materials may include:

- Sand and water tables
- Dramatic Play
- Books, tapes and CD's
- Puzzles, pegs and matching/sorting games
- Play dough, painting, cutting, and drawing
- Block building
- Climbing equipment
- Woodworking items
- Science Tools
- Computer

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Children enrolled in our program are properly supervised at all times by sight and by sound. The (paid) staff to child ratio takes into consideration the appropriate supervision of children to ensure their overall safety and well-being. Each classroom and playground space will have a minimum of two (2) paid staff members present at all times. If additional staff is needed to properly supervise children, due to unforeseen circumstances, employees are responsible to contact and/or seek assistance from others stationed at their particular site.

ATTENDANCE

\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

Your child's daily attendance is very important. This gives him/her, and the classroom, a sense of consistency, which is important as it promotes a sound, healthy and predictable environment. The classroom plays a major role in providing children with an opportunity to develop social skills and participate in activities and discussion. Regular attendance is an important aspect of your child's education and school readiness success.

ATTENDANCE/ABSENTEEISM PROTOCOL

If your child is going to be absent, please contact Head Start. If your child is absent for 3 days in a row, your Case Manager will call you. **Remember:** If you need to take your child to the Doctor for any reason, please be sure to get a Doctor's note explaining the reason for your visit. This can be counted as an **excused** absence.

**Birth – 3-year-old Option:**

When a child has missed fifteen (15) days of class, **unexcused**, a letter is sent to the parent/guardian notifying them that we are concerned.

After twenty-five (25) days of **unexcused** absences, the parent/guardian is called to arrange a meeting with the appropriate Head Start staff. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the attendance issue and to develop a written, joint plan of action.

After thirty-five (35) days of **unexcused** absences, the child's slot may be considered an enrollment vacancy.

**3 – 5 year old Option:**

When your child has missed ten (10) days of class, **unexcused**, a letter is sent home notifying you that we are concerned.

After 15 days of **unexcused** absences, a meeting is arranged with you to discuss the attendance issue and develop a plan of action.

After a total of twenty (20) **unexcused** absences, the child's slot may be considered an enrollment vacancy.

**Home Based:**

When a family/pregnant woman has missed two (2) home visits, **unexcused**, a letter is sent advising that we are concerned.

When a family/pregnant woman has missed three (3) home visits, **unexcused**, a meeting is arranged with the parent/guardian/pregnant woman and the appropriate Head Start staff. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the attendance issue and to develop a written, joint plan of action.

When a family/pregnant woman has missed four (4) home visits, **unexcused**, the child's/pregnant woman's slot may be considered an enrollment vacancy.

**SHORT TERM EXCLUSION/REDUCTION OF DAYS**

\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

A child may be sent home from Head Start for the day for reasons other than health related issues. For example, a child exhibiting behaviors that pose a risk to the health or safety of him/herself and/or others may be sent home. This exclusion is for the remaining portion of that day only. If unsafe behavior continues, Head Start may consider the child for Short Term Exclusion or a reduction of scheduled days/hours of attendance. Parents/Guardians are informed of this at a joint meeting between staff and parents. A mutual plan is developed with the ultimate goal being the child's full participation in our program.

**CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Nurturing and enhancing children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development is the major focus of early childhood education. Parents/Guardians, indeed, are the primary educators of their children. It is the parent/guardian, with the support of the Head Start staff and community that allows this process to be a successful and positive one.

Parents/Guardians are recognized as the primary influence on their child's growth and development. Through their overall involvement with the Head Start component, they receive the support and encouragement necessary to carry this through.

It is of great importance that we all understand children's needs as they grow and develop. Children learn by playing.

Young children need an environment which allows them many opportunities to make choices and direct their own learning. They need time to explore and experiment. This is how a child begins to organize and understand concepts. Tri-Town provides a nurturing and supportive environment, which is conducive to productive and enjoyable learning.



**PLAYGROUND USE/CLOTHING**

Weather permitting; all children use the outdoor playground daily throughout the year, even if it is for a short period of time. Please send your child to school each day with the appropriate type of clothing (boots, snowsuits, hats and mittens). Outdoor play is an important part of a child's day. If children are well enough to come to school, they are well enough to be outside. For the 3-5 year old option, we ask parents/guardians to send an extra change of clothes to keep in the classroom. For the Birth-3 year old option, we ask parents/guardians to send two sets of extra clothes to keep in the classroom.

