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## **Mission Statement**

**Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Inc. provides:**

- **High quality family-centered child development programs**
- **Strong partnerships with families**
- **Leadership and advocacy within the community for the healthy development of all young children.**



## Separation Challenges



Separation difficulties can happen with any child at *any* time during their preschool years. Whether this is your child's first preschool experience or a mid-year crisis, you have probably tried everything, including a few special treats, but he/she will not be convinced that preschool is the place where they should be. It is very important that you are ready for the separation, also. If you are anxious about your child starting preschool, they will pick up on that anxiety.

### **Drop-off routine to the rescue!**

Whether this is your child's first school experience or a new phase, these meltdowns are difficult for everyone involved. What do you do when your child refuses to say goodbye and happily go into the classroom? What you need is a "drop off routine." Children like routines because they provide a sense of security. Just as a good bedtime routine helps in the evening hours, a good drop-off routine will help you at preschool.

Creating the drop-off routine should include your child's teacher. Decide on steps that you will take every day when you and your child arrive at preschool. The goal is to establish and follow a routine for saying goodbye. The more your child knows what to expect, the more likely he/she will remain calm as the "goodbye" approaches.

### **Keep it simple!**

Your routine could be as simple as helping your child hang up his coat, reading a book in the reading corner and then waving goodbye at the door. Or you might watch your child color a picture and take it with you when you leave. The routine can change over time and eventually you might not even need one.

A drop-off routine will not always keep your child from crying, especially at first. Some children cry for days or even weeks before they adjust. You may need the teacher's reassuring arms to help your child as you leave.

Helping children with separation is a large part of a preschool teacher's job. Often the teacher is very effective at calming down your child after the goodbye has passed. Believe your child's teacher when she/he says that your little one only cried for ten minutes or so.

### **Some simple steps for separation!**

There are other simple steps that can help your child adjust to the separation. Leave a family picture in your child's cubby. Show your child that you trust and like his teacher with a happy "hello" in the morning. Provide your child with the chance to talk about his feelings, but then change the subject to something positive. Try to relax and believe that this problem will pass. Before you know it you will be hearing them say "but I said I wasn't ready to go home!"

## Parent Involvement

At Head Start, we believe that parents are the most important teachers their children will ever have. We also want you to become involved in the program. Parents are welcome to visit any classroom at any time, so you always have access to your child.

There are many ways for parents to get involved in Head Start.

### Home Visits

Your child's Teacher will meet with you and will do four home visits with you per year. Your Family Worker will also visit you at your convenience.

#### Purpose of home visits:

- To allow **you** to tell us about **your** child and what **you** want for him/her and your family.
- To give you a chance to learn more about your child's day and progress at school.
- To provide a time for you to ask questions.
- To give you information and resources to meet your goals for your family.

#### ❖ Family Fun Events

These events are held monthly at your child's school. During these events, parents and Family Workers discuss things that are going on in the classrooms and parents have a chance to make suggestions about the program. We also have guest speakers, discussions, and activities for children and families together. Parents set meeting times and help run the events.

#### ❖ Policy Council

Each Parent Committee elects parents to represent them as a member of Head Start Policy Council. The Policy Council has the responsibility of reviewing and approving or disapproving new policies, and other important program issues.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are a very important part of the Head Start program.

To provide the best services, parent and community volunteers are needed to share their talents, knowledge and energy. While volunteer activity is not required for a child to be in the program, parents who volunteer benefit Head Start children and the whole family.

Some specific jobs that volunteers may do:

- assist in the center-based classrooms
- help recruit children for the program
- assist with outings and Head Start field trips
- provide special musical and dramatic activities
- assist with snack/meal preparation and serving at special events
- support on-going activities
- donate supplies and equipment
- assist with typing, record-keeping and projects
- work at home on special projects (sewing, woodworking, cutting)
- participate in monthly meetings

Parents who are volunteering in the classrooms may not bring other children with them to the school. Free child care will be provided for Family Fun Events and special events as noted on the parent calendar.

