



2026-2027
Program
Year

Family Handbook

Celebrating 45 years of working hand-in-hand with children and their families to strengthen our communities.



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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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ECEAP SITES

EPIC PLACE 701 Superior Lane Yakima, WA 98902 Phone: (509)248-3950 *TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED	East Valley-Northeast 408 E. Seattle Ave Moxee, WA 98936 Phone: 509-367-6481 *TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED
Mountainview 830 Stone Road Yakima, WA 98908 Phone: (509) 972-5530	East Valley-Northwest 316 E. Seattle Ave Moxee, WA 98936 Phone: 509-895-6468 *TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED
Fairview 110 S. Fair Ave. Yakima, WA 98901 Phone: 509-426-2762 *TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED	5th Avenue 315 N. 5th Ave Yakima WA 98902 Phone: 509-424-4655
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East Wenatchee 1901 Rock Island Road East Wenatchee, WA 98802 Phone: 509-300-525 *TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED	Castlevale (Room 12) 2902 Castlevale Rd. Suite B Yakima, WA 98902 509-594-4563

HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START CENTERS

Castlevale 2902 Castlevale Rd. Suite B Yakima, WA 98902 509-594-4563 *TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED	Wide Hollow 1000 S. 72nd Ave Yakima, WA 98908 509-406-2668 EXTENDED HOURS OFFERED
Jefferson 902 E. Viola Avenue Yakima, WA 98901 509-594-4564 *TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED	Ellensburg 220 E. Helena Ave Ellensburg, WA 98926 509-872-5132 EXTENDED HOURS OFFERED

WELCOME TO EPIC EARLY LEARNING!

Dear Families,

We are pleased to welcome you and your child to our EPIC Early Learning program.

Our staff is dedicated to working with you and your child to provide you with the resources and information you need as well as providing a safe, fun, and developmentally appropriate learning experience for your child.

We have prepared our 2026-27 Family Handbook to ensure you have the program information that you need to have a successful year.

If you have any questions about the program, please reach out to your child's teacher or the Center Manager. Once again, welcome! Thank you for letting us be a part of your child's early learning journey.

We thank you for choosing our program to provide your child with an early learning experience.

Respectfully,

EPIC Staff

WHO WE ARE

EPIC, Enterprise for Progress in the Community, is a private, nonprofit organization delivering early childhood educational services to families in Central Washington for more than 40 years. We are funded by state contracts and federal grants to provide free, comprehensive early childhood education services to pregnant women and children from birth to age five. Our programs include ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) and Head Start for children ages 3-5, and Early Head Start for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers.

EPIC MISSION STATEMENT

Working hand in hand with children and their families, EPIC provides services to strengthen communities.

WE BELIEVE IN

- Honoring the dignity and worth of every individual while respecting the diversity of cultures
- Providing quality services that support the whole family
- Engaging families in decisions that affect their lives
- Encouraging the growth and development of our staff
- Building strong partnerships through collaboration and cooperation
- Adapting our services to meet changing needs of the community

For 45 years, we have proudly worked hand-in-hand with children and their families to strengthen and enrich our communities.

CORE VALUES

TOGETHER, WE GROW THE EPIC WAY!

At EPIC Early Learning, we believe every child grows best when surrounded by a community of caring adults, families, teachers, and program leaders—working together.

As a program, we intentionally set out to create a curriculum that supports children, families, and educators—one that reflects who we are, what we value, and how young children learn best. What makes this curriculum especially meaningful is that it was developed in partnership with our teachers, whose voices, experiences, and ideas helped shape both the planning and implementation. We are excited to learn and grow together as this work comes to life in our classrooms!

Our Core Values and Buddies help young learners build the foundational skills they need for school and for life: **Be Safe, Be Kind, Do Your Best, and Work Together.**

Strong roots create strong learners.

With family, educators, and EPIC support working together, every child can grow, bloom, and succeed.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Our program is equipped with a Crisis Preparedness plan. Our Crisis plans are posted on our classroom bulletin boards.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Information shall not be discussed about families, children, and/or staff in the classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, or in the community where people gather. Information shall not be discussed with family members. EPIC staff must ensure the security and confidentiality of all child and family information.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION POLICY

The safety of children is our highest priority, and we ensure that children in our program are never left unsupervised or left alone. Staff are trained yearly in active supervision practices to ensure children are safely supervised at all times while in our care. The program utilizes practices to help maintain the safety of the children.

Practices include:

- Maintaining at least two staff members when children are present or meeting the licensing requirement on ratio.
- Counting the children when entering and exiting a classroom or building.
- Utilizing both a verbal and visual system that represents the number of children present in the classroom.
- Classrooms are monitored through the program year on active supervision practices.

CHILD GUIDANCE

The Child Guidance Policy is to ensure that all EPIC staff and volunteers promote healthy social - emotional development in children. Our policy clearly states practices that are appropriate to use with children and practices that will not be implemented in the program. Staff are trained yearly on:

- Utilize nurturing and responsive care practices.
- Provide positive strategies to help children manage their emotions, behaviors, and to solve problems.
- Offer children choices.
- Communicate with children at their level in a calm and warm voice.
- Learn about each child's needs and interests.
- Refrain from using any practices that belittle or shame a child.
- Avoid the use of time-out or isolating a child.
- Allow time for a child to try to de-escalate themselves if they have become overly upset.
- How to move or carry a child if the child needs to be moved to a safe place and the child will not move themselves.