**SPECIAL INTEREST EVENTS**

Each classroom may plan special interest events as part of their curriculum and/or at the request of parents/guardians. Please take note of your child's classroom calendar and newsletter for their scheduled events. As always, we encourage parents/guardians to volunteer to help during these wonderful experiences.

**CELEBRATIONS:**

In order to maintain the most developmentally appropriate approach to teaching young children, it is the policy of Tri-Town Community Action Agency's Head Start program to refrain from celebrating holidays (Halloween, Christmas, Valentine, St. Patrick's Day and Easter) or birthdays. As the holidays approach, we ask that you do not send in cards, food or gifts in the classrooms or building. Instead, we focus on celebrating the child/family achievements. It is of equal importance to celebrate a first tooth, a favorite story, the birth of a sibling, moving to a new house, or the first snowflake of the season. Birthdays are acknowledged in the classroom setting in different ways by the classroom community.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

In accordance with this policy, we ask that parents/guardians refrain from giving gifts to the Head Start staff. If you or your child would like to express your appreciation to the staff you may do so by sharing a special drawing or writing a personal note.

### NEWSLETTERS

We publish a monthly newsletter and calendar. The calendar includes the dates of current happenings such as Parent/Child Play Dates, Policy Council, dates that the program is closed and much more. The newsletter includes a note from your child's teachers, information on community events, health, safety and nutrition ideas, and favorite book.

### CLASSROOM CURRICULUM

The curriculum we use for our 3-5 year olds is the Creative Curriculum. The Creative Curriculum is consistent with the RI Early Learning and Development Standards and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. It is based on the 11 domains of learning: Science, Mathematics, Approaches to Learning, Literacy, Language Development, Physical Health and Development, Creativity, Social Studies, Logic and Reasoning, Social and Emotional Development, and English Language Development. Activities are planned based on these domains and individual goals with input from parents. Planning and facilitating activities as well as arranging the classroom environment in an age-appropriate manner is essential for each child's development and progress in preschool.

The curriculum used for birth-3 is Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos. In the infant/toddler option, the curriculum is based on 10 domains of learning including cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, language and personal-social development. This curriculum helps teachers better understand developmentally appropriate practice and how to create daily routines and meaningful experiences that respond to children's strengths, interests, and needs. The curriculum focuses on responsive care, while incorporating objectives that enable teachers to focus on what matters most for each individual child in their care. Each volume helps teachers plan and implement every aspect of caring for and teaching children from birth to 3.

In order for active learning to take place, the following ingredients must be present:

1. Parent participation in planning the curriculum activities and carrying them out. Home Sweet Homework, Curriculum Activity pages and Family Curriculum Input sheets are sent home monthly.
2. Choices by the child about what activities to do.
3. Support by adults and friends to help the child to think about his/her actions; and
4. An environment that is conducive to all types of learning.

Children must have daily opportunities to decide what they want to do. The staff helps each child to make choices and follow through with them. These choices provide the teaching staff with a starting point to begin developing individual plans for each child.

The Teachers begin to ask the child questions, make suggestions and pose problems. The Teachers help children to think about what he/she is doing. They observe, define and solve problems as a team. This teamwork between staff and children fosters the development of a sense of responsibility and facilitates the opportunity for children to be independent, active learners.

Our ultimate goal for children is the development of a positive self-concept, social skills and school readiness. This method of curriculum planning is designed to do just that. Children learn to get along cooperatively in the world with others as they explore and complete activities they have developed in partnership with their Teachers and parents.

### CHILD ASSESSMENT

In addition to the initial developmental screening that is conducted for each child, periodic ongoing assessments are conducted throughout the program year for children enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start. The results of these periodic assessments are reviewed with families during Family Conferences and home visits.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

### SCHOOL READINESS

It is the goal of the Head Start program to ensure that children transition to Kindergarten prepared and ready to learn. The Head Start program has developed a School Readiness Plan, with family input, for all children enrolled in the program beginning in Early Head Start. School Readiness goals are part of this plan and are updated annually to ensure proper planning for children and families as they transition from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start to Kindergarten.

### PHOTOGRAPHS

Parents may take photographs of their own child(ren) on Tri-Town property but are strictly prohibited from photographing other children. Photographs of groups of children or staff may not be posted on social media sites.