## A Brief Overview of Head Start

### Education

The activities we provide for the children are what we call “developmentally appropriate”. This means that we plan for each individual child. We learn about your child from you and by observing him/her at play. We plan activities that meet his/her interests and abilities, as well as, what he’s ready to learn next. Because we plan for each child individually, we welcome children who have disabilities. We recognize that children with disabilities are children first.

### Field Trips/Guest Speakers

Once a month, your child will have an opportunity to go on a field trip or have a visitor from the community come to the classroom. Field trips and speakers are great ways to give your child the opportunity to learn more about the community and the people within it. Please look for announcements of field trips or speakers in your child’s monthly newsletter or a note from your child’s teacher. You are welcome to come with your child’s class on a field trip or visit the classroom for the speaker.

### Family Partnerships

Each family has a Family Worker who can assist in securing other services in the community such as medical care, energy assistance, housing, continuing education and transportation. Each school year, your Family Worker will meet individually with you several times to make sure that both our Head Start and other programs in the community are meeting your needs.

### Health

To be successful in school and life, it is important to stay as healthy as possible. Here at Head Start we have **health requirements** for your child:

- **Health and Development Assessment Form (Filled out during your application)**
- **A copy of your child’s Immunization Card or medical records that are current and up to date for his or her age**
- **Well Child/Physical Exam Form with all necessary blood work, according to your child’s age. This must be signed by a health care provider and remain current during the year. Regular age-appropriate well-child exams must be completed throughout the year.**
- **Dental exam for all children must be signed and dated within 30 days of program start date, if applicable. Fluoride varnish will be administered four times per year with parent permission.**

If you do not have private insurance, Title XIX, or Hawk I insurance, we will help you with the application process.

## Physical Activity

Active play and exercise are part of healthy child development and our curriculum. While at Head Start, **children's shoes must allow safe participation in activities**. Tennis shoes with socks are the best choice to prevent injuries. During the *summer months* flat sandals with a secure heel strap are okay, but sandals with heels, thin straps or flip flops do not promote safe active play. Snow boots are needed during the winter months to allow for outdoor play when snow is on the ground. Please notify your Family Worker if you need help getting safe shoes for your child.

## Mental Health

At Head Start our approach towards mental health is holistic. This means that the basic needs of the individual are met and include the physical, emotional, social and cognitive areas of development. At Head Start our focus in the area of mental health includes prevention, identification, education and referral.

## Nutrition

Head Start provides healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks to all children.

- Your child will enjoy healthy meals and snacks which meet at least 1/3 of the daily nutritional requirements and follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program Guidelines.
- Your child will participate in nutrition and physical activities to promote healthy life-long habits.
- Your child will learn self-help skills such as hand washing, brushing teeth, and making healthy food choices and good mealtime manners.

Please let staff know if your child must eat or avoid any foods for religious or other reasons (food allergy or intolerance). We will provide food substitutes if a completed food allergy/exception form is on file with a doctor's signature.

**Parents/caregivers are not allowed to send food to class with their child for any meal or snack. Any extra food needs to be eaten before they enter the school or it will be discarded by staff.**

- **Birthdays treats**

Children are allowed to bring treats once a year on their birthday (or another day if their birthday is not on a school day). **Agency policy does not allow us to serve food from home or home-made treats.** If food is brought in that is not in its original store packaging, we can not serve it to children.

Here are some healthy treat ideas:

- Stickers

- Magnets
- Homemade crafts
- Simple puzzle or games
- Graham crackers
- Trail mix
- Pretzels
- Fresh fruit
- Holidays
 

Treats are not allowed at Head Start for holiday, including Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day. If they are sent to school they will not be distributed to the classroom. Each classroom will have healthy ways to celebrate special days. You can show your appreciation by volunteering, donating a book or sending cards to the classroom for special occasions.

