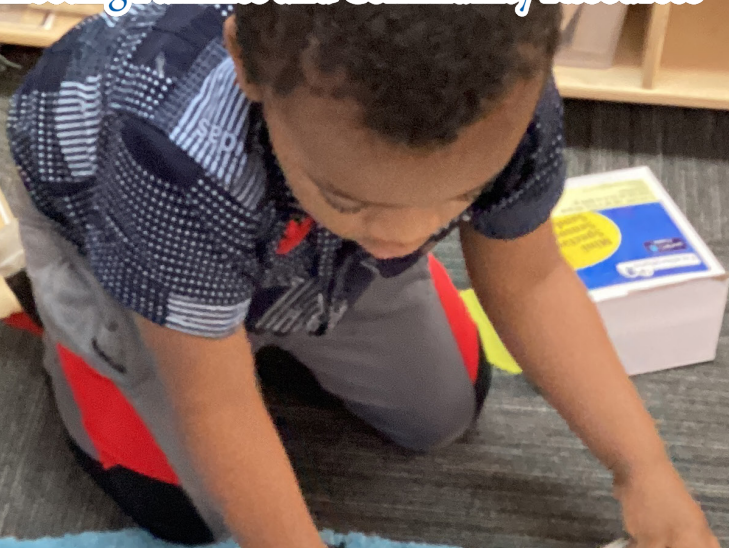




# Head Start for Kent County

Connecting Families and Community Resources



*Piece by piece, we're*

**\*Better**



**Together\***

**2024-2025  
Parent Handbook**

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# Site Locations

## Central Office

2626 Walker Ave. NW,  
Walker, MI 49544  
Phone: (616) 453-4145  
Toll-Free: (800) 472-6994  
[www.hs4kc.org](http://www.hs4kc.org)

Position	Ext.
Central Office Receptionist	2210
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Manager: Tyneicshe Williams	2247
Site Administrative Manager: Michelle Paul	2269
Outcomes Analyst Manager: Laura Silvis	2224

**Spanish speaking families: Choose option 8**

<b>Alger:</b> 256 Alger St SE Grand Rapids, MI 49507 Ph. (616) 735-5318   Fax (616) 279-3025	<b>Plainfield:</b> 1710 Woodworth. NE Grand Rapids, MI 49525 Ph. (616) 454-8874   Fax (616) 279-3040
<b>Comstock Park:</b> 3825 Oakridge Ave. NW Comstock Park, MI 49321 Ph. (616) 493-0744   Fax (616) 279-3000	<b>Rogers Lane:</b> 2929 Rogers Lane Ave. SW Wyoming, MI 49509 Ph. (616) 532-4229   Fax (616) 279-3050
<b>Henry:</b> 551 Henry Ave. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49503 Ph. (616) 774-8822   Fax (616) 279-3010	<b>South Godwin:</b> 28 Bellevue St. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49548 Ph. (616) 735-5351   Fax (616) 279-3060
<b>Home Visiting Program:</b> 2626 Walker Ave. NW Walker MI 49544 Ph. (616) 453-4145   Fax (616) 279-3200	<b>Sparta:</b> 480 S State St, Sparta, MI 49345 Ph. (616) 735-5327
<b>Kentwood:</b> 5360 Eastern SE Kentwood, MI 49508 Ph. (616) 735-5345   Fax (616) 279-3090	<b>Springhill:</b> 2626 Walker Ave. NW Walker, MI 49544 Ph. (616) 791-9894   Fax (616) 279-3220
<b>Leonard:</b> 1708 Leonard St NE Grand Rapids, MI 49505 Ph. (616) 735-5319   Fax (616) 279-3026	<b>Sylvan:</b> 1875 Rosewood Ave. SE Grand Rapids MI 49506 Ph. (616) 241-0250   Fax (616) 279-3070
<b>North Kent:</b> 14951 White Creek Ave. NE Cedar Springs, MI 49319 Ph. (616) 696-3990   Fax (616) 279-3030	

See <https://www.hs4kc.org/locations> for Site Days and Times. Please note that site times are reviewed during the summer months for the next school year.

# Welcome to Head Start for Kent County!

We are so pleased you have chosen us to begin your child's formal education experience. We look forward to working with you to provide experiences that will help your child's growth and development.

## Our Mission

*To deliver comprehensive services to low income children five and under and their families, promoting their well-being and development.*

You are an important part of our team as your child's first and best teacher. Your interaction with us will help create a unique experience for you and your child, which will prepare your child to enter kindergarten. Please use this handbook as a resource to help you become more familiar with our program. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to call or visit our website at [www.hs4kc.org](http://www.hs4kc.org).

## Open Door Policy

Head Start for Kent County has an open door policy. Children's parent(s)/guardian(s) are welcome to join in all of our program activities, including visiting the classroom anytime. We look forward to seeing you.

## Success Basics

As a parent, you are already your child's first and best teacher. The Success Basics offers parents comprehensive support and resources as advocates in their child's learning journey. Success Basics are "five fun, simple, and effective ways to help your child grow smarter"! You can watch their videos to explore more ways to boost brain development now that can help your children achieve their highest potential.

Learn more today at <https://www.successtartsearly.org/>.

# Emergency and Severe Weather Procedures

## Severe Weather and School Closings

Head Start for Kent County monitors weather conditions during extreme weather. The Operations Director will inform the media in the event of a closing or delay. Announcements will be broadcast on Channels 8 and 13. When all sites (including the Home Visiting Program) are affected by a closing or delay, "Head Start for Kent County" will be listed as closed. In the event only one or two sites are closed, due to specific circumstances, the site will be listed individually.

## Tornado Procedure

### Tornado Watch

During a tornado watch, we will continue regular classes; the staff will remain aware, track changes, and will take necessary action to keep children safe.

### Tornado Warning

If a tornado warning is issued, staff will follow the safety action plan and children will be kept at the sites. If the warning extends past regularly scheduled session times, all children who are bused will be taken home when the warning is canceled and it is safe to travel. The Home Visiting Program will be canceled.

