

ACHR Parent Handbook

ALABAMA COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS

CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM &
COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY



Early Head Start / Head Start



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Introduction

Dear Parents,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to a new year with Alabama Council on Human Relations, Inc. (ACHR) Child Development Program. Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning for another year of growth, we are honored to partner with you in supporting your child's early learning journey.

Our program is designed to meet the educational, physical, mental health, and nutritional needs of children from birth to age five. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and infants/toddlers from birth to three through center-based and home-based options, while Head Start provides preschool services for children ages three to five. Both programs welcome children with special needs and help families access appropriate services. Because these programs are federally funded, they follow income- and age-based eligibility guidelines.

Children learn best through meaningful experiences, and our Teaching Strategies Curriculum supports development through play, exploration, and hands-on learning. This approach helps children build language, early literacy, math, social-emotional, and problem-solving skills at their own pace.

Federal funding covers 80% of our program costs; the remaining 20% must come from parents and the community through **in-kind contributions** such as volunteering, attending meetings, participating in RAGS or ReadyRosie, or donating goods. Your participation ensures we maintain full funding and continue serving families in Lee and Russell counties.

This *Parent Handbook* provides important information for the year. You can also find *Branching Out to the Community*, a directory of local services, on our website at **www.achr.com** under "Information."

Thank you for trusting us with your child's early learning. We look forward to a year of partnership, growth, and joyful learning experiences.



Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tina Evans'.

Tina Evans

CEO / Head Start Director



Our Vision

A community where every individual and family has access to the education, resources, and support needed to achieve lasting self-sufficiency, fulfilling their potential, and contributing to a thriving, equitable, and inclusive society.

Our Mission

Empowering low-income individuals and families in our community to break the cycle of poverty through education, emergency services, and partnerships that foster self-sufficiency and community well-being.



Our Locations & Programs

King Center (Main Office)

**950 Shelton Mill Road
Auburn, AL 36830**

- Head Start Program (Center-Based)
- Energy Services (Utility & Rent Assistance) - Lee County Only

Agency's Mailing Address

**P.O. Box 3770
Auburn, AL 36831-3770**
Main Phone: 334-821-8336
Fax: 334-826-6437

Darden Center

**601 S 4th Street
Opelika, AL 36801**

- Early Head Start (Home-Based)
- Early Head Start (Center-Based)
- Head Start (Center-Based)

Edelman Center

**403 Red Fox Drive
Hurtsboro, AL 36860**

- Early Head Start (Center-Based)
- Head Start (Center-Based)
(for Russell County)

Our Educational Philosophy

We believe each child is a unique individual who deserves nurturing, respect, and opportunities to thrive. Children learn best when they feel safe, accepted, and valued. Consistent, caring relationships with families, caregivers, and teachers help children develop trust, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning.

Each child's development is influenced by factors such as temperament, culture, experiences, abilities, and learning style. To support positive outcome, teachers build relationships with children and families to better understand each child's strengths and needs. This knowledge helps teachers provide meaningful experiences that promote growth, learning and school readiness in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Young children learn through active exploration, play, and hands-on experiences. Our program recognizes that children are naturally curious and capable learners. Teachers create engaging learning opportunities that support children's physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and creative development while encouraging independence, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Our approach to early education and school readiness is guided by the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), and recommendations from recognized organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

We implement **Teaching Strategies' The Creative Curriculum**, a research-based, comprehensive curriculum that promotes development and learning through meaningful investigations, intentional teaching, and play-based experiences. The Creative Curriculum supports children's growth across all developmental domains and aligns with school readiness goals, helping children build the skills and confidence needed for future success.

We recognize that development occurs in predictable stages while respecting the uniqueness of each child. Infant routines are individualized to meet each child's needs and promote secure relationships with caregivers. Toddler routines provide increasing structure while supporting growing independence and social awareness. Preschool classrooms offer consistent daily schedules that balance teacher-guided and child-directed learning experiences, including opportunities for exploration, collaboration, and choice.

We believe parents are children's first and most important teachers. Family engagement is central to our program. Through home visits, parent conferences, family meetings, classroom participation, and other learning opportunities, we partner with families to support children's development and advocate for their success.

Early Head Start – School Readiness Goals

ACHR's specific infant and toddler goals and objectives for achieving school readiness.

01

Approaches to Learning

- Child manages feelings and emotions with support of familiar adults.
- Child manages actions and behavior with support of familiar adults.
- Child maintains focus and sustains attention with support.
- Child develops the ability to show persistence in actions and behavior.
- Child demonstrates the ability to be flexible in actions and behavior.
- Child demonstrates emerging initiative in interactions, experiences, and explorations.
- Child shows interest in and curiosity about objects, materials, or events.
- Child uses creativity to increase understanding and learning.
- Child shows imagination in play and interactions with others.

02

Social and Emotional Development

- Child develops expectations of consistent, positive interactions through secure relationships with familiar adults.
- Child uses expectations learned through repeated experiences in primary relationships to develop relationships with other adults.
- Child learns to use adults as a resource to meet needs.
- Child shows interest in, interacts with, and develops personal relationship with other children.
- Child imitates and engages in play with other children.
- Child learns to express a range of emotions.
- Child recognizes and interprets emotions of others with the support of familiar adults.
- Child expresses care and concern towards others.
- Child manages emotions with the support of familiar adults.
- Child shows awareness about self and how to connect with others.
- Child understands some characteristics of self and others.
- Child shows confidence in own abilities through relationships with others.
- Child develops a sense of belonging through relationships with others.

03

Language and Literacy

- Child attends to, understands, and responds to communication and language from others.
- Child learns from communication and language experiences with others.
- Child communicates needs and wants non-verbally and by using language.
- Child uses non-verbal communication and language to engage others in interaction.
- Child uses increasingly complex language in conversation with others.

- Child initiates non-verbal communication and language to learn and gain information.
- Child understands an increasing number of words used in communication with others.
- Child uses an increasing number of words in communication and conversation with others.
- Child attends to, repeats, and uses some rhymes, phrases, or refrains from stories or songs.
- Child handles books and relates them to their stories or information.
- Child recognizes pictures and some symbols, signs, or words.
- Child comprehends meaning from pictures and stories.
- Child makes marks and uses them to represent objects or actions.

04 Cognition

- Child actively explores people and objects to understand self, others, and objects.
- Child uses understanding of casual relationships to act on social and physical environments.
- Child recognizes differences between familiar and unfamiliar people, objects, actions, or events.
- Child recognizes the stability of people and objects in the environment.
- Child uses memories as a foundation for more complex actions and thoughts.
- Child learns to use a variety of strategies in solving problems.
- Child uses reasoning and planning ahead to solve problems.
- Child develops sense of number and quantity.
- Child uses spatial awareness to understand objects and their movement in space.
- Child uses matching and sorting of objects or people to understand similar and different characteristics.
- Child observes and imitates sounds, words, gestures, actions, and behaviors.
- Child uses objects or symbols to represent something else.
- Child uses pretend play to increase understanding of culture, environment, and experiences.