### **Attendance**

In order for your child to get the most out of the child development program, it is **important that they come to school on a regular basis.**

- Because of the need for Head Start services, **we cannot hold a spot for a child who has frequent absences** unless there are certain emergency situations such as illness or significant family problems.
- If your child is not at school and we don't hear from you, a **staff member from your child's classroom will get in touch with you** to make sure your child is okay and to see if we can help.
- **Please contact your child's Teacher or Family Worker at your child's school whenever your child will be absent.**

### **Illness**

In order to keep all of our children as healthy as possible, we cannot allow children who are sick to stay at school. If we are not sure what illness your child has or how contagious they are, we may ask for a note from your child's doctor before they can return to school.

#### **Do not send your child to school if:**

- **She/he has a fever**
- **She/he complains of not feeling well**
- **She/he has diarrhea or is vomiting**
- **She/he shows signs of a contagious disease such as pink eye, impetigo, staph infections or chicken pox.**

#### **Your child may be sent home if:**

- **She/he has a fever of 100 or higher**
- **She/he has flu-like symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, etc.)**
- **She/he has open, bleeding or oozing sores**
- **She/he is contagious (chicken pox, impetigo, pink eye, etc.)**

## **Medication**

If your child needs to take medicine at school, our staff can give your child medication **only if it is prescribed by a doctor. The medicine you bring in must be in the original pharmacy container.** It must be clearly labeled with:

- Child's first and last name
- Physician's name
- Date the prescription was filled
- Name and strength of the medication
- Instructions from manufacturer, pharmacy or doctor

**We are not able to give your child any over-the-counter medication** such as cold medicine or Tylenol without a doctor's prescription. Over-the-counter medications prescribed by your doctor must be in the original manufacturer's container labeled by the parent with the child's first and last name and specific instructions given by the child's doctor.

You will also need to fill out a **Medical Authorization form** that gives our staff permission to give medicine to your child. The authorization is good for 30 days.

## **Staff Qualifications**

Tri-County Head Start is committed to the professional development of all our staff. We know that a quality program is the result of well-trained, qualified and dedicated staff. As a result, all of our Teachers have an AAS in Child Development or BA in Early Childhood Education. All Family Workers have a BA. All staff are trained and certified in the following: CPR, First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens, Safety Emergency Procedures and Child Abuse Reporting.

## **Confidentiality**

At Head Start we respect your privacy. The information that is in your child's file is kept in a locked file cabinet and is not shared with anyone outside of the program without your written permission. As a parent, you always have the right to read the information in your child's file.

## **Arrivals and Departures**

Anyone picking up a child from school must be prepared to show picture identification and either be on the child's "release to" list or (in special situations) have other written permission from the parent.

**Please update this information as needed.**

A non-custodial parent may have access to their child unless there is a court order in our files prohibiting such contact.

Parents/caregivers who bring their child directly to the school are asked to deliver their child in person to a classroom teacher when arriving. This is for your child's safety and helps in the transition from home to school.

### **Child's Schedule**

**Please pick your child up promptly.** Children build trust by knowing you arrive on time. If your child is not picked up by the closing time of the school, the Teacher will contact people on your child's emergency cards.

**If the Teacher has not reached any contacts by 15 minutes after the school closes, the local police department and DHS will be notified.**

### **Change of Address and/or Phone Number**

For your child's safety, it is **very important that you notify the school immediately if your address, phone number or emergency numbers change.** We must have a current number where you or the emergency contact person may be reached.

### **Bad Weather/Emergency Closings and Cancellations**

In order to insure the safety of your child, it is likely that there may be times when we have to cancel school or close school early if the weather is bad. Your child's classroom Teachers or Family Worker will call you regarding school dismissal or school closing information. Please notify the classroom of any phone number or address changes.

### **Reporting Child Abuse**

All Head Start staff are mandatory reporters for child abuse. The Head Start program complies with the State of Iowa law requiring all mandatory reporters working in licensed child care to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Services. This is in the best interest of your child.

The law tries to protect children from abuse and helps others find ways to handle the stress of raising children. If you would like help in coping with any area of your child's behavior, please call your child's Teacher, Family Worker or the health services staff. We will try to help you find solutions to your concerns.

Children's safety and best interests are always our goal. We will notify authorities should we have concerns regarding any child's safety.