### BILINGUAL POLICY

Every effort is made to assess a participant's and their family's primary language upon intake. This information is obtained from the application and/or home visit interview.

Every effort is made to place children needing assistance with English translations in classrooms with bi-lingual speaking staff. The child's Teacher then tailors the classroom curriculum to meet the needs of that child. It is not the Teacher's goal to "teach the child English". It is however, the Teacher's goal to validate the language the child is currently using and to try to extend/add English to it wherever and whenever possible.

### RELEASE POLICY

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

It is the goal of Tri-Town Community Action Agency's Head Start Program to ensure the safety and well-being of each child and family served. In order to accomplish this, we find it necessary to adhere to certain program rules that encourage safe and responsible actions.

Therefore, we require that all people picking up a child be a parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian is unable to transport and they have placed someone else on the release list, it is required that these individuals be 18 years of age or older. If the

person transporting, from Tri-Town's Head Start facility, is not 18 years old or older, we will not release the child. In addition, the following policies/procedures must be followed:

- At drop-off, the parent must indicate who will pick the child up on the daily Sign-In sheet.
- The person's name **MUST** appear on the child's emergency information sheet, located in the child's file and first aid emergency backpack.
- The person **MUST** show a photo ID when picking the child up.

In the event that an emergency call-in by the parent/guardian takes place, the identity of the parent/guardian is verified using a security code chosen by the parent/guardian. No child will be released based on a phone call alone unless the security code is verbalized. If the parent/guardian is calling to report a change in pick up and that said parent is under duress, it is strongly recommended that the parent/guardian give the wrong security code. Staff will utilize predetermined questions for the parent/guardian to verify the security code. If the security code is stated incorrectly a second time, the staff member will alert the proper authorities. The child will not be released until the police arrive at the school and give consent for the release.

If these policies/procedures are not followed, the child WILL NOT be released.

In the event that the parent is the child's sole Emergency Contact, it is the policy of this program to contact RI DCYF in an emergency if the parent is unreachable. Parents are strongly encouraged to indicate at least two Emergency Contact names.

**PLEASE REMEMBER:** We need accurate emergency contact information at all times. Therefore, it is the policy of this program to assist families in updating this information on an annual basis. If there are changes in any information including custody of restraining orders, please contact your Case Manager/Home Visitor immediately.

### SECURITY CHIP POLICY

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

Tri-Town's Head Start Program has implemented a security chip system at all sites to ensure the safety of children, families, and staff at all times. All families are expected to place a refundable deposit for a security chip at the beginning of the program year to gain access into the centers. It is imperative that this security chip is

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

utilized to enter the center. In order to ensure the safety of all children and staff, access to the building is gained only by using your chip. At the end of the program year, participants will receive a refund of their deposit when the security chip is returned.

### TRANSPORTATION POLICY



\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

Tri-Town's Head Start program is a ***parental self-transport program***. We work with families who lack transportation to secure it when possible. Though Tri-Town is not responsible for transportation, we encourage families to abide by RI laws concerning vehicle safety for all children.

It is against all safety guidelines to leave any child unattended in a car. **If Tri-Town is aware of this practice by any Parent/Guardian, we talk with the Parent/Guardian individually and immediately. We are also mandated to report this act to DCYF.** In addition, RI general law states that all children who have not reached 4 feet 9 inches and are not between 8 and 12 years of age should use a federally approved child restraint system (Car Seat or Booster Seat) in the back seat of the vehicle. In addition, it is a Rhode Island Law that all persons riding in a motor vehicle wear seat belts at all times. If you are in need of a car/booster seat, see your Case Manager/Home Visitor for assistance.

### PEDESTRIAN AND CAR SEAT SAFETY INFORMATION

\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

Parents receive Pedestrian and Car Seat Safety pamphlets. These pamphlets encourage healthy practices that prevent injury. Both pamphlets describe the developmental level of young children and their inability to recognize and react to danger. The Car Seat Safety pamphlet includes the State of R.I. Child Restraint Law. Parents receive assistance if necessary to ensure that their vehicle has the appropriate child restraint system.

Some tips to follow when teaching children about pedestrian safety are:

- Pre-school children are not able to recognize a dangerous situation. Be sure to hold their hand.
- Understand and obey traffic signals and signs.
- Cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks.
- Before crossing the street, look left-right and left again. Cross when the street is clear, and keep looking both ways while crossing.
- Walk, don't run, across the street.
- Walk facing traffic, on sidewalks or paths.
- Hold a grown-up's hand in parking lots.

