

MID-WEST NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER FAMILY HANDBOOK

2026-2027



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FAMILY HANDBOOK

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W E L C O M E

The Mid-West NMCAP grantee board members, Policy Council Members, and staff would like to take this opportunity to welcome Parents/Guardians and your children to our Early Childhood Development Center.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

- High quality early child services for children 6 months to 3 years of age
Early Head Start (EHS) Monday – Friday, August-June.
- High quality preschool services for children 3-5 years old Head Start (HS),
Monday-Friday, operating August-May.
- Services for children with special needs.
- Breakfast, lunch, and snack for enrolled children.
- Parenting and literacy classes.
- Quality staff - all staff will receive a background check in accordance with
Head Start Performance Standard (HSPS) 1302.90 (b).
- Disability and adult education services are provided through community
partnerships.
- Medical/Dental exams and services are scheduled and paid for by
insurance or Medicaid, if child is not covered by one of the above the
agency will cover the cost as per funding availability.
- These services are provided at no cost to families who meet the eligibility
requirement.
- Check with your local Center Director/Manager for other services in which
you may qualify.
- Transportation may be available for enrolled children.
- Male involvement activities.

“Education is the best thing you can give your child”

~Anonymous

MID-WEST NMCAP EARLY CHILDHOOD MISSION STATEMENT

“Through our work and partnership with families and the community we empower every child and every family we serve to be ready for life and school.”

~Education Team

MID-WEST NMCAP EARLY CHILDHOOD PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

We believe that early learning is the root of success and begins at birth. Early Head Start and Head Start provides experience and opportunities to help families in providing a “good beginning” for their children.

We believe that families are the first and most important teachers for their children. To carry out this goal, the Agency helps build the skills and strengths of families by giving them information and varied opportunities for application of these skills. We highly encourage family involvement and hope you have an opportunity to participate in your child’s classroom.

We emphasize an individual approach when working with children and families based upon individually assessed needs agreed upon by both families and staff. Our goals are directed towards the enhancement of the family and the involvement of the community in the services that we provide through an integrated approach to delivery of services.

We create a learning environment that prioritizes the health, safety, well-being, and comfort of children, families, and staff by following all relevant regulations and standards. Our approach incorporates best practices in early childhood development, including inclusivity, multiculturalism, and optimal room arrangements as outlined in the Early Childhood Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale and supported by current research. Additionally, we emphasize the importance of fostering positive relationships between teaching staff, children, and families.

INTRODUCTION

The Mid-West New Mexico Community Action Program (MWNMCAP or The “CAP” Office), is a grantee agency, a non-profit corporation which sponsors various programs in the counties of Catron, Cibola, McKinley, Socorro and Valencia. The Mid-West NMCAP Head Start is funded for a total enrollment of 270 children. Early Head Start program is funded for a total enrollment of 112 children. These services are at no cost to the families.

The service areas are located in the Mid-Western part of the state of New Mexico and cover an area of approximately 20,000 square miles or approximately 1/5 of the state of New Mexico.

The Agency’s Grantee Board and the Policy Council, hereafter referred to as the Governing Body, are unified in shared governance, in which parents of currently enrolled children participate in policy making and in other decision making concerning our various programs.

This handbook is for parents/guardians of currently enrolled children. Its purpose is to identify, explain and answer some of the most significant questions parents may encounter in the daily operation of the program.

Mid-West NMCAP EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Every ECDC in the Mid-West NMCAP family is a state licensed childcare center. If you have any site-specific questions, please feel free to contact the appropriate Center Director/Manager. Business hours are from 8:00AM-5:00 PM Monday through Friday.

Center	Contact	Telephone	Address
Valencia County ECDC	Open <i>Center Director</i>	(505) 864-6700	2747 Highway 47 Los Lunas, NM 87031
Gallup ECDC	Duane Casias <i>Center Director</i>	(505) 722-7428	310 E. Maloney Ave Gallup, NM 87301
Grants ECDC	Annette Alcon <i>Center Director/Manager</i>	(505) 287-4470	246 Mountain Rd. Grants, NM 87020
Socorro ECDC	Isabel Binger <i>Center Manager</i>	(575) 835-0008	239 Garfield St. Socorro, NM 87801

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. We are required to provide orientation to parents of enrolled children prior to the children’s first day of school.