## **Gifts**

Staff members are not allowed to accept gifts from our families. We appreciate the trust you show in us, and the opportunity to be a part of your child's life.

## **Discipline**

Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Inc. must follow the Discipline Policy that is required by the Iowa Department of Human Services.

The policy is as follows:

- Corporal (physical) punishment including spanking, slapping, and shaking shall not be used.
- Punishment, which is humiliating or frightening, shall not be used.
- Children will not be punished or threatened with punishment for concerns to do with illness, lack of progress in toilet training or in connection with food or rest.
- No child shall be subject to verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about such child or child's family.

## **Positive Discipline**

The Teachers' goal is to create a setting and activities that encourage a fun, learning and safe classroom. To do this, all staff provide a supportive and nurturing atmosphere, activities that are developmentally appropriate, a consistent schedule, as well as clear and reasonable expectations.

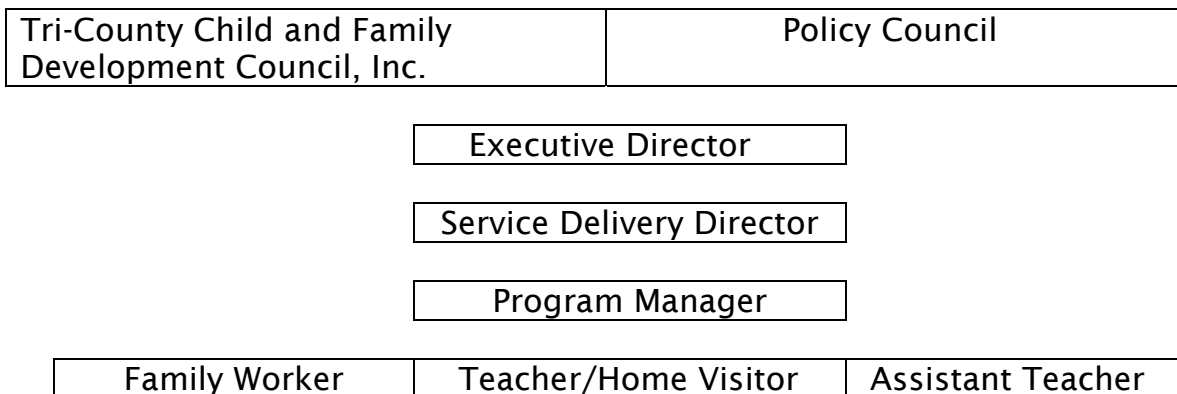
A Teacher's response to negative behavior depends on the individual child's age, development and personality. Some of the responses may include:

- **Re-direction:** Staff will re-direct a child to a more appropriate activity.
- **Sit quietly:** The teacher and child go to a quiet place to help them gain some self-control.
- **Time outs:** (only for 3-5 year olds) The child sits separately from the group (in the same room) for about one minute for each year of the child's age.
- If a child hits, bites or hurts other children or staff, the **parent or guardian may be asked to meet with the teachers** to discuss the problem and agree upon a plan of action.

**Parents and volunteers must follow the Discipline Policy and all other program procedures when working with children on agency property.**

### Procedures for Problem Solving

- If you have a complaint or concern about the school, it is your responsibility to **discuss the situation with the staff directly involved.**
- If a solution cannot be agreed upon by all parties involved, you need to **talk to the staff's immediate supervisor (Program Manager)** and an attempt will be made to resolve the situation. Please call the EMA school at 235-0383 if you do not know the staff person's supervisor.
- If the parties involved still cannot work out a solution, the **next step is to talk with the Service Delivery Director.** If the situation cannot be resolved, the Service Delivery Director **may request a meeting with parent, staff member, Executive Director, or Policy Council chairperson,** depending on the nature of the situation.
- If no solution is reached, the **Service Delivery Director, the Executive Director, and the parent** jointly may request discussion of the matter with a **special committee of the Council, Inc. Board. The committee will then make a recommendation for action to the Board as a whole.**



## **PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

Tri-County Child and Family is committed to keeping your children safe. Please share the following information with your child. Classrooms will reinforce to children the importance of pedestrian safety.

