



Northern Tier Community Action Corp.
Head Start Program
Newsletter
Sept/Oct 2015

David Greene
Executive Director

From the Director . . .

By this time, your child is probably coming home telling stories about what they learned in Head Start. The children entered a new world of friends, activities, experiences and opportunities. Activities are carefully planned for your child to develop in language, math, and social skills to help them prepare for Kindergarten.

The curriculum used in the classrooms has been developed over several decades and is being refined continually based on the latest research in early childhood education. Kindergarten readiness is the goal of the Head Start program. Your child's success as they enter they enter kindergarten is vital to our program and is at the heart of each teacher's weekly planning. The teachers have been trained to identify individual learning opportunities for your child as they participate in activities. This approach will give your child the best opportunity to succeed in years to come.

Our goal is to partner with you to provide the best 'Head Start' for your child, and we look forward to a very rewarding year.

*Welcome to Northern Tier Community Action
Head Start Program!*

Debra Sidelinger, Head Start Director



POLICY COUNCIL

Chairperson:

Margaret Heiser

Vice Chairperson:

Veronica Allen

Secretary:

Linda DuBeck

Treasurer:

Mary Hasselman

Policy Council

**Meeting: October 8,
2015@ 10:15 AM in
NTCAC Conference
Room.**

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Notes from Marcy . . .

Welcome! I want to welcome you to Northern Tier Community Action Head Start. My name is Marcy Boswell and I am the Family and Community Specialist. I am so excited to start a new year. We are so fortunate to have enthusiastic parents and dedicated staff. I am looking forward to meeting and working with all the families and children at NTCAC Head Start. We would ask that all parents take time to read over the Parent Handbook and get familiar with the information contained within it.



I was so pleased to see so many parents attend Policy Council. It was great to see some returning parents and was wonderful to see some new faces at the meeting. I hope you find it informative and fun. I am looking forward to a very productive year.

On October 14, 2015 at the Johnsonburg Fire Hall, we will be holding our 3rd Annual

Family Fundamentals Event. This is a networking time for parents and agencies. This is a time to meet parents from other centers; as well as meeting with agencies throughout the four-county area and receiving valuable information. There will also be free give a ways, food, and door prize. If you need a ride, please contact your Family Service Worker. **HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!!!**

Marcy Boswell, Family and Community Specialist

What Is The Home-Based Program?

The Head Start home-based program was created to help you help your child reach the goals that you want for your child. I know you have heard this before but the following statement can have a significant impact on your child's development: *You are your child's first teacher.* Sometimes you may not know what to do in your home to help your child be successful. That's where the Head Start Home-Based program comes in. The home visitors in our program will support and guide you in helping your child be successful.

Once a week, a home visitor will come to your home for 90 minutes. You, your spouse or partner, your child's siblings, or any person who has guardianship over a child can participate in the home visit. You will talk together about your child and how things are going for your family. Together, you will plan activities for you to do with your child during home visits and during the week between visits. Over time, as you get to know one another, you will become partners in helping your child grow and learn. Twice a month, the home base program holds socialization days where all of the children will attend a preschool classroom for 4 hours with the other children in the program.

Our home visitors provide services to Elk, McKean, and Potter County. If you would like more information or know of a family that could benefit from our program, please call me at 1-888-809-3704, ext. 231.

Amanda Dempsey, Education/Transition Specialist



Head Start Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

The Northern Tier Community Action Head Start Staff are all mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. They receive comprehensive training as to their responsibilities of detecting and reporting. They must report, if based upon that training, they feel that abuse or neglect may have occurred. Head Start staff does not investigate but they are, by law, mandatory reporters. The protection of the child is of foremost importance to our staff.

The local Children and Youth Services were formed to offer protection of the child and support to the family to return to a positive child rearing environment. Children and Youth also sponsor or are associated with programs that can assist you in being a "better parent." It is to your advantage to learn as much as possible. Unfortunately none of us were given an instruction manual when our children were born.

Your Head Start teachers present the "Talking About Touching" curriculum to all enrolled children with parent permission. This is a presentation that includes safety from "good and bad touches" as well as other safety concerns such as traffic, poisons etc. Please contact your center about this program if you would like to come in and observe, so that they could give you the times of the lesson. You are, of course, welcome to stop by anytime for a visit!

Mike Kuleck, Disabilities Specialist

Mental Wellness Consultant Visit to Head Start Centers

Cathy Gabel, our Mental Wellness Consultant, from the Guidance Center, will soon be visiting the Head Start Centers. She will be available to talk privately with parents or staff about issues that they may be concerned with regarding themselves, their family and/or their children. If you are interested in talking with her please contact your local Family Service Worker. You will be receiving a note that will tell you the date and time of her visit. We all can use a little support at times and this is a great way to personally talk with a friendly professional... one to one!

Mike Kuleck, Disabilities Specialist

IDEA ~ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** provides safeguards to help parents advocate for their child's educational wellbeing and special needs. It promotes parent involvement in the education of their child and gives them the necessary tools to be key decision makers. Your Head Start teacher is also invited to your child's IEP meeting and can assist and support you at the meeting. It's always nice to have someone who you may know to be there with you during this time of decision making. Give them a call!

This federal law also allows you to participate in all meetings concerning your child, look at your child's school records, and request an independent evaluation of your child and agree or disagree with the placement decisions

IDEA is a complex law that can be hard to understand. If you have any questions please ask the IU#9 Staff or Head Start. You can call me at (814) 486-1161 X222 and if I do not have the answer, I will make contacts and find the answer for you.