During this orientation you will be provided with additional information. Center staff will be available to help you by answering any questions or addressing any concerns you may have on a one-to-one basis.

2. Mid-West NMCAP is an equal opportunity employer, which prohibits physical segregation or any other discriminatory action against any children, or their families based on eligible income and eligible age, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or spousal affiliation.
3. MWNMCAP is dedicated to ensure complete confidentiality of all information gathered and/or utilized by its various programs. All employees and volunteers of MWNMCAP must sign a declaration of confidentiality before service can begin.
4. It is understood that all discussions between the employees of Mid-West NMCAP and the parents/guardians of the children are confidential. We will not divulge any information that is of confidential manner to any person without prior written consent from parents/guardians. We will not discuss any situation that involves other children without their parents/guardian present. It is understood that all discussions will be conducted in a respectful and caring manner. We will not participate in discussions that disclose information about children and families enrolled in our school. We respect that the families of children will uphold the same consideration. It is understood that discussions with parents/ guardians will occur during a time in which confidentiality can be upheld (example: not during busy drop- off and pick-up times or in the presence of their child(ren). We will make ourselves available for meetings or phone discussions to ensure they can be conducted in a confidential manner.

SAFETY

1. All grounds and facilities are smoke free. The center prohibits smoking, to include e-cigs, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, and/or firearms(s). This regulation applies to all functions held at all facilities and grounds.
2. All personnel working at a center and/or volunteers of center having primary custody of children for six (6) hours or more per week will have a background check in compliance with HSPS 1302.90 (b)
3. All visitors must sign in at the center office and briefly state their business to the Center Director/Manager or designated staff member. All visitors will be provided with a pass and must sign in and out.
4. The ECDC is responsible for enrolled children from the time they are signed-in/signed-out and are only allowed to release children to authorized parent/guardians and/or to emergency adults 18 years or older.
5. Children should wear comfortable, wash-n-wear play clothes, since most of the planned activities involve playing on the floor, outdoors, finger painting, water/clay play. An extra set of clothing will be requested. We understand that

- in summertime it gets hot outside. However, parents, please bring your children in closed toed shoes. It is very important to keep their little feet safe when walking or playing around the school grounds. Please do not let them wear **flip-flops or sandals, or high heels** to school.
6. Parents will be provided with their child's scheduled school hours. **Children may not arrive earlier than their scheduled time.** This includes those school days when school is on "delay time", due to weather conditions.
 7. If a child is not picked up at the center or at the bus stop and a parent is not able to be contacted, center staff is required by state law to report this as possible child neglect.
 8. Parent/guardian must sign-in/out with their child's classroom teacher. **A child must never be left alone in the classroom.**
 9. Any individual entering the center must wash his/her hands thoroughly.
 10. Emergency/evacuation procedures are posted in every classroom (parents may review at any time). Center staff are trained in evacuation and emergency procedures prior to the first day of instruction.
 11. Mid-West NMCAP employees are required to notify New Mexico Children Youth and Families Division (CYFD) at ANY sign of abuse or neglect.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

1. All children will be offered breakfast, lunch, and snack, with no physical segregation of or other discriminatory action against any child because of race, color, age, origin, sex, disability or religion.
2. If a child has allergies to various foods, a **doctor's note** must be provided to the Health Specialist/Manager and Nutrition Manager prior to the child's first day of attendance.
3. Our Program provides all meals for children while in our care, therefore, no food is allowed from outside. All foods served in our center for meals and snacks are prepared on site, unless medically necessary. If there is a medical reason that a child needs foods from home (i.e. an allergy) this must be documented by a doctor's note with dietary restrictions clearly outlined.
12. Children are not allowed to bring any toys/special goodies or treats to the Center. Please explain to your child, these items need to stay home, or in your vehicle. Also, check your child's pockets on jackets, pants, and dresses for such items before they come to school!

ENROLLMENT/ATTENDANCE

13. Enrollment varies by Program. Head Start enrollment is based upon prioritization outlined in our ERSEA Plan.
14. The Program must document the cause of child's absences. To achieve this a

notification by way of text or email will be sent to the parent or guardian within 1 hour of class starting. When a child has been absent without a documented excuse for three (3) consecutive days, the staff will contact the child's parents and schedule a home visit and provide documentation on the home visit form, conference form or parent contact form.