Please take a moment to go over these tips provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. You can also visit their website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids).

### **Pe-des-tri-an**

*n.* A person traveling on foot; a walker

### **safe-ty**

*n.* The condition of being safe; freedom from danger, risk or injury

### **Pedestrian Safety Facts**

- Children hit by cars can be hurt or killed, even when cars are moving slowly.
- Toddlers (1 and 2 year olds) are most often hurt by a vehicle backing up.
- Preschoolers (3 and 4 year olds) are most often hit when running across a street near home.

### **Young Children Are Not Small Adults**

- Children cannot judge speed or distance of vehicles.
- Children move quickly and can run into the street without warning.
- Children don't know safety rules and expect adults to watch out for them.
- Children are small and hard for the driver to see.

# **Safety Tips for Walkers**

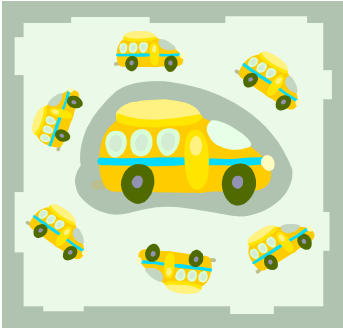
## **Sidewalks**

- Always walk on the sidewalk.
- If there is no sidewalk and you have to walk in the street, always walk facing traffic so you can see any vehicle that might go out of control.

## **Crossing the Street**

- Cross only at corners or marked crosswalks.
- Stop at the curb or edge of the road.
- Stop and look left, then right, then left again before you step into the street.
- If you see a vehicle, wait until it goes by. Then look both ways before crossing.
- Do not cross the street in-between cars.
- Children should hold onto an adult's hand while crossing.

## Bus Transportation Safety Information for Parents



Our agency provides transportation to and from enrichment opportunities throughout our community. It is important that all parents, children, bus drivers and staff follow the rules set forth by the Head Start Performance Standards and State of Iowa Transportation.

Please take time to read through this material and sit down with your child and go over the information.

### Field Trips for Classrooms

During the year, Head Start classrooms and some Early Head Start classrooms will have enhanced learning experiences and will be transported on a school bus. All children 3 to 5 years old will wear the safety harnesses. Children under 3 that meet forward facing car seat requirements will use a car seat. (Children must be 1 year of age and at least 20 lbs. to be in a forward facing car seat. Booster seats are not used on the bus.)

### Bus Evacuation Drills



Children will participate in bus evacuation drills throughout the year. They will practice exiting from the back of the bus and using the line ropes.

In case of an emergency:

1. Bus drivers will contact their bus garage.
2. The bus garage will notify Tri-County Child and Family administrators.
3. Parents will be contacted by our staff.

### Safety Education for Parents offered throughout the Year

Safety information will be available during the year for families in the classroom newsletters. Please look over this information with your child. Transportation and pedestrian safety information is also reinforced in your child's classroom.