- Physically restraining a child only when it is the last resort and to prevent a serious injury to persons, serious property damage, or to obtain possession of a dangerous object.

SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

EPIC is prohibited from expelling children from the program. EPIC's response to support the child to prevent expulsion includes, but is not limited to, meetings with families, developing and implementing a Child Focus Response Plan, consultation with an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant and/or outlining temporary services through an Alternative Attendance Plan when needed. Temporary limitations on services may be implemented only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances.

ELIGIBILITY & ENROLLMENT

EPIC provides free, comprehensive preschool services to eligible children and their families. Eligibility is determined following state requirements for ECEAP and federal guidelines for Head Start and Early Head Start. Eligibility is primarily determined by family income, special needs, and other risk factors.

Children are accepted into the program on a priority basis; not first come, first served. Children not accepted into the program at the beginning of the year will be placed on an active waiting list. As openings occur, parents/guardians will be notified in the same manner as original enrollees.

ATTENDANCE

Regular and on-time attendance helps children build routines, strengthen their skills, and receive the full benefit of the program. We ask families to help their child arrive on time, attend the entire session, and be picked up on time.

We understand that children get sick and unexpected situations happen. If your child will be absent, please call your child's center within one hour of the start of class to let us know.

Our program is required to track attendance and document the reason for each absence. If your child begins to miss school frequently, our staff will work with your family to understand what is making attendance difficult and create a plan that supports regular attendance. If attendance concerns continue after we have worked together and provided support, your child's placement may be reconsidered so the space can be offered to another family on the waiting list.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS)

All EPIC staff are Mandated Reporters. If staff have reasonable cause to suspect that a child may be in danger of abuse or neglect, we are required by state law to call CPS. If parents have concerns, they may call CPS directly or discuss it with their Center Manager or Program Director.

EDUCATION & PROGRAM SERVICES

We recognize that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children; we work side by side with parents/guardians to involve you in the process of assessment and planning for your child. We utilize curricula and practices that teach children self-help skills along with social-emotional skills to help

our children develop relationships with peers-and adults. We want children to become independent, self-confident, curious, hands-on learners, and enthusiastic learners.

OUR CLASSROOMS

- Focuses on building positive relationships with every child and family.
- Prepare children for kindergarten.
- Provide activities that are developmentally age- appropriate.
- Fully support your child's overall development.

DAILY SCHEDULE/ROUTINE

The classroom environment and daily schedule are intentionally designed to support children's learning and development by providing predictable routines and meaningful opportunities to practice sharing, independence, responsibility, and cooperation with peers. Children have opportunities to freely explore developmentally appropriate learning centers and materials, make choices based on their interests, and engage in purposeful play.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

EPIC Early Learning focuses on supporting children's development across key learning domains to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success throughout their educational journey.

- Intentionally supports children's growth and development across the six essential learning domains: Math, Social-emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, and Literacy.
- A developmental screening tool (Dial 4) will be used with your child to help identify their strengths and any areas where additional support may be beneficial.
- Collaborate with local school districts, early intervention providers, and community agencies to support children with individualized plans. This includes partnering with families and service providers to participate in planning, implementing, and reviewing services for children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), or Child Focus Plan
- Utilize an ongoing assessment process to monitor your child's growth and development over time. Information gathered through observations, family input, and assessment helps teachers plan individualized learning experiences, activities, and instruction that build on your child's strengths, interests, and unique developmental needs.
- Parent-teacher conferences and family visits are scheduled throughout the year to discuss your child's growth and development, celebrate accomplishments, share progress, and collaborate on individualized home goals that support your child's learning and development.

STAFF TO CHILD RATIOS

Our classrooms are staffed with the following adult-to-child ratios at a minimum. You will frequently see additional staff in your child's classrooms as we work to ensure quality learning environments:

- Infant classrooms: 1 adult to 4 children (EHS Sites)
- Toddler classrooms: 1 adult to 4 children (EHS Sites)
- Preschool classrooms: 1 adult to 10 children

SPECIAL SERVICES

- EPIC will support the local school districts by having collaborative meetings and supporting services for children who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP).
- The school district and Children's Village are responsible for evaluating children and identifying if an IEP/IFSP is needed. EPIC will provide additional information about the child if requested, and there is permission to do so by the parent/guardian.
- The school district and Children's Village are responsible for providing the services needed for each child. There are times when the district can come to EPIC Early Learning classrooms and provide their services at our location; these types of on-site services will vary depending on the school district's policies and boundaries.
- If you have questions or need support in this area, please reach out to your child's teacher.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

EPIC Early Learning values and respects every child as a unique individual and is committed to fostering each child's social-emotional development. We create nurturing, welcoming environments where children develop a strong sense of identity and belonging, learn to express and manage their emotions, build positive relationships, and gain confidence as learners.