05 Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

- Child uses perceptual information to understand objects, experiences, and interactions.
- Child uses perceptual information in directing own actions, experiences, and interactions.
- Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles for movement and position.
- Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles to explore the environment.
- Child uses sensory information and body awareness to understand how their body relates to the environment.
- Child coordinates hand and eye movements to perform actions.
- Child uses hands for exploration, play, and daily routines.
- Child adjusts reach and grasp to use tools.
- Child demonstrates healthy behaviors with increasing independence as part of everyday routines.
- Child uses safe behaviors with support from adults.
- Child demonstrates increasing interest in engaging in healthy eating habits and making nutritious food choices.

Head Start – School Readiness Goals

ACHR's key goals for education and school readiness are to help children learn to:

01 Social and Emotional Development

- Children will develop relationships with and build positive connections with adults and peers.
 - Identify themselves by name, age, and gender.
 - Identify teachers and peers by name and form relationships with both groups.
 - Engage appropriately in small and large group activities.
 - Interact with peers in play and group activities.
- Children will manage emotions with increasing independence.
 - Express feelings in ways that are appropriate to the situation.
 - Look for adult assistance when feelings are most intense.
 - Use a range of coping strategies to manage emotions with the support of an adult, such as using words or taking a deep breath.

02 Approaches to Learning

- The children will recognize and regulate emotions, attentions, impulses, and behavior while following classroom rules and routines.
 - Display appropriate emotions.
 - Demonstrate self-regulation.
 - Follow limits and expectations.
 - Use words to solve conflicts.
 - Balance needs and rights of self and others.
 - Demonstrate confidence in tackling new tasks.

03 Language and Literacy

- The children will develop emerging phonological awareness, to include, identifying letter-sound relationships.
 - Identify and name letters (18 uppercase, 15 lowercase).
 - Identify and discriminate between sounds, phonemes, rhymes, and alliterations through our Teaching Strategies Curriculum.
- The children will understand and use a wide variety of words for a variety of purposes.
 - Use complete sentences of more than 5 words with complex structures.
 - Produce and organize multiple sentences on a topic.
 - Describe and tell the use of familiar items.

04 Cognition and General Knowledge Goals

- The children will begin to count, write numbers, and identify numbers in print.
 - Verbally count to 20.
 - Count 1-10 objects accurately.
 - Tell what number comes next in order by counting (1-10).
 - Identify numerals 0-10 by name and connect each to counted objects.
 - Make sets of 6-10 objects and then describe the parts.
- The children will recognize simple shapes, repeat simple patterns, and measure objects using standard and non-standard measurement.
 - Recognize simple shapes (circle, square, rectangle, oval, triangle, rhombus).
 - Make simple (ABAB) patterns.
 - Compare and orders small objects according to size, shape, length, and weight.
 - Measures using cubes, strings, hands, and other non-standard measurement tools.
 - Understands and knows the purpose of standard measuring tools (scales).

05 Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

- The children will develop fine motor skills in order to be able to perform more complex tasks such as drawing fine details, holding scissors, and writing utensils.
 - Manipulate, explore and use a variety of are materials for the development of fine motor skills.
 - Manipulate, explore pre-writing using our Teaching Strategies Curriculum.
 - Use scissors correctly and effectively.
 - Manipulate materials and toys (puzzles, LEGOs, lacing cards, play-dough, stringing beads, peg board) for the development of fine motor skills.

06 Dual Language Learners

- Children who are dual language learners will demonstrate competency in their home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English.
 - Progress in listening to and understanding English and in speaking English (non-English speaking children).
 - Promgram must provide intentional support for the development of their home language as well as for English acquisition.



ACHR Child Guidance

Based on Conscious Discipline

- ACHR staff will create a school family, which creates a safe, caring classroom that fosters meaningful academics and social learning. Part of building this school family includes each child having a meaningful job, creating rituals, setting classroom commitments, and building connections with each child. The school family promotes and encourages kindness and helpfulness.
- Classrooms will practice the Safe Keeper Ritual. The adults say, "My job is to keep you safe. Your job is to help keep it safe!" Safety is the core of the classroom.
- Verbal abuse or derogatory remarks about the child, his/her family, or their race, religion, culture, or economic status will NOT be used or permitted.
- Children will learn anger management, helpfulness, assertiveness, impulse control, cooperation, empathy, and problem-solving skills.
- Breathing techniques will be taught as a way to relax, become calm, regain composure, and maintain control. Star, balloon, drain, and pretzel are some examples.
- The Safe Place in the classroom provides an opportunity for children to remove themselves from the group in order to become calm, regain composure, and maintain control when upset, sad, angry, or frustrated. Children go to the Safe Place in order to be helpful to themselves and others. A teacher will go with the child as a guide who helps them through the process. There may be breathing techniques posted, family photos, squishy balls, comfort bag, or many other things to help manage feelings. Time out will not be used.
- All children will be within the sight of an adult. No child will be left alone at any time.
- All behavior is viewed as a call for love (help) and will be seen as an opportunity to teach the child skills so that the next time the child/children will be better able to handle the situation on their own. Children will be involved in the conflict resolution process.
- Staff will help the children to be successful instead of attempting to make them behave. For example, the perspective: "How can I get this child to clean up?" will be changed to: "How can I help this child be more likely to choose to clean up?"
- Staff will focus on what they want the child to do. For example, instead of saying: "No pushing, you know better than to push your friend, you need to be nice to your friends." say: "When you want your friend to move, say, 'Move please.' Tell him/her now for practice."
- Children will be offered choices and given consequences. For example, "When you throw the blocks, one of your friends could get hurt. You can throw the ball when we go outside and you can build with the blocks. If you choose to throw the blocks again, you will have to leave the block area. That will keep you safe and keep our friends safe."



Parents' Quick Reference Guide

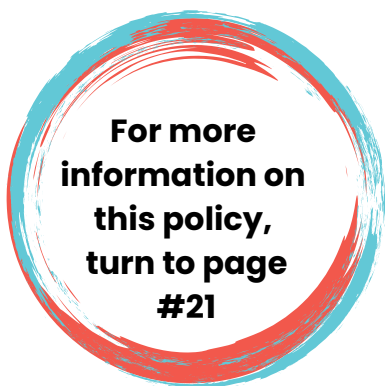
The following pages are a “quick guide” for parents that includes important information about our program. However, the rest of the handbook provides more details on policies.

Please review the entire handbook.



Being on time for both drop-off and pick-up is an important part of your child's daily experience. Arriving on time helps children settle in smoothly, participate fully in learning activities, and feel part of the classroom routine from the beginning of the day. Likewise, timely pick-up ensures a consistent and reassuring end to their day. Maintaining a predictable schedule supports not only your child's success, but also helps create a calm and organized environment for all children.