## Fire Procedure

In case of fire, staff will follow a safety action plan. Parent/guardian will be notified if there is a fire and all children who are bused will be taken home.

## Lockdown Procedure

Lockdown procedures are in place to keep children and staff safe when dangerous or suspicious activity occurs at or near our sites. All of our buildings and classrooms are locked while children are present. All visitors' identification is verified before entering the premises. Please be aware that you will not be able to enter our sites during a lockdown emergency or drill. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause; safety is our main priority.

## Drills

Site staff conduct regular tornado, fire and lockdown drills, with the children. Regular drill practice prepares staff and children in the event of a real emergency, documentation of these drills are posted at your child's site.

All announced and unannounced drills, as well as any weather event or other emergency occurring at the site, will be communicated to parents/guardians.

# Site Administration

*Site Administrative Manager: Michelle Paul .....616-453-4145, ext. 2269*

## Parent Policy Council

The Parent Policy Council is a group of parents and individuals from the community working as a team to make decisions about the design and operation of the programs at Head Start for Kent County (HS4KC). The Parent Policy Council gives parents a voice in the Preschool and Early Head Start classrooms and the Home Visiting program. It also allows parents the opportunity for personal and professional growth.

It is very important that all HS4KC sites and the Home Visiting program have parent representatives who attend the monthly meetings on a regular basis, so your site or program's interests are heard. Parent Policy Council members also share information they receive at the site's monthly family engagement events.

### The Parent Policy Council works with the staff to:

- Attend monthly Policy Council Meetings and ask questions.
- Provide a brief report of Policy Council activities during the site's Family Engagement Event.
- Help complete the Annual Self-Assessment, and/or serve on other committees as needed.
- Encourage other parents to attend their site's Family Engagement Events and become involved in the program.
- Contribute to agency discussions related to program design, continuous improvement, and planning (including data review).

Childcare and a meal are provided at in-person Parent Policy Council meetings. Members are reimbursed for transportation and childcare costs. Parent Policy Council meetings may be held virtually.

All parents are welcome and encouraged to attend a Parent Policy Council meeting. If you are interested in learning more about becoming your site's Policy Council Representative, please contact your site staff. You can also call the Community and Parent Relations Specialist at (616) 453-4145 ext. 2205 for more information.



## Code of Conduct

We rely on parents to cooperate with us and to help us set an example for your children. As a parent, you play a formative role in the development of your child. In order for the relationship between SCHOOL and HOME to be as successful as possible, parents and staff are asked to abide by the following code of conduct.

### Staff and parents will:

- Always communicate in an honest, open and respectful manner.
- Appreciate that communication is always a two way process.
- Show respect and courtesy.
- Follow the agency's conflict resolution policy, located on your site's parent board and available on our website Resources page (link below) if any conflicts arise.

In rare and unusual circumstances, a parent/guardian/adult that violates the Code of Conduct may be asked not to return to the HS4KC properties, but their child(ren) would always be welcome.

### Website Resources Page:

<https://hs4kc.org/resources/hs4kc-conflict-resolution-process/>

## Smoking & Vaping

State regulations prohibit smoking and vaping on Head Start properties and in all Head Start vehicles. We encourage everyone participating in Head Start activities, regardless of location, to refrain from smoking and vaping.

## Weapons

Head Start for Kent County (HS4KC) strictly prohibits possession of firearms, explosives or other dangerous or illegal weapons on Agency properties.

## **Pesticide Management Program**

State Regulation 637 requires that each school have a verifiable Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program in place. IPM involves using various methods of control, which include mechanical, biological, harborage reduction, and environmental controls, with pesticide applications only used when necessary. Furthermore, Regulation 637 requires that any aerosol or liquid pesticide not be applied in classrooms or other areas that students will occupy within a four-hour period.

Annual Statement: In accordance with Regulation 637, HS4KC will provide advance notice to families of the application of a pesticide at least 48 hours before application. This notice will be posted at the entrance of the school building as well as be emailed to parent(s)/guardian(s). In certain emergencies, pesticides may be applied without prior notice, but you will be provided notice following any such application. Spraying for wasps or bees to protect children is a common example of such an emergency.

## **Drinking Water Management Plan**

To protect Michigan children from exposure to lead in drinking water, the Clean Drinking Water Access Act, 2023 PA 154, and amendments to the Child Care Organizations Act, 1973 PA 116, collectively also known as Filter First, were signed into law. In accordance with Filter First, HS4KC will make available to staff and parents the Drinking Water Management Plan (DWMP). This plan will include the location of consumptive water, the schedule and results for water sampling and testing, as well as the filter and filter cartridge replacement dates.

## **Change of Staff Notification**

HS4KC recognizes the communication between staff and families is an important part of the engagement in their child's education. When a staff person leaves a position either through promotion or through separation, a Change of Staff Letter will be sent to parents and families informing them of the change.

## Release of Children

Children are our first priority. A child shall only be released to persons authorized by the child's parent or guardian. We must **ALWAYS** verify photo identification of the individual the child is being released to. The person accepting the child must also be at least 18 years of age.

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

*Program Manager: Ebony Gonzalez-Pugh ..... 616 453-4145, ext. 2259*

## **Enrollment Process**

HS4KC provides preschool services for children ages 3-5, infant/toddler center-based services for children ages 6 weeks to 3 years old and home visiting services for expectant families and children ages 0-3. These services are provided at no cost to families. HS4KC prioritizes enrollment for families with income at or below the federal poverty guidelines for their family size. Children with disabilities, in foster care, receiving public assistance (SSI-Disability, Child-Only TANF, and/or SNAP), and/or experiencing homelessness are also given priority for enrollment. Parent(s)/guardian(s) may enroll children at any site for preschool and infant/toddler classrooms. Transportation may be available, based on need, at all sites for our preschool aged children. Age is an additional qualifying factor for enrollment. Children must be at least 3 years old or turn 3 by the date used by local school districts. In an effort to provide early childhood education for all preschool aged children, priority is given to 4-year-old children and in accordance with the established eligibility priority criteria, which is approved by the Parent Policy Council and the Board of Directors on an annual basis.