Through responsive relationships, intentional teaching, positive guidance, adult and peer role modeling, and developmentally appropriate curriculum, children are supported in developing independence, cooperation, problem-solving, self-regulation, and other lifelong social-emotional skills. We recognize that every child develops at their own pace, and some children may benefit from additional individualized support.

When appropriate, we also collaborate with mental health consultants, early intervention providers, school districts, and other community partners to connect families with additional resources and services that support children's healthy development and overall well-being.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

EPIC values every child as a unique individual and recognizes that a child's home language is an important part of their identity, culture, and learning. We support children in developing both their home language and English through meaningful interactions, intentional teaching, and individualized instruction. The staff will model rich language, provide learning experiences that promote listening, speaking, early literacy, reading, and print awareness.

KINDER TRANSITION

EPIC Early Learning is committed to implementing consistent, intentional practices that prepare children and families for a successful transition from preschool to kindergarten.

EPIC Staff will support children and families in preparing for a successful transition to kindergarten by:

- Providing intentional learning experiences that support kindergarten readiness skills and help children become familiar with the transition process.

- Working individually with children who will be transitioning from EPIC Early Learning to kindergarten to support their developmental needs, strengths, and areas of growth.
- Discussing each child's progress toward kindergarten readiness during parent-teacher conferences using Teaching Strategies, GOLD checkpoint assessment information, and ongoing observations.
- Collaborating with the Early Learning Specialist and local school districts in EPIC service areas to support a coordinated transition process by:
 - Planning joint family engagement events, when possible, to help families become familiar with kindergarten expectations and school resources.
 - Connecting families with kindergarten readiness activities and events offered by local schools.
 - Providing families with information about kindergarten registration timelines, processes, and required documentation.
 - Building relationships with kindergarten teachers and school staff to promote communication and a smooth transition for children and families.
 - Sharing child assessment information and developmental records with receiving schools when appropriate and with parent/guardian permission.
 - Supporting families in gathering and completing required documents for kindergarten registration.

CELEBRATION POLICY

EPIC Early Learning's classroom and center environments are designed to support and respect all family structures, cultures, ethnicities, beliefs, and languages. We recognize and value the background of families we serve and strive to create a welcoming environment where every child and family feels a sense of belonging.

The program does not promote or participate in the celebration of religious holidays, cultural holidays, or individual birthdays within classrooms or during program activities. Instead, staff use a theme-based approach to support children's learning about seasons, classroom experiences, and topics that are connected to children's development and daily experiences.

To recognize and honor each child's individuality, EPIC utilizes a Very Important Person (VIP) system as an alternative way to acknowledge children and celebrate their unique qualities, interests, and family connections within the classroom.

EPIC also follows the following practices to support children's health and safety during special activities and maintain compliance with the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines:

- No outside food (store-bought or homemade) is allowed in classrooms.
- Food experiences in the classroom are focused on teaching children about healthy foods and healthy habits.
- Recipes must contain minimal sugar ingredients. Food experiences must not replace a meal served at the center.
- Food items such as fruit snacks, cookies, cakes, soda, candy, etc. are not allowed to be brought into the centers, classrooms, or on the bus.
- Balloons and flowers are not permitted at the centers, classrooms, or on the bus.

END OF THE YEAR CELEBRATION

EPIC recognizes the importance of acknowledging the success of children and families. The program will work with parents to plan an end-of-the-year celebration that is respectful of all families.

CREATIVE FUN WEEK

Three times during the program year, EPIC Early Learning centers and classrooms may offer a Creative Fun Week where children can express their creativity and participate in themed dress-up activities. Participation is optional, and children are welcome to participate in whatever way feels comfortable for them.

Families are not expected to purchase special clothing or items for these activities. Children may use items they already have at home or participate without dressing up. Classroom staff will provide families with advance notice and a schedule outlining the theme for each day.

Creative Fun Weeks are designed to support children's creativity, self-expression, and classroom community while maintaining the regular classroom schedule and instructional activities.

REST TIME

Children who are enrolled in our school day program of 6.5 hours (or more) must be offered rest time. Rest time is an opportunity for children to relax and calm their bodies. Rest time does not require a child to go to sleep unless the child wants to. Children who do not need to sleep will be offered a calming activity to do. Children who do need to sleep will be offered a mat or cot to rest on for up to sixty minutes.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Physical activity is necessary in a child's development as it helps teach a child balance, coordination, and large motor skills. Per the Washington Administrative Code and our curricula, children must engage in outdoor play daily. When the weather is not safe for children to be outdoors, the children will engage in gross motor/physical development play inside the center or classroom. Children will engage in various outdoor activities that include painting, water play, planting, etc. We strongly encourage families to dress children in comfortable clothing that allows for movement, exploration, and participation in daily activities while also considering weather conditions. Children should wear clothing that supports their independence and allows them to safely engage in classroom and outdoor learning experiences.

