

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Head Start Providers, Superintendents, and Principals
FROM: Hal Cohen, Secretary of the Agency of Human Services
Dr. Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary of Education
COPY: Dr. Ben Allen, Director, Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office BA
SUBJECT: Public School and Head Start and Act 166: Statement of Preferred Practice
DATE: August 2016

Act 166 of 2014 entitles all Vermont three, four, and five year olds (not enrolled in kindergarten) to tuition vouchers for 10 hours per week for 35 weeks annually of high-quality prekindergarten education. Parents enroll their children in the preapproved prekindergarten program of their choice and which will accept them. The school district in which the child is resident pays the tuition to the provider where the child is enrolled. Preapproved prekindergarten providers include private day care centers, family day cares, public prekindergarten programs and Head Start prekindergarten programs. Some school districts offer prekindergarten education in a school-based setting and partner with Head Start to offer expanded programming for eligible students in the same location.

When parents choose to send their children to prekindergarten education programs provided in tandem with Head Start in school-based settings, the public schools and Head Start leverage and optimize federal, state and local resources to assure equity, access and benefits for young, vulnerable children from low-income families. Leveraging and optimizing funding streams enables programs to expand services to unserved children, provide prekindergarten education in a socioeconomically diverse setting, add additional hours of service, enhance systems and services consistent with federal Head Start quality standards, and/or provide wrap-around, comprehensive child and family development services.

Of the options affiliated with Head Start, our preferred practice is that public prequalified prekindergarten programs partner with Head Start to provide prekindergarten education in heterogeneous public school/school-based settings with expanded services for Head Start eligible children. We prefer this practice because empirical research has demonstrated young children learn much from their peers when they learn in a socioeconomically heterogeneous context. We value the role Head Start grantees can play in supporting children who live in poverty by adding comprehensive Head Start services to prekindergarten education so that children eligible for Head Start receive critical support and opportunities-- including family supports-- that they need to thrive and learn alongside their more affluent peers in an integrated context, as well as family supports that are critical to early school success.



Vermont Head Start Association



What is Head Start?

Head Start programs are child and family development programs that provide high quality comprehensive education and development services for very low-income children (up to 130% FPL) and social services for their families. Head Start serves preschool children ages 3-5 and their families. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and children birth to age 3 and their families.

Comprehensive education and development services for children are designed to promote school readiness, and include early education, health, nutrition, mental health, and services for children with special needs. Services for parents are designed to promote family engagement, and include parent leadership and social service supports.

Comprehensive development services include:

High quality, early education services to close the achievement gap for at-risk children:

- Research-based curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold developmental assessment aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards
- Focus on children’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical development
- Specifically designed to support successful preparation for school readiness and transition to kindergarten
- Expertise in serving children with special needs, and individualizing services for all children

Coordination of children’s health services:

- Health, behavioral and developmental screenings
- Medical, dental and mental health services
- Food and nutrition services
- Assuring that children have health care providers
- Assuring that children are up-to-date on physical and dental exams and receive needed follow-up treatment

Family engagement and social service support for families:

- Individualized home visits to engage parents in their children's growth, learning and development
- Assisting families in accessing social services and community resources to meet their needs
- Addressing a wide range of stressors and crises with the goal of helping to assure family stability and well-being

Head Start programs are *high quality, research-based* programs with *rigorous accountability* and proven, *positive outcomes* for children.

For more information on Head Start, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/>.

Champlain Valley Head Start
431 Pine Street
Burlington, VT 05401

Capstone Head Start
20 Gable Place
Barre, VT 05641

**NEKCA / Child & Family
Development Program**
191 High Street
Barton, VT 05822

**Early Education Services /
Windham County**
130 Birge Street
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Bennington County Head Start
P.O. Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201

Rutland County Head Start
Box 222
Rutland, VT 05701

**SEVCA / Windsor County
Head Start**
15 Pine Street
Springfield, VT 05156

**State Head Start
Collaboration Office**
103 South Main Street
Waterbury, VT 05671