



Family Handbook

2023 - 2024



Welcome to Rutland County Head Start

We are pleased that you and your child will be part of our program for 2023-2024! The year ahead will be filled with many opportunities to learn, create, socialize and have fun. Head Start is dedicated to serving children and families. We know there are many changes that take place during the early years and we want to help support your child and family through these transitions. Rutland County Head Start provides a positive, safe and welcoming environment along with highly engaging educational experiences, where all children can dream, believe and shine.

Head Start believes that parents (biological, adoptive, foster parents, legal guardians) are the first and most important teachers of their children. All Head Start staff work together with your child and family to provide high quality educational opportunities to build relationships that support positive child and family outcomes.

This Family Handbook is a resource where you will find information about what makes Rutland County Head Start special, and some general information about program policies and practices. Your Head Start staff, your child's teacher or family advocate will review this information with you, and talk with you about any questions you may have about the year ahead.

Thank you for choosing our program! We look forward to providing your child with a caring and welcoming educational environment where all children and families can thrive.

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INTRODUCTION TO HEAD START

What are Early Head Start and Head Start?

Head Start and Early Head Start are publicly funded program free programs for pregnant people, families and their children ages birth to five. Head Start is for children ages 3-5. Early Head Start is for pregnant people and children from birth to age 3. Both programs include support around education, health, nutrition, mental health, and social services to help families and children grow and do well in school and in life.

Who can be part of Head Start?

People who are pregnant, and families with children ages 0-5, may be able to be part of Early Head Start or Head Start if:

- the child's family receives Reach Up, 3Squares or Supplemental Security Income (SSI); OR
- the child is in foster care; OR
- the child's family is homeless; OR
- the child's family meets income limits

We can also enroll some children from families that do not meet the above rules at no cost.

Head Start Core Values

At Head Start we:

- Create a place where you, your children, and staff can learn new skills and feel good about learning
- Are aware that families and staff come from many different backgrounds, and work together as a team to talk about and honor different cultures and diversity
- Encourage you to help make choices about the program by being part of Policy Council (part of Head Start's "government"), and/or by letting Head Start know what you think about the program

- Keep children healthy and safe
- Respect all parts of your child's growth, including social, emotional, learning, and physical growth
- Build a community in which you and your child feel like part of a group
- Connect you with area agencies that provide services to children and families
- Develop services that support you and your child after you leave Head Start

Rutland County Head Start Mission

Rutland County Head Start mission is to prepare children for a successful school experience through comprehensive, integrated, family-centered early childhood services.

The Organization

Rutland County Head Start serves all of Rutland County. Rutland County Head Start is part of Rutland Community Programs, which is a part of Community Care Network. Community Care Network is comprised of Rutland Mental Health Services and Rutland Community Programs. The mission of CCN is to enhance the health and well-being of our communities, individuals and families through responsive, innovative and collaborative services. The programs of Community Care Network serve more than 3,000 people each year throughout Rutland County.



POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Our staff will talk about important Head Start information with you. Please be sure that you understand this information. Please ask questions if you do not understand. We have shortened some of the information for this handbook. Copies of the full policies are available on request.

Confidentiality

All child and family records are confidential (private) and in secure locations. The privacy and confidentiality of each Head Start family is of primary importance.

In most situations, we do not share information about you or your child with anyone outside of Rutland County Head Start unless you sign and agree to it. Rutland County Head Start can share information with some or all of the key people below without a signed release:

- Rutland County Head Start staff
- Other people who work at/with Rutland County Head Start, and only on a need-to-know basis
- Federal or state entity, to conduct a study to improve child and family outcomes, including the improvement of quality.
- Appropriate parties in order to address a disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or serious health and safety risk, such as serious food allergy.
- Qualified people who are doing a review of our program
- As required to comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena.

All RCHS staff are required by law to share certain information in situations where there is suspected child abuse or neglect or risk of harm to individuals. RCHS does not need

your permission to share these concerns with the appropriate authorities.