Children are required to wear closed-toe shoes with secure heel straps or a secure backing each day while attending the program. Footwear that may create a safety hazard, including flip-flops, slides, open-toe sandals, shoes with wheels, high heels, slippers, or shoes with slippery bottoms, is not permitted. Safe, secure footwear helps prevent slips, trips, and injuries during play and daily routines.

Families are encouraged to provide an extra set of clothing for their child to keep in the classroom in case of spills, accidents, or weather changes. Please place extra clothing in a non-plastic bag labeled with your child's name.

WATER ACTIVITIES

EPIC Early Learning prioritizes the health and safety of children during all activities, including water play experiences. Written permission from each child's parent or guardian will be obtained before children participate in planned water activities.

Children will be closely and actively supervised during water activities. EPIC staff will follow all required supervision practices outlined in this section and in **WAC 110-300-0345** to ensure children's safety and well-being. Staff will maintain appropriate supervision, positioning, and engagement throughout water play activities while providing developmentally appropriate opportunities for exploration and learning.

INFANT/TODDLER SERVICES

(EHS- Early Head Start locations: Ellensburg, Castlevale & Jefferson)

CONTINUITY OF CARE

Early Head Start classrooms use a Primary Care Model that requires children be assigned to each full-time classroom staff person. The assigned teacher is the primary caregiver for the children in his/her group. All infant and toddler classrooms follow a Daily Staffing Plan to ensure appropriate and consistent care.

COMMUNICATION

It is important to let us know every day about your baby or toddler. Tell the teacher about any changes in food, bottles, sleep, emotions, and health. We welcome your ideas concerning family traditions and activity ideas.

EHS Mixed-Age Grouping: *Applies to: EHS Classrooms (Castlevale 2A & JF 1) (Ages 0–36 months)*

RATIOS AND GROUP SIZE-MIXED-AGE GROUPS (0–36 MONTHS):

Programs must follow the stricter (lower) ratio and group size requirements based on the youngest child enrolled.

- Ratio: 1:4 (one adult for every four children when infants are present)
- Maximum group size: 8 children with 2 adults if infants are enrolled in the group.
- When only toddlers are present, group size and ratio may shift to toddler standards.

SUPERVISION

Staff must always ensure active supervision, defined as:

- Positioning themselves to see and hear all children
- Scanning the environment and counting children frequently
- Anticipating children's behavior to ensure safety
- Ensuring no child is ever left alone or unsupervised
- Staff will document transitions (indoor/outdoor, diapering, feeding, nap) to ensure continuity of supervision.

CAPACITY

Classroom enrollment must not exceed the licensed capacity under WAC 110-300-0355.

When infants and toddlers are served together, capacity is capped by the lowest applicable group size requirement (maximum of 8 children with 2 adults if infants are present).

INFANT FEEDING

- Infants are fed on demand according to their individual feeding schedule using only iron-fortified infant formula or breast milk provided in accordance with program policies.
- Babies are always held while feeding. Bottles are never propped, and infants are never allowed to walk or crawl with a bottle.
- Staff document each infant's feedings and work closely with families when introducing developmentally appropriate foods. New foods are introduced gradually, with parent input, to help monitor possible food allergies or sensitivities.
- Breast milk is properly labeled, stored, and refrigerated according to food safety guidelines. Any unused breast milk remaining at the end of the day will be sent home with the parent or guardian.

TODDLER MEALS

We provide healthy, nutritionally balanced breakfasts, lunches, and snacks that meet the meal pattern requirements of the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Meals are served family style whenever developmentally appropriate, allowing children to practice self-serving skills, make healthy food choices, and develop positive mealtime habits while enjoying meals together in a supportive environment.

DIAPERING & TOILET TRAINING

We will keep a record of when your child is changed. We provide diapers and wipes while your child is in our care. We follow stringent sanitary procedures by wearing disposable gloves and using disposable changing table paper. Afterwards, hands are washed, and the changing area is cleaned with a disinfecting solution.

Toilet training is done at a pace that's right for your child, with a plan developed between staff and parents. Staff provide support and encouragement while teaching self-care skills.

SLEEPING

In keeping with state safe sleep guidelines, infants sleep on their backs in their own crib. Staff don't use blankets, bumper pads, mobiles, or stuffed animals in the crib, and no child is swaddled or restrained in any way.

Staff can soothe infants and toddlers to sleep by holding and gently rocking them and may wrap a child loosely in a blanket for comfort beforehand. That blanket comes off before the child goes into the crib to rest. Our program follows all licensing safe sleep standards. Toddler classrooms build consistent rest time into the daily routine.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

EPIC sees our parents/guardians as valuable contributors to their families, to our programs, and to our communities. We treat each family as its own individual, bringing its set of values, needs, and concerns to the program. We aim to involve each family in the program to participate at a level where they are most comfortable.

HEALTH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

EPIC supports families by helping to remind parents of their child's medical and health needs. The program focuses on making sure that children attend in a safe and healthy environment. We take precautions and follow all safety measures when there is a potentially sick child or a health need.

WELL CHILD AND DENTAL EXAMS

EPIC requires all children in the program to have a current Well Child Exam and Dental Exam. Please ask your child's doctor and dentist to provide you with your child's exam results so they can be turned in. Our Performance Standards require us to show documentation of these exams within 90 days of your child's enrollment. It is very important that we receive these for our program.