Program Hours & Drop-Off/Pick-Up Policy



01 Operating Hours

Head Start – Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM – 2:30 PM
Early Head Start – Monday – Friday, 8:00AM – 3:00PM

02 Morning Drop-Off

8:00 AM (Bus Arrival)

03 Afternoon Pick-Up

Head Start – 2:30pm
Early Head Start – 3:00pm

04 Bus Loading (Head Start ONLY)

2:45pm (For safety reasons, children may not be taken off the bus once they have boarded)

05 Pick-Up Authorization

Only parent/legal guardian or designated adult (age 16 or older) listed on child's DHR Pre-Admission form can pick-up.

ADULT MUST HAVE A VALID GOVERNMENT PHOTO ID.

Drop-Off Policy

- Children must be scanned in the front office when they arrive at the center.
- Walk child to their classroom and sign-in on form with full signature and correct time.
- Children brought to center after 8:30 AM will be considered LATE/UNEXCUSED.
- If arriving after 8:30 AM, parents must notify the school in advance.

Pick-Up Policy

- Authorized adult must scan child out in front office, provide valid Government issued photo ID, and sign a release slip.
- Only authorized individuals listed on the child's DHR Pre-Admission form may pick up the child.
- If authorized pick-up person does not come to pick up child within 30 minutes of pick-up time, DHR may be notified.

Dressing for School

Comfortable Clothing

Please dress your child in comfortable, washable clothing that allows them to explore, create, and play freely. Learning can be messy, and we want children to fully participate without worrying about their clothes.

Please label all clothing and personal items with your child's name. While staff do their best to help children keep track of belongings, we cannot be responsible for lost items.



Safe Footwear

Children should wear shoes that:

- Fit securely
- Cover the toes
- Have a closed back

For safety reasons, flip-flops, mules, sling-back shoes, high heels, and Crocs are **not permitted**.

Weather-Appropriate Clothing

Please send hats, gloves, scarves, coats and sturdy shoes during cold or wet weather. Be sure to label these items with your child's name.

Jewelry and Hair Accessories

For children's safety, jewelry such as earrings, necklaces, rings, and similar items are not to be worn to the center. Hair accessories that could become choking hazards, such as beads and decorative barrettes, are also not allowed.

Simple hair ties, scrunchies, ribbons, and rubber bands are welcome.

For more
information on
this policy,
turn to page
#25

Safety, Communication, & Daily Reminders

01 Items from Home

To help keep everyone safe, children will not bring toys, food, candy, or other personal items to the center or on the bus unless requested by staff.

03 Bad Weather and Emergency Closings

If a center must close due to weather or another emergency, families will be notified through:

- Text messages
- ACHR Facebook page (ACHR – Alabama Council on Human Relations, Inc.)
- Email
- ACHR website: www.achr.com

Please check these sources before calling the center or main office.

For everyone's safety, buses may run late during bad weather. If severe weather develops during the day, buses may arrive earlier or later than usual. Please ensure an authorized adult is available to receive your child if schedule changes occur.

02 Smoke-Free and Scent-Free Environment

All ACHR centers are **smoke-free and scent-free** environments to help protect children and staff with asthma, allergies, and sensitivities.

Please do not wear or apply perfumes, colognes, scented lotions, or aftershave when visiting the center, and please do not apply these products to your child.

04 Keep Contact Information Current

We must be able to reach you quickly in case of illness, emergencies, weather-related changes, or other important matters.

Please keep the following information current with us at all times:

- Cell phone number
- Home address
- Email address
- Emergency contact information

If any of this information changes, please contact your Family Service Advocate as soon as possible.

Thank you for partnering with us to provide a safe, supportive, and successful learning experience for your child. Together, we can help every child thrive.



Operating Procedures

To provide a safe, healthy, and positive learning environment for all children, ACHR follows specific operating procedures and guidelines. These procedures help ensure the smooth operation of our program, support children's well-being, and promote effective communication between families and staff. We encourage families to review this information carefully and contact us if they have any questions. By working together, we can create the best possible experience for every child.

A – Rights of ACHR Parents

As a parent, you have the right to:

1 – Be Treated with Respect and Dignity

We value families as our partners and are committed to treating every parent and caregiver with courtesy, respect, and professionalism.

2 – Receive Regular Information About Your Child’s Growth and Learning

Parents have the right to be informed about their child’s interests, strengths, progress, and developmental growth.

- **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

- Regular communication between home and school helps children succeed. Parent-teacher conferences provide opportunities for families and teachers to share information, celebrate accomplishments, and discuss goals for continued growth.
- Conferences are scheduled at least 4 times a year (2 at home, called “home visits,” and 2 at the center), and additional meetings may be requested by either parents or staff whenever needed. Families are encouraged to contact their child’s teacher or Center Operations Supervisor with questions about classroom activities, schedules, curriculum, or child progress.

3 – Understand the Screenings and Assessments Used with Your Child

- **Developmental and Health Screenings**

- All Early Head Start and Head Start children receive developmental and health screenings within their first 45 days of enrollment. These screenings help identify concerns related to health, development, hearing, vision, language, behavior, motor skills, and social-emotional growth.

- **Ongoing Assessment**

- ACHR uses ongoing assessments to monitor children’s learning and development throughout the year. Teachers gather information through observations, work samples, classroom experiences, and family input.
- Assessment information is aligned with Teaching Strategies – The Creative Curriculum and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF). Teachers use this information to individualize instruction, plan meaningful learning experiences, and support each child’s progress toward school readiness goals.
- Families receive regular updates about their child’s development through conferences, home visits, progress reports, and portfolios that showcase children’s learning and accomplishments.
- Assessment results also help ACHR evaluate program effectiveness, guide staff training, plan classroom improvements, and strengthen school readiness outcomes.

4 – Participate in Family Goal Setting and Educational Opportunities

ACHR partners with families to identify strengths, set goals, and access resources that support family well-being and self-sufficiency

- **Family Partnership Process**

- Families work alongside Family Service Advocates or Home Visitors to create and update individualized goals through the Family Partnership Agreement Process.

- **Parent Workshops and Learning Opportunities**

- ACHR offers workshops and training opportunities based on parent interests and needs. Topics may include parenting, child development, employment, literacy, financial wellness, health, and family life.

- **Parenting Education**

- Families may participate in research-based parenting education programs designed to strengthen parent-child relationships and support children's success.

- **Community Partnerships**

- ACHR collaborates with community agencies to connect families with services and resources. Information may be shared with partner organizations when appropriate and with required consent.

- **Male Engagement**

- ACHR values the important role fathers and other positive male role models play in children's lives. Special activities are offered throughout the year to encourage their involvement and strengthen family engagement.

5 – Receive Regular Program Communications

ACHR provides families with timely information through a variety of communications methods, including:

- Monthly parent newsletters
- Text messages
- Flyers and notices
- Email communications
- ClassDojo
- ACHR website (www.achr.com)
- ACHR social media pages

Families are encouraged to review all communication for important updates, upcoming events, health information, and program announcements. Resources such as the **Branching Out Resource Directory** are also available to help families locate community services and supports.