You will get a copy of your rights about information related to your child and family every year. If your child will be going to Kindergarten, RCHS will share information about your child's educational experience with their next school unless a parent or legal guardian notifies the program in writing that they do not want the information shared.

You will sign a form if you agree that it is okay for the teacher to take pictures of your child. Sometimes we use these pictures for Head Start newsletters, brochures, posters or the Rutland County Head Start website and social media.

Standards of Conduct

All Rutland County Head Start staff, consultants, volunteers and substitutes agree to follow our Rutland County Head Start Standards of Conduct Policy. This means they agree to:

- Follow our Confidentiality Policy
- Never assume things about a child or family based on gender, race, ethnic background, culture, religion, family make-up or disability
- Never leave a child alone or unsupervised
- Use positive teaching methods with children and never hurt a child, physically or emotionally
- Never try to teach a child to behave by isolating them, or by using food as a punishment or reward, or by denying them basic needs
- Use truthful information to only enroll eligible children and families.

Behavior Guidance & Pyramid Model

Rutland County Head Start promotes and supports a proactive approach to behavior guidance that supports the learning and practice of pro-social behavior. We use the framework of the Pyramid Model to form close and secure relationships with children and families. We provide experiences for children to practice expressing and regulating emotions while exploring the environment and learning. The Pyramid model helps children learn confidence, good relationships with peers and adults, concentrations and persistence on challenging tasks, the ability to effectively communicate emotions, listen to instructions and be attentive and solve social problems.

The Pyramid Model is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development of our children. The goal of the Pyramid Model is to create an environment where every child feels good about coming to school. This is accomplished by designing classrooms that promote engagement in learning and by building relationships among children, families, and staff. The classroom staff will work together to ensure that all children understand behavior expectations, receiving instruction in social skills, and those who are struggling receive individual support.

All children learn and develop at their own pace. In early childhood, children are developing social and emotional skills and learning behavioral expectations. These skills are taught over time and require LOTS of practice, just like reading and math skills. Some children need extra support in working on challenging behavior. By this we mean behavior that isn't working for the child, occurs often, and impacts their ability to learn and play.

RGHS does not suspend, expel, reduce hours or send children home because of challenging behavior.

If you have concerns about your child's behavior at home or school, please talk with your Head Start staff person. RGHS staff will work with you in supporting your family to make a plan about how we will help your child.

Attendance and Participation

All classes begin at 8:00am. All children should be in their classroom as close to 8:00am as possible. Pick up is at 2:00pm. If a child has not been picked up within fifteen minutes of closing time (2:00pm) and we have not heard from you, we will attempt to contact you and the contacts listed on the Authorization and Consent Form(s). If after 45 minutes we have not been able to reach you, or a person listed as an emergency contact, the Rutland City Police Department will be notified and will take charge of the situation.

When your child is absent please call the child's classroom or family advocate to let them know why, and when your child will return. Your Family Advocate will discuss attendance with you during your first home visit.

Permission to Pick Up / Permission to Transport / Emergency Contacts

Authorization and Consent Forms indicate who can pick your child up from Head Start, and provide staff with contact information for each person that is authorized, and not authorized to do so. Authorization and consent forms are completed upon initial enrollment, at the start of a new school year, and are updated as the need arises. Staff will only let children leave with people you list on

this form. People picking up children will need to show ID if the staff do not know who they are. Parents must fill out new forms any time they want someone new to pick up their child. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

You must have two adults (other than the legal parents/guardians) listed as Emergency Contacts for your child on this form. The State of Vermont requires we have this information for every child in our program. Emergency Contacts must be able to pick up your child if there is an emergency. Please let these Emergency Contacts know you have listed them on this form.

Child Custody Orders

The Vermont Child Care Regulations require that Head Start gather and maintain a certified copy of the most recent court order, or court-ordered visitation schedule for each child. Without a certified court document Head Start will assume that both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody and Head Start will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody. Head Start is legally bound to respect the wishes of parents/guardians with legal custody based on a court order. Head Start will adhere to the schedule on the certified court document as it applies to pick up and drop off schedules.

