

## CHILD DROP-OFF, PICK-UP, AND VISITATION POLICY

Policy Number: TF0003-05	Effective Date: 11/14/00 Revision Date: 01/18/05	Policy Council Approval Date: 11/14/00
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**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:** 1310.10(g) Staff will follow procedures to ensure that children are released to approved adults. These procedures will help promote clear communication, provide support to the primary custodial and provide safety and continuity for the child.

Head Start does not assume any responsibility to interpret or enforce any legal documents supplied to them by parents and/or other family members of children enrolled in the program.

### **PROCEDURE:**

1. At the time of enrollment, the staff will determine who is the primary, physical custodian of the child. This is determined by who the child lives with most during the week. (Example: If child lives with mom 3 days out of the week and with dad 4 days out of the week; dad is considered the primary, physical custodian.) The family's visitation schedule will be confirmed and documented at this time. Any changes to the schedule must be in the form of a written statement from the primary, physical custodian. In the case of divorced parents, Head Start staff will require a certified copy of the family's divorce decree with the custody plan, be supplied by the primary, physical custodian upon enrollment.
2. If a non-custodial parent or parent with joint custody, who does not have primary, physical custody, notifies Head Start staff that they have recently obtained primary, physical custody, Head Start will contact the primary, physical custodian to confirm this information.
3. The primary, physical custodian will complete the Emergency Contact Form. This form will identify those adults (14 or older) who are authorized to pick up the child or meet the child at the bus. Staff must explain the significance of the form to the primary, physical custodian. Parents may include any special instructions on this form or on a separate sheet of paper.
4. The child may only be released to adults who are listed on the Emergency Contact Form. Any changes to the Emergency Contact Form must be made by the primary, physical custodian in writing and include their signature and date. A staff person will verify or witness any requests for change. Changes or exceptions to this list of approved adults will not be accepted by phone.

5. Staff must verify the identity of adults picking up children by asking who they are and by checking their photo identification.
6. If an adult not on the list attempts to pick up the child, the staff will not release the child. Staff will contact the primary, physical custodian and tell them who attempted to pick up the child.
7. If an adult not on the list becomes angry or abusive, the staff should ask them to leave. If the adult persists in their behavior, the staff will call the police (or 911).
8. Native American children will not be released to tribal authorities unless the procedures listed above are met.
9. If no approved adult is available to meet the child at the bus or pick-up the child at the center, staff will attempt to contact the parent(s) and authorized emergency contacts. If no contact is made, staff will call the DFS Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline for instructions. *(If the parent calls and notifies staff of the delay, staff will make every effort to work with the parent on the pick-up arrangements.)*
10. Head Start encourages the involvement of non-custodial parents. If a non-custodial parent, or a parent with joint custody, but who does not have primary, physical custody, wishes to visit their child during the Head Start day, this may be allowed. Head Start staff will notify the primary, physical custodian the first day the other parent visits the center. If the primary, physical custodian objects to this visitation, the non-custodial parent or parent without primary, physical custody, will not be allowed access to the child. If disputes arise from this decision, Head Start staff will encourage the child's parents to resolve the matter on their own, as Head Start will follow the primary, physical custodian's instructions.
11. If Head Start is made aware that the legal guardian of a child is no longer residing with the child, every effort will be made to continue to provide services to that child. If the child is left in the care of a relative, Head Start will encourage the family to pursue power of attorney. Head Start will continue to provide services, sharing information with the child's relative, as needed. If the child is left in the care of a non-relative, Head Start will continue to provide services to the child, only if the non-relative has obtained power of attorney or has legal guardianship. If the non-relative fails to obtain power of attorney or legal guardianship, within 30 days, the child will be dropped from the program.
12. Head Start reserves the right to temporarily cease services for children

whose parents and/or legal guardians continue to be disruptive to the daily operations of the Head Start program and who refuse to settle issues surrounding custody and visitation. The purpose of temporary cessation of services will be to encourage both parties to arrive at a mutually agreed upon plan regarding such issues.