Northcoast Children's Services

Parent Handbook

2026 – 2027



Nurturing our caring community

The NCS Vision: To nurture and empower the whole child and family; enhance our quality of life and create a more peaceful global community.

www.ncsheadstart.org

Welcome to Northcoast Children's Services!

We believe that parents are the first and primary teachers of their children.

Our Mission

Northcoast Children's Services believes that healthy families are crucial to the development that occurs from the beginning of life through early childhood. Respectfully building on each family's strengths and goals, NCS works in partnership with children, families, and communities to promote and advocate for healthy development.

My Program Information

PROGRAM NAME

TEACHER

HOME VISITOR / FAMILY WORKER

CONTACT NUMBER

NCS MAIN OFFICE

(707) 822-7206 • (800) 808-7206



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Services for All NCS Families

Family support, involvement, and leadership



NCS is a family-centered program designed to support the parents' role as the primary educator, nurturer, and advocate for their children. Staff work in partnership with parents to build respectful relationships and to help families access resources and meet their goals. Parents are encouraged to identify their family's strengths, needs, and interests, and to develop a plan for the goals they would like to work on.

Services to Families

Services are based on each family's individual needs and may include:

- Referrals to community agencies to help the family meet their needs and goals
- Support with literacy goals
- Meeting basic needs for food, clothing, and housing
- Applying for Medi-Cal, TANF, CalFresh, WIC, and similar programs
- Locating doctors, dentists, counseling services, and other providers
- Crisis intervention support services
- Transitioning children and families from one program to another
- A Quick Reference Guide to Services
- Finding transportation to a community agency or service
- Parenting education and support
- Other services as needed

For more information about the services available, contact your Teacher, Home Visitor, or Family Worker.

Parent Involvement

NCS operates with an open-door policy. Parents are always welcome to visit their child's classroom without prior arrangement. Parent involvement and input are an essential part of our programs, and NCS provides many opportunities for parents to take part in their child's program. Fun parent events are planned with families — school orientation, ice cream socials, family fun nights, and more. Please tell your Teacher or Home Visitor which days and times work best for you; events are scheduled when the most families can attend.

Volunteering

NCS welcomes and encourages parents to volunteer. Volunteering benefits the child, the parents, and the program. Parents can help in their child's classroom by getting down to the child's level and playing with them — children love it when their parents spend time in the classroom. You can volunteer for half an hour or for the whole day.

There are many ways to be involved. Parent volunteers can:

- Help with a classroom project
- Chaperone on field trips
- Assist with projects at home
- Share a hobby

Ask your child's Teacher, Home Visitor, or Family Worker about all volunteer opportunities.

TB Screening and Proof of Immunization

All adults — staff and parents — who regularly work or volunteer in licensed programs must have a current TB risk assessment or negative TB screen, MMR, Tdap, and influenza immunizations, along with a certification of good health. This licensing requirement keeps the classroom safe and healthy.

Parents are required to provide proof of immunization, or to get an antibody test proving immunity to MMR and Tdap. Parents may waive the influenza vaccine with a signed waiver. With parent permission, NCS can verify immunization information through the CAIRS system.

If you have Medi-Cal or health insurance, go to your doctor or local health department and use your coverage to pay for your TB screen. (Some providers will not bill Medi-Cal for TB screens.) If you do not have Medi-Cal or health insurance, please speak with your child's Teacher about how NCS may be able to help pay for your immunizations and TB screen.

Parent Meetings and Workshops

All parents of children enrolled in NCS programs are members of their site's parent advisory committee. Meetings are an opportunity for parents to get to know each other and are scheduled at a time that works for most parents at the site. Child care is provided.

These meetings keep you informed about what is happening in the program and how it helps your child learn and grow. They can also include learning new skills such as cooking or crafts, talking about parenting, or learning about community resources. Each site's parent committee chooses the topics they would like to know more about, and staff encourage parents to take an active role in planning and leading the meetings.

Leadership Opportunities

NCS encourages parents to be involved at all levels of our program, from volunteering in the classroom to taking an active role in decision-making and policy-making. Below are a few of the opportunities available. Ask your Teacher or Home Visitor for more details.

NCS Policy Council

Parents from all sites are elected each year to serve on the Policy Council, an important decision-making body within the agency. Policy Council members are trained in leadership, information gathering and analysis, decision-making, and communication skills. The Council meets monthly to vote on major program decisions and to plan changes to NCS programs.

Parent Survey

NCS asks that all families complete the Parent Survey each year. We analyze the results and use them to help identify our strengths and the areas where we need to improve.



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Communication and Your Child's Progress

How families and staff work together



WE ARE SAFE • WE ARE RESPECTFUL
WE ARE FRIENDLY

Parent and Staff Communication

NCS program-wide expectations are that all staff, parents, and children communicate and behave toward each other in a safe, respectful, and friendly manner.

Staff and parents communicate often. Home Visitors meet with parents every week, and parents who drop off or pick up their child in the classroom have daily opportunities to talk with Teachers and Family Workers. To help your child have a successful day at school, it is especially important that you share what is going on in your child's life — things that have been going well, and things that may be causing stress.

Confidentiality

Any information, verbal or written, about children and families enrolled in NCS programs is confidential and is not shared with anyone other than NCS staff unless required by law.

When a family is working with other community agencies or resources, or asks that other individuals receive information about their child or family, NCS staff and the family will talk about a Release of Confidential Information. Together they discuss why a release would be helpful and what information the family would like to share. The family decides whether to complete the release.

We also ask parents to protect confidentiality. If you observe something in a classroom or playgroup that involves another parent or child, please respect that family's privacy and do not discuss it with anyone other than your Teacher or Home Visitor. It is the staff's responsibility to share information about a child or family with their parents in a timely manner.

Parent Orientations

Parents receive an orientation to the program at the first parent meeting and/or during the first week of school — or individually if the child enrolls later in the year.