Some tips to follow about Car Seat Safety are:

- Air bags can save your life, but they can seriously hurt or kill infants and children.
- Your lap is never a safe place for children of any age to ride.
- Properly buckle the baby in a car seat in the back seat.
- Children need to ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are two years old or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.
- Children 2 years or older, or those younger than 2 years who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car safety seat, should use a Forward-Facing Car Safety Seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer
- Children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car safety seat should use a Belt-Positioning Booster Seat until the vehicle seat belt fits properly. Typically, this is when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.

### RESTRAINING ORDER POLICY

A copy of any current restraining or custody order is kept in your child's file at all times. Therefore, it is imperative that you supply Tri-Town with the appropriate copies. If we do not possess a copy of these, and the party listed on the order comes to the Center, legally, he/she may have the right to have contact with your child. PLEASE be sure to supply us with all appropriate documentation to ensure the safety of your child(ren)

### USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Parents are encouraged to use social media sites sensitively. These sites should not provide an opportunity to discuss issues about children and families enrolled in the Head Start program. Photographs of groups of children or staff may not be posted on social media sites. You are strongly encouraged to communicate verbally with Program staff any time you have a question or concern.

### DISCIPLINE POLICY



Children in our program are to be treated in a positive and reassuring manner. Staff encourages appropriate behaviors through positive recognition. When staff address children, it is done in a quiet voice and on the children's level. If a disciplinary situation occurs, the staff use positive approaches to help children feel respected while they are being corrected.

Teachers are encouraged to plan ahead to avoid discipline issues. They are encouraged to use positive discipline. The rules and limits should be clear and consistent for children. Redirecting children is encouraged. When discipline is necessary, it is strictly non-judgmental.

Children may be asked to use a "quiet area" for several minutes to give themselves time to settle down. Teachers may consult with a child's parent/guardian, Case Manager, and/or appropriate Coordinators if a problem persists or escalates.

**Assurance to parents:** At no time does a staff member use extreme punishment.

Staff is prohibited from:

1. Using corporal punishment,
2. Subjecting a child to severe or cruel punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse,
3. Denying food as a form of punishment, and
4. Punishing a child for soiling or wetting themselves.

### CHILD ABUSE POLICY

\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

The State of Rhode Island requires that suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect be reported to the Department for Children, Youth and Families. Failure to do so will result in a hearing, a fine for the staff person and/or possible loss of license for Tri-Town Community Action Agency.

It is the responsibility of all persons to report suspicions of abuse and neglect. It is not the responsibility of the staff to determine if abuse or neglect has occurred. Tri-Town's Head Start component staff does not undertake the responsibility, on their own, to treat cases of a child's abuse and/or neglect.

Abuse is defined in four basic ways:

1. **Physical Abuse:** is when bruises, burns, broken bones, etc. appearing on the child presents substantial risk of harm to the child.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** is repeated name-calling, scape-goating, and put-downs.
3. **Neglect:** the lack of basic adequate attention to the home, food, clothing, health care and personal hygiene of the child.
4. **Sexual Abuse:** is the penetration, inappropriate touching and/or exploitation of a minor.

All staff are responsible for carefully documenting and monitoring any cases of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. All suspected cases are reported to the Case Manager/Home Visitor and Family Development and Support Coordinator as soon as possible. Parents are notified about calls to DCYF except if the child's and/or staff's safety would be further jeopardized or in cases in which DCYF has encouraged staff not to inform the parents.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

The purpose of this protocol is to protect children and to prevent further neglect or abuse, not to punish parents. Parent awareness of abuse and/or neglect issues is introduced at the beginning of the program year and throughout the year.

**Reminder:** DCYF has the authority to interview any child without the parent's consent or presence. Staff makes every effort to be with the child during this interview for support; but it cannot be guaranteed due to DCYF policy and RI State Laws.

\_\_\_\_ Parent's Initials

The Sexual Offenders Registration and Notification Act (Megan's Law) requires Tri-Town CAA to provide a list of children enrolled in the Head Start program as well as their addresses to the local Police Department. This list enables the police to provide your family with any notification if a Sexual Offender were to move into your family's neighborhood.