## Busing Safety Tips

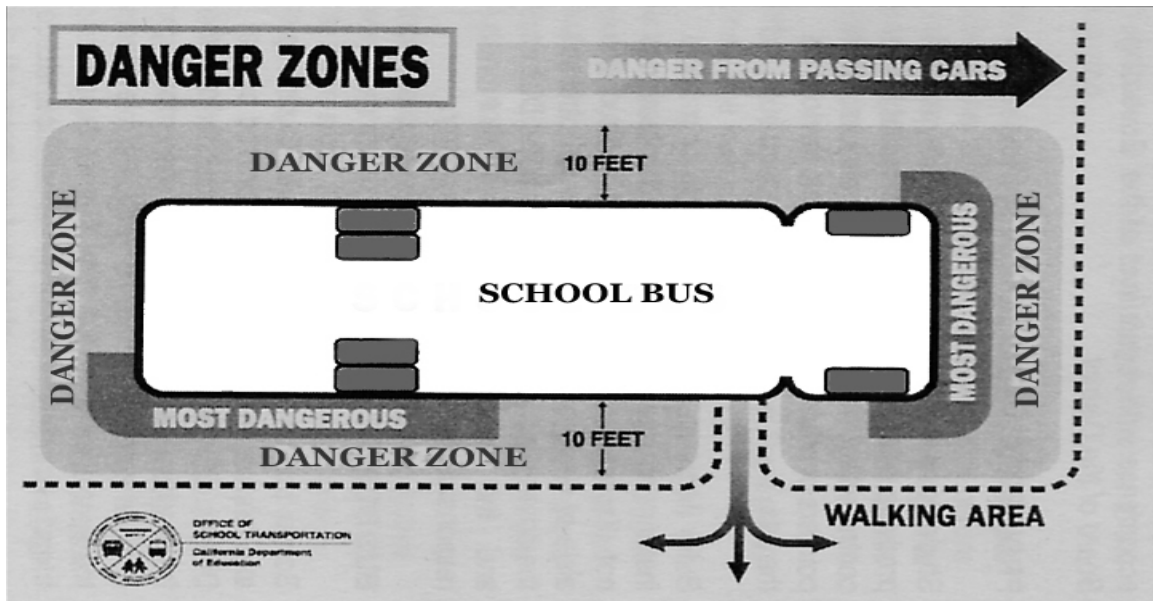


Figure 1 Source: Office of School Transportation, California Department of Education

### Important Safety Rules for Loading and Unloading

- The bus driver cannot see you if you are closer than ten (10) feet to the bus.
- Stay out of the Danger Zone.
- If you have to cross the street to get to the bus, wait until the bus has stopped and the safety lights are flashing. Cross the street after the bus driver directs you. Look both ways before crossing the street.
- If something is dropped at or near the bus, tell the driver before you retrieve it.

Source: National Association for Pupil Transportation

## **Busing Rules**

### **Safety Rules while Waiting for the Bus**

1. Please wait for the bus in a safe place, away from the curb. Children should not be playing in a way that may cause them to run into the road.
2. Don't move toward the bus until it has stopped and the driver opens the door. Ice or gravel on the road may cause the bus to skid when stopping to pick up children.

### **Safety Rules for Riding on the Bus**

1. Children will use inside voices on the bus so that the driver can hear sounds outside of the bus.
2. Children are never allowed to move while the bus is moving.
3. No food or drink is allowed on the bus.

For more information regarding Tri-County Child and Family Development's transportation services please contact the Transportation Lead, Pauline Jones at 235-0383.

Tri-County Child & Family Development Council, Inc.  
2008-2009 Calendar

**July 2008**

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**August 2008**

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**September 2008**

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**October 2008**

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**November 2008**

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**December 2008**

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**Sum. Semester - 6/1-8/12/08**  
 July 4 .....IndependenceDay  
 -Centers Closed  
 July 17...Cunningham  
 -1<sup>st</sup> Day of School

**Fall Semester-9/13-10/21/08**  
 Aug. 13 ....Family Workers-PY  
 -Return to Work  
 Aug. 18- 22.....Full Year  
 -Prof. Dev. & No School  
 Aug. 20 ..Part Year Teaching Staff  
 -Return to Work  
 - Preservice...All Staff  
 Aug. 25 .....All Centers  
 -1<sup>st</sup> Day of School  
 Sept 1.....Labor Day  
 -Centers Closed  
 Sept. 12.....All Staff  
 -Prof. Dev. & No School

**Fall Semester-10/22-12/31/08**  
 October 31.....All Staff  
 -Prof. Dev. & No School  
 Nov. 27-28.....Thanksgiving  
 -Centers Closed  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 2...Winter Break  
 -Part Year Centers Closed  
 Dec. 22,23,29-31.. Winter Break  
 - Full Year Centers  
 -Consolidated Care @ EMA site  
 Dec. 24-26 .....Winter Break  
 - Full Year Centers Closed