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are scheduled in your home and at each site during the school year. Parents and staff discuss the child's progress and family needs, and create a plan to support the child's and family's development. Parents may schedule additional conferences to meet with staff as needed.

Child Developmental Assessments

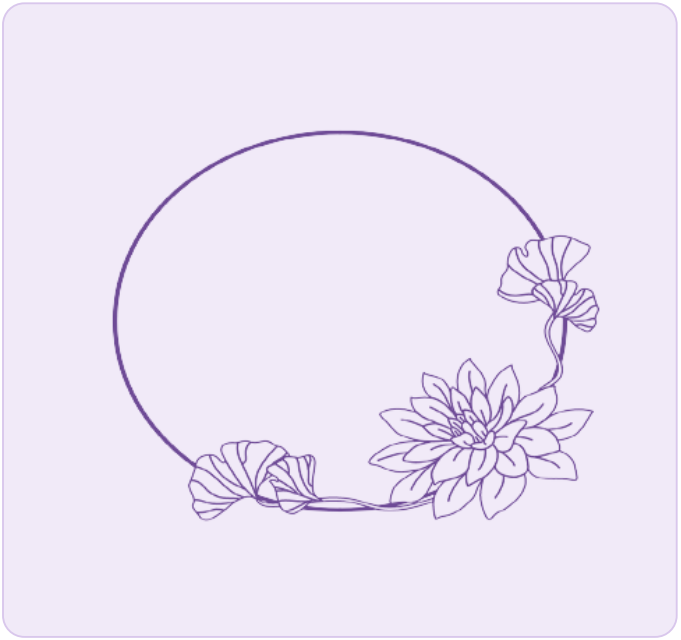
The goal of NCS is to support children in their physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development. We use the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), a tool developed by the California Department of Education and the Early Education and Support Division, to assess children's development.

The DRDP assessment is conducted by observing children during play activities and routines, rather than by “testing” them. Children are assessed twice during the school year. Assessment outcomes are used to plan and conduct age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate activities.

Mandated Reporting

California law (Penal Code 11166) states that people who work with children are “mandated reporters” of child abuse or neglect. This means that if staff know of or reasonably suspect child abuse, they must report it to Child Welfare Services / Child Protective Services.

All NCS staff are mandated reporters under this law. The primary purpose of the reporting law is to protect children. If you would like more information, ask your child's Teacher, Home Visitor, or Family Worker.



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Things to Know About All NCS Programs

Policies that apply to every family



Staff Education and Training

The education and experience of our staff meet or exceed what is required by California Community Care Licensing and by our funders. All staff members have undergone comprehensive background checks, including fingerprint clearances, and have completed health assessments that include immunizations. NCS is committed to staff development through ongoing training and education.

Preparing Your Child for the First Home Visit or School Day

Making sure children get enough sleep is essential for their physical growth, cognitive development, and emotional well-being. Quality sleep improves attention span, learning, and memory. A consistent routine can also significantly boost your child's overall growth and development. Begin a fun, relaxing bedtime routine that helps your child settle in for sleep at a reasonable time.

Be sure your Teacher or Home Visitor knows important things about your child, such as:

- Whether your child has frequent colds
- What time your child goes to bed and wakes up
- Whether your child is potty trained or potty training, and the words they use for the potty
- Whether your child has had group play experiences
- How well your child gets along with family members and siblings

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in or around any NCS building, or at any NCS activity such as home visits, classrooms, playgroups, Policy Council, field trips, or trainings. Secondhand smoke is harmful to children and adults. As of January 1, 2008, it is against the law to smoke in a car with a child present.

Alcohol and Drugs

The consumption of alcoholic beverages, vaping, and the use of cigarettes, marijuana, or illegal drugs is not permitted in or near any NCS building or during any NCS activity.

Respectful Communication

Staff and parents will always communicate respectfully with each other. Each person's opinion is valued and considered.

Adult-to-Adult Conversations

The sound in classrooms and playgroups should be the sound of children playing with each other and interacting with adult staff and volunteers. Staff, visitors, and parents limit conversations in the classroom while class or playgroup is in session. If a lengthy conversation is needed, it is best held away from the children.

Emergency Card

California Community Care Licensing requires NCS to collect signed parent permission to seek medical treatment in the event of a medical emergency for each child. Updated contact information for each child's parent is kept on the Emergency Card.

Parents also provide the names and phone numbers of two reliable adult emergency contacts who are able to pick up the child during the day if the parent is not able to. We ask families in the Home Base program to complete an emergency card in case of an accident or emergency during NCS activities such as playgroups and parent meetings. Parents are responsible for keeping this information up to date.

Screenings and Assessments

NCS uses several screenings and child assessments that help staff and parents identify a child's strengths as well as areas of needed growth or delay. These screenings are reviewed with families and may lead to referrals to community providers and follow-up services.

Screenings and assessments are two of the ways staff help parents determine whether their child has a special need. If you have concerns about your child, you are encouraged to talk with your child's Teacher or Home Visitor.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

NCS staff are actively involved in supporting children and families when a child has an IEP or IFSP. The developmentally rich environment of NCS classrooms, playgroups, and home visits provides children with appropriate activities to meet their individual goals. If you have concerns about your child's development but your child does not have an IEP or IFSP, we encourage you to talk with your Teacher or Home Visitor.

Allergies and Food Modifications

For Center Base programs, the parent of a child with an allergy must meet with center staff and have all plans and needed interventions in place before the child can attend. This ensures that safe food substitutions are made to the regular menu and that safety plans are in place.

Meal Service

NCS provides nutritious, regularly scheduled meals and snacks that are moderate in fat and low in salt and sugar. Menu items are designed to introduce children to new foods, emphasizing fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains as well as familiar favorites, and often include foods from the cultures of the children enrolled in each classroom.

Center Base parents are encouraged to review the cycle menu posted at their site. Substitutions and special arrangements for meals and snacks are made for children with medically based dietary needs.