### **FAMILY DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT**

The Family Development component serves as a link between the family, Head Start and the community.

Each family enrolled in the Head Start program has a Case Manager/Home Visitor that provides support and assistance as needed. Case Managers/Home Visitors provide guidance and resources necessary to assist families in reaching or maintaining self-sufficiency.

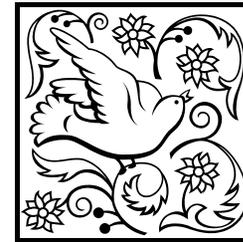
Case Managers conduct at least three (3) home visits per year. These home visits are scheduled with the family at a time that is most convenient.

Home Visitors complete weekly home visits with families enrolled in the Early Head Start Homebased option.

Case Managers/Home Visitors are on Site daily and can also be a link to other members of the Head Start Team, such as Teachers, and Coordinators.

If you need any type of assistance, please contact your Case Manager/Home Visitor. If he/she is unavailable, please contact the Family Development and Support Coordinator.

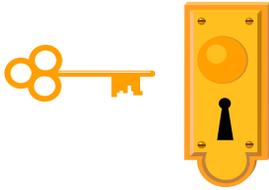
### **FAMILY SUPPORT COMPONENT**



Our goal for family support services is to emphasize the importance of good self-esteem and positive attitudes in order to promote overall social competence. The major focus of this effort is to assist families in dealing with issues they may be struggling with and to provide the appropriate family support services.

These services focus on the following:

1. promoting positive self-esteem in children, as well as parents and staff,
2. teaching individuals about how a child grows and develops emotionally,
3. assisting individuals in dealing with stress,
4. assisting individuals with any personal issues they may be having (relationship problems, a death in the family, divorce, illness, child discipline issues, drug and alcohol issues and so on), and
5. assisting individuals in finding the community support services and mental health services they need.



### **NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

Federal law requires that the Tri-Town Community Action Agency must provide clients with a copy of the Agency's Notice of Privacy Practices policy. This law mandates that we protect the privacy of health information that identifies, or can be used to identify, a client. This information is called "Protected Health Information" ("PHI"). The Notice of Privacy Practices describes your rights as our client, and our obligations regarding the use and disclosure of your protected health information.

Tri-Town Community Action Agency reserves the right to make changes to this Notice and to make such changes effective for all protected health information we may already have about you. If and when this Notice is changed, a copy will be posted at each Site in a prominent location.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential. Tri-Town does not distribute or release information in a participant's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without written consent of the child's parent/guardian. Tri-Town notifies the individual or his/her parent/guardian if a record is subpoenaed.

The participant and/or child's parent/guardian has, upon request, access to theirs or their child's record at reasonable times. Tri-Town has established procedures governing access to, duplication of, and dissemination of such information, and maintains a permanent, written log in each record indicating any persons to whom information contained in a record has been released.

However, if information is obtained by Tri-Town that an individual and/or family is in danger or at risk, this information is released to the proper authorities, without the participant's or parent's/guardian's written consent.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS COMPONENT**



The Head Start Special Needs component focuses on assisting parents/guardians and Staff in finding the best way for each child to learn through his/her strengths. Teachers and/or Home Visitors conduct an initial developmental and behavioral screening on every child. In the 3 to 5 year old program, the Special Needs Coordinator works with local Child Outreach programs to schedule an on-site developmental screening for each child. All screenings are conducted within the first 45 days of the child's start date. These are "quick looks" at what the child is able to do. Speech and language, large and small muscle skills, cognitive reasoning, social/emotional skills and self-help skills are assessed along with hearing and vision. In the birth-3 option, the Special Needs Coordinator, teachers, case managers, and home visitors work with the Early Intervention program and specialists. The ASQ-3 is used as a developmental screening for Early Head Start.

Each child's individual needs are addressed through their natural play experiences inside and outside of the classroom. Should you and/or your child's Teacher suspect that your child may need special services through Early Intervention or the local school department, the staff is available to support you throughout the referral process on behalf of your child. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please contact your child's Teacher, Home Visitor or Case Manager, the Education or Special Needs Coordinator.