## **Withdrawal Process**

The parent/guardian may withdraw their child at any time during the program year. Agency staff appreciate immediate notification in order to begin providing services for another child as quickly as possible. Consistent efforts to engage families are made in order to promote regular attendance in center-based care and encourage weekly home visits within the Home Visiting Program.

# Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is a group of volunteers from the community who oversee the legal and financial business of HS4KC. They are experts in multiple areas such as social services, finance, law, and early childhood education. They meet on the fourth Tuesday of every month (except for July and December). Non-Board members are welcome to speak to the Board with the consent of the Board President. They must notify the Executive Director in writing no later than the Monday morning of the week preceding the monthly meeting date with the request to speak, including the topic and details.

If the topic is concerning a conflict, guests must complete the adopted Conflict Resolution Process prior to addressing the Board. This process for conflict resolution has been approved by both the Parent Policy Council and the Board of Directors. Conflicts, when resolved satisfactorily, are an opportunity for positive change and understanding. For more information about the Board of Directors or Conflict Resolution Process, please contact the Community and Parent Relations Specialist at (616) 453-4145 ext. 2205.

## Current Board Members

- Kristy Greenberg - President
- Linda Pickett – Vice President
- Brian Hofstra - Treasurer
- Joann Hoganson
- Rudy Gutierrez
- Tammy Smith
- Oogie LaMar
- Lauren Stanton
- Dean Pacific
- Fabiola Tenorio
- Abby Bishop

# Home Visiting

*Program Manager: Ebony Gonzalez-Pugh ..... 616 453-4145, ext. 2259*  
*Supervisor: Meg Becker..... 616-453-4145, ext. 2208*

*Services for expectant families, infants, and toddlers in a home visiting program.*

A child's experiences during his or her earliest months of growth and development are crucial in determining later success in school and life. The home visiting program, for expectant families and children 0 to 3 help families provide their children with the nurturing, responsive care, which promotes healthy parent/child attachments and the best outcomes in school and life.

## Attendance

Parents and their child(ren) are expected to be present and on time every week for their scheduled visits. If a parent has to cancel a visit, they must inform their Home Visitor as soon as possible, and they are expected to schedule a makeup visit.

## Home Visiting Philosophy

The Home Visiting Program assists eligible infants and toddlers and their families, and expectant families, in achieving optimal growth and development through access to adequate prenatal and postnatal care; ongoing monitoring and support for child health, development and learning; access to early intervention services; and access to needed community resources. The Home Visitor assists parents in completing routine developmental screenings and works with the parent to plan activities specific to their child's needs.

## The Home Visitor will:

- Have a caseload of 10-12 families.
- Provide one scheduled home visit per week lasting a minimum of 90 minutes, and will offer a make-up visit when a home visit is canceled by the program. Families with two or more children enrolled will have a 2-hour visit.
- Encourage and support parent(s) to strengthen relationships and skills as the child's first teacher.
- Support the family to meet requirements by:
  - Discussing health requirements/concerns
  - Providing two socializations a month and monthly family engagement events
  - Providing information on community resources
  - Supporting parent(s) to plan each home visit based on parent's observations
  - Providing information on developmental stages and how to observe their child's individual needs and interests

## Socialization

In addition to weekly home visits, the Home Visiting Program offers socialization experiences (playgroups) for enrolled children and their parent(s)/guardian(s). The group experience provides activities for parents and children to enjoy together, the opportunity for parents to support their children interacting with other children and adults, and for parents to share and learn with others about the joys and challenges of parenting. We offer 22 socialization experiences to our families, which are held at the Socialization Room located at Sylvan Head Start. Activities are jointly planned by the parent and the Home Visitors based on the developmental needs of the children and parent interests. Snacks are offered at each socialization.

## Expectant Family Services

A healthy pregnancy has a direct influence on the health and development of a child. The prenatal period has a lasting impact on the child's potential for healthy growth and development. HS4KC staff schedule home visits every week and an Agency Nurse attends the home visit every other week. Phone contact may be provided between visits, based on the expectant family's needs.

## Services to pregnant women include:

- Monitoring prenatal doctor and dentist appointments, providing resources, support and referrals as needed.
- Providing appropriately timed information regarding fetal development, labor and delivery, postpartum care, SIDS prevention, substance abuse, birth control and childcare.
- Reviewing mental health issues regularly.
- Ensuring pregnant women have access to needed community resources (clothing, food, housing, etc.).
- Providing breastfeeding and nutrition information.
- Providing information on preparing to return to work/school as appropriate.



# Special Needs

Program Manager: Nicole Choice ..... 616-453-4145 ext. 2266

*Educating the whole child physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually to meet their individual needs in a developmentally appropriate setting.*

## Behavior Guidance Policy

At Head Start for Kent County, we celebrate our commitment to fostering positive and supportive environments for your child's social and emotional development. Our approach is proactive, centered on building positive relationships, and guided by the Pyramid Model- a program-wide framework designed to ensure effective teaching practices that nurture social and emotional development in all children.

If a child behaves in a way that is harmful to someone else, him, or herself, staff will intervene. For the best interest of the child and classroom, if safety cannot be guaranteed, staff will meet with the family to determine a plan. Children are not excluded from programming based on challenging behavior, developmental delays or identified disabilities. HS4KC works alongside parents/guardians, local education agencies, and outside community resources to ensure children's needs are being met. In circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that has not been reduced or eliminated by the provision of interventions and supports recommended by the mental health consultant, the program may provide additional individual services through alternative programming models in partnership with the family.

## Pyramid Model Practices

Head Start for Kent County child guidance and discipline methods are based on the following components:

**Shared Expectations:** HS4KC has clear behavior expectations for all students and staff throughout the agency. Students and staff are always expected to act kind, be safe, and care for their space or the ABC's.

**Positive Guidance Strategies:** Our staff use positive strategies such as logical consequences, redirection, and proactive problem-solving. We strictly prohibit the use of corporal punishment or any humiliating, threatening, frightening, or shame-based disciplinary techniques.

**Family Engagement:** Staff recognize the importance of working hand-in-hand with the families. If a child faces behavioral challenges, HS4KC will work together with caregivers to develop and implement a plan that focuses on teaching social and emotional skills while reducing problematic behaviors.

**Continuous Improvement:** Staff continuously grow and learn new ways to support social-emotional learning and promote positive student behaviors. HS4KC provides ongoing training and uses data to monitor and enhance available strategies which ensures equitable care for all children.

## Developmental Screen Follow-Ups

In collaboration with each child's parent and with parental consent, HS4KC completes a current developmental screening, using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) as a baseline assessment regarding a child's developmental, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, and emotional skills. The ASQ must be completed within 45 days of your child attending our program. You can expect to complete the ASQ at the Orientation Home Visit to ensure teachers have the most up to date information to support your child's development.

The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) will also be completed by your child's teacher after your child has attended for four weeks, and again in the spring. This tool will be used to measure the growth and progress in your child's social emotional development. Teachers will share strategies with you from the DECA in the fall and spring to help support your child's continued social-emotional development. After completing these assessments with families, specialists will work with the classroom teachers and home visitors when a concern is found to support the development of each child.

Based on these screens, referrals for further evaluations will be made as necessary, and with parent approval, to the Local Education Agency (LEA) or other professionals. HS4KC staff also evaluate and serve or coordinate supports for children 0-3 who qualify for Early On services.

## **Inclusion - What Is It?**

The least restrictive environment (LRE) differs for each child, as it is the setting where they can have the most freedom to learn, grow, and play. Whenever possible, children with disabilities are placed in Head Start for Kent County classrooms where they can still receive the necessary services and support per their Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The LRE offers these children the opportunity to learn and play alongside their typically developing peers to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, children receive the benefit of peer modeling and acceptance in the classroom. When possible, LEA's will meet the child's IEP/IFSP by providing services in the classroom and coordinating with the teachers to support the child's needs.

Parents of children with special needs may request an individualized record of their child's day at any time.

## Parent Rights For Special Needs Services In Accordance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### You Have The Right:

- To give or not give your written permission for the Agency Specialist to evaluate your child.
- To meet with the Specialist and share your observations and any other information you believe is important about your child.
- To have your child evaluated by other outside agencies/ LEAs and share your observations and any other information with HS4KC staff.
- To bring someone with you to help you in the meeting.
- To have your child's evaluation and plan developed by your LEA in a reasonable period of time.
- To receive a copy of the plan developed for your child.
- To disagree with any part of the plan.

### You Have The Responsibility:

- To attend all meetings related to your child's services.
- To ask questions whenever you do not understand what is being said or done, or whenever you are concerned about how your child is acting or learning.
- To share your observations about your child, as well as any changes in the family, as this might affect your child at school.
- To carry out any activities as agreed to in the plan and share how these worked for your child.

# Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE)

*Program Manager: John Robinson..... 616-453-4145 ext. 2290*

Our agency staff are dedicated to building and maintaining continuous relationships with families and the community by working towards the goal of moving parents from 'involved' to 'engaged'. When this occurs, families see benefits including increased family well-being, parent-child relationships, and families as advocates and leaders. This all adds up to strong, healthy, and firmly established families, which builds a foundation that helps both parents and children succeed in school and life.

## **Parents and Families**

Our staff engages parents and families through intentional partnerships and relationships, creating a foundation of trust to build family strengths and goals upon. Individual needs and services are also identified. Children's education and development are nurtured through parent-teacher conferences, home visits, parental volunteering, and parents taking on leadership roles such as Parent Policy Council, Parent Cafe Leaders, and Understanding Readiness Outcomes Committee. We have staff specifically available to connect families to community resources throughout the year to meet needs and achieve goals. Contact your Home Visitor or your child's teacher about your needs and goals so we can pair you with the best staff member to address your situation and connect you with community resources.

## **Open House**

The purpose of the site open house is to give parents and children time to become familiar with the site and staff and to provide valuable information for families regarding the services HS4KC provides. Open Houses are scheduled by each site at the beginning of the school year.

## Family Engagement Events

Family Engagement Events are held monthly and scheduled by each site and home visiting. During these events, families get a chance to engage with other families as much as possible. These events are also a chance to get a voice in site operations and discover more resources for family needs and goals.

## Volunteering

### Volunteer Opportunities

Parents, community members, and families can also partner with us through our volunteer program. Volunteer opportunities may be held in person or virtually depending on current conditions and needs. Volunteers can become engaged in the program in many ways such as: reading stories, helping in the classroom, helping with meals, riding the bus as a bus volunteer, participating on advisory committees, or getting involved in the Watch D.O.G.S. program. If you are interested in volunteering, or know someone who is, please talk to the staff at your site for current opportunities.

HS4KC values volunteers and uses them to the fullest extent possible. Volunteers are always supervised and may never be left alone with children.

### Volunteer Requirements

All volunteers working at a site, in a classroom, or at a socialization, must sign in and out on the Volunteer Sign-In Sheet.

To ensure a safe and secure environment for all children, HS4KC will complete a background check on all non-parent volunteers. If volunteers or parents wish to take photos/videos of their child while in any program activity, the photos may not include other children without written permission from the other child's parents.

All volunteers working at HS4KC locations must follow all of our current health and safety policies and procedures. Volunteers are not to come in if they are feeling ill.

All volunteers will need to have the Public Sex Offender Registry (PSOR) clearance completed before they can volunteer with children.

## Attendance Policy

### Preschool

There are many benefits of attending preschool regularly. Children who attend regularly are more likely to develop early reading skills and be ready for kindergarten. They are also more likely to learn to read by third grade and even graduate from high school.

The routines children develop in preschool are likely to continue throughout school. When children miss school for any reason (tardy, leaving early, missing the middle of the day, absent), they are not able to receive the full benefits of our program. Too much time missed, whether excused or unexcused, can keep children from succeeding in school and life.

How much time missed is too much? Research from [AttendanceWorks.org](https://www.attendanceworks.org) shows missing 10% of the school year for any reason (in terms of absences alone this is 2 days a month) can keep a child from doing well. We encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to strive for less than five absences for the school year. We partner with families to monitor data, promote attendance, and identify barriers that keep children from missing school.

HS4KC is required to maintain full enrollment. Parents are expected to send children to school on a regular basis, arrive at school on time, and pick up children on time. Students are considered tardy when they are more than 15 minutes late for the start of school. If, for any reason, a child will not be attending school on a scheduled day, the parent/guardian will need to call their child's site as soon as they are aware the child will be absent but no later than the first 15 minutes of school starting and also notify transportation (if the child rides the bus). Parent(s)/guardian(s) or pre-authorized adults are expected to pick up the child from the bus or at the child's site on time.

We have three levels of intervention for attendance issues:

- **Tier 1:** Awareness and prevention for all families all year round
- **Tier 2:** Personalized outreach to families of children missing 10-19 percent of days enrolled.
- **Tier 3:** Targeted intervention with families of children missing (absences and/or tardies) 20 percent or more of days enrolled.

Families can expect support and resources to overcome barriers to attendance at each tier of intervention. Our Family Advocates are available to partner with you in promoting your child's regular attendance. In extreme situations where a child has missed 50 percent or more of enrolled days, a meeting with the PFCE Supervisor and PFCE Manager will be required to determine next steps on a case-by-case basis.

Please contact the staff at your child's site for more information about our attendance policy and the support available to your family.

## Protection of Children Policy

HS4KC supports families in promoting their child's development. When there are specific concerns about a child's health or wellbeing, our approach is to contact the parent or guardian to discuss the concerns. HS4KC is also a mandated reporting agency. We are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to Children's Protective Services. Agency staff does not perform investigations. Our required procedures are:

1. Agency staff suspect a child has been abused or neglected, or a child states that they have been abused or neglected.
2. Agency staff report to Children's Protective Services per their and our procedures.
3. Agency staff also call 911 in emergency situations as needed.



## Community Partnerships

Through community engagement, we have established partnerships with area agencies to assist families in locating services needed. Our staff is trained to help families find the appropriate agency/program in Kent County to assist with services such as clothing, education, food, job training, legal assistance, language and literacy, mental health services, shelter/housing, transportation, substance abuse prevention and treatment, child neglect and abuse services, domestic violence, child support assistance, health education, parenting, marriage education, and asset building.

## Program Transitions

### From Early Head Start to HS4KC Preschool

Your child is growing up quickly! At age 30 months, your Home Visitor or Early Head Start (EHS) Teacher will begin talking with you about transitioning out of EHS. As a parent, you may have questions about whether your child qualifies for HS4KC preschool, what site your child may attend, when HS4KC preschool begins and other options for your family.

Your Home Visitor/EHS Teacher can arrange for you to complete a HS4KC Preschool application, for you to visit the Head Start Preschool site your child would attend, and work with HS4KC Preschool staff to ensure a smooth transition from home to classroom. A transition event will take place to help those families transitioning into the preschool program. We want to support your family through this important milestone.

### From HS4KC Preschool to Kindergarten

As a parent of a child that will be moving into kindergarten next fall, you may have many questions whether your child is ready for kindergarten, when and where to register and how to support learning at home.

During the second parent teacher conference of this school year, all children moving into kindergarten will receive a Kindergarten Kit. In this kit, you will find important paperwork that is needed to enroll your child in kindergarten. Towards the end of the school year you will receive your child's School Readiness Record, which will help your child's future kindergarten teacher know how your child did while in HS4KC.

HS4KC will host a Transition Event. This event will provide support for families getting ready to move into the next program. This transition could include any 3 year old children moving into 4 year old preschool as well as any 4 year old children moving into Kindergarten. We encourage families to attend this event to get all of their questions answered. This meeting will provide added support for families as they get ready to move onto kindergarten. Plan to attend this meeting to get all of your questions answered.

We want to help you find answers to your questions and to support your family through this exciting transition. Please contact the staff at your child's site, the Community and Parent Relations Specialist or the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Program Manager for more information.

# Health

Program Manager: Anne Glass..... 616-453-4145 ext. 2241

*Promoting health and preventing illness and injury helps children succeed in school.*

## Health Requirements

HS4KC partners with families to ensure children have access to appropriate health care to make sure that children are prepared to be successful in preschool and kindergarten.

The Office of Head Start requires all children enrolled in Head Start to have the following exams and screenings:

- Well-child exam (physical) – preschoolers need an exam every 12 months; children birth through age two need exams more frequently.
- Dental exam and treatment of cavities. Beginning at 1 year of age, children need a dental exam and cleaning every 6 months.
- Hearing and Vision screens are done each year by the Health Department and HS4KC staff. You will be informed of the results and provided a referral for further assessment if your child does not pass a screen.

Agency staff work with families to obtain all required health screens and any follow up care. Please let your child's teacher know if you need help in obtaining health care.

The following outlines possible circumstances when a child may not be allowed to attend the program:

- A child will not be allowed to start school if their immunizations are not current, or waiver has not been provided.
- A child may be excluded after 30 days if HS4KC has not received a copy of a current physical exam. For preschool children, the physical exam must be dated within the past 12 months. For infants and toddlers, the exam must be dated within the past 6 months.

## Handwashing

Children, staff, and volunteers complete hand washing upon arrival at school/work, immediately before and after eating/handling food, after toileting/diapering, after toothbrushing, after any contact with bodily fluids, after using water tables, playing outdoors, handling pets, whenever hands are visibly dirty and after removing protective gloves.

## Universal Precautions

All staff use Universal Precautions in order to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. All blood and other potentially infectious materials are considered infectious. Personal protective equipment is worn at all times when dealing with any bodily fluids.

## Cleaning and Sanitation

Tables and other surfaces are sanitized after every use. Tables and surfaces used for meal preparation are also sanitized before meals or snacks are prepared and served.

Toys that are chewed on or otherwise contaminated with bodily fluids are placed in a tub to be sanitized at the end of the day or before they are made available to the children again. Toys are cleaned weekly and when soiled.

## Accidents, Injuries, Incidents, and Illness

HS4KC is required to notify you and the Licensing Division of the Michigan Department of Human Services for any of the following occurrences:

- Your child is lost or left unsupervised
- An incident involving an allegation of inappropriate contact
- A fire on the premises of the center that requires the use of fire suppression equipment or results in loss of life or property
- The center is evacuated for any reason
- Your child is injured

If your child is involved in an accident that results in an injury, you will also be given a copy of the Accident Report form.

If an injury requires Emergency Medical Services, a staff member will call 911 and you. If staff are unable to reach you by phone, they will call the people you have listed as emergency contacts for your child. A staff member will accompany your child to the hospital if you have not yet arrived at the site.

## **Illness**

### **Center-Based**

If your child is sick, for their sake and for the sake of their classmates and teachers, your child should be kept home. If your child becomes ill at school, you will be contacted to pick up your child. If you cannot be reached, we will call the individuals designated by you to come and pick up your child.

### **Home Visiting Program**

If anyone in your home is sick, for their sake and for the sake of other children and your Home Visitor, you should call your Home Visitor to cancel and reschedule your home visit during the same week.

### **A Child Should Stay Home/Home Visit Should Be Canceled & Rescheduled When:**

- Child has a fever and acts sick or has other symptoms such as a sore throat, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Child has had two or more episodes of vomiting and/or diarrhea in the past 24-hour period.
- Child has a rash and a fever or acts sick.
- Child has or is suspected of having any contagious illness.
- Your child is too sick to fully participate in school or the home visit

## **Medications at School**

HS4KC cannot have any medications in the classroom unless we have a doctor's order. If your child needs medication at school, please contact the Site Supervisor at your child's Head Start center. Please do not put medications in your child's backpack and do not allow your child to bring any medications in his/her pockets.

## Notice of Privacy Practices

A copy of the complete HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) is available on the parent information board at your child's HS4KC site.

## Toothbrushing

Children brush their teeth once per day while in school. Toothbrushing is done at the table to help minimize the spread of germs. Each child has his/her own labeled toothbrush. Brushes are stored in a holder and out of the reach of children when not in use. Toothbrushes are replaced every 3 months during the program year.

# Nutrition

Program Manager: Cori Anderson ..... 616-453-4145 ext. 2221

*Our goal is to ensure children are prepared to be successful in school by providing a nutritious meal and snack during which children can actively participate in a relaxed, family-style atmosphere.*

## Program-Based Food

Children are offered food based on program option:

Home Visiting Program	Full Day Classroom
Socializations: Twice a month	Breakfast
Home Visits: Once a month	Lunch
	Snack

## Mealtime in the Classroom

- Meals and snacks are served in a family style setting where children are encouraged to set the table, serve themselves, talk about the foods they are eating with others at the table, and clean up their area afterwards.
- Children are encouraged to try new foods, but are not forced.
- Additional food is available for children to satisfy their hunger.
- Food is not used as punishment or reward.
- Accommodations are made for children with special dietary needs documented by a doctor.
- Ready-made formula will be provided for infants in the Infant/Toddler classrooms. If a special formula is required due to a medical need, an alternative formula based on the guidance from the infant's doctor will be provided.
- Parents will provide three clean bottles for their infant each day and will make the the child's bottle upon arrival. If they are not available to provide, bottles will be provided for them. The bottles will be marked with the infant's first and last name as well as the date and time the bottle was made.

Food experiences are offered on a regular basis and allow children to participate in the actual snack preparation, and then eat what they have helped prepare. Toothbrushing takes place during the day after mealtime.

## Menus

- Posted in the classroom and monthly on the agency website at [www.hs4kc.org](http://www.hs4kc.org).
- Planned to meet Child and Adult Care Food Program and Head Start guidelines.
- Designed to provide a wide variety of nutritious foods, while limiting sugar, fat and salt.
- Foods from different cultures are included whenever possible.

## Extra Food Brought Into the Classroom

To ensure a safe and inclusive classroom environment for all children, food brought in by families or staff will not be allowed in the classrooms.

Families are encouraged to talk with their child's Teacher or Site Supervisor to discuss other possible ways to be safe and inclusive. Ideas may include spending the day with their child in the classroom, making a book or other nonfood project at home to share with the class, etc.

The Nutrition Program Manager is available to discuss your concerns regarding special dietary needs, weight concerns, food allergies, basic shopping, and menu planning at home. Parental input on menus and food experiences is always welcome. Please give any ideas to your child's Teacher, Home Visitor, or Nutrition Program Manager. Nutrition trainings may be held at Family Engagement Events, based on parent interests.

## Breastfeeding

Head Start for Kent County (HS4KC) acknowledges and supports the benefits of breastfeeding babies. We provide a space where a mother can come in to breastfeed her baby on site and/or will bottle feed breastmilk that is provided by the mother.



## Civil Rights

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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**Text from:** <https://www.usda.gov/non-discrimination-statement>

***How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint:***

[https://www.usda.gov/oascr/  
how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint](https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint)

# Education

Program Manager: *Becky Stoessner* ..... 616-453-4145 ext. 2238

*To provide all children with a safe, nurturing, engaging, enjoyable, and secure learning environment, in order to help them gain the awareness, skills, and confidence necessary to succeed in their present environment, and to deal with later responsibilities in school and in life.*

## Philosophy, Curriculum, & Typical Daily Schedule Preschool

Our preschool program model is based on developmentally appropriate practice, which requires both meeting children where they are and planning for their next steps through appropriately diverse and challenging experiences. Our classroom environments are arranged to enhance children's learning through hands-on active play opportunities. Defined interest areas allow children to play and explore materials independently or with peers under the guidance of the teacher.

Our Infant-Toddler classrooms use a comprehensive curriculum grounded in current research, which is designed to build trusting relationships, so children feel confident to explore and exercise their creative imagination through purposeful play.

Our preschool classrooms use a comprehensive, research-based curriculum carefully designed to provide a rich academic foundation and foster child creativity, confidence, and independence.

A daily schedule is posted in every classroom at the children's eye level. This establishes the consistency that helps children predict the sequence of events and feel more secure and in control of their day. A typical schedule includes Greeting Time, Breakfast Time, Large Group Time, Small Group Time, Planning Time, Work Time, Clean Up Time, Recall Time, Lunch Time, Rest Time, Outside Time, and Read Aloud Time.

## Infant/Toddler

Daily caregiving routines offer the opportunity to build positive relationships with children and support trust. The teachers are intentional about the daily experiences they provide as they engage children in playing with toys, imitating and pretending, enjoying books and stories, creating with art, and much more, while giving them the flexibility to respond to the changing interests, abilities, and needs of the children in their care.

The teachers use these routine times to nurture children's curiosity, help them feel secure, and create a language-rich environment full of warm, loving, and meaningful interactions. This is what helps build the foundation for children's future success in school and in life.

### Primary Caregiving

Each child in our Infant Toddler classrooms will have a primary caregiver assigned to them at all times to ensure that their physical and emotional needs are met. The primary caregiver attends to their assigned child's individual needs and is responsible for most of that child's daily routines. This may include, but is not limited to verbal and physical interactions such as greetings and departures, comforting, feeding, diapering, napping, tracking individual milestones, facilitating indoor and outdoor play, and continued interaction with the child's parents regarding their child's experiences.

### Daily Sheets (Infant/Toddler Classrooms)

We use the Kaymbu app to digitally provide parents with daily information about their child, such as changes in a child's feeding habits, sleeping patterns, elimination patterns, and development, and to identify their child's primary caregiver. A paper form is used initially until the family is set up on the app. Parents of preschoolers with special needs may request a Daily Sheet be sent to them as well.

### Weather Precautions

Children play outdoors every day, weather permitting. Special caution is used during times of extreme heat or cold, as well as times when the air quality is not within a healthy range for outdoor play. Please make sure to dress for the weather.

## **School Readiness**

### **Developmental Screenings**

All children are screened for developmental, speech, behavioral, hearing and vision within 45 days of their entry into HS4KC. Screenings provide information to determine whether the child needs a referral for further evaluation. Teachers and Home Visitors review the screen with the family to determine a plan that will further support the child's development.

### **Developmental Assessments**

Our curriculum is aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, which supports the five essential domains of school readiness: Language & Literacy, Cognition, Approaches to Learning, Perceptual, Motor & Physical Development, and Social & Emotional Development. Teachers use the 34 items within 8 categories of development and learning to provide ongoing assessment of the COR Advantage assessment tool, which is shared with families after each of the periods.

### **Readiness Kits**

Each family will receive a new book, learning activities and a calendar to enjoy with your child. Included in these kits are age appropriate materials to support your child's development. Look for these kits to come home with your child in December, April, and June. Home Visitors will deliver their Readiness Kits in December, April, May and July.

### **School Readiness Home Connection- News You Can Use**

HS4KC issues a weekly newsletter for families of children enrolled in the preschool and home visiting programs. The "News You Can Use" newsletter provides information on upcoming events, important dates and reminders, monthly menus, community resources, and researched-based articles to support children and families in growth, learning and development.

## **Parent and Family Engagement**

Parent and family engagement is about building relationships with families that support family wellbeing, strong relationships between parents and their children, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children.

### **Education Home Visits**

Home visits are conducted two times per year. The first Education Home Visit occurs prior to each program year or whenever a new child joins the program, and it is focused on meeting your child's teacher or home visitor and the review of our Orientation packet. The second Education Home Visit occurs in the spring and is focused on supporting the whole family, including re-enrollment for the next program year, the enrollment of siblings, or discussion of the child's transition to kindergarten in the fall.

### **Family Conferences**

Conferences are held twice a year for preschoolers and three times per year for infants and toddlers, including Home Visiting. The purpose of the Conference is to review the child's individual progress and to work with each family to develop individualized learning goals specific to their child's development. Conferences are held in November and February of each program year for Preschoolers and in November, February, and July for Infants and Toddlers and Home Visiting.

## Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

The children and families we serve at HS4KC reflect the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of this nation. Respectfulness and Competence are two of our agency core values. We seek to provide tools that will enable all children to become competent, successful, and respectful adults. HS4KC strives to promote research-based practices and strategies to ensure optimal academic and social progress for all children and families enrolled in our program, including linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families. One way we do this is by asking families to contribute a page to our classroom books. Classrooms are provided with a variety of diverse materials and equipment. The Home Visiting Program works with each family utilizing the materials available in the home. We believe:

- Families are the first and most important teachers of their children.
- Families are our partners with a critical role in their family's development.
- Families have expertise about their child and their family.
- Families' contributions are important and valuable.

## Field Trips

Preschoolers have the opportunity to participate in field trips that support our curriculum objectives during the regular school day. Parents are notified in advance and are encouraged to participate. Field trips for infants and toddlers planned cooperatively with parents outside of the regular school day so that parents can provide transportation and attend with their child.

## Holiday Celebrations/Gifts

With the desire to promote respect for everyone, Head Start requests that celebrations of any type held during Head Start sponsored activities (staff gatherings, classroom time, parent meetings, etc.) reflect practices that are inclusive of all children and families. All events will be respectful of people of all races, colors, sexes, religions, national origins, ages or handicaps, heights, weights, veterans, marital status or membership in other protected groups.

Classroom events and activities will be sensitive to all families' beliefs, by looking for "common ground" issues to celebrate such as: seasons changing, children's achievements, number of books the class has read together, developmental milestones, etc. Teachers are encouraged to be creative and plan original celebrations with children and families that go beyond the commercialism of Halloween, Christmas, etc. Things like friendship, cooperation, solving a problem, reaching a goal, or a long-awaited change in weather.

## What to Send to School With Your Child

At HS4KC, we will provide everything your child needs to fully participate with us during the day. Some specific items can be helpful to ensure your child's comfort. If you are in need of any of these items, please speak with your child's teacher for assistance.

Please put your child's name on any items sent in to school. Do not send in any food items or toys.

### Infants/Toddlers

Extra Clothing, Outdoor Gear, Comfort Items (pacifier, blanket\*, etc.)

\*Note: blankets will not be placed in cribs, sleep sacks are provided

### Preschool:

Backpack, Extra Clothing, Outdoor Gear, Rest Time Blanket  
Blankets are sent home weekly to be laundered.

# Transportation

*Operations Director: Jim Vandermaas ..... 616-735-0693*  
*Transportation Supervisor: Kim Allington ..... 616-453-4145 ext. 2291*

Your child's safety is our main concern. For this reason, it is necessary that parents:

- Volunteer on the bus. The State of Michigan requires an additional adult on each bus when more than ten (10) children are transported. You can help ensure all students are transported each day by volunteering to ride the bus to and/or from school. First time bus volunteers will receive their expectations from their child's driver at the beginning of their volunteer time.
- In the event a volunteer is not secured for a particular route, only ten (10) children will be transported to, or from, school that day.
- Give your child's emergency medication(s) to the bus driver. Never put medications in your child's backpack or their pockets.
- Help your child on and off the bus. Bus drivers will only release your child to the person(s) preauthorized by the parent. Additional adults can be authorized through Smart Tag Parent Portal, where you can also sign up for Smart Alerts. Authorized person(s) must have a valid picture I.D. and be at least 18 years of age. If a parent/guardian or authorized person is not available when a child is returned, the child will either be returned to their Head Start for Kent County (HS4KC) site or will be taken to the HS4KC TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT, 2626 WALKER AVE NW. If HS4KC staff is unable to contact someone to pick up the child, Child Protective Services may be called. The first time this happens, you will receive a written warning. The second time it happens, your child's transportation services may be suspended. Any subsequent times may result in termination of transportation services; this will be at the discretion of the Operations Director.
- Secure your child's seat belt. Child(ren) must be accompanied by an adult to and from the bus at all times.
- Escort your child across the road if your child must cross a road to board or exit the bus. When possible, stops will be located curbside to eliminate the need for children to cross the road to board or exit the bus.
- Ensure accurate contact information is up to date.
- In order to keep on schedule, bus drivers can only wait for 90 seconds at any home, so please have your child ready.



You must call the Transportation Department at (616) 735-0693 as well as your HS4KC site if:

- Your child will not be riding the bus to or from school
- An emergency arises

All HS4KC buses are equipped with GPS and video surveillance cameras for the safety of our children.

## **Safety Education**

### **Pedestrian Safety**

Please discuss the importance of pedestrian safety with your child.

Pedestrian safety is walking safely outdoors, not in the street, and crossing streets, driveways, and parking lots safely. Remember your children are young, and to cross streets, driveways, and parking lots safely, young children need to cross with an adult. Children this age should not yet be trusted to make a safe judgment call on whether it is or is not safe to cross the street. Young children should always cross the street with an adult. You may contact your child's Teacher or Home Visitor for specific books and finger-plays covering pedestrian safety that your child has been exposed to.

Another aspect of pedestrian safety is having an adult escort their child on and off of the bus. This helps children learn the safe way to board and exit the bus (walking, holding the handrail, one step at a time) and reinforces the child buckling up in their car seat. All of these aspects are important to pedestrian safety. As parents are escorting their children to the bus, onto the bus, and into their seats, they are being positive role models for their children, as well as the other children on the bus.

### **Bus Safety**

HS4KC is dedicated to providing our children and their families with important health and safety information. Topics covered at school and reinforced at home will provide our children with consistent information and will help them to retain the information more easily.

Please review the following topics with your child to reinforce what they will be learning at school.

## Boarding and Exiting the Vehicle

Please encourage your child to do the following when boarding and exiting the bus:

- Walk
- Go one person at a time
- Hold the hand railing
- One step at a time
- Upon entering the bus, go directly to a car seat
- Buckle up, ask for help if needed

## Danger Zones

Please discuss with your child the danger zones all around vehicles. The danger zone is ten feet around the perimeter of the bus. Vehicles, especially buses, are large, so it is hard for the driver to see things that are up close to the bus.

- Never walk around a bus
- Never walk next to the bus
- Walk directly to the bus door, but stay back so the driver can see you
- Never cross in front of a bus except with an adult

## **Bus Evacuations**

All children who ride the bus will experience bus evacuations three times during the program year. Bus evacuations are done in a controlled setting. They allow the children to practice evacuating the bus in a pretend emergency, listening to the driver, and meeting at a designated place. The children will practice evacuating out of the side door, the rear door, and both doors simultaneously. If you would like to be a part of the bus evacuation, please contact your child's driver to see when these are scheduled.

# State of Michigan Childcare

## Licensing Notebook

- (I) Notice of the availability of the center's licensing notebook. The notice must include all of the following:
  - (i) The licensing notebook contains all the licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans for the last 5 years.
  - (ii) The licensing notebook is available to parents during regular business hours.
  - (iii) Licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports, and corrective action plans from at least the past 3 years are available on the department's child care licensing website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare). The website address must be in bold print.



# Head Start for Kent County

Connecting Families and Community Resources



## Thank you!

These materials were developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential.



The most current version of the handbook is always available at  
[www.hs4kc.org](http://www.hs4kc.org)

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