EPIC staff will work with you to keep these exams up to date and turned in within 90 days, while also keeping them up to date throughout the school year. They can also assist you if you need to find a regular doctor or dentist, need a referral, or need insurance coverage.

If your child has, or develops, a life-threatening condition, a health care plan and food substitution (if applicable) must be in place and not be expired before your child can attend class. Please notify your center.

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME

In accordance with WAC 110-300-0205, children need to feel their best to fully participate in the day-to-day activities. If your child is not feeling well, please keep your child home and notify the center. If your child has had any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours, please do not send them to school.

- Temperature of 101 degrees F or higher accompanied by one or more of the following
 - Diarrhea or vomiting;
 - Earache;
 - Headache;
 - Sore throat;
 - Rash;
 - Fatigue that limits participation in daily activities; or
 - Irritability, confusion, unusual sleepiness, or significant behavior change.

- Vomiting; two or more episodes within the last 24 hours
- Diarrhea: two or more episodes within the last 24 hours
- Rash or skin condition that is unexplained, associated with fever or behavioral change, draining, blistering, or suspected to be contagious.
- Open, draining, or oozing sores that cannot be fully covered with clean, dry bandage or clothing.
- Contagious, communicable disease

MEDICATION

Medication prescribed by a medical provider will only be administered by center staff if the dosing schedule falls during center service hours. Otherwise, the parents are required to give medication at home.

Both the parent and the doctor must complete and sign the authorization form if prescription medication, ointment, or topical creams are administered during center service hours.

Necessary information before medication will be allowed in the center and administered to a child:

- Child's first & last name
- Child's date of birth
- Child's parent/guardian and/or health provider signature
- Name of medication
- Reason for giving medication
- Amount of medication to be given
- How often do you give medication?
- How to give medication
- Start & stop dates of the medication
- Expected side effects.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES/ILLNESSES

Communicable diseases and illnesses are highly contagious, especially in a child's setting. If your child has any communicable disease or illness, please contact us immediately. All calls are kept confidential to ensure your child's privacy. State law requires us to report certain communicable diseases or illnesses to the local health district. General exposure notes may be sent to all children in a classroom for certain communicable diseases or illnesses to inform you that your child has been exposed to an illness/disease, what the symptoms are, and what steps parents should take. At no time will we ever disclose a child or family name in an exposure letter.

ORAL HEALTH

Oral health is important in a child's development. Children and parents will learn about the importance of oral health, and children will develop healthy oral habits in the classroom. Toothbrushes and toothpaste will be provided for the children to brush their teeth daily. Children will also swish and swallow after lunch, snacks, and food experiences.

Children under 2 years of age will use non-fluoride toothpaste.

TOILET TRAINING

Toilet learning is a developmental skill that children develop at their own pace and with support from caring adults. EPIC Early Learning recognizes that children enter the program with a variety of developmental abilities and experiences. No child will be denied enrollment or services based on their stage of toilet learning; however, a toileting support plan must be developed in partnership with the family before the child begins services.

The plan will identify the child's individual needs, family preferences, and strategies to support consistent, respectful, and positive toileting experiences at home and in the classroom.

NUTRITIOUS MEALS & SNACKS

USDA CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

Our program participates in the **USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**. All meals and snacks served to your child meet USDA/CACFP meal pattern requirements and are planned to provide the nutrition children need for healthy growth and development. Menus are posted in each classroom and on the parent information board at your child's center.

Participation in CACFP benefits children in many ways:

Nutrition

Meals and snacks are planned in accordance with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and USDA meal pattern requirements. They provide nutritious foods that support healthy growth, development, and lifelong healthy eating habits.

Learning and Development

Mealtimes provide opportunities for children to explore new foods, experience a variety of flavors and cultures, and develop positive attitudes toward healthy eating. Family-style dining, when developmentally appropriate, also encourages independence and self-help skills.

Access to All Children

Healthy meals and snacks are available to all enrolled children, helping ensure every child has access to nutritious food while in our care.

Social and Emotional Development

Mealtimes are an important part of the daily routine. Children eat together with their peers and teachers, practicing conversation, table manners, cooperation, and other important social skills in a positive and supportive environment.

FOOD SAFETY

Meals are prepared by trained food service professionals who follow USDA, state, and local food safety regulations. Proper food handling, preparation, and sanitation practices help ensure that every meal served is safe and wholesome.

MEALTIME

EPIC Early Learning views mealtime as an important opportunity for children to develop healthy eating habits, build relationships, and practice social skills. Meals and snacks are provided in a family-style setting where children are encouraged to participate, make choices, and engage in conversations with peers and adults.

Children participate in nutrition education experiences that may include exploring foods through activities such as tasting, touching, peeling, preparing, cooking, and stirring. Food is never used as a reward or punishment. Children are not forced to eat; instead, they are encouraged to explore and try new foods while respecting their individual preferences and readiness.