Mike Kuleck, Disabilities Specialist

New PA Volunteer Clearance Requirements



Each Head Start classroom has special events and fun activities that help our program reach our "In-Kind" goal and build community support. As a parent, your participation in your child's education is very important and we do not want you to miss out on even one opportunity for sharing in your child's educational journey.

Due to recent changes, clearances are required for classroom volunteers.

We do realize that this is a new change that may bring confusion.

Clearances

- * Take approximately 20 minutes to complete
- * They are 'free' to all persons who have resided in PA for the past 10 years
- * This information is held in the strictest confidence
- * Only items dealing with child abuse would keep you from being considered an approved volunteer

If you would prefer to help our program in another way, ask for projects that may be completed at home. There are always craft projects and various activities that help your center earn In-Kind that may be completed at home, but please note that the parent presence in the classroom is essential to the growth and development of your child.

We need classroom volunteers to help build our program, to meet our "In-Kind" goal, and to support our children in their learning. Please take a few minutes of your time to invest in your child's education by meeting with your Family Service Worker to complete your clearances.

We trust that all parents and community volunteers respect this policy as a good faith effort of Northern Tier Community Action Corporation to ensure for the safety of all children receiving services through any of our programs. Don't miss out on even one opportunity for sharing in your child's educational journey! Just take a few minutes to complete your clearances with your family service worker so that you can volunteer in the classroom! It will only take 20 minutes, but it will mean the world to your child to have you participating in the Head Start classroom activities.

Debra Sidelinger, Head Start Director

There's No Place Like Home!



Children are usually most comfortable in their homes – and why not? That is the place where they are loved most of all! A family's home is already a rich environment full of learning opportunities! Whether a family is enrolled in a home visiting option or they participate in a preschool classroom, their child will still spend much of their time at home. Both teachers and home visitors have the important job of helping families see all the opportunities for learning that already exist in their own home.

Helping families create home environments where their children can thrive is an exciting way home visitors can support parent and child relationships in the home. Here are ways that you can support your child's learning with things you already have in your home!

Everyday materials that support learning:

- * Empty food containers (egg cartons, cereal boxes, spice tins, cracker boxes)
- * Boxes to serve as blocks (shoe boxes, tissue boxes, etc.)
- * Clean, empty laundry detergent tops or yogurt containers make excellent toys for stacking and nesting
- * Empty egg cartons or muffin tins provide opportunities to explore one-to-one correspondence and pretend play (shopping or cooking)
- * Fabric of various textures like scarves, bandanas or scraps of old clothes can be fun to touch, snuggle, or use as a baby blanket in pretend play
- * Empty containers and a bowl of water over a cake pan for dump and fill water play with minimal mess
- * Safe-to-throw items such as soft balls, shower scrubbers and balled up socks
- * Cushions or pillows on the floor to crawl over or jump on top of
- * A "cozy" area (blanket or scarf laid over a table, or large cardboard box) that children can crawl into and use as an indoor tent

To create a home environment that supports gross motor skills:

- * Use a step stool (to wash hands, brush teeth, see the kitchen counter).
- * Take a walk.
- * Create a child-friendly obstacle course with cushions to climb over, a cardboard box tunnel to crawl through, hopping over a handkerchief on the floor, etc.
- * Practice walking (or crawling!) up and down stairs with your child.
- * Play outside as often as possible!

To create a home environment that supports fine motor skills:

- * Provide supervised experiences with paper and pens/pencils/markers/crayons/scissors – children as young as twelve-months-old will want to try writing like adults do. (cont'd)

There's No Place Like Home! (cont'd)

- * Get on your child's level and really listen to them when they have something to say.
- * Play turn-taking games—for example, the child may hand the parent a ball, and the parent hands it back. Board games are another great way to teach sharing, taking turns, and how to be a good sport.
- * Use a paper plate to make a "stop" sign on one side and a "go" sign on the other. Play stop-and-go games in a hallway; this helps children learn self-control and listening skills.
- * Play games using stuffed animals, dolls, or action figures. The dolls can practice negotiating difficult issues like taking turns, needing space, and being polite. They can also sing songs and do silly dances!



Adapted from: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/learning-environments>

Amanda Dempsey, Education/Transition Specialist

Good Food Habits Are "Caught Rather Than Taught"

When it comes to nutrition and eating habits, parents are their children's first and most important teachers. We know that children are great imitators and this is particularly true with eating. When children see their parents and teachers eating and enjoying nutritious foods, they are more likely to develop similar habits. These early experiences with food are very important in forming lifelong habits and attitudes that affect health and well being.

Meal time is a good time to learn more than good nutrition. Family style food service that we use at Head Start allows the children to make decisions on how much food to put on their plates. By serving themselves, they are developing muscle control and hand-eye coordination. Children and staff, including volunteers, eat together sharing the same menu and pleasant table conversation in a relaxed atmosphere. Food is never used as a reward or punishment and the children are always encouraged but never forced to eat or taste.

When children are eating in the Head Start center, we ask that you be willing to try new foods and always have a good, positive attitude toward the foods that are being served. Discourage talk about personal dislike of food by directing the table conversation toward the children's total experiences (not limited to food and nutrition). We eat in small groups that make conversation and interaction easy. All the adults should set a good example by their attitude toward acceptance of the food served. Because at Head Start we believe that good food habits are "caught rather than taught."



Bonnie Halquist, Health / Nutrition Specialist