6 – Participate in Parent Committees

Families play an important role in shaping the program. Each center has a Parent Committee where parents can:

- Learn about program activities
- Share ideas and concerns
- Help plan family events
- Participate in decision-making

- Elect representative to Policy Council

Parent Committee meetings are held regularly throughout the year.

7 – Serve on the Policy Council

Parents elected by their Parent Committees may serve on ACHR's Policy Council. The Policy Council works with program leadership to provide input on decisions affecting Early Head Start and Head Start services. Training is provided to all members.

8 – Stay Informed About Policy Council Activities

Families are kept informed through:

- Parent newsletters
- Parent Committee reports
- Updates from Policy Council representatives

9 – Serve on Advisory Committees

Parents may volunteer to serve on advisory committees and self-assessment teams that help improve program services and strengthen outcomes for children and families.

10 – Make Suggestions or Express Concerns

ACHR welcomes parent feedback. Families may share suggestions or concerns with program staff at any time. If a concern cannot be resolved at the center level, parents may contact the Center Supervisor or call ACHR's main office at (334) 821-8336. Your input helps us continually improve our services.

11 – Review Program Standards and Regulations

ACHR operates in accordance with:

- Head Start Program Performance Standards
- State child care licensing regulations (DHR)
- Other applicable federal, state, and local requirements

Parents are encouraged to become familiar with these standards and learn more about the regulations that guide our program.

12 – Volunteer and Participate in Program Activities

Parents and legal guardians are encouraged to volunteer in classrooms, attend field trips, support special events, and participate in family engagement activities.

For the safety of all children:

- All visitors must sign in and out at the center office.
- Visitors must wear a visitor badge while on site.
- Non-parent volunteers will need to complete the DHR volunteer requirements. This includes siblings (older or younger), parent's significant other, step-parents, grandparents, and friends of family. These persons are not permitted to visit in classrooms other than specially planned times.

Volunteer contributions help support the success of our program and are an important part of ACHR's commitment to family engagement.

- **Family Learning Activities**

- Research shows that children benefit when parents spend time reading, talking, playing, and learning with them. ACHR encourages families to engage in home learning activities that strengthen relationships and support classroom learning.

- **ReadyRosie**

- ReadyRosie is a family engagement resource that provides short, easy-to-use videos designed to help parents support learning at home. The videos demonstrate everyday activities that promote language, literacy, math, social-emotional development, and school readiness skills.
- ReadyRosie activities use common household materials and everyday routines, making it easy for families to turn ordinary moments into meaningful learning opportunities. Families receive videos and activity ideas throughout the year that connect directly to children's classroom learning and developmental goals.

- **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**

- The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a free book-gifting program that helps build children's love of reading from an early age.
- When available in your community, enrolled children can receive a high-quality, age-appropriate book mailed directly to their home each month from birth until age five. The program helps families create home libraries, encourages daily reading, and supports early language, and literacy development. ACHR enrolls eligible children (up to age 5) in this program, but parents can opt-out.



B – Responsibilities of ACHR Parents

As a parent or legal guardian, I agree to:

1 – Treat Others with Respect

Treat ACHR staff, children, families, and visitors with courtesy, respect, and dignity at all times.

Concerns or disagreements should be discussed calmly and respectfully. Disruptive behavior, profanity, threats, or physical aggression will not be tolerated at ACHR centers, events, or activities.

2 – Keep Contact Information Current

Provide and maintain current:

- Home address
- Phone numbers
- Email address
- Emergency contacts
- Transportation and pick-up information

Families must provide at least two emergency contacts and immediately notify the center whenever contact information changes (*DHR may be notified if parent cannot be contacted during an emergency*). **Families will need to update the DHR Pre-Admission form every time information needs to be updated.**

3 – Ensure Regular Attendance and Punctuality

Regular attendance is essential for children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Program Hours

Early Head Start: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Head Start: 8:00 am – 2:30 pm

Children need to arrive by **8:00 am** each day unless absent due to illness or an approved appointment.

If attendance concerns arise, your child will be placed on an Attendance Success Plan.

4 – Arrival, Pick-Up, & Transportation

Families are expected to follow all transportation procedures and maintain consistent arrival and pick-up times. Children should arrive on time and be in their classroom by 8:00 AM each day. Arriving on time allows children to participate fully in learning activities and begin the day with their peers. Late arrivals may cause children to miss important parts of the daily schedule and can disrupt the classroom routine.

- **Arrival Expectations**

- Please ensure your child arrives at the center on time.
 - Children arriving after 8:30 AM will be marked late/unexcused, unless:
 - The bus arrives late (not due to a missed bus), or
 - The center is notified in advance of a medical or dental appointment
- If your child has an appointment:
 - Notify the Family Services Advocate the day before or before 8:30 AM the day of the appointment.
 - This ensures your child is included in the lunch count.
 - Bring documentation of the appointment for the absence to be considered excused.

- **Drop –Off Procedures**

- For safety and accountability, please follow all steps below when dropping of your child:
 - Hold your child’s hand from the time they exit the car until they are safely in the classroom.
 - Check in at the front office, scan your child in, and present a valid Government issued photo ID.
 - Walk your child to the classroom and inform the teacher before leaving.
 - Sign your child in on the classroom attendance sheet using your full signature and accurate time.

- **Pick-Up Procedures**

- Children must be picked up on time each day by an authorized adult.
 - Pick-up times:
 - 2:30 PM (Head Start)
 - 3:00 PM (Early Head Start)
- Only individuals (adults 16 years of age or older) listed on your child’s DHR Pre-Admission Form (Pre-Ad) may pick up your child.
- A valid Government photo ID is required.
- Check out at the front office, scan your child out, and sign a release slip. A valid Government issued photo ID must be shown.
- Provide the release slip to the teacher.
- Sign your child out in the classroom attendance notebook using your full signature and correct time.

- **Late Pick-Up Policy:**

- If a child is not picked up on time, a conference with an ACHR representative will be required before the child may return to the center.
- If no authorized adult arrives within 30 minutes, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) may be contacted.

- **Repeated Late Pick-Ups:**

- **Second Occurrence:** Another conference will be held to set up an Attendance Success Plan with a clear plan for on-time pick-up will be established.
- **Third Occurrence:** ACHR will conduct a thorough investigation of situation to determine if there is a safe plan in place prior to the child’s return.
 - If a child is not picked up safely and consistently, DHR may be contacted.

- **Closings & Delays**

- Information about center closings, delayed starts, or early dismissals (due to weather or other events) will be shared through:
 - Text message
 - Email
 - Facebook: *ACHR – Alabama Council on Human Relations, Inc.*
 - Website: www.achr.com
- For safety reasons, buses may run late or may not operate during severe weather conditions

5 – Bus Transportation Guidelines

To ensure the safety of all children, families must follow all transportation rules when their child rides an ACHR bus. These procedures help us provide safe, efficient, and reliable transportation each day.

- **Supervision at Drop-Off**

- An authorized adult must be present each day to receive your child from the bus.
 - The adult must be listed on your child's DHR Pre-Admission Form (Pre-Ad).
 - Bus staff cannot leave a child without an authorized adult present.
 - If no authorized adult is available, your child will be returned to the center and you will be notified.
 - If a parent/legal guardian cannot be reached, DHR may be contacted.