Children's Rights

Children have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, to be given safe, healthful, and comfortable classrooms that meet their needs, and to be free from physical or other unusual punishment, including but not limited to humiliation, intimidation, and threats. All NCS programs refrain from religious instruction or worship. See the “Personal Rights” form in the enrollment packet.

Concerns and Complaints

Our goal is for staff and parents to keep an ongoing conversation with each other so that concerns can be addressed as soon as possible. Concerns, complaints, or suggestions can be discussed with staff or submitted in writing.

If you have a concern or complaint that cannot be resolved by talking directly with staff, you may contact the Supervisor, Executive Director, State Program Administrator, or Family Services Manager. The Supervisor's name is posted on the Parent Bulletin Board.

Non-Discrimination Policy

NCS does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability in determining which children are served. There is no fee charged for Head Start, Early Head Start, or Child Care Food Programs.

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Home Base Programs

Important information for families in Home Base



The Home Base philosophy is built on the belief that success begins in the home. Home Visitors come once a week and work with parents and their children together. The Home Visitor and the parents plan ways to help children learn using parent-child interactions, daily routines, and household materials.

Regularly scheduled playgroups are held twice a month, where children and parents are encouraged to socialize with other families, share a hearty snack, and take part in age-appropriate activities. Parent meetings are offered throughout the year on subjects of interest to parents of young children.

Curriculum

NCS Home Base programs use the Portage curriculum for home visits. Your Home Visitor will arrive ready and prepared to participate with you and your child. Parents and Home Visitors work together to plan each home visit. Home Visitors support the parent-child relationship and promote the parent as the first and most important teacher for their child.

Dual Language Learners

In our Early Head Start home-based program, visits are conducted in the family's home language using bilingual Home Visitors whenever possible. Activities focus on the continued development of the home language with introductions to English for both children and families.

In the Head Start home-based option, there is an increased focus on English development, with activities that support the continued development of the home language.

Diapering and Toileting

Diapers are provided for all children attending NCS programs. Children are diapered in designated areas. “Diapering Guidelines for Parents and Staff” is available on-site.

Children's Safety — Home Base

Together we keep your children safe. Keeping your children safe is our number one priority. When you are at your child's site, please be aware of safety and pedestrian safety.

- Look for the Teacher's greeting and health check when you arrive.
- Always stay off cell phones and smartphones while at the center.
- Our parking lots are busy places, especially at drop-off and pick-up time. Always hold your child's hand in the parking lot.
- Never leave a younger child or baby in the car, even for a minute. If you need to talk to the Teacher or another parent, make sure your child stays under your supervision at all times.
- California state law requires all children under 8 years old to be properly restrained in a car seat. See current car seat requirements posted at each playgroup site.
- Please help maintain the safety of all the children at the center. Watch for children around you as you exit doors and gates, and attach gate hooks.

Discuss safety rules with your child. Show them how to stop at the edge of the street and look right, then left, then right again. Point out safety signs, traffic lights, crosswalks, and intersections. Always walk on footpaths, and don't let children play on or near the road.

Accidents and Emergency Medical Care

At least one staff member at every center, and one staff person at each home base site, is trained in First Aid and CPR. Children's accidents and injuries are documented on an “NCS Accident Report Form,” and parents receive a copy. First aid kits and supplies are available in each classroom and playgroup site. If a medical emergency arises, staff will call 911.

As Your Child Begins the Home Base Program

Home Visit Attendance

Attendance in Home Base programs is important. Please call your Home Visitor ahead of time if a child or family member is ill, if your home visit needs to be changed, or if you are unable to attend a playgroup.

Bringing Items from Home to Playgroup

Children should not bring toys or other items from home unless the parent makes a prior arrangement with the Home Visitor. These items are difficult to share with other children and are often lost or broken.

Field Trips

NCS Home Base programs may take up to four field trips each year. Parents or guardians must accompany and supervise their own child for the entire field trip. Children are prepared for each trip with a review of safety rules and learning objectives. Field trips are free for all enrolled children.

Children's Health — Home Base

Physical Exam and Immunizations

The Home Base program encourages parents to keep their child's well-child check-ups and immunizations current.

Dental Exam — Head Start and Early Head Start children age 1 or at first tooth

Head Start and Early Head Start encourage dental examinations every six months for enrolled children. Children are encouraged to have completed a dental exam within the past six months, or to have a dental appointment scheduled within 90 days of enrollment.

For children not covered by Medi-Cal or other health insurance, Head Start / Early Head Start or other local resources may pay for children who are referred for or require a dental exam or treatment by a pediatric dentist. A limited number of appointments with pediatric dentists may be available for children suffering from severe dental decay or emergency dental needs. Let your child's Home Visitor know if you need assistance. Early Head Start staff assist parents with dental services as needed.

Child Illness at Home Visits

If a home visit has been scheduled and any family member is ill, the Home Visitor must be notified so the visit can be cancelled and rescheduled. Staff conduct a daily visual health check at playgroups to make sure children are well enough to participate.

Daily Visual Health Checklist — Home Base

To support each parent's desire for a safe and healthy environment for their child, we have established procedures for a Daily Visual Health Check. Please do a visual check yourself before bringing your child to the center or playgroup. This health check is conducted as soon as possible after the child enters the facility, and whenever a change in the child's behavior or appearance is noted.

The health check addresses the following:

- Illness or injury affecting the child or family members since the last date of attendance
- Reported or observed changes in the child's behavior (such as lethargy or irritability) or appearance (for example, seeming sad) from the previous day
- Skin rashes, impetigo, itching or scratching of the skin or scalp, or the presence of one or more live lice
- A temperature over 100.4°F taken by any method, if the child appears ill
- Other signs or symptoms of illness or injury, such as drainage from the eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, cuts or lacerations, pain, or feeling ill

Once the child has been determined able to participate, the child can be signed in for the playgroup. If the child is determined to be too ill to participate, or develops any of the above symptoms during the session, they will not be allowed to stay at the playgroup.