### **TRANSITIONING TO INFANT/TODDLER CARE**

Children entering the Early Head Start center-based option receive one home visit before their classroom start date. This allows infants/toddlers and Teachers to meet one another in a relaxed, familiar environment, which facilitates a smoother transition into the classroom. When a child is enrolled in the Early Head Start home-based option, the family receives a packet of information in the mail prior to their first home visit. This packet introduces the family to Early Head Start and provides general child development information as well.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

### TRANSITIONING TO PRE-SCHOOL

For those children enrolled in our Early Head Start program, transition planning begins with the Teaching Team, Home Visitor, Case Manager, parents/ guardians, and the child at least six (6) months prior to that child turning three. During those 6 months, activities designed to make each child's transition as successful as possible are planned. Activities may include discussions about the expectations of a 3-5 year old classroom and what families can do to assist their child in the transition, joint home visits with old and new Home Visitors and Teachers and visits to the 3-5 year old classroom. While we make every attempt to transition children from Early Head Start into Head Start, this isn't always possible. DCYF licensing requires that children leave the infant/toddler classroom setting when they turn three. If the Head Start program is at full capacity, the child may be placed on a waiting list until an opening is available.

### TRANSITIONING TO KINDERGARTEN



Throughout the school year we begin to talk about the steps involved in entering kindergarten with the parents/guardians and those children age-eligible for kindergarten in the coming September. We remind parents/guardians to obtain original birth certificates, up-to-date immunization records from their pediatrician, necessary proof of residency documentation and to watch for flyers for registration dates and times. Parents/guardians receive a Health Summary detailing screening information, immunization records, physical and dental exam information. In addition, families receive a copy of their child's individual assessment report. Families are encouraged to share the report with their child's Kindergarten teacher. Transitioning children to kindergarten includes discussions, sharing Kindergarten registration information, a visit to the school to complete registration papers, and attendance at your local school's Kindergarten Open House. Please feel free to call us if you have any questions about going to kindergarten.

### PARENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mutual respect between staff and families is the primary goal of program relations. Through on-going communication, Tri-Town attempts to work closely with each participant to provide the best possible program for them and their families.

#### Reports to Parents:

Head Start periodically, but at least two (2) times per year, prepares a written progress report of the participation of each child. Head Start provides a copy of each report to the parents/guardians and meets with them at least two (2) times per year to discuss their child's activities and participation in the center. In addition, for children with special needs, Head Start actively participates in the planning for the child, which takes place between the parent/guardian, Early Intervention, and/or the local school department. Head Start brings special problems or significant developments to the parent's/guardian's attention as soon as they arise.

#### Family Conferences:

Head Start staff is available for individual conferences with families at their request, as well as three times per year as required by Head Start and Early Head Start. Teachers meet with families, within the first month of the program to discuss initial observations of their child, as well as goals for future success.

#### Transfer/Release of Records:

Upon written request from the parents/guardians, Tri-Town transfers/releases the child's record to the parents/guardians, or any other person the parent/guardian identifies, when the child is no longer in our care. However, we will only release the information that is ours to release. In other words, we cannot re-release information obtained from other Agencies regardless of participant or parental/guardian written permission. Custodial issues are dealt with on an individual basis.

#### Charges for Copies:

Tri-Town does not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of any information contained in the child's record.

## TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

### **Communicating with Staff:**

Communicating with staff is important. Head Start staff are available at the centers during pick-up and drop-off, by telephone, and through scheduled meeting times. Staff have access to Agency supported email and have voice mail on which messages can be left throughout the day. Email and voicemail are checked periodically throughout the work day as time allows. Head Start staff will communicate information regarding a child to the primary client only.

### **Information Required by the Office of Head Start:**

Notwithstanding **102CMR 7.05(19)**, upon request of an employee, authorized by the Director and involved in the regulatory process, Tri-Town makes available to the Office of Head Start any information required to be kept and maintained under these regulations and any other information reasonably related to the requirements of these regulations. Authorized employees of the Office of Head Start will maintain the confidentiality of individual records.

### **Home Visits:**

Case Managers conduct a minimum of three (3) home visits per year for Basic Head Start and four (4) for Early Head Start. Education staff conducts a minimum of three (3) home visits per year for Basic Head Start and six (6) per year in Early Head Start. The number of visits may vary based on the child's educational setting and

program option.

Home Visitors conduct weekly home visits with families enrolled in the Early Head Start Home-Based option.

### **Copies of Regulations:**

Program regulations are available on the internet by searching *Head Start Program Performance Standards* and Rhode Island *DCYF Child Care Licensing Regulations*.

### **NOTES:**