If any parent wants to pick up his/her child, the staff must let that child leave. If there is a court order that says a parent can't pick up a child, the staff will not let the child leave.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All Rutland County Head Start staff, substitutes, consultants, and volunteers are required by law to call the Vermont

Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (DCF-FSD) if they think that a child has been hurt on purpose or neglected. Neglect can include situations where a child is at significant risk of harm due to not receiving treatment at a doctor or dentist.

Parents/Guardians are also encouraged to call DCF-FSD if they are concerned their child is being hurt by another caregiver, including a child care provider. The number to call is 1-800-649-5285.

No Smoking/Vaping and Prohibited Substances

Head Start is tobacco free! There is no smoking/vaping allowed at any Head Start event or location. This includes classrooms, group activities, parent meetings, and offices.

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs, possession of illegal substances and possession of unauthorized, potentially toxic substances is prohibited on premises. Any adult who appears inebriated, intoxicated or impaired by a substance is required to leave the premises immediately.

Immunization Policy

Head Start believes that healthy children are up to date with their shots. Head Start staff will work with you and your child's doctor to make this happen if your child does not have the shots they need.

Shot records must be on file by the first day of class. This is a Vermont Child Care Licensing requirement for children in child care or preschool. Head Start will try to get your child's records from the State of Vermont before he/she starts. If we cannot get your child's records before your child

begins with Head Start, we will ask you to get them for us.

If you do not want your child to get all their shots, you must complete and sign a State of Vermont Immunization Exemption Form each program year.

Sick Policy

For the safety of all, children and their family members who are sick or who are contagious (have something that can be passed on to others), should not go to school, childcare or any Head Start activities.

RGHS follows Vermont State Child Care Licensing Regulations. Teachers will provide Illness chart if needed. Guidance to consider when determining a temporary exclusion:

- Does the condition prevent the child from participating comfortably in activities?
- Does the condition result in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children?
- Does the condition pose a risk of spreading a harmful illness to others?

Medication Policy

Sometimes a child needs to take medicine during school hours. This is true for both prescription and non-prescription (also called over-the-counter) medicines. Your Head Start staff person can give your child medicine as long as you do the following:

- Fill out a Medication Permission Form. We also need a note, signature, or health plan (like an asthma action plan) from your child's doctor.

- You (or another adult) must give the medicine to your child's teacher. Do not send it in with your child.
- All medicine must be in the original package. If it is a prescription, it must have the prescription label with it.

For "rescue" medicine (such as an inhaler for an asthma attack or Epi-Pen for a bee sting or food allergy), the plan must be signed and the medication must be on site for the child to attend. If your child has a food allergy, we will post information about their food allergy, along with their picture, wherever food is served to keep them safe.

The first dose on any new medications must be given at home where the child's parent or guardian may observe them for any possible adverse reactions.

Food Policy

Head Start gives healthy meals and snacks to children. Due to food allergies and strict Federal and State rules, families cannot bring in food to share at any Head Start activity (including classrooms, parent meetings, and group events). Head Start provides food for all children enrolled in a center-based option. The program does not discriminate under any circumstances.

Holiday and Celebrations Policy

RGHS believes that decisions about what holidays to celebrate are best made together by teachers, parents, and children. Activities must be meaningful to the children, it must meet their needs and interests, and it must be goal oriented.

Complaint Procedure

Rutland County Head Start offers you a high-quality program, but sometimes you may have concerns. It might be about the

classroom days or times, or maybe about someone who works with your child. Talk to your Head Start staff person first. Classroom Team Supervisors are also available RCHS Director and Content Managers (Health, Education, ERSEA and Family Services) can also help. Please call us with any questions 1-802-775-8225

Grievance Procedure

A grievance is a written complaint alleging that Head Start Regulations, Program Policies and Procedures or Vermont Center Based Child Care Licensing Regulations were:

- a) Not followed; or
- b) Administered in a discriminatory (unequal) fashion; or
- c) Were administered in an arbitrary and capricious (unfair) fashion.