We promote healthy eating habits by providing balanced meals and snacks that include a variety of fruits, vegetables, proteins, and whole grains in accordance with USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines.

Special dietary accommodations will be provided for children with documented medical needs. Families must provide required documentation from the child's healthcare provider to support the development of an appropriate dietary plan.

To support children's health, safety, and compliance with food program requirements, all food served at EPIC Early Learning must be commercially prepared or prepared according to program-approved procedures for classroom service. Outside food is not permitted in classrooms or centers unless approved as part of an identified dietary accommodation or program requirement.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY & CIVIL RIGHTS

In accordance with Federal law and the U.S. Department of Agriculture civil rights regulations and policies, EPIC is prohibited from discriminating against, any person who meets the eligibility criteria for ECEAP & Head Start on the basis of race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/ parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. EPIC must comply with the requirements of the Washington law against discrimination (chapter 49.60 RCW) and with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY).

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

email:

program.intake@usda.gov

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES:

(Busing is not available at all centers)

We ask for your patience and cooperation for the first few weeks of school, while we are getting routes and times established. Our goal is to establish routes that will keep children on the bus for the shortest time possible.

Before your child receives transportation services (if offered at the site), the following forms must be complete/current:

- Emergency Information Form
- Transportation Procedures for Parents
- Healthcare Plan and Medication Chart (when applicable)

STOP AND GO SIGNS

- If your child receives transportation services, adults will receive a stop/go sign.
 - Place your stop/go sign in a window that is clearly visible by the bus from the street (daily).
- The red STOP and green GO signs can be used to let the driver know if the student is riding.



= Your child will ride



= Your child will NOT ride

Please make sure the sign is visible and correct, as we will not be able to go back if your sign is incorrect.

ADDRESS CHANGES

If you are moving or have a new childcare provider, which will require a new pick-up/drop off address, please notify your teacher(s) of the change. Changes can take up to 48 hours to take effect. Due to scheduling limitations, we may not be able to accommodate all requests. Address changes must be in place for a period of at least two (2) weeks.

- There is no guarantee that all addresses will qualify for transportation services.
- Buses will not enter apartment buildings/private roads unless deemed safe and economically feasible.
- Pick-up points may need to be assigned if a bus is not able to meet your exact location. The program has established pick-up points that will be suggested.

BUS SERVICES

For the first two weeks of school, the bus routes will vary for pick-up and drop-off times until the routes are fully established. Times may vary according to inclement weather, traffic, or number of children on the bus. We cannot call parents when buses are ahead of or behind schedule; we ask parents to please be patient and understand we cannot provide exact times.

ADULT DROP-OFF & PICK-UP

- Children must be dropped off at the scheduled start time of their class and may not arrive before the program's designated start time. This ensures staff is available to provide appropriate supervision and that children begin their day safely and successfully.
- When dropping off your child, you must sign in with your child. When picking up your child, you must sign-out with your child.
- If your child's classroom is currently loading or unloading children from the bus, we ask that you please wait until the staff is done before dropping off or picking up your child.
- Adults must closely supervise their children while in the parking lot.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

For your child's safety, we will only release children to authorized adults who are listed on the Emergency Information Form. Adults must be at least 18 years old and show a photo ID when they pick up from the center or the bus.

- If you need to make changes to the Emergency Information Form, please contact your child's center.
- We cannot accept changes through handwritten notes or phone calls.
- The person receiving your child from the bus **MUST BE LISTED** on the Emergency Information Form and show a picture ID.
- Family members or guardians must be at least thirteen years of age to place your child on the bus.
- Please contact the Center Manager if you have questions regarding bus services.

IMPORTANT BUS SAFETY SKILLS TO TEACH YOUR CHILD

Families can help children have a safe and successful bus experience by practicing these important bus safety skills:

- Listen to and follow directions from the bus driver and transportation assistant.
- Use a quiet voice while riding the bus to help keep everyone safe.
- Remain seated and always wear a seat belt while the bus is moving.
- Show kindness and respect toward friends and others riding on the bus.
- Keep hands, feet, and belongings to themselves while riding.

ITEMS NOT ALLOWED ON THE BUS

To support the safety of all children and ensure a safe transportation environment, the following items are not allowed on the bus:

- Food, drinks, candy, or gum
- Toys, electronic devices, or personal items that may distract children or create safety concerns
- Pets or animals
- Backpacks or large bags
- Extra coats, sweaters, or clothing items that the child is not wearing

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS REGARDING BUS SERVICES

To ensure the safety of all children, families, and transportation staff, please be aware of the following expectations when using EPIC Early Learning bus services:

- The bus will only pick up and drop off your child at their assigned transportation location.
- Parents/guardians must remain off the bus. Only authorized children and transportation staff may enter the bus.
- Parents/guardians should not follow the bus, attempt to stop the bus, or communicate directly with the bus driver while the bus is in operation.
- If a parent/guardian appears to be under the influence or if the designated pick-up/drop-off location appears unsafe, the bus driver may not release or pick up the child. Staff will follow program safety procedures and contact the appropriate individuals as needed.
- The bus will not honk or use other signals to notify families that the bus has arrived. Families should be present and ready at the assigned location during the scheduled transportation window.
- Questions, concerns, or changes related to transportation services should be communicated with your child's Center Manager or the Transportation Manager.

