

Family Literacy

Policy: The primary goal of Head Start is to promote the development of social competence in the young children it serves. To effectively meet this goal, Head Start has long recognized the importance of supporting parents' efforts to attain family self sufficiency and to be their child's first and most important teacher. Adult literacy levels limits the economic self-sufficiency of many Head Start families, therefore Head Start must respond by incorporating a family approach to promoting the literacy development of the families it serves that also meets the needs of dual language learners.

Procedure:

1. UMHS Inc. will provide books to enrolled children three times during the program year through the RIF (Reading is Fundamental) Program.
2. Reach Out and Read will provide literacy development through books, literacy education and volunteers reading aloud to families in WIC clinics and selected pediatric clinics.
3. Home visitors will take books provided by UMHS Inc., on home visits for families to check out on regular basis. Home visitors will provide assistance for reading opportunities. Parents will be encouraged to use the public library and to obtain a library card. Regular visits will help cultivate a familiarity and comfort with library facilities.
4. Home visitors will involve the whole family in the Family Partnership Plan by identifying literacy desires, goals, needs, and strengths. The information provided assists the program and community agencies in determining which resources and referrals would best respond to the family's literacy goals. (SS8)
5. With identified needs, the home visitor with the family, will develop and implement a planned system of referral for appropriate services to meet the interests and goals of the family/individual. (SS5)
6. Family literacy information will be offered as outlined in the Parent Training Plan, which reflects parent's requests for training and education. (PI21)
7. Supporting emerging literacy and numeracy development through materials and activities according to the developmental level of each child. Strategies used for promoting reading and writing with preschool children are building on the foundation set in infancy. Emergent Literacy training can be requested by staff or parents, and encompasses the following:
 - ! Learning to read and write begins very early in life.
 - ! Reading and writing develop concurrently and inter-related in young children.
 - ! Literacy develops from real life situations in which reading and writing are used to get things done.
 - ! Children learn language development and literacy development through active engagement with peers and adults.

- ! Reading to children plays a special role in the literacy development of the young child.
 - ! Learning to read and write is a developmental process. Children pass through the stages in a variety of ways and at different ages.
 - ! Children are capable of learning more than one language simultaneously.
8. Families are encouraged by staff to talk with their children and share books with them in their home language as well as in English. Reading and talking about books is the single, most effective way for families to promote literacy.
 9. Reading books to and with children occurs daily in the classroom to meet the cultural needs of the children. Children who have enjoyable experiences with books want to be readers themselves and are more likely to become life-long enthusiastic readers. Books should reflect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children and be relevant to their experiences (Books in English, as well as, books in the families' home language will be made available as available).
 10. Classrooms will have a print rich environment. A print rich environment is one in which signs and labels that have a function are visible at children's eye level throughout the room. Reading and writing materials are available to children at all learning centers and encouraged by staff in the appropriate languages.
 11. Reading and writing related activities are infused in each interest area and throughout the curriculum. For example, equipping the block corner with a basket containing markers, index cards or poster board, and masking tape, children can make signs for their buildings. Displaying books with pictures of buildings, bridges, and construction sites will enable children to learn that they can get ideas from books. By making literacy development a part of all Head Start activities, children can make discoveries about letters, the sound and symbols of language, and the purpose of reading and writing all day long in everything they do. Having sign-in sheets so children can write their names when they arrive, writing thank-you notes to classroom visitors or people visited on a trip, or pointing out street signs can show children that print is an important means of communication.
 12. Family literacy articles will be placed in the agency newsletter. Family literacy articles will include such topics as, the importance of reading to your child, when to begin reading to your child, how to read to your child, creating stories, how to make a book with your child.
 13. Training on Emergent literacy will be offered to parents through parent center meetings.
 14. Parents and community volunteers will be encouraged to participate in the UMHS, INC. programs.
 15. Bilingual staff is available in classrooms where support for Dual Language Learners is required.
 16. Staff understands and takes care to understand the child's and the family's cultural and linguistic needs to effectively meet them in English as well as in their home language.

June 1, 2009