When absenteeism persists, the child's slot will be considered an enrollment vacancy. After five (5) consecutive days of absences, the child may be disenrolled and placed on a waiting list. Center Director/Manager or designee will inform parents, in writing, of disenrollment.

15. Parent/Guardian must go to the Center Office for a 'student admit slip' when bringing a child late (more than 15 minutes) or they will not be admitted. (Offsite classrooms are exempt from this policy)
16. A child showing signs of a communicable illness and/or has a temperature at or above 100.5 degrees will be sent home.
17. Medication can be administered at each ECDC as a last resort with written parental consent and a signed physician orders on how and when the prescribed medication is to be administered. We recommend requesting medication that can be administered at home by the parent/guardian.
18. Mid-West NMCAP ECDCs will follow local school district weather policies.

EXAMINATIONS, SCREENINGS AND ASSESSMENTS

19. Performance Standards requires that each child enrolled in said Program receive a complete medical and dental examination within the first 45 days the child is enrolled in the program.

Parents must provide a copy of their child's Medical and Dental examination. If your child has a Medicaid Card or private insurance, you must take your child to your own Medical or Dental provider.

If your child does not have Medical/Dental insurance, the Health Specialist will assist parents to make a Medical or Dental appointment. Your cooperation in keeping these appointments is very important. Rescheduling causes undue hardship on all program participants and also risks local Medical or Dental Professionals discontinuing services with our Centers.

20. Each child enrolled in the Program will be screened and assessed in accordance with program requirements. Results will be discussed with child's parents during Parent/Teacher Conferences.
21. Head Start Performance Standards requires a minimum of two (2) home visits and two (2) Parent/Teacher Conferences per year.

The Agency requires during 'home visits' two staff members must be present at all times, **with no exception to this regulation.**

TRANSPORTATION (HS 3-5 years only)

Transportation will be provided based upon availability and with designated boundaries. Children living close to their local ECDC may not be eligible for child's individual needs. Parents must have children at the pickup location 5 minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. The bus will depart 1 minute after scheduled stop time. Parents must arrive at the drop-off location 5 minutes before the bus is scheduled to drop off their child. Children will only be released to those that are found on the Child's Transportation Authorization Form.

Parents are to notify the Center Office immediately when they will not be able to pick up their child at the bus stop. **All children will be brought back to school** if an eligible adult is not at the bus stop to sign the child off the bus.

22. School bus 'STOPS' will not be changed and 'BUS SCHEDULES' will not be altered by the bus driver or other staff prior to the Center Director/Manager, Transportation Coordinator consulting with each other.
23. Route Requirements: On morning routes, a complete stop shall be made at all established school bus stops whether students are present or not, unless a parent or guardian, school district administrator or transportation provider has notified the driver that the student will be absent. The driver will not wait for students unless they are observed making an effort to reach the bus or unless otherwise specified and justified in the student's IEP. The bus will be brought to a complete stop with the park brake activated before taking on or letting off students. The driver will use good judgment and not impede traffic unnecessarily.
24. In transporting school projects, in school bus, the following shall apply:
 - a. No item shall occupy a bus seating space.
 - b. No item shall be placed in the bus driver compartment.
 - c. Transportation Staff/Teaching Staff must assist children when sending correspondence and artwork home.
 - d. Children's artwork is to be in a paper bag provided to the children or in child's backpack.
 - e. Items will be under control of the child at all times and carried on child's lap, to include jackets, when not wearing them.
 - f. No rolling backpacks will be allowed on the bus.
 - g. No toys/food shall be allowed on the bus.

Bus Drivers are authorized to disallow the transportation of any objects that can become a danger while the bus is in motion. Parents must make arrangements with the Center Director/Manager or designated staff, for these items that need to be taken from home to school or school to home. This includes using school bus for transporting other items when children are not being transported; this is a danger to the bus driver and is not allowed.

FIELD TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

25. Field trips may be taken throughout the school year. These trips are educationally oriented and reflect the curriculum.

Each child must have a signed permission slip in his/her file from parents or guardians for each individual field trip taken. Prior notification of any events will be sent home with your child.

Your child will not be allowed to participate without your signed permission slip, please remember to return permission slips with your child. Buses will be used for field trips in transporting the children.