If your child is in the Home Base program, please consider these health guidelines before a Home Visitor comes to your house. Call the office or your Home Visitor to cancel the visit if you or your children have any of the above symptoms. For your child's well-being and for the health of all the children, we ask for your cooperation.

Questions about any NCS health policy? Ask your Teacher or Home Visitor, or call the Health Services Manager at (707) 822-7206 or (800) 808-7206.

Nutrition and Food Service — Home Base

Family Style Meals

During snacks and mealtimes at playgroups, children, parents, and staff eat together “family style.” During playgroups, when age appropriate, toddlers are encouraged to serve themselves.

Tooth Brushing

Children brush their teeth with fluoridated toothpaste at all NCS playgroups. Infants under one year of age do not use toothpaste.

Foods Brought from Home or the Store

According to state health regulations, foods prepared in private homes may not be served at any NCS activity. This minimizes the risk of food-borne illness from cross-contamination, time or temperature abuse, or transporting mistakes.



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Center Base Programs

Important information for families in Center Base



Classroom Activities and Routines

The Role of California Community Care Licensing

All NCS center-based programs must meet Title 22 and/or Title 5 state licensing regulations, which ensure the minimum health and safety of children. The California Community Care Licensing Division has a district office analyst who visits and inspects sites. Each site has a current license posted in a prominent place for parents to view. Licensing Program Analysts may enter the facility at any time to conduct unannounced inspections, which may include interviewing children.

Parents may make complaints regarding licensed centers to California Community Care Licensing, 520 Cohasset Rd., Suite 170, Chico, CA 95926, (530) 895-5033. NCS does not discriminate against parents or children when a concern is raised or a complaint is made.

Curriculum and Environment

Play is a young child's work and is the foundation for academic or "school" learning. Children become enthusiastic learners through hands-on educational experiences. They also become more independent, self-confident, and inquisitive. The curriculum reflects the daily lives of children and incorporates each child's first language and culture.

NCS classrooms are designed using the Creative Curriculum. Classrooms are arranged into different "interest areas" with activities designed around a specific subject, study, or skill. A child may work alone or with others in these areas. Children are encouraged to discover a broad variety of new concepts through playing and working with others, communication, observation, experimentation, and problem-solving. Classroom interest areas include blocks, art, dramatic play, music, library, discovery, toys and games, sand and water, and outdoor play. We believe children learn best by doing, so classrooms are set up as places where children can learn how things work independently through active thinking and making choices.

Most NCS preschool programs use the Teaching Pyramid and the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning strategies in the classroom to teach children important social-emotional skills. These programs help children learn to get along with others, reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviors, and build friendship skills and kindness.

Daily Schedules

A daily schedule and weekly lesson plan are posted in each classroom. These daily routines help children feel secure and independent, and able to move easily from one activity to another.

Routines in a young child's day include arrivals, departures, feeding and eating snacks and meals, diaper changing and toileting, dressing, indoor and outdoor play, sleeping, and quiet activity times. Predictable routines help children develop trusting relationships with the adults and primary caregivers in their lives.

Tooth Brushing

Children brush their teeth with fluoridated toothpaste in all NCS classrooms and playgroups as part of our daily health routine. Tooth brushing typically takes place after meals to promote good oral hygiene and help prevent tooth decay. Each child is provided with their own toothbrush and a small amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Toothbrushes are stored in a sanitary, labeled container and replaced regularly. Infants under one year of age do not use toothpaste, in accordance with pediatric dental guidelines.

Dual Language Learners

In our center-based programs, we use the “English with home language support” model to help children build and maintain a solid foundation in their home language. Both English and the home language of the children are modeled in the classroom when possible. Most instruction takes place in English, with bilingual staff or volunteers previewing and reviewing information in the home language before and after learning experiences. Bilingual staff support pre-reading and pre-writing skills such as letter and word recognition in the home language.

Staff work with families to share information on the importance of maintaining the home language and the benefits of bilingualism. During enrollment, each Center Base family will have the opportunity to complete the Family Language Form.

Napping and Rest Time

All children enrolled in extended day and full day programs are offered a rest period. Infants who are unable to climb out of a crib are provided with their own crib and are not allowed to have anything in the crib. For older toddlers and preschoolers, NCS furnishes comfortable mats or cots, sheets, and blankets for each child. Children who sleep on mats may bring their own small personal blanket and/or comfort item; personal nap items remain at the site and are laundered monthly or when soiled.

No child is forced to sleep or stay awake. Children who do not nap are provided with quiet, engaging activities during the rest period.

An “Individualized Needs and Care Plan” is completed for each child under 36 months and updated at least quarterly, or as needed. Staff complete 15-minute “sleep checks” on children under 24 months and document their observations on the daily sleep log.

Diapering and Toileting

Diapers are provided for all children attending NCS programs. Children are diapered in designated areas. “Diapering Guidelines for Parents and Staff” is available on-site.

An age-appropriate toileting plan is created for each child in diapers. NCS staff and parents work together to help children learn to use the toilet. Parents are responsible for leaving a change of clothing at the site and for washing any soiled clothing. Staff are aware of a child's “toilet readiness” signals and will help each child learn the skills they need to be successful. Children are never disciplined for accidents; all staff are positive and encouraging.

Children's Safety — Center Base

Together we keep your children safe. Keeping your children safe is our number one priority. When you are at your child's site, please be aware of safety and pedestrian safety.

- Wait for the Teacher's greeting and health check when you arrive.
- Always contact staff when you drop off or pick up your child, and always let staff know when you are leaving. Be sure to sign your child in and out on the sign-in sheet.
- Notify staff if someone else is picking up your child, and be sure their name is on your emergency card. Let them know they may be asked for photo ID. We are only able to release children to adults 18 years or older.
- Always stay off cell phones and smartphones while at the center.
- Our parking lots are busy places, especially at drop-off and pick-up time. Always hold your child's hand in the parking lot. You must accompany your child inside the school at drop-off and to the car at pick-up time.
- Never leave a younger child or baby in the car, even for a minute. If you need to talk to the Teacher or another parent, make sure your child stays under your supervision at all times.
- California state law requires all children under 8 years old to be properly restrained in a car seat. See current car seat requirements posted in each classroom.
- Please help maintain the safety of all the children at the center. Watch for children around you as you exit doors and gates, and attach gate hooks.