- **Daily Bus Procedures**

- Have your child ready on time each day.
- Be present to safely hand your child to the Bus Aide.

- **Additional Guidelines:**

- Children must be at least 3 years old and weigh at least 40 pounds to ride the bus.
- In apartment complexes or mobile home parks, pick-up and drop-off will occur at the designated central location.
- A parent or authorized adult must walk the child, while holding their hand, to the bus and remain with them until boarding.
- For safety reasons, the Bus Aide must stay on the bus and cannot walk to meet children. They can go no further than the bottom step.

- **Colored Safety Vests:**

- Children will be given a safety vest when boarding the bus and will wear it during transportation.
- ACHR staff will also wear safety vests and use walkie-talkies to communicate while transitioning children from bus to classroom and classroom to bus.
- Upon arrival at the center, children will remove their vest when they enter the classroom.
- Safety vests help staff quickly identify, supervise, and safely account for each child during transitions on and off the bus.

- **Scheduling:**
 - Arrival times may vary up to **30 minutes** due to route changes, staffing, or other factors.
 - We appreciate your patience as routes are adjusted.
- **If Using Another Childcare Provider:**
 - Please ensure staff walk your child to and from the bus, as required.
- **If your child will not be riding the bus:**
 - Notify the center **the day before** by calling 334-821-8336 and ask to speak to the Center Operation Supervisor at your designated center.
- **Missed Bus Usage:**
 - If your child does not ride the bus for **3 consecutive days without notice**, transportation services may be removed.
 - Reinstatement is not guaranteed and may require joining a waiting list.
- **Health & Safety**
 - Each child will be briefly checked before boarding.
 - Children who appear ill (fever of **100.4°F / 38°C or higher**, rash, etc.) will not be transported.
 - This helps reduce the spread of illness.
- **Bus Safety Rules**
 - Only children are allowed on the bus steps at any time.
 - Parents and caregivers must remain off the bus.
 - Children must remain **buckled in their seats** while the bus is in motion.
 - Safety vests must be worn properly at all times while on the bus.
 - If safety or behavior concerns arise, a conference may be required to create a safe transportation plan.
- **Receiving Your Child from the Bus**
 - An authorized adult must be present each day at the scheduled drop-off location.
 - Child will wear their safety vests when leaving the center and riding the bus home.
 - Vests will be removed once the child is safely released to an authorized adult.
- **If No One is Present:**
 - Bus service will be paused until a conference is held.
 - Transportation will resume no sooner than 24 hours after the meeting.
 - Parents will need to provide transportation in the meantime.
- **Repeated Instances:**
 - **Second Occurrence:** Conference and required plan for consistent pick-up.
 - **Third Occurrence:** Transportation services may be discontinued.
 - **Parents will need to provide transportation while conferences and plans are set into place.**
- **Approved Locations & Changes**
 - Children may only be picked up or dropped off at the **address listed on the Transportation Agreement Form.**
 - The receiving adult must be listed on the **DHR Pre-Admission Form.**
 - Changes require updates to official paperwork at the center.

- **Transportation Changes**

- All changes must be made **in person at the center office**.
- Changes cannot be made through the Bus Driver, Bus Aide, or by phone.
- Please allow **4-7 days** for processing.
- Transportation is subject to availability.

- **Picking Up Instead of Riding the Bus**

- If you plan to pick up your child from the center instead of using bus transportation, please arrive by **2:30 PM**.
- Bus loading begins promptly at **2:45 PM**. Once your child is on the bus, they will not be unloaded.

- **Additional Information**

- Bus stops are carefully planned to avoid backing up the bus, for safety reasons.
- Some roads are not accessible to buses, so designated stops may be assigned.
- Drivers cannot make changes to routes or drop-off locations.

6 – Dress Children for Learning and Play

Children learn through active exploration, both indoors and outdoors.

Please:

- Dress children in comfortable, washable clothing.
- Provide weather-appropriate outdoor wear.
- Label clothing and personal items with your child's name.
- Keep a complete change of clothes at the center at all times.

For safety reason:

- Closed-toe, closed-back shoes are required.
- Jewelry and accessories that present safety hazards cannot be worn.

7 – Respond Promptly When a Child is Sick or Injured

Parents or authorized emergency contacts must be available to pick up a child within 30 minutes when notified of illness, injury, or emergency situations.

8 – Partner with Staff to Support Children's Success

- Families play a critical role supporting children's social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth.
- When concerns arise, parents are expected to work collaboratively with teachers, Family Service Advocates, mental health staff, and other specialists to develop strategies that support the child's success at home and at school.
- **Support Positive Behavior**
 - Learning social skills takes time. Young children are still learning how to:
 - Share and cooperate
 - Follow directions
 - Manage emotions
 - Solve problems
 - Build friendships

- ACHR staff use positive guidance, relationship-building, and developmentally appropriate practices to help children develop these important skills.
- Our classrooms use strategies aligned with **Teaching Strategies The Creative Curriculum**, which promotes social-emotional growth, problem-solving, self-regulation, and positive relationships as essential foundations for school readiness.
- When children need additional support, staff will partner with families to create individualized plans and connect families with available resources, including mental health consultation when appropriate.

9 – Participate in Family Engagement Opportunities

- Families are encouraged to:
 - Attend Parent Committee meetings
 - Participate in parent conferences and home visits
 - Volunteer in classrooms and program events
 - Support home learning activities
 - Consider serving in leadership roles such as Parent Committee Officer or Policy Council Representative
- Your involvement helps strengthen our program and supports your child's success.

10 – Communicate Regularly with Program Staff

- Parents are responsible for staying informed by reviewing:
 - Newsletters
 - Text messages
 - Emails
 - Flyers
 - ACHR website updates
 - ACHR social media posts
- Open communication between families and staff helps ensure children receive the best possible support. For infants and toddlers, daily communication between families and teachers is especially important to share information about feeding, sleeping, development, and daily routines.

11 – Help Keep Children Safe

- Parents help maintain a safe learning environment by:
 - Following all sign-in and sign-out procedures
 - Using designated entrances and parking areas
 - Supervising children in parking lots and hallways
 - Keeping emergency information current
 - Using appropriate car seats and seat belts
 - Reporting safety concerns to staff
 - Signing appropriate consent forms for field trips, health screenings, other forms to ensure safe participation in various program activities throughout the year

- **Personal Items**

- To protect children with allergies and ensure safety, please do not send your child to school with any of the following items:
 - Toys
 - Food
 - Candy
 - Or any other personal items

- **Smoke-Free and Weapon-Free Environment**

- All ACHR facilities and properties are:
 - Smoke-free
 - Vape-free
 - Weapon-free
- These policies apply to **all** visitors, staff, volunteers, and participants.

- **Photography and Privacy**

- To protect all children, especially those in foster care or other sensitive situations, families should always check with staff before taking photos or videos during classrooms activities or field trips.