26. Non-local field trips may be allowed with the approval of the Head Start Director.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Enrolled children with developmental disabilities or special needs are included in all classrooms and activities.

The Agency must have parent's written consent for all screenings by a third party, such as the following and any others that may come about:

- a) Speech and Language
- b) Developmental Concerns
- c) Physical and/or Health Concerns

Parents will be notified when their child is scheduled for screening. Parents are notified of the results of their child's screening. After the assessment is completed, parents are invited to a meeting where the results will be shared. An IEP will be developed, if the child is eligible. Parents are required to attend the IEP meeting.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Wellness promotion. To support a program-wide culture that promotes children's mental health, social and emotional well-being, and overall health as per Head Start Performance Standard 1302.45 (a)-(b).

Discipline and Suspension/Expulsion Policy:

Discipline Policy:

Discipline refers to teaching strategies and positive guidance that encourage young children to develop the appropriate social-emotional and regulatory skills considered to be essential for school readiness. Staff are expected to be informed about and practice positive guidance (disciplinary) techniques. Disciplinary practices are designed to:

- a. Encourage children to “Be a Friend” (treat others with kindness and respect), “Be a Worker” (follow directions, stay on task, and persist), and “Be Safe” (practice safe behaviors that protect all individuals and the environment).
- b. Be consistent, age appropriate, clear, and understandable to the child.
- c. Promote positive guidance, redirection, and the setting of clear limits.

Positive discipline includes:

- Model appropriate behavior with children during conflict resolution.
- Provide children with appropriate redirection and positive choices.
- Encourage desirable behavior with verbal and non verbal reinforcement.
- Expectations are stated positively - talk about what to do, not what not to do.
- Classroom Agreements (rules) are developed collaboratively with children’s input.
- Provide advanced notice of transitions: “five minutes until cleanup, two minutes until cleanup.”
- A daily schedule (both written and visual) is posted and consistently maintained.
- Provide a brief, supervised separation from the group.

Prohibited discipline includes:

- Physical punishment of any type.
- Threats of physical punishment or coercion.
- Withdraw or withholding of food, rest, bathroom, or outdoor activities.
- Abusive or profane language, including yelling, or using language that threatens humiliates, or frightens a child.
- Any form of public or private humiliation or emotional abuse.
- Unsupervised isolation of a child. Unsupervised means that a staff member and the

In the event that behavior persists despite positive intervention and/or presents a threat to the child or others:

1. Intervene immediately if there is a chance that a child may be physically hurt.
2. Remove the child from the situation. Allow the child to calm down and prepare to rejoin the group. Any separation from the group is always within sight and hearing of staff. A staff member must remain available to offer support and assistance to rejoin the group.
3. Notify the parent/guardian and complete all required documentation.
4. Persistent or potentially harmful behavior warrants a Service Coordination Meeting. Center staff will work with parent(s)/guardian(s) to develop a plan that fosters the child’s skills. Program components that may be utilized to address persistent challenging behaviors include but are not limited to: parent involvement in the classroom, changing classroom assignment, assignment of additional staff, and additional staff training.

A copy of the Discipline Policy will be clearly posted in each classroom and will be provided to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of all enrolled children.

Suspension/Expulsion Policy

MWNMCAP is committed to working with families in order to prevent expulsion of a child.

This expulsion policy follows mandatory guidelines established by the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD 8.1.6.2.22.C(3)) and the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS 1302.17) for preventing and severely limiting expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings. The goal of this policy is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and families that severely limits expulsion, suspension, or other exclusionary discipline; these exclusionary measures are to be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a determination of a serious safety threat that cannot otherwise be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications. Expulsion due to a child's behavioral challenges alone is prohibited and will be addressed through the service coordination and intervention process.

Suspension - should a child's behavior present a serious safety threat for themselves or other children or adults, necessitating a temporary removal or change to the child's current program (suspension), MWNMCAP will collaborate with parents to utilize appropriate referrals and community resources, such as a mental health consultant or other appropriate specialists. Even in such extraordinary cases, MWNMCAP will assist the child and family in accessing services and an alternative placement through community-based child care resources and referral agencies. In the event of a temporary suspension, MWNMCAP must support the child's return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring the safety of all children by (HSPPPS 1302.17 (a)(4)):

- (i) continuing to engage with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and a mental health consultant, and continuing to utilize appropriate community resources;
- (ii) Developing a written plan to document the action and supports needed;
- (iii) Providing services that include home visits; and,
- (iv) Determining whether a referral to a local agency responsible for implementing IDEA is appropriate.