When walking with your child, talk about safety rules. Show them how to stop at the edge of the street and look right, then left, then right again. Point out safety signs, traffic lights, crosswalks, and intersections. Always walk on footpaths, and do not let children play on or near the road.

Child Guidance and Discipline

Making sure the classroom is a safe place for all children is a priority for NCS staff. Our goal is to help children learn to control their own behavior and solve their own problems. Staff use the following guidelines in supporting children:

- Children are encouraged to resolve conflicts by using words rather than their bodies to express emotions. If children can't resolve their own conflicts, a Teacher works with them and offers suggestions or alternatives.
- Positive behavior is reinforced.
- Redirection is used when appropriate.
- Clear limits are set and reinforced with children.
- Staff work in partnership with parents to create a consistent approach to guidance and discipline.
- If a child experiences ongoing behavior issues, staff work with the family to create a plan to help the child be successful. Infants and toddlers need close guidance from adults while learning how to socialize with their peers.

Safe School Behavior Policy

Our goal at NCS is to provide all children with positive, appropriate, and safe experiences. Occasionally, a child's behavior may represent a serious safety threat to themselves or other children. In these cases, NCS staff work with the family to help their child participate successfully in the classroom.

If, after exhausting all strategies to help a child participate safely, the child's behavior continues to pose a serious safety risk, the child may transition to a more appropriate placement. NCS uses suspension and/or expulsion only as a last resort, in extreme circumstances when there is a serious threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated without removal. Any decision to change a child's placement is made with the child's health and safety, Community Care Licensing Title 22 regulations, and funding requirements in mind.

Emergency Preparedness

Each site is prepared for emergencies with emergency supplies, an Emergency Preparedness Binder, and a posted Emergency Care and Disaster Plan. In some cases, children may need to be moved to a relocation site listed on the emergency plan. Staff stay with the children until the parent, or a person designated by the parent on the emergency card, comes for the child.

In an emergency, parents can call the NCS main office at (707) 822-7206 or (800) 808-7206.

Site Closures

If there is an extended power outage or another unexpected event, sites may need to close. If staff know the site will be closed, they will contact parents before school starts, if time permits. If the power goes out during school, parents may be called to pick up their child. If the public school in the community is closed due to a natural disaster, NCS programs will close as well.

A large tsunami can be generated by a distant earthquake or can occur within minutes of a local earthquake. Except for the Crescent City 7th Street location, all NCS locations are above the tsunami evacuation areas. If a tsunami is predicted, parents should not drive through a tsunami evacuation zone to pick up or drop off their children. Follow instructions from the Office of Emergency Services or local Emergency Broadcast Systems.

Site Safety Protocol and Lockdown Procedure

The safety of staff and children at all NCS sites is of the highest concern. NCS has a site safety protocol and lockdown procedure. In the event of a threat to the site or to people at the site, staff will call 911 and the center will be locked down. A note is placed on the door, which remains locked until law enforcement responds or the situation is resolved. Parents can call the main office at (707) 822-7206 or (800) 808-7206 for information.

Accidents and Emergency Medical Care

At least one staff member at every center, and one staff person at each home base site, is trained in First Aid and CPR. Children's accidents and injuries are documented on an “NCS Accident Report Form,” and parents receive a copy. First aid kits and supplies are available in each classroom and playgroup site.

If a medical emergency arises, the following steps are taken:

1. Staff call 911 if a child is having a medical emergency.
2. Staff try to reach the child's parents by phone.
3. Staff try to reach the people listed on the child's Emergency Card.
4. Staff may call the child's physician or dentist.
5. Staff try to reach the parent by phone if a child receives a bump on the head while at school.

If a child has eaten or tasted a potentially poisonous substance, staff call the Poison Control Center and follow the instructions given by Poison Control staff.

As Your Child Begins Center Base

Transportation to and from School

Parents are responsible for transporting their children to regular program activities. Children being transported in cars must be secured in an appropriate child safety seat according to California law. When a family faces a transportation crisis that makes it difficult for the child to attend program activities, parents may contact their child's Teacher or Family Worker for help developing a transportation plan.

Signing Children In and Out of the Classroom

As a licensed facility, we are required to complete daily attendance sheets for the classroom. When the child is dropped off or picked up, the parent signs their full legible signature next to the child's name on the attendance sheet. The Daily Visual Health Check is completed for the child by the Teacher as they enter the classroom. Please remember to sign your child out at the end of the day.

Once the child has been signed out, the parent is responsible for their safety. If someone else is to pick up a child, staff cannot release the child unless that person is 18 years or older and has been designated by the parent on the Emergency Card. Parents should let the friend or relative picking up the child know that they may be asked for photo identification.

Center Attendance

It is important that children be dropped off and picked up on time. A regular schedule helps them learn the school routine and be successful in the program. A child may be absent for illness, quarantine, family emergency, visitation, best interest days (up to 10 per year), or other reasons. If a child is sick or unable to attend school, parents need to call the Teacher.

Documentation of classroom absences is required and includes the name of the child, the dates of the absence, the reason, and the signature of the parent or the Teacher.

Children fall behind if they miss just three days each month. Head Start and Early Head Start centers require 85% attendance in the classroom.

In the State Programs, if a child has 10 unexcused absences, they will be disenrolled from the program. For the State Infant and Toddler program, the abandonment policy applies: after 30 consecutive days of no contact, the child will be disenrolled. For disenrollment from state programs, a Notice of Action will be issued and the child will be dropped.