**Spring Semester-1/5-3/18/09**  
 Jan. 1 .....New Years Holiday  
 -Centers Closed  
 Jan. 2 ..... All Centers Closed  
 Jan. 5...All Classes Resume  
 Jan. 16.....All Staff  
 -Prof. Dev. & No School  
 Jan. 19.....MLK Holiday  
 -Centers Closed  
 Feb. 13.....All Staff  
 -Prof. Dev. & No School  
 March 16-20.....Spring Break  
 -Part Year Centers Closed  
 -Full Year Centers-  
 Consolidated Care @ EMA site  
 Apr. 3.....All Staff  
 -Prof. Dev. & No School  
 April 10 .....Holiday  
 -Centers Closed  
**Spring Semester-3/19-5/31/09**  
 May 2....Volunteer Picnic  
 May 21.....Part Year Program  
 -Last Day of School  
 May 22.....Part Year Staff  
 -Last Work Day  
 May 25.....Memorial Day  
 -Centers Closed

**January 2009**

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**February 2009**

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**March 2009**

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**April 2009**

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**May 2009**

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**June 2009**

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**Holidays**  
**Breaks**  
**Prof. Dev. & No School**

## 2008 – 2009 Family Fun Events

<p>October 2, 2008 “Parent Kick-Off”</p>  <p>Menu – Tyson’s BBQ Pork</p>	<p>February 2009 – “Welcome to the Library”</p>  <p>Menu – Walking Tacos</p>
<p>November 2008 – “Family Fun” (games, arts, crafts, scrap booking, etc.)</p>  <p>Menu – Walking Tacos</p>	<p>March 2009 – “Challenging Behaviors”</p>  <p>Menu – English Muffin Pizza</p>
<p>December 2008 - “Coping with Stress”</p>  <p>Menu – Spaghetti Dinner</p>	<p>April 2009 “Good Touch/Bad Touch”</p>  <p>Menu – Smoothies</p>
<p>January 2009 “Physical Fun”</p>  <p>Menu – Smoothies</p>	<p>May 2, 2009 “Volunteer Recognition Picnic”</p>  <p>Menu – Burgers, dogs, etc.</p>

\*\*PLEASE REMEMBER ~ There will be incentives for the highest attendance at the end of the year!!\*\*

04-07-08

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Tri-County Child & Family Development Council, Inc. has just updated work on a comprehensive agency wide safety/emergency plan of action. This plan outlines responses to basic emergencies such as tornado, blizzard, nuclear attack, fire, major accidents, civil disturbances, and personal crisis. The plan was prepared in accordance with guidelines for the State Department of Human Services, Tri-County Child & Family Development Council, Inc. Board policy, Community Schools, and current building practices. The Black Hawk Emergency Management Agency officials have approved this plan.

One of the safety/emergency objectives is an orderly release of children from classes so that they may return home within a minimum amount of time. If this cannot be done, the plan provides for retention of children until they can return home. While all reasonable attempts will be made to provide supervision protection for children, it should be understood that Tri-County Child & Family Development Council, Inc. cannot guarantee either. The initial steps for activating the safety/emergency plan are as follows:

1. Warning or alert messages communicated through national, state, and local emergency networks will be forwarded to all Tri-County Child & Family Development Council, Inc. schools through cellular phones.

Parents/guardians are requested to assist in our efforts to prepare for emergency situations by assuming the following responsibilities:

1. During times of emergency, listen to local radio stations for informational messages. The stations which use the

Emergency Broadcast System have been listed in our Parent Handbook. Early dismissal of classes or retention of children at school will be announced over Tri-County's traditional media outlets.

2. Telephone lines to various buildings will need to be kept open for instructions and informational messages during the emergency. Please do not attempt to phone the sites.

Please update your emergency contacts frequently so everyone involved knows where your child will be going in your absence.

Sincerely yours,

Kim Young-Kent  
Executive Director

Barb Foss  
Operations Director

Kris Engstrom  
Service Delivery Director

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received and reviewed a copy  
of the Tri-County Child and Family Parent Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)



Tri-County Child & Family  
Development Council, Inc.

# Parent Handbook 2008-2009