Expulsion - Should a situation arise where there is documented evidence that all possible interventions and supports recommended by qualified professionals, such as an early childhood mental health consultant or school district ChildFind team, have been exhausted - and it is collaboratively determined by the family, teacher, program, and other service providers that another setting is more appropriate for the well-being of the child - all parties, including the receiving program, will work together to develop a seamless transition plan and use that plan to implement a smooth transition from MWNMCAP to an appropriate receiving program (HSPPS 1302.17 (b)(3)).

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

These policies and procedures in child abuse and/or neglect are intended to comply with state and federal laws and established standards of performance and expectation for Mid-West NMCAP employees.

New Mexico state law (NMSA-8-32A) and the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) amended in 1996 (PL 104-235 Section 106); mandates that anyone who suspects child abuse and/or neglect must report. **Failure to report: if you suspect abuse and/or neglect and do not report your suspicion, you can be charged with a misdemeanor in a court of law.**

STAFF and PARENT TRAINING:

1302.92(b)(2): Training on methods to handle suspected or known child abuse and neglect cases, that comply with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws. The Agency, at the beginning of each program year, will coordinate with CYFD, local law enforcement office or others in providing staff and parents of enrolled children with training on child abuse and/or neglect, policies and procedures, how to identify and report suspected child abuse and/or neglect, in accordance with applicable state and local laws using, so far as possible, a helpful rather than a punitive attitude towards abusing or neglecting parents and/or caretaker.

STAFF/PARENTS:

Staff and parents will be provided with a copy of this child abuse and/or neglect reporting policies and procedures and with a statewide central intake packet, which includes how to identify, and report suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

EVERYONE:

Anyone who has a reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused and/or neglected, is mandated to report the matter to CYFD or local law enforcement.

EMPLOYEE:

If an employee has evidence that a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, the employee must immediately call 911 and report the matter to the local law enforcement. In addition, the staff member must immediately notify the Center Director/Manager and the Center Director/Manager must notify the EHS/Head Start Director by telephone when a report has been made, and within twenty-four (24) hours, will submit the completed report form, stamped confidential, to the attention of the EHS/Head Start Director.

REPORTING PROCEDURES:

1. To protect the child and staff member; when reporting suspected child abuse and/or neglect in good faith, all staff members must file a report by making a telephone call to CYFD when he/she has a reasonable suspicion of a child abuse and/or neglect incident(s).

2. All calls, including anonymous calls on suspected child abuse and/or neglect are investigated by law. If employee feels the child is in a dangerous or life-threatening situation, the employee must immediately report the matter to the local law enforcement agency, afterwards notify the Center Director/Manager and follow up with a written report.
3. Employee will completely fill out the Agency's Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect Incident Report Form". The employee will immediately submit written report to the Center Director/Manager.
4. The Center Director/Manager will immediately notify the EHS/Head Start Director by telephone when a report has been made, and within twenty-four (24) hours, will submit the completed report form, stamped confidential, to the attention of the EHS/Head Start Director.
5. The EHS Director and Center Director/Manager will keep all suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect Incident Reports received in a locked cabinet.

WHY SHOULD ABUSE BE REPORTED:

Answer: To protect the child. You are required by law to report what you suspect to be child abuse and/or neglect. You should not hesitate to speak out and promptly report to your immediate supervisor. The intent of the law is not to punish parents, but to keep the child in the home unless they are in a life-threatening situation.

Individuals who report suspected child abuse and/or neglect are protected by the law; immune from civil or criminal liability for reporting in good faith. If you do not want to give your name, the case will still be investigated. Please care enough to help the children and keep them safe.

HOW TO REPORT:

A report of suspected child abuse and/or neglect may be made by telephone, and document in person or in writing to CYFD.

WHAT INFORMATION TO GIVE:

1. The name and address of the child and family and/or caregiver.
2. The age of the child if known.
3. The name of the person you suspected is abusing and/or neglecting the child.
4. The potential risk for the child, family and investigator.
5. Why you suspect the child is being abused and/or neglected.