12 – Help Build Your Child’s Confidence and Love of Learning

- Children thrive when families show interest in what they are learning. Parents can support their child’s development by:
 - Reading together daily
 - Talking about classroom experiences
 - Displaying children’s artwork and accomplishments
 - Encouraging effort and persistence
 - Participating in home learning activities
- ACHR uses **Teaching Strategies The Creative Curriculum**, which emphasizes hands-on learning, exploring, creativity, and strong partnerships, between families and teachers. Family participation plays an important role in helping children build confidence and succeed in school.



C – Health and Medical Information

The health, safety, and well-being of every child are top priorities at ACHR. Families play an important role in helping us maintain a healthy learning environment. The following guidelines help us ensure children receive appropriate care while protecting the health and safety of all children and staff.

1 – Child Illness and Exclusion Guidelines

To help prevent the spread of illness, please keep your child home when they are sick.

- **When to Keep Your Child Home**

- Do not send your child to the center if they have:
 - A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - A severe cough or cold symptoms
 - An unexplained rash
 - A contagious illness
 - Other symptoms that prevent them from comfortably participating in daily activities

Please notify the center before **8:00 am** if your child will be absent due to illness.

If a child becomes ill while at the center, a parent or authorized emergency contact must pick up the child within 30 minutes of notification.

- **Returning to School**

- Children must be free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for at least 24 hours without medication before returning to the center.
- If a child has had a contagious illness, a written release from a healthcare provider may be required before the child returns. Upon return, health or administrative staff may conduct a wellness check to ensure the child is ready to participate.

- **Communicable Diseases**

- ACHR will notify families when children may have been exposed to certain communicable illnesses. Families should also notify the center if their child has been exposed to or diagnosed with a contagious illness outside of the program.

2 – Daily Wellness and Safety Checks

To help ensure health, safety, and well-being of all children, teachers conduct a brief visual wellness and safety check of each child upon arrival each day. During this check, staff observe children for signs of illness, injury, or changes in their physical condition that may affect their participation in program activities. Staff may note concerns such as visible bumps, bruises scratches, rashes, or symptoms of illness.

These observations help us:

- Promote a safe and healthy environment for all children.
- Identify signs of illness that may require further attention.
- Document injuries or marks that are present when a child arrives at the center.
- Communicate with families about health and safety concerns.

If staff observe an injury, mark, or other concern, they may ask the parent or legal guardian for information about how it occurred. In some cases, staff may document the observation and share information with appropriate program personnel as required by program policies and state regulations.

The daily wellness and safety checks are routine procedures conducted with all children and are intended to support children's health, safety, and well-being while in our care.

3 – Immunizations

State law requires all enrolled children to maintain a current Alabama Certificate of Immunizations or appropriate exemption documentation.

- **Parent Responsibilities**
 - Provide immunizations records whenever vaccinations are received.
 - Maintain a current Alabama immunization certificate at all times.
 - Submit documentation of required immunizations and well-child visits.

Children whose immunization records are not current will be excluded from attendance until updated documentation is provided.

- **Exemptions**
 - Families claiming an exemption must provide an official exemption certificate issued by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

4 – Well-Child and Well-Baby Checkup

Regular preventive healthcare is essential to children's health growth and development. ACHR is required to maintain documentation of routing Well-Child examinations for all enrolled children.

- **Infants and Toddlers**
 - Well-Child visits should occur according to the schedule recommended by the child's healthcare provider.
- **Preschool Children**
 - A current annual Well-Child examination must be documented.
 - Families should provide updated medical forms after each Well-Child visit. Documentation from Medicaid, healthcare providers, or clinics are accepted when appropriate.
- **Lead Screening**
 - Federal and state guidelines require documentation of lead screening, typically completed at 12 and 24 months of age. ACHR is required to have this the results of this screening on file.

5 – Head Lice

ACHR follow state and local guidelines regarding the prevention and treatment of head lice.

- **If Lice are Found**
 - Parents and legal guardians will be notified immediately.
 - The child must be picked up from the center.

- Families will receive information about treatment options.
- Potentially affected classrooms and areas will be cleaned and sanitized.
- **Returning After Treatment**
 - Children may return when:
 - Proof of treatment is provided, and
 - A designated staff member determines that no live lice are present.
 - Children who ride the bus must be checked and cleared at the center before resuming transportation.

6 – Medication Administration

Whenever possible, medications should be given at home. When medication must be administered at the center, all DHR and ACHR medication procedures must be followed.

- **Requirements**
 - Written parent authorization is required.
 - Medication must be in its original container.
 - Prescription medication must include the child’s name and administration instructions.
 - Expired medication will not be accepted.
 - Medication must be delivered by an adult directly to the center office.
 - A new “Authorization for Administering Medication” form must be completed every 5 days.
- **Non-Prescription Medication**
 - Over-the-counter medications may only be administered with:
 - Written healthcare provider instructions, and
 - Parent authorization forms are completed
- **Diaper Cream and Sunscreen**
 - Parents may provide diaper creams, ointments, and sunscreen, if:
 - The product is labeled with the child’s name
 - Written healthcare provider instructions, and
 - Parent authorization forms are completed
- **Emergency Medications**
 - Children requiring emergency medications, including EpiPens, inhalers, or other medical devices, must have all required medications and documentation on file before attending.
 - Families are responsible for providing replacement emergency medications before expiration dates and for ensuring an adequate supply is available for all settings where the child receives services, including transportation when applicable.

7 – Emergency Medical Care

- Current emergency information is essential for every child.
- Families must maintain current:
 - Phone numbers
 - Emergency contacts
 - Healthcare provider information
 - Insurance information
 - Emergency medical permissions

- **Emergency Treatment**

- If emergency medical care is needed:
 - Families will be contacted immediately.
 - Emergency services will be used when necessary.
 - A designated staff member will accompany the child for treatment until a parent or authorized adult arrives.

8 – Insurance, Medicaid, and Medical Assistance

To ensure children receive necessary medical and dental services, families should provide current information regarding:

- Medicaid coverage
- ALL Kids coverage
- Private insurance
- Primary healthcare provider
- Dental provider

Parents are responsible for promptly reporting any changes in coverage, providers, or insurance status. Maintaining active insurance coverage helps ensure children have access to preventive and ongoing healthcare services.

9 – Medical Updates and Special Health Needs

Please notify the center whenever:

- Your child has surgery
- Your child experiences a serious injury
- Your child develops a new medical condition
- Activity restrictions are required

A healthcare provider's written release may be required before a child returns to the program following surgery, hospitalization, or significant injury. Families will be notified whenever a health incident occurs at the center that requires documentation or follow-up.

10 – Dental Health

Good oral health is an important part of children's overall health and school readiness. ACHR promotes health dental habits through daily oral hygiene routines and family education.

- **Dental Care at the Center**

- Infants' gums and emerging teeth are cleaned daily using developmentally appropriate methods.
- Toddlers and preschool children participate in supervised toothbrushing activities.
- Children begin using toothpaste when developmentally ready.