RETURNED CHILD POLICY

It is an EPIC policy to protect the safety and well-being of every child under its care. The EPIC staff will adhere to procedures that carefully maintain a chain of custody from the time a child is received from their parent(s)/guardian(s) until the child is returned to them. When no parent or guardian or authorized individual is available to receive the child as designated by the on-board Emergency

Information Form, the EPIC Early Learning staff will follow the Returned Child Procedure and return the child to the center.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Our program will make every effort to post up-to-the-minute school closure information due to inclement weather or any circumstance that would delay the normal school schedule. Announcements are made online at the EPIC website at www.epicnet.org. You may also tune into your local television, radio stations, and flash alert for updates.

Aside from using the FLASH ALERT app, we will be using the ChildPlus app for announcements as well.

•*Don't forget to check out our Facebook page as well for more information.*



EARLY HEAD START HOME VISITS

Inclement weather may cause the Home Educator to reschedule the Home Visit. If that is the case, the Home Visitor will contact you to reschedule. A may keep the appointment with you, even if the district has announced a closing/delay. Safety will determine if the Home Visit takes place or is rescheduled.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips will be scheduled based upon the curriculum and learning experiences in the classroom. Parents/Guardians will be notified, and written permission will be gathered prior to any child attending a field trip. Children who do not have permission to attend the field trip will have accommodations made for them to still participate in the program.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

POLICY COUNCIL

Parents also choose a representative from their Center to join the Policy Council. This group helps shape the program by sharing feedback and approving major changes. Representatives get reimbursed for childcare and travel costs.

You might be asked to help with things like answering questions about the program, observing activities, or filling out checklists. Your experiences and ideas are very important to us, and your involvement helps make our program even better!

Get involved – Your Voice Matters!

You are the primary educator in your child's life, and we encourage you to participate in all levels of their education. We welcome you to share ideas to improve our program, plan fun family activities, and plan end-of-year celebrations.

Ways to Be Involved

- Attend Family Nights
- Do take-home projects
- Attend field trips with your child
- Celebrating Very Important Person (VIP) in the classroom
- Keep your appointments for conferences
- Join Policy Council

Learn about helpful resources in the community, elect parent representatives to the Policy Council, and meet other parents and build friendships.

Volunteer– Your Time Matters!

We'd love for you to be part of your child's classroom and center activities! If you're interested, just ask your Center Manager or your child's Teacher for more details. Examples include volunteering in class or on field trips, helping with projects at home, and joining meetings or trainings.

If you plan to volunteer at your child's center or classroom on a regular basis, please contact your child's teacher or family service teacher to complete the required volunteer packet.

FACILITIES & OPERATIONS

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF PESTICIDE USE AT SCHOOLS

EPIC is committed to providing the safest learning environment for your child. In accordance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 17.21.415, notice is given to all parents and guardians of enrolled children of the occasional use of pesticides to control and suppress unwanted pests on school grounds and in buildings and buses.

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG POLICY

For the safety and well-being of everyone, alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and any illegal drugs are not allowed on our premises. This policy helps us create a healthy and safe environment for all children and families. We appreciate your cooperation in keeping our center a positive place for everyone.

We recognize the harmful effects of alcohol, drugs, and all types of tobacco use, including the addictive nature of nicotine, and are committed to establishing an alcohol-, drug-, and tobacco-free learning and working environment. In order that this commitment may be met, the possession, distribution, or use of alcohol, tobacco products, and illegal drugs is prohibited on all EPIC Early Learning premises. This prohibition extends to all people employed by the program either full or part time, and all other people who, for whatever reason at whatever time, enter or come onto our site premises.

FIREARMS AND WEAPONS

We are a firearm- and weapon-free zone.

EMERGENCY LOCKDOWN/INTRUDER ALERT PROCEDURE

Our programs will conduct regular drills with your children. These drills will include lockdowns and fire drills. We will work with children to teach them how to remain calm and stay safe during these drills.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Our program is equipped with a Disaster Preparedness plan. Our Disaster plans are posted on our classroom bulletin boards.

RESOLVING PARENT COMPLAINTS

We are committed to resolving concerns or complaints made by parents and community members. When complaints arise, staff will respond immediately, ensuring that the issue is heard and resolved quickly. If a parent has a complaint or a concern about something regarding their child's experience, they are encouraged to speak with the assigned Center Manager or Program Director. Parents can view Program Governance Policy #101 – Resolving Community and Parent Complaints, which is posted on the Family Bulletin Board at every site.

SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Our program embraces a safe environment for all programs, all children, all families, and all staff. We work diligently to ensure all who walk through our doors feel, see, hear, and fully experience positive and supportive human interactions. We ask both staff and parents to report when you see something that does not seem right; it is your right and responsibility to report it. Each center or classroom will have posters titled "Speak Up and Speak Out" posted to remind our parents/guardians and staff that safety is our number one priority and together we can work to keep everyone safe.