State part-day preschool and child care programs provide up to 10 days of absence for best interest in a program year (20 days for state full day / full year preschool). These could include a sibling field trip, family members visiting, family bonding, or a child who is tired or unable to participate in program activities. Once a family has used their allotted best interest days for the year, any further absences of this sort are considered unexcused. Please talk to your Teacher about these days.

> *If you have difficulty with regular attendance, your Teacher will work with you to make an attendance plan. The Home Base program may be an educational alternative when getting to school is a struggle.*

Late Pick Up

"Late pick up" refers to any time a child is picked up after the scheduled program hours. If an emergency arises, parents agree to:

1. Call the center and let a staff member know the situation, and/or
2. Arrange for another adult to pick up the child, and let the center know that person's name and when the child will be picked up. Remind them they will need to show photo ID.

If a child is still at the center after closing and staff have not heard from the parents, the following steps are taken:

1. Attempt to reach the parent at home, work, or school.
2. Call the people listed on the emergency card.
3. Call the authorities (Child Welfare Services, law enforcement, and the NCS Executive Director).

Teachers document late pick-ups with a form that the parent signs each time they are late.

Children's Clothing — What to Bring

Children's play is messy. They dig in sand, work with clay, climb, run, and slide. Parents are asked to dress their children in comfortable play clothes. Rubber-soled shoes that either buckle or tie are best, and we recommend closed-toe shoes for safety. A complete change of clothing, labeled with your child's name, should be stored in the child's cubby in the classroom.

> *NCS is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen items.*

Bringing Items from Home to Class

Children should not bring toys or other items from home unless the parent makes a prior arrangement with the Teacher. These items are difficult to share with other children and are frequently lost or broken.

Please do not bring food or drinks for your child into the classroom. Children are provided meals and a snack during the school day. Exceptions need to be approved by the Food Program Manager.

Field Trips

NCS Center Base programs may take field trips to appropriate local attractions within safe walking distance of the facility. Children are prepared for each trip with a review of safety rules and learning objectives. Field trips are free for all enrolled children.

Being Ready for School

School days are busy, exciting, and fun. It is important that a child gets enough rest — most children of this age need 10 to 12 hours of sleep every night. Lack of rest causes irritability and low energy, as well as vulnerability to illness and disease. Making sure your child is rested and dressed in weather-appropriate clothing makes for a more comfortable day at school.

Only enrolled children are allowed to attend class at licensed centers. Siblings may accompany parents at drop-off and pick-up time but must be supervised by the parent at all times.

Child Custody

In most situations, both parents have a legal right to be a part of their child's life. If a custodial parent has a legal document, such as a certified restraining order, stating that the other parent has limits on their access to the child, a copy of that document must be in the site file. Staff will deny a parent's access to their child only when the legal document specifically denies them access.

Without such documentation in the site's files, legal parents and guardians are entitled to pick up the child. In cases where parents share custody, child information is shared, but parent information is kept confidential.

Responding to Safety Concerns at Pick Up

If NCS staff believe a person is unsafe to pick up a child from school — for example, a person under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or someone who is extremely upset — we cannot release a child to someone who is impaired. If the parent or other designated person appears to present a danger at the time, it could result in a police report (911) or a call to another adult on the child's Emergency Card.

Children's Health — Center Base

Immunizations

Prior to attendance at any licensed NCS center, children must be immunized against disease. This is state law. Children who are behind schedule but have received all immunizations possible to date may attend on a conditional basis, but must complete their immunizations as they become due. Please check with our staff if you have any questions.

Parents are also encouraged to keep current documentation of their child's immunizations in their files at home. The Home Base program encourages parents to keep their child's well-child check-ups and immunizations current.

Physical Exam

Prior to, or within 30 calendar days of, attendance at any NCS center, parents must provide NCS with the child's complete physical exam, which includes a TB risk assessment. Preschool exams must be less than 12 months old. Children in Center Base programs may not attend class without a current physical exam or an appointment scheduled within 30 days. Home visits are provided for children not attending class.

Dental Exam — Head Start and Early Head Start children age 1 or at first tooth

Head Start and Early Head Start encourage dental examinations every six months for enrolled children. Children are encouraged to have completed a dental exam within the past six months, or to have a dental appointment scheduled within 90 days of enrollment.

For children not covered by Medi-Cal or other health insurance, Head Start / Early Head Start or other local resources may pay for children who are referred for or require a dental exam or treatment by a pediatric dentist. Let your child's Teacher, Home Visitor, or Family Worker know if you need assistance.

Incidental Medical Services

NCS licensed child care programs may, upon request from a parent, administer and store limited medications to provide services: nebulizers, inhalers, and epinephrine auto-injectors. In these situations, a meeting with the Health Coordinator must be scheduled before your child attends, to determine how best to serve your child's individual needs and ensure all required paperwork is on file.

All medications must be in their original container with the original pharmacy or clinic label, and must not be expired. All prescribed medications must be in the child's name. At least one staff member at each site is trained in CPR and First Aid.

Giving Medications at School

NCS staff are not trained as medical professionals. When needed, parents should give the child the first dose of medication at home to see whether the child has any type of reaction. Parents or legal guardians may give medication to their own child during the child care day. If a child must have medication given by staff during school hours, parents need to follow the procedures required by Community Care Licensing.

Sunscreen

Even overcast days can burn children's sensitive skin. NCS has sunscreen on-site and will apply it to children with parental permission. Please talk with a staff member if you have any questions.

Child Illness at School or Home Visits

The school notifies parents when a child has been exposed to a contagious illness or condition. If a child is ill with any of the conditions listed in the Daily Visual Health Checklist, or develops any symptoms during playgroups or class time, they will not be able to stay at the site. Staff notify the parent immediately to take the child home. While waiting for the parent to arrive, the child is kept separate to prevent further contact with other children.