Family complaints should first be discussed with the staff person most directly involved with the concern. If no resolution is reached, the concern will be taken to the Head Start Director. The Director will follow-up on the situation, as necessary. A verbal or written response will be provided to the parent within 3 business days. The hierarchy of authority to resolve parent and/or community grievances is as follows:

1. Originator (parent or community person) and staff person
2. Supervisor
3. Rutland Community Programs / Rutland County Head Start Director
4. Policy Council
5. Chief Executive Officer of Community Care Network
6. Rutland Community Programs, Inc. Governing Board

Rutland County Head Start Parent and Community Complaint forms are available at each site on the parent board, with stamped

and addressed envelopes. Community complaints will be forwarded to the Policy Council and addressed accordingly.

Vermont Child Care Licensing Regulations Information

All Rutland County Head Start classrooms follow the State of Vermont Child Care Licensing Regulations. A copy of these regulations is available in the classroom or by visiting this link:

https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Docs/Licensing/CBCCPP_Regulations_FINAL.pdf

Child Care Consumer Line

Call **1-800-649-2642** toll free in Vermont to:

- Get information about child care providers (e.g., when they became licensed, if they are accredited or have a STARS rating, and if they've had any licensing violations in the past year);
- Voice a concern about a provider (e.g., unregulated, lack of supervision, too many children, unqualified or not enough staff, inappropriate guidance and discipline, unsafe environment)
- Make a formal complaint about a child care provider.

Lead Testing of Water

All Rutland County Head Start classrooms follow the State of Vermont's Child Care Licensing Regulations. Lead is a harmful substance that can make people very sick, especially children. Vermont law requires that we test all water taps used for drinking, cooking and tooth brushing for lead.

You can find the results of water testing here: <https://leadresults.vermont.gov/>



CLASSROOM LOGISTICS

Classroom Schedule

Teachers will provide you with a copy of the daily classroom schedule and the yearly calendar. Please ask for an additional copy if needed.

Classroom Sign in and out

Each classroom will have a sign in sheet located on a clipboard near your child's cubby. Parent's or other authorized individuals are expected to sign each child in every morning at drop off and out every day at pick up time. Please ask your child's classroom teacher for assistance with this process if you have questions or concerns. RCHS complies with VT Child care regulations and cannot release a child to a person not listed on the Authorization and Consent Forms. If you need to update your child's authorization and consent forms, please speak with your classroom teacher, or your Family Advocate.

Classroom Closings

- Check the classroom calendar for days your child will not have class.
- Mark your calendar to note changes to the normal class schedule.
- Each classroom follows Rutland City Public school's schedule for bad weather closings. For example: if Rutland City schools have a snow day, our classrooms will too. Closings are usually announced on Rutland County Head Start Facebook page and WCAX

Things to Bring (and Not to Bring) to Classrooms

Please keep two extra sets of clothing for your child at school at all times. If your child gets wet or very dirty, he/she can change right away for comfort. Include a pair of

pants, a shirt, a pair of underpants, and socks. Please label the clothing.

If your Early Head Start child is using diapers, we will provide the diapers while they are in our care. Please let your Early Head Start teacher know what size your child will need. We supply diapers and wipes, but the brand may vary. If your child prefers a specific brand, you will have to bring them in yourself. If there is a medical reason why your child needs a specific brand, please let us know. Please check with your Early Head Start staff person if you have questions

If your Head Start child is toilet training, please bring in diapers or pull-ups for use to keep child dry.

If your child drinks formula, we will provide formula while they are in our care. The brand may vary and may not be the same you use at home. If your child prefers a specific brand, you will need to bring in your own formula. If there is a medical reason why your child needs a specific formula, please provide a note signed by your child's doctor with the instructions on what formula is needed. In addition, we provide bottles for your child. However, we may not be able to accommodate the brand and/or style of bottle