- **Annual Dental Examinations**

- Head Start children are expected to receive an annual dental examination and any recommended follow-up treatment.
- Families should provide documentation of examinations and treatment so ACHR can maintain required health records and support children's oral health needs.

- **Specialized Dental Appointments**

- ACHR may assist with coordinating dental services and transportation when appropriate. Families will receive advance notice and permission forms for any appointments requiring transportation by program staff.

D – Nutrition

Good nutrition plays an important role in children’s growth, development, learning, and overall health. ACHR is committed to providing nutritious meals and helping children develop healthy eating habits that support lifelong wellness.

1 – Meals and Snacks

ACHR participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and is an equal opportunity provider.

Children receive nutritious meals and snacks that help meet their daily nutritional needs, including:

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Afternoon snack

Mealtimes provide opportunities for children to learn healthy eating habits, practice social skills, and try new foods in a positive and supportive environment.

2 – Food Must Be Consumed at the Center

Federal nutrition program regulations require that all meals and snacks provided by the program be eaten at the center.

- Food, beverages, and snacks served by ACHR may be not taken home.
- Children may not leave the classroom with food or drinks.
- If you arrive during a meal or snack, please allow your child time to finish eating before leaving.

Meals and snacks are an important part of your child’s daily nutrition and development.

3 – Infant and Toddler Nutrition

Infants and toddlers are fed according to their individual developmental and nutritional needs.

- **ACHR provides:**

- Infant formula
- Baby food
- Age-appropriate toddler meals and snacks

- **Breastfeeding Support**

- ACHR strongly supports breastfeeding and welcomes breastfeeding mothers at any time during the program day.
 - Families may:
 - Breastfeed at the center
 - Use our designated breastfeeding area
 - Store expressed breast milk at the center
- Please let staff know how we can best support your family’s feeding preferences.

4 – Food Allergies and Special Dietary Needs

The safety of children with food allergies and special dietary needs is a top priority.

If your child requires dietary modifications, substitutions, or food restrictions due to a medical condition, allergy, disability, or special health need, a written order from a licensed healthcare provider is required. The provider's documentation must include:

- The medical condition or dietary need
- Food to be omitted, modified, or substituted
- Any special feeding instructions

Because meal accommodations require planning and preparation, the required documentation must be received and approved before accommodations can be provided. Families must notify the center as early as possible so appropriate arrangements can be made before the child attends.

5 – Nutrition Education

ACHR staff help children develop healthy habits through daily learning experiences, conversations, and positive role modeling during meals and snacks. Families may receive information and resources on topics such as:

- Health eating habits
- Child nutrition
- Meal planning
- Trying new foods
- Physical activity and wellness

If you have questions or concerns about your child's nutrition, please contact your Center Supervisor or a member of the Health and Nutrition team.



E – Emergency Preparedness & Safety Procedures

The safety and well-being of children and staff is our highest priority. ACHR maintains comprehensive emergency preparedness procedures and conducts regular drills to help ensure everyone is prepared to respond quickly and safely during emergencies.

1 – Emergency Drills

Throughout the year, children and staff participate in age-appropriate emergency drills, including:

- Fire drills
- Severe weather drills
- Shelter-in-place drills
- Bus evacuation drills

These exercises help children and staff become familiar with emergency procedures and support a safe response during actual emergencies.

2 – Severe Weather Procedures

When severe weather threatens while children are at the center, ACHR will take appropriate action to ensure everyone's safety. Depending on the situation, we may:

- Dismiss children early before severe weather reaches the area.
- Delay dismissal and keep children safely at the center until the warning has been lifted.
- Ask families who arrive during an active tornado warning to remain at the center until conditions are safe.

Safety decisions will always be based on current weather conditions and emergency management recommendations.

3 – Delayed Openings and Program Closures

If severe weather or another emergency occurs before children arrive at the center:

- Buses may run late or not operate until conditions are safe.
- The CEO or designee may delay opening or close centers for the day.

Families will be notified through:

- Text messages
- Email
- ACHR social media pages
- The ACHR Website: www.achr.com

4 – Emergency Evacuation Locations

If a center must be evacuated, children and staff will be relocated to a designated safe site. Families will be notified as quickly as possible and provided instructions for reunification.

- **King Center**
 - **Primary Evacuation Site:**
 - Auburn Arena – 250 Beard-Eaves Court, Auburn, AL
 - **Secondary Evacuation Site:**
 - Darden Center – 601 South 4th Street, Opelika, AL
- **Darden Center**
 - **Primary Evacuation Site:**
 - Covington Center – 213 Carver Avenue, Opelika, AL
 - **Secondary Evacuation Site:**
 - King Center – 950 Shelton Mill Road, Auburn, AL
- **Edelman Center**
 - **Primary Evacuation Site:**
 - Hurtsboro Senior Center – 506 Owens Street, Hurtsboro, AL

5 – Emergency Communications

Maintaining current contact information is essential during emergencies. Please make sure the center always has your current:

- Cell phone number
- Home address
- Email address
- Emergency contact information

If regular phone services is unavailable, ACHR may use alternate methods to communicate important information and emergency updates.

- **Emergency-Only Phone Numbers**
 - The following phone numbers are available for **emergencies only** if regular phone services are disrupted:
 - **Darden:** 334-742-9766
 - **King:** 334-826-6397
 - **Edelman:** 334-667-6645
 - These phones are activated only when regular communication systems are unavailable and should not be used for routine inquiries.
- **How Families Can Help**
 - Families can support emergency preparedness by:
 - Keeping all contact information current.
 - Ensuring emergency contacts are available when needed.
 - Responding promptly to emergency notifications.
 - Following directions provided by ACHR staff during emergencies.
 - Reviewing family emergency plans at home.

Together, we can help ensure the safety, security, and well-being of every child in our care.

F – Special Services

At ACHR, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. We welcome children of all abilities and are committed to providing inclusive, supportive learning environments where every child can thrive.

1 – Services for Children with Special Needs

Children with disabilities, developmental delays, and other special needs are welcome in ACHR's programs.

ACHR partners with families, local school systems, early intervention providers, and community agencies to ensure children receive the services and support they need. Our classrooms use **Teaching Strategies The Creative Curriculum**, which supports individualized learning and allows teachers to adapt experiences to meet each child's unique strengths, interests, and developmental needs.

We believe all children benefit from learning and growing together in an inclusive environment that promotes belonging, independence, and positive relationships.

2 – Sharing Concerns About Your Child's Development

Families know their children best. If you have concerns about your child's development, behavior, learning, speech and language skills, motor skills, hearing, vision, or social-emotional development, please speak with:

- Your child's teacher
- Your Family Service Advocate or Home Visitor
- Health staff
- Center Operations Supervisor

If your child has a medical diagnosis, developmental diagnosis, Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), Individualized Education Program (IEP), or evaluation reports, please share copies with us or provide permission for us to obtain them. This information helps us better support your child.

3 – Developmental Screenings and Referrals

ACHR conducts developmental screenings for all enrolled children to help identify strengths as well as areas where additional supports may be beneficial.