Parents need to notify the school within 24 hours if their child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness or condition, even if the child is kept at home. If a home visit has been scheduled and any family member is ill, the Home Visitor or Family Worker must be notified so the visit can be cancelled and rescheduled. Staff conduct a daily visual health check every morning in classrooms and at playgroups to make sure children are well enough to participate.

Daily Visual Health Checklist — Center Base

To support each parent's desire for a safe and healthy environment for their child, we have established procedures for a Daily Visual Health Check. Please do a visual check yourself before bringing your child to the center or site. See the Exclusion for Illness Quick Reference Guide. This health check is conducted as soon as possible after the child enters the child care facility, and whenever a change in the child's behavior or appearance is noted while the child is in care. The adult bringing the child must remain until the Daily Visual Health Check is completed.

The health check addresses the following:

- Reported or observed illness or injury affecting the child or family members since the last date of attendance
- Reported or observed changes in the child's behavior (such as lethargy or irritability) or appearance (for example, seeming sad) from the previous day at home or the previous day's attendance at child care
- Skin rashes, impetigo, itching or scratching of the skin or scalp, or the presence of one or more live lice
- A temperature over 100.4°F taken by any method, if the child appears ill
- Other signs or symptoms of illness or injury, such as drainage from the eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, cuts or lacerations, pain, or feeling ill

Once the child has been determined able to participate, the child can be signed in for the day. If the child is determined to be too ill to participate, or develops any of the above symptoms during the session, they will not be allowed to stay at the center or playgroup.

Questions about any NCS health policy? Ask your Teacher, or call the Health Services Manager at (707) 822-7206 or (800) 808-7206.

Nutrition and Food Service — Center Base

Child Care Food Program

Northcoast Children's Services participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federal program offered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Participation in CACFP allows NCS to provide nutritious meals, without charge, to enrolled children.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

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

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.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 Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) 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 to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; by fax to (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or by email to program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. (05/05/2022) Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339, or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

Note: The only protected classes covered under the Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) are race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

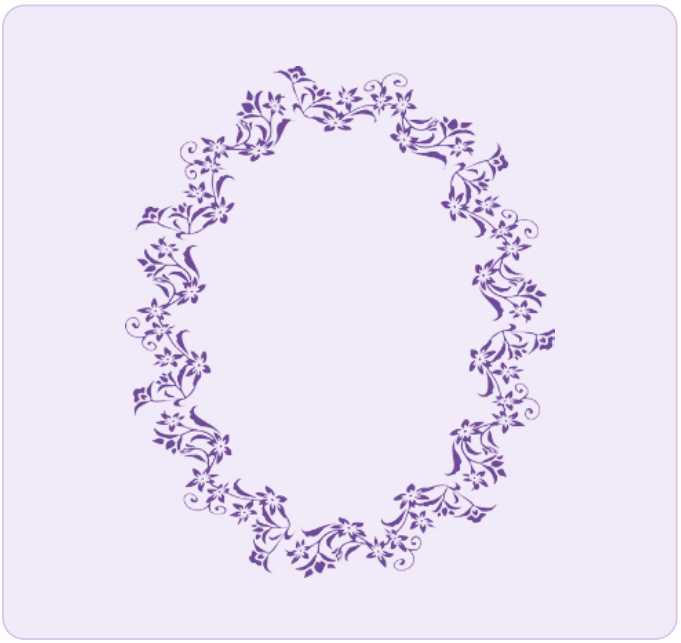
Bottle Feeding

For infants, prior to their first day at the center, the parent and teacher and/or physician will create an individualized needs and care plan for the infant that includes a written individualized feeding plan. This plan is updated quarterly, and more often as necessary to ensure its accuracy.

The infant's authorized representative may provide formula or breast milk according to the individualized

feeding plan. Formula or milk must be bottled before being accepted by the center. Bottles are labeled with the child's name and the current date and stored in the refrigerator. The infant care center heats formula or breast milk according to CACFP regulations.

Infants who are unable to hold a bottle are held by a staff person for bottle feeding. A bottle given to an infant able to hold their own bottle must be unbreakable. Mealtime chairs are used to seat infants during feeding. Formula or milk in a partially consumed bottle is discarded at the end of each meal. Food is discarded if not consumed within 72 hours of the date on the container label. Labeled bottles provided by the authorized representative are rinsed and returned to the parent for sanitizing and refilling at the end of each day.



6

State Funded Programs Only

Fees, enrollment, and program quality



Family Fee Assessment — Child Care Programs Only

- Monthly fees are assessed at certification and recertification. If you have a change in circumstances that might reduce your family fee, you may request an update to the application prior to the recertification due date.
- Your family fee is paid in advance of service. You may pay by cash or check.
- No adjustments are made for absences.
- Your fees are delinquent seven (7) calendar days after the due date. A Notice of Action (NOA) will be issued to you with a pending termination date for services. To halt the NOA action, you may either pay the delinquent fees or agree to a reasonable repayment plan.
- Credit is given for child care fees paid to other service providers when the assigned provider cannot meet all of the family's certified need for child care. A receipt or cancelled check for the fees paid is required. The credit is applied to the next billing period (the following month).

Exceptions — No Fees Are Assessed For:

- CPS or At-Risk families, for a maximum of 12 months, if the written referral from a legally qualified professional or the CPS worker states that family fees shall be waived
- Families receiving CalWORKs cash aid
- Income eligible families in Part-Day CSPP programs

Requesting a Change in Hours

For full day / full year child care programs, hours of care are documented at the initial certification and recertification, or at the voluntary request of the family to increase or decrease the hours of need, with written documentation.