6. Your name, if you choose to give it (makes it possible for CYFD worker to talk with you if necessary). An anonymous report will be investigated.

WHO INVESTIGATES:

1. CYFD **only** investigates abuse and/or neglect in which the perpetrator is a caregiver of the child.
2. Law enforcement investigates **all** abuse and/or neglect reports including day care providers, foster parents, and institutions.
3. CYFD and law enforcement **jointly** investigate child abuse and/or neglect when appropriate.

**IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE AND/OR
NEGLECT
REPORT IT!**

**1-855-333-SAFE(7233)
#SAFE**

Parent/Community Complaint Policy

All the staff at the Mid-West New Mexico Community Action Program are concerned about the well-being of young children and their families in this community. The staff, therefore, is anxious to listen to your suggestions and any concerns you may have regarding the day-to-day operations in the classroom or communication between families, staff and the community.

Complaint Procedures:

A. Complaints which involve child abuse or neglect must be referred to CYFD in the county where the child resides.

B. Submission of complaints: Complaints regarding any facility should be submitted to the Center Director/Manager, EHS/Head Start Director or Chief Executive Officer.

1. Complaints should be submitted in writing and signed by the complainant.
2. Complainants telephoning the Agency should identify themselves and be able to provide the necessary information needed in order to document the complaint.

C. Acknowledgment: The Agency shall, whenever possible, acknowledge in writing or by phone all complaints received within ten (10) working days of receipt.

PLEASE KNOW THAT WE RESPECT AND VALUE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR PROGRAM. YOUR IDEAS AND CONCERNS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US AND WE TAKE THIS POLICY SERIOUSLY. ALL CONCERNS WILL BE DOCUMENTED, INVESTIGATED, AND RESOLVED WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE HEAD START PROGRAM OBJECTIVES.

MID-WEST NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

PARENT/COMMUNITY COMPLAINT FORM

Complainant Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Contact Number: _____ Center/Site: _____

1. The date(s) during which the alleged actions occurred:

2. Please state reason for complaint:

3. The nature of the incident or action that led to the complaint:

4. Names and addresses of persons who may have knowledge of the incident or action:

Person Receiving Complaint: _____ Date: _____

*Please submit this form in writing within five (5) days after the events on which the grievance is based.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION?

Career development funds are available for Early Head Start/Head Start parents who join our agency and would like to take college courses at their local university. Please contact your local Family and Community Services (FCS) Specialist.

WOULD YOU LIKE A NEW CAREER?

Parents are encouraged to apply for employment with the Agency when a vacancy becomes available, with proper qualifications.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Participate in decision making about the nature and operation of the program.

- a. Become an active member of the Center Committee, Policy Council and Male Involvement events.
- b. Talk with other parents and staff about the program and ways they can help.
- c. Share information with other parents and staff about the program and ideas on ways to improve the program.
- d. Get involved with your local center.
- e. Observe how your child works and plays with other children.
- f. Communicate with the FCS Specialist to assist in planning programs that are of interest to your family.
- g. Become aware of your community resources by working together on community problems that are of concern, such as housing, health or welfare.
- h. Keep appointment for home visits and parent/teacher conferences.

PARENT COMMITTEE

One of the most direct ways for parents to be effective in the program is through participation in the parent committee. This committee consists of all parents of children enrolled in each center. You will have what is referred to as the committee officers and all other center parents of children enrolled in each center are parent committee members.

ELECTIONS OF CENTER COMMITTEE OFFICERS

1. Each county parent committee's chairperson will automatically serve as the first parent representative to the policy council.
2. The remaining parent representatives will be elected by the parents of the parent committee at each local ECDC according to the number of policy council memberships per county as listed on the membership chart.
3. Each parent center committee will be eligible to elect two (2) alternates.

PARENT COMMITTEE NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS

1. The parent committee chairperson will be responsible for organizing and conducting meetings. The Center Director/Manager, in conjunction with assigned staff, will be available to help plan meetings and assist the parent committee chairperson.
2. Elected parent committee officers are seated and chairperson takes over conducting business.
3. Nepotism: No person can serve as a member of the policy council while any member of his or her immediate family is employed in the program. The immediate family will hereby be defined as spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, siblings, or relative by marriage of comparable degree. This definition covers any person related by birth, adoption, or marriage.
4. Conflict of Interest: No two members of the same family can serve on the policy council as a voting member or alternate.