Screening tools include:

- Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3)
- Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE)

If screening results indicate that additional evaluation may be helpful, ACHR staff will discuss the results with the family and may assist with referrals to appropriate community agencies or local school systems.

Parents will be informed throughout the process and must provide written consent before any formal evaluation takes place.

Families will receive information about evaluation results and recommendations through meetings, conferences, and written reports.

4 – Individualized Plans and Specialized Services

Some children may qualify for specialized services through an:

- Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for infants and toddlers, or
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) for preschool-aged children.

These plans are developed by a team that includes parents, educators, specialists, and service providers.

Family participation is an essential part of the process. Parents are encouraged to attend all meetings, share information about their child's strengths and needs, and participate in decisions regarding services and goals.

ACHR works closely with families and community partners to support children in reaching their individual goals while participating in everyday classroom experiences.

If transportation assistance is needed to attend an IFSP or IEP meeting, please contact your Family Service Advocate for support.

5 – Individualized Care Plan / Safety Plan

To help ensure a safe, supportive, and successful experience for every child, families of children who may require additional support for medical, developmental, emotional, behavioral, communication, sensory, or individual needs will be asked to participate in an Individualized Care Plan / Safety Plan meeting prior to enrollment. This collaborative plan helps staff understand each child's unique strengths and needs and ensures appropriate supports are in place before the child begins attending the program.



G – Other Program Information

ACHR offers a variety of opportunities for families to participate in their child's learning, celebrate special occasions, and access resources that support family well-being.

1 – Birthdays and Classroom Celebrations

We enjoy celebrating special occasions and welcome family participation when appropriate.

- **Birthday Celebrations**

- Parents or legal guardians who would like to celebrate their child's birthday at the center must notify the teacher and Center Supervisor at least one week in advance.
- To help ensure safety and compliance with health regulations:
 - Celebrations may take place only after lunch
 - **No outside food** is permitted at the centers
 - Balloons are not permitted
 - Only the child's parent or legal guardian may attend. Siblings and other family members may not participate.

2 – Multicultural Learning Opportunities

Families play an important role in helping children learn about the world around them.

We encourage parents, legal guardians, and family members to share their cultures, traditions, languages, careers, hobbies, and experiences with children. Examples include:

- Reading a book in another language
- Teaching simple words or greetings in a home language
- Sharing music, clothing, instruments, or artifacts
- Discussing careers and community roles
- Sharing family traditions and customs

These experiences help children develop an appreciation for diversity and broaden their understanding of the world.

3 – Sunshine Shop

The ACHR Sunshine Shop provides donated items to Head Start and Early Head Start families at no cost.

- Items may include:
 - Gently used children's clothing
 - Books
 - Toys
 - Other family necessities
- Emergency Assistance
 - Families experiencing emergencies, such as a house fire or other crisis, may be eligible for additional assistance through the Sunshine Shop. Please contact your Family Service Advocate or Home Visitor for information.

- **Open Shopping Opportunities**

- When available, ACHR may offer designated shopping days for families.
- Notifications will be shared through:
 - Text messages
 - Email
 - Social media
 - Parent newsletters
 - Center announcements
- A valid photo ID is required for participation.
- To ensure fairness, limits may be placed on the number of items each family may receive.
- For questions about the Sunshine Shop, please email donations@achr.com

4 – In-Kind Contributions and Volunteer Support

Head Start programs are required to provide a portion of program support through community contributions known as **in-kind** or **match**. Families play an important role in helping ACHR meet this requirement.

- **Ways Families Can Contribute**

- Volunteering in classrooms
- Assisting with family events
- Participating in field trips
- Sharing special skills or expertise
- Participating in home learning activities

- **Volunteer Documentation**

- Volunteer hours and donated items can only be counted if the appropriate forms are completed.
- Please remember to:
 - Sign in and out when volunteering
 - Complete required volunteer forms
 - Record eligible donated materials or services
- Your contributions help strengthen ACHR programs and support services for children and families.

Family Learning Activities

- Time spent reading, talking, playing, and learning with your child supports school readiness and strengthens family relationships.
- ACHR encourages families to participate in home learning activities that extend classroom learning and support children's growth and development.

5 – Enrollment Information

ACHR accepts applications throughout the year for Head Start and Early Head Start services.

- Applying for Services
 - Families interested in applying should contact a Family Service Advocate for assistance.

- Because Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded programs, eligible children are selected according to federal eligibility requirements and community needs.
- Selection is based on factors such as:
 - Age
 - Family income
 - Family size
 - Special circumstances
 - Disabilities or special needs
 - Other eligibility criteria
- Children are selected through a priority-point system. Enrollment is not based on first-come, first-served status.
- When spaces are unavailable, eligible children are placed on a waiting list.
- **Documents Needed to Apply**
 - Families should be prepared to provide:
 - Completed application
 - Proof of income
 - Verification of the child's age (such as birth certificate, passport, Medicaid card, immunization record, or hospital documentation)
- **Additional Documents Required After Acceptance**
 - If your child is accepted into the program, additional documentation will be needed including:
 - Immunization Records
 - A current Alabama Certificate of Immunization or approved exemption documentation is required and must remain current throughout enrollment.
 - Well-Child Examination
 - Documentation of a recent Well-Child exam, physical examination, or Well-Baby visit, including lead screening when required.
 - Health Insurance Information
 - Documentation of:
 - Medicaid
 - ALL Kids
 - Private insurance
 - Other health coverage

Providing current health information helps ACHR support your child's health, wellness, and access to services.

H – Child Custody and Enrollment Information

ACHR is committed to protecting the safety, well-being, and confidentiality of all children and families. To ensure we follow legal requirements and respect family rights, the following procedures apply to custody and enrollment matters.

1 – Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

The enrolling parent or legal guardian is responsible for providing accurate and current custody information.

- Families must:
 - Provide ACHR with any court orders, custody agreements, or legal documents that affect the child's custody, visitation, or release arrangements.
 - Notify ACHR promptly and in writing of any changes to custody status or court orders.
 - Ensure all authorized pick-up and emergency contact information remains current.

Providing updated legal documentation helps ACHR maintain a safe environment and follow court-ordered requirements.

2 – ACHR Responsibilities

ACHR will follow all applicable laws and court orders regarding custody and parental rights.

- **Parental Rights**
 - Unless legal documentation states otherwise, ACHR cannot deny a parent listed on the child's birth certificate access to their child or information about their child.
- **Child Release Procedures**
 - ACHR will release a child only to individuals authorized by the enrolling parents or legal guardian, unless a court order specifies different arrangements.
 - If legal restrictions exist regarding who may pick up or have access to a child, ACHR must have a copy of the applicable court order on file before those restrictions can be enforced.
- **Confidentiality**
 - ACHR respects the privacy of children and families and will maintain the confidentiality of family information in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and program policies.

If you have questions regarding custody documentation or need to update information related to your child's enrollment, please contact your Family Service Advocate or Center Supervisor.