Disenrollment Policy

A family may be dropped from the preschool program for any of the following reasons:

- The parent knowingly files false or inaccurate information that makes them ineligible for the program, or submits fraudulent, false, or misleading information or documentation
- Ten unexcused absences
- Failure to provide necessary documentation
- The family's gross monthly income (submitted and calculated) exceeds state income guidelines
- Non-payment of fees
- Violation of our policies and procedures
- The child reaches state age eligibility limits

Notice of Action (NOA)

You will receive a Notice of Action (NOA) at:

- Initial certification, to approve or deny services
- Recertification
- When your family fee payment is delinquent
- Suspension or expulsion
- Disenrollment from the program

Parent Right to Appeal

The NOA will provide details of the action and instructions on how to appeal. You must follow the instructions and timeline for the appeal process at the local (program) level first. If you do not agree with the program's decision, you may appeal at the California Department of Education level.

Environmental Assessments

NCS conducts an annual CLASS Environment Assessment in all preschool classrooms and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale Assessment in all Infant Toddler centers, to ensure that we provide quality classroom environments and activities that promote the development and well-being of enrolled children. Results from the environment assessments are also used to enhance and promote continued quality improvement.

Self-Evaluation and Program Monitoring

NCS conducts a self-evaluation process every year to identify areas for improvement. We use data and monitoring from various assessment tools, including the Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP), the environmental assessments, and parent surveys. We value and use input from parents, staff, Policy Council, and board members to create a program improvement plan that addresses the areas of concern identified. These plans are shared with parents. Ongoing monitoring ensures that all areas of the program continue to meet high-quality standards.



7

Important Notifications for All Families

Your child's privacy and your rights



Annual Notice Regarding Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and Parental Rights

Effective August 1, 2017. This notice describes how personally identifiable information about your child may be used and disclosed, and how you can access this information. Please review it carefully.

By law, Northcoast Children's Services must protect the privacy of your child's Personally Identifiable Information. Information that could be used to identify your child — known as "Personally Identifiable Information" or "PII" — includes your child's name, the name of a child's family member, the street address of the child, a social security number, or other information that is linked or linkable to the child.

NCS retains PII because your child receives Head Start / Early Head Start services from us, and it is part of each child's record with us. We take our obligation to protect the privacy of your child's PII very seriously. This notice explains your rights and our legal duties and privacy practices. We are required to give you a copy of your rights in writing every year, including definitions that cover the types of PII that may be disclosed and to whom we can disclose it.

NCS will abide by the terms of this notice. Should our data and child record practices materially change, NCS reserves the right to change the terms of this notice and will follow the terms currently in effect. If we revise our practices substantially, we will provide a revised notice either to the address you have supplied or by handing it out at child pick-up.

Definitions

Child Records Records that (1) are directly related to the child; (2) are maintained by the program, or by a Party acting for the program; and (3) include information recorded in any way, such as print, electronic, or digital means, including media, video, image, or audio format.

Confidential To be kept private with certain specific protections.

Consent Written approval or authorization that is signed and dated. It may include a record and signature in electronic form that (1) identifies and authenticates a particular person as the source of the electronic consent, and (2) indicates that same person's approval of the information. Consent can be revoked going forward.

Disclosure To permit access to, or the release, transfer, or other communication of, Personally Identifiable Information contained in Child Records by any means — oral, written, or electronic — to any Party except the Party identified as the Party that provided or created the record.

Party An entity or individual.

Parent A Head Start child's mother or father, other family member who is a primary caregiver, foster parent or authorized caregiver, guardian, or person with whom the child has been placed for purposes of adoption pending a final adoption decree.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) Any information that could identify a specific individual, including but not limited to a child's name, the name of a child's family member, the street address of the child, a social security number, or other information that is linked or linkable to the child.

Required Uses and Disclosures of PII

We must use and disclose information contained in Child Records that is PII in a number of ways in order to carry out our responsibilities. We keep PII in our Child Records. The following list describes the types of uses and disclosures of PII that federal law requires NCS to make and allows us to make without your consent:

- Within this organization, for Head Start purposes
- In connection with an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs, or for enforcement of or compliance with federal legal requirements (such as to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which funds our work)
- For studies to improve child or family outcomes or quality of services, if the results will be reported in aggregate form that does not identify any individual
- During disasters or health and safety emergencies, to appropriate Parties (including but not limited to local health departments, police, fire, and EMS)
- Pursuant to court orders or subpoenas
- For Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) monitoring
- To foster care caseworkers who have the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement
- To appropriate Parties in cases of suspected or known child maltreatment (such as Child Protective Services)

NCS also uses and shares your child's PII when requested by you or when otherwise required by law. Except as described above, NCS will not use or disclose your PII without your written consent.

You may give us written consent to use or disclose your PII to anyone for any purpose you choose. You may revoke your consent so long as you do so in writing; however, NCS will not be able to get back any PII we have already used or shared based on your prior permission.

Parental Rights

You have the right to:

- Ask to inspect your child's record on-site containing PII that NCS maintains. NCS will create an opportunity for you to inspect your child's record on-site within 45 days. You do not have the right to remove the original record from the site, nor to take any parts of the original record with you.
- Ask for a copy of Child Records disclosed to third Parties with parental consent, free of charge.
- Ask NCS to amend your child's record if you believe it is inaccurate, misleading, or violating your child's privacy. You must ask for this in writing, along with a reason for your request. NCS will review your request and decide on it within 30 days. If NCS denies your request to amend your PII, we will issue you a written statement explaining why, and explain your right to a hearing.
- Ask for a hearing if your request to amend the Child Record is denied. If the issue is not decided in your favor at the hearing, you have the right to place a statement in the Child Record that comments on the contested information, states why you disagree with the program's decision, or both.

Complaints or Questions

If you believe your child's privacy rights may have been violated, or if you have questions, please let us know as soon as possible. Complaints should be directed to Rodney Oien, Executive Director, 1266 9th Street, Arcata, CA 95521, or (707) 822-7206. Filing a complaint or exercising your rights will not affect the care or services your child receives from Northcoast Children's Services.

Notes

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www.ncsheadstart.org

Please like and follow us for news, information, and resources.

instagram.com/ncsheadstart

facebook.com/ncsheadstart

1266 9th Street, Arcata, CA 95521

(707) 822-7206 • (800) 808-7206