The above are according to the Agency bylaws, Article IV, Sections 1 and 2.

ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE POLICY COUNCIL

The policy council consists of members from the four (4) counties. Policy councils and policy committees must work in partnership with key management teams and the governing bodies to develop, review, and approve or disapprove policies.

1. Mileage and per diem for parent representatives are allowed for policy council meetings. Mileage and per diem for community representatives may also be allowed for policy council meetings.
2. The policy council membership consists of representatives from the four counties. A total of eighteen (18) members and alternates, thirteen (13) parent representatives and five (5) community representatives.

Socorro County

- (2) Two Head Start parent representatives
- (1) One Early Head Start parent
- (2) Two alternates to parent representative
- (1) One community representative

Valencia County

- (3) Three parent representatives
- (1) One Early Head Start parent
- (3) Three alternates to parent representatives
- (2) Two community representative

Cibola County

- (2) Two Head Start parent representatives
- (1) One Early Head Start parent
- (2) Two alternates to parent representative
- (1) One community representative

McKinley County

- (2) Two Head Start parent representatives
- (1) One Early Head Start parent
- (2) Two alternates to parent representative
- (1) One community representative

Policy council parents should have an alternate. Alternates do not vote when the member is present.

Parent committee members play a vital role in the recruitment and screening of employees. Within the guidelines established by the policy council or policy committee, members of the parent committees:

- Assist agencies to determine how and where to recruit potential employees;
- Help determine the selection criteria; and
- Participate in the interview process.

***IMPORTANT:** Any staff/employee who may have a child enrolled in the ECDC program are obligated to follow and abide by center committee guidelines, decisions, participation, etc. However, they do NOT have any voting power. Nor can they hold an office, or be a representative to the policy council, screening selection committee, or the center parents grievance committee.

ECDC CLASSROOMS/CURRICULUM STATEMENT

All classroom activities must be “developmentally appropriate” for the enrolled children, which means that activities must be planned at each child’s own level. School Readiness is the ultimate goal for all children and their families. MWNMCAP diligently selects School Readiness Goals each year to ensure focus and attention in the areas that children need to be successful in their education career.

These activities must lead to certain outcomes in the domains of literacy, language development, mathematics, science, creative arts, social and emotional development, physical health and development and approaches to learning. Children learn best through play, so the activities must be fun and meaningful to the children.

The Agency is currently using the Creative Curriculum in all classrooms throughout the Agency’s service areas. It is our belief and Creative Curriculum’s belief that children who are exposed to high-quality setting and educational materials gain better literacy and mathematical skills, develop better cognitive and social skills for everyday life. Creative Curriculum is a fully integrated, comprehensive curriculum with carefully sequenced and systematic instructions and provides a strong foundation in early literacy.

The Creative Curriculum was developed based on several sets of early childhood curriculum guidelines including those of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education. The Creative Curriculum meets the Head Start domains for measuring children’s outcomes.

MWNMCAP, with the support of the Creative Curriculum, believes in play as the primary mode of learning. The teachers will plan a variety of fun activities and set up their classroom environments to accomplish the outcomes. When you go into your child’s classroom you may think that your child is only playing but in reality, that has been a carefully planned activity.

MWNMCAP, with the support of the Creative Curriculum, strives for the active engagement of all children by providing them various opportunities to make independent choices and to experiment and explore their environment and creativity which leads to your child’s positive emotional and cognitive development.

PARENT ACTIVITY FUNDS

It is the policy of the Agency: (a) to adopt and include, as an amendment, the same purchasing practices addressed in the accounting procedures manual for the expenditures of appropriation of the parent's activity fund.

Allowable Expenditures

- Educational/cultural activities: Costs associated with trips to museums, field trips, cultural events, and other educational activities, are an allowable expenditure.
- Educational equipment
- Equipment maintenance and repairs

MID-WEST NM COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM
FAMILY HANDBOOK

I hereby acknowledge that I have received orientation and have been provided with a copy of the Mid-West NMCAP – Early Childhood Development Center Family Handbook.

I further acknowledge that I have read and understand its contents.

(Print Name)

(Center – Print)

(Signature)

(Date)

(County)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM