



## HIGHER HORIZONS EARLY HEAD START – 7 CORNERS CENTER GUIDELINES

We want your child's time at Higher Horizons to be safe, healthy and educational. Please help us to provide the very best for your child by observing the center guidelines. **Please read this information carefully!**

### **SECURITY:**

Higher Horizons has security cameras that monitor the interior and exterior of the facility. These cameras are used to safeguard the facility and equipment and for the protection of the health, safety and security and welfare of the children, parents and staff. Signs are located on the entrance doors to alert you to the use of surveillance equipment.

### **HOURS OF OPERATION & DAILY SCHEDULE:**

1. Higher Horizons Early Head Start operates from 7:45 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.
2. Drop off may start as early as 7:45 am and pick up from the center may start from 3:30 pm
3. Breakfast will provided from 8:30 am to 9:00 am. Infants will be fed on demand.
4. Diapers and pull-ups are provided by Higher Horizons.
5. The school day will consist of choice time, physical activities, and learning activities, meal time, and rest time. Please check your classroom bulletin boards for the class daily schedule.
6. The program will close periodically for holidays and staff development/teacher work-days. Please see program calendar on [www.higherhorizons.org](http://www.higherhorizons.org) for dates. Refer to the **Inclement Weather Policy** for what to do in the event of snow or severe weather.

### **RULES FOR CENTER DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP:**

1. When bringing your child into the building, you must transfer care to a Teacher or staff at the Early Head Start Center. **DO NOT leave your child at the main entrance or unattended in the classroom.** Parents or the designated drop-off person must sign their child into the classroom each day, and a phone number must be left as a contact for the day.
2. If you cannot pick your child up at school, you may send an authorized adult. Anyone picking your child up **MUST** be listed on your Emergency Contact Form. **We will not release your child to anyone who is not listed on your Emergency Contact Form. Please update your Emergency Contact form as contacts and phone numbers change.** You may change or add names on your Emergency Contact Form at any time. In cases of emergency, we can accept names to be added to the emergency contact list by fax from the parent. The parent must write a letter with the full name and phone number of the person(s) picking up the child. **We will not accept names over phone.**
3. Parents will have entry access to the school through an identification system. You will be given access upon enrollment of your child into the center based program. Please speak to your Family Service Advocate to assign other routine authorized pick up and drop off person(s).
4. Authorized individuals, picking a child up from the center, must sign in at the front desk. A valid picture ID needs to be presented to Higher Horizons' staff by the person picking up your child. Parents, or authorized individuals, picking up a child must obtain a (pink) Release Slip from the front desk prior to proceeding to the classroom. The pink slip must be given to the teacher. Children will not be released by the classroom staff without following this required procedure!
5. Authorized individuals using the identification system to gain entry into the school may not prop or hold the door open or give access to other individuals. **Violating this rule endangers the safety of the children and may result in the parent losing thumb print identification access.**
6. **Parents or authorized persons must pick up their children by 4pm.** If we do not hear from you or cannot contact anyone on the emergency contact to retrieve your child a call will be placed to Child Protective Services or the Fairfax Police County Department.

## FOODS & MEALS:

Higher Horizons participates in the United States Department of Agriculture Care and Adult Care Food Program (USDA). Your child will be provided three meals while in Early Head Start. Menus are sent home monthly for your review, parents are encouraged to offer feedback and suggestions. Infants in the program are fed on demand. Formula and baby food will be provided by Higher Horizons Early Head Start.

1. Breastfeeding mothers are encouraged to provide freshly expressed breast milk, in “feeding-sized” quantities. Breast milk must be labeled with your infant’s name, time, and date of expression. A hospital grade electric breast pump is available in the clinic for you use.
2. Outside foods other than breast milk, **are not allowed** into the center.
3. Birthdays are celebrated monthly, with a special treat provided by the kitchen staff.
4. For any special dietary needs, including allergies, a written medical statement from your child’s physician must be provided.
5. Please list religious dietary restrictions on the Nutrition Questionnaire.

## ATTENDANCE:

1. **Attendance is very important!** Please call us if your child is sick, or will be absent for any reason. Unless the absence has been pre-arranged, you must call us each morning on the days your child will be absent. **If we do not hear from you, your child’s absence will be unexcused.** For your convenience, you may call the Higher Horizons **Absence Hotline at 571- 499-6642, press option “1”** and leave your child’s name, the classroom or teacher name, and the reason for the absence. The office staff will record this information in the Student Absence Log. You do not have to talk to the teacher to report absences. Absences shall not exceed 30 days per program year.
2. A request must be made in writing for vacation approval. Your child will be placed on the waitlist if they are unable to return to the program in 30 days. We will not grant vacation approvals for over 30 days of absence. Parents please plan accordingly.
3. You will be contacted by your Family Engagement Advocate after three (3) or more consecutive days of absences or if there is a pattern of absences noted. Family emergencies, where the child will be absent for more than three days, must be reported to your Family Engagement Advocate (in writing or on the phone).
4. Your child’s slot at Higher Horizons may be in jeopardy if (1) your child is excessively absent (2) we are unable to contact the family (3) home visits are cancelled and not rescheduled or (4) you leave the country for more than 30 days.

## SICK CHILD:

Children **MAY NOT** come to school if they have the following symptoms:

1. A fever of 101 degrees or higher, taken under the arm, within the last 24 hours and without the use of fever reducing medication
2. Diarrhea within the last 24 hours
3. Vomiting within the last 24 hours
4. Any contagious disease
5. Signs of general discomfort or fatigue that make it difficult to take part in routine activities

You must let us know within 24 hours, or the next business day, if your child or any household member has developed any communicable disease. If your child is absent for three (3) or more days due to illness, we may ask that you provide us with a note from a health care provider or meet with Higher Horizons’ Health Assistant before your child returns to the program.

## MEDICATION AND TOPICALS AT SCHOOL:

1. Written permission from you and your child’s doctor must be provided before medications of any type can be given to your child.
2. Medications must be in their original container with clear instructions on the label, prepared by the pharmacy.
3. **DO NOT send ANY MEDICATIONS to school with your child. A parent or authorized adult must bring medications to school.**
4. Written permission is required to apply sunscreen, diaper ointment, cream, or insect spray on your child. Please ask your child’s teacher for the permission form.
5. If your child uses a pacifier, your written permission is required. Please ask your child’s teacher to provide you with the necessary form.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Early Head Start children must receive routine well-baby exams and immunizations. After the age of 12 months, we require dental exams every 6 months. Documentation must be submitted after these visits. Children without documentation of immunizations will not be able to participate in the school program according to the state of Virginia Licensing Standards. As a courtesy, the Health Assistant, Home Visitor or Family Engagement Advocate will remind you of upcoming medical due dates.

## DISABILITY AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONCERNS:

If your child has an identified disability we ask that you submit your child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in order for us to develop an educational plan appropriate for your child.

If you have concerns about your child's development or emotional health, please contact your child's teacher or Family Engagement Advocate. We will meet with you to discuss on how to best meet your child's needs.