Epic's Code of Conduct

To ensure our program stays a safe place for children, families, staff, and all personnel. We have established the following:

No use of abusive, threatening, foul, or harassing language while in or around Epic property.

No disruption to the daily function of the classrooms, programs, or transportation services.

No entering classrooms, program spaces, or buses without authorization.

No possession of any type of prohibited weapon on any Epic properties.

No one is permitted to enter the building if they are or appear to be, under the influence of substances. Nor be in possession.

Violators will be asked to leave Epic properties. These expectations apply to all program locations, including classrooms, program sites, bus stops, and transportation services.

MY RIGHTS AS AN EPIC EARLY LEARNING PARENT/GUARDIAN

- To take part in the decisions affecting the planning and the operation of the program through participation in the policy council.
- To help with my child's development by providing my input.
- To be treated with respect and dignity by the program staff.
- To be informed about community resources around health, education, and family goals. 5. To be informed regularly about my child's progress and behavior.
- To be welcomed into my child's classroom through different classroom experiences.
- To attend parent-teacher conferences, family nights, and other center activities.
- To be provided with information regarding job vacancies in the program.
- To have the opportunity to volunteer in the center or classroom and be provided with guidance on my role.
- To choose whether I will participate in the program events without the fear of losing my child's placement in the program.

PARENT'S PLEDGE

- To learn about the program and to be part of my center program planning.
- To take part in the classroom as an observer, volunteer, and participate.
- To parents-child and child activities.
- To be open to allowing the staff into my home for visits/conferences and to talk about my child's development.
- To work with my child's teachers, other program staff, and parents in a cooperative and respectful manner.
- To guide my child and utilize discipline that does not cause harm or endanger my child.
- To support my child's development by working with my child on goals and activities.
- To offer suggestions to improve the program, by offering feedback, participating in policy council, being a part of the program's self-assessment.
- To take advantage of classes/workshops designed to increase my knowledge about child development and increase my skills in areas that may lead to possible employment.
- To follow through on commitments I make to the program.
- To treat staff with respect and dignity.
- To keep my child up to date on the Well Child Exam, Dental Exam, and Immunizations.
- To pick up my child from the center or transportation pick-up point on time.
- To request a copy of information that is kept in my child's file if there are no parenting/guardianship restrictions.

EPIC'S EARLY LEARNING ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY

- To provide high-quality services to all children who are served in our program
- Invite parents/guardians to be a part of their child's education and preschool experience.
- To encourage adult participation in parent- teacher conferences, VIP days, family nights, policy council, field trips, and other center activities.
- To document all parent(s)/guardian(s) conversations on our contact log that is stored in a child's file.
- To remain a neutral party when there are custody battles, parenting/guarding conflicts, or other family situations.
- To obey all legal court order documents that are current and brought to our attention.
- To recognize both parties listed on the birth certificate as active participating parents unless there are current court order documents that restrict an adult from their child.
- To report to Child Protective Services if abuse is suspected.
- To call law enforcement if there is a potential threat or endangerment towards a child, parent/guardian, a staff member, or towards the center.
- To call law enforcement if a child is not picked up from the center within the program operating hours and the parent/guardian has not been able to be reached.
- To avoid dropping off a child or picking up a child from their bus stop if the environment does not appear safe.

FAMILY HANDBOOK PARENT SIGNATURE PAGE

Purpose of Handbook & Declaration of Understanding: This Handbook explains the policies and procedures of the EPIC Early Learning Programs. Please reference this book for questions you may have about our programs. This handbook is available at www.epicnet.org.

I'm signing that the following policies and our procedures have been reviewed and discussed with me:

- **Licensing, Plans and Policies**
- **Disaster Preparedness Plan**
- **Education & Program Services**
 - **Dual Language/English Language Acquisition**
 - **Transition To Kindergarten**
 - **Confidentiality**
 - **Pest Management**
 - **Celebration Policy**
 - **Very Important Person (Vip) Day**
 - **Family Night**
 - **Active Participation in Parent-Teacher Conferences and Family Visits.**
 - **Volunteer Opportunities**
- **Infant/Toddler Services (Early Head Start)**
- **Family Support Services**
- **Health Policies & Procedures**
- **Nutrition Services**
- **Non-Discrimination Policy**
- **Transportation Services**
- **Inclement Weather/School Closings**
- **Parent Involvement**
- **Facilities & Operations Policies and Notifications**
- **Resolving Parent Complaints**
- **Safe Environments**
- **Child Abuse & Neglect**
- **Code Of Conduct**
- **My Rights as An Epic Early Learning Parent/Guardian**
- **Parent's Pledge**
- **Early Learning Role & Responsibility**
- **Family Handbook**

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

(Copy to be filed in the child's electronic file under the family service communication log when staff share with parents how to access the handbook and what the handbook consists of)

CENTER AND CLASSROOM INFORMATION

<i>My Center is:</i>	<i>My Classroom Number is:</i>
<i>My teachers are:</i>	<i>My classroom hours are:</i>
<i>My First day of class is:</i>	
<i>My Center Manager is:</i>	<i>The center phone is:</i>