All children receive a developmental and social-emotional screening within 45 days of enrollment as part of Head Start/Early Head Start requirements. You will receive the results of the screenings within 60 days of completion.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Each day, a "Daily Report" will be sent home with your child. The report will contain a brief description of your child's diapering/toileting, sleeping, and eating patterns.
2. Please review this each day and direct any questions you may have to your child's teacher. Please check your child's backpack and/or cubby daily for any correspondence. You may receive information about upcoming field trips and events at the program, as well as incident and accident reports.
3. Please respond quickly when we request information. We appreciate your cooperation.
4. **Please bring at least two changes of clothes (if possible) to leave at the center (including: shirts, pants, onesies, socks and underwear). Do not allow your child to bring toys, candy, or other items to school.**
5. Lesson plans, daily routines, calendars, and lunch menu will be posted in the classroom. Menus will also be sent home on a monthly basis.
6. Parent-teacher conferences will occur quarterly. Your teacher will contact you to set up meeting times and home visits. During your first home visit, the teacher will describe how your child will participate and learn through the Creative Curriculum and Parent as Teachers curriculum (for Home Based families).
7. Please communicate to your teachers any concerns that you may have about your child.
8. Higher Horizons' policy does not allow staff to accept monetary gifts.
9. **All parents are encouraged and expected to volunteer and be actively engaged in your child's educational experience.** Your participation will enable your child's School Readiness!

## TRANSITION:

If you have a child in the Early Head Start Program, at age three (3), your child must transition from the Early Head Start program to the Head Start program, or a community preschool that serves children three (3) years and older. Higher Horizons will assist you with this transition by:

1. Officially meeting with you when your child is two (2) years and six (6) months to plan and discuss your wishes for care after the child turns three (3) years old. At this meeting, parent and staff will create a plan that identifies appropriate community preschools for the child. Additionally, parents will submit updated income and address verification to determine the child's eligibility for Head Start.
2. Higher Horizons has agreements with community preschools that will facilitate your child's placement on the waitlist. Your child's participation in Early Head Start will not guarantee a placement with a community preschool.
3. If your child is Kindergarten eligible, you will be receiving notices and information from us on activities pertaining to Kindergarten transition. We host two Kindergarten meetings for parents in the fall and winter.

## **FAMILY SERVICES:**

A Family Engagement Advocate (FEA) is assigned to each center based family. In September, the FEA will contact you to arrange a home visit in order to complete a Family Partnership Plan. The Family Partnership Plan must be completed at the beginning and again at the end of the school year. Completing the plan provides an opportunity for the staff to assist your family with identifying and discussing strengths and needs, and defining your family goals. Home Based families receive the same services through their assigned Home Visitor (HV). FEA and HV are also available to you for assistance in accessing targeted community services to meet the specific needs of your family.

## **HOME BASED SERVICES:**

Early Head Start Home based is a prenatal through 3 years of age program. Child development and health information is shared by a home visitor during weekly visits. Activities are designed to encourage and teach parents to be their child's first teacher. Monthly Socialization play groups for children and parents are offered to encourage play and interaction with other children and learn new things.

## **ABUSE & NEGLECT:**

Higher Horizons Staff are mandated by law to report any suspected child abuse and neglect. Fairfax County Child Protective Services (CPS) will investigate and determine if abuse/neglect is taking place. We are not mandated to disclose to parents if we make a call to CPS. Staff may call CPS if they see or hear the following:

1. The child's disclosure of abuse
2. Repeated or unexplained bruises, welts, or burns
3. A child showing extreme behavior
4. A child that often does not have appropriate clothing for the weather
5. A child who is often hungry, tired, dirty, or seems neglected or not getting medical treatment as needed
6. A child who shows signs of sexual abuse or who talks about or exhibits inappropriate sexual behavior
7. Failure to follow-through with health care and medical treatments is a form of child neglect and will be reported.

## **PARENTAL CUSTODY:**

1. Please inform us and give us a copy of any legal changes to parental custody. Unless you provide us with a court or CPS order, we are required by law to release your child to their birth parent.
2. If there are individuals that are currently on your emergency contact and you no longer want them to have contact with your child, please contact your Family Engagement Advocate immediately and request a change.
3. Please provide us with legal documents describing a shared custody schedule, if it impacts school pick-up and drop-off. We will not honor your request to change the schedule unless it is legal.
4. We cannot advise you on legal matters or intervene on your behalf with the other custodial parent(s). Please do not ask our staff to communicate with the other parent for you.
5. Higher Horizons is not a visitation site. Please ask the courts for information on custody handover and supervised visits.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY:**

When there is bad weather please listen to the local news reports on the television or radio that relates to school closings. Higher Horizons follows the same schedule as Fairfax County Public Schools. Parents will be given an Inclement Weather Policy, please share this information with your child's babysitter, if they are the routine pick-up or drop-off person.

1. If Fairfax County Public Schools are closed, Higher Horizons will be closed.
2. If Fairfax County Public County schools open 1 or 2 Hours late, Higher Horizons will be open 1 or 2 hours late. Home Based families: there will be no Socialization and/or morning home visits will be rescheduled.
3. If Fairfax County Public School closes 1 or 2 hours early, Higher Horizons will close 1 or 2 hours early. Parents must pick their children up as indicated. Afternoon home visits will be rescheduled.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

**Daily bus service is not provided for children in Early Head Start.**

## EMERGENCIES:

1. If your child becomes ill, we will call you at the phone numbers you left on the sign in sheet in the classroom or use the emergency contact information you have provided. **You will be required to come to the school immediately to pick your child, or arrange for an authorized adult to pick your child up.**
2. Please report any changes in address, phone numbers or emergency contact persons. **It is very important that we are able to reach you at all times.** An Emergency Contact Form can be changed at any time; please request a new form through the Front Desk Receptionist or your Family Engagement Advocate when information changes.
3. If your child is seriously ill or injured, Higher Horizons reserves the right to call 911. We will also contact you with any information we may have.
4. An emergency is a sudden, urgent, usually unexpected occurrence that requires an immediate response. Emergencies can be natural (such as an earthquake) or man-made, (such as a fire). Higher Horizons Head Start/Early Head Start is prepared for many different types of emergencies. Plans have been written in accordance with Fairfax County and Federal Government recommendations to assure that children are kept safe in the event of an emergency. Each staff member has a specific responsibility, which is outlined in the plan.
5. Staff and children practice different scenarios every month, to learn what to do and how to act when an emergency occurs. Emergency supplies such as water, food, diapers and communication devices are kept at each site.
6. Communication is very important before, during and after an emergency. Once the emergency is brought under control parents will be immediately notified.

## POLICY COUNCIL:

The Policy Council is an established group of parents enrolled in the program. These parents share responsibilities for decisions concerning the **entire** program. For example, the Policy Council must review the annual budget, grant applications, and certain changes in the program. **Without parent's active participation in the Policy Council, Higher Horizons' programs cannot function!** The Policy Council is made up of parents and community members that are elected at the beginning of the program year at the Parent Committee meeting. If you like to make things happen, let us know and we will assist you in becoming a member.

## PARENT COMMITTEE:

**All parents are welcome** and encouraged to attend the monthly Parent Committee meetings. These meetings are held at Higher Horizons. Refreshments and/or a meal and child care are provided by the program. The topics presented reflect the trends in the community and are both educational and fun.

## FATHERHOOD/MALE INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM:

The goal of the Higher Horizons Fatherhood program is to organize fathers or male figures involved in their child's education which will strengthen their relationship between the family and school by providing consistent programs and services.

## EDUCATION AND HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEES:

These committees meet periodically throughout the year. Parents are invited and encouraged to participate in these committee meetings to advocate for their children. Together with community members and other professionals we can meet the challenges facing children and families.

## SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION:

Higher Horizons Early Head Start Program main phone number: 571 -499- 6642  
Executive Director: 703- 820-2457 extension 114  
Early Head Start Manager: extension 215  
Family Engagement Advocates: extension 206  
Home Visitors: extension 203, 204 & 205  
Health Assistant: extension 216

Higher Horizons is a Virginia state licensed child care provider, and we encourage you to speak to us about concerns you may have about your child's care. If you believe the program is not responsive to your concerns, please contact the Division of Licensing Programs at 1 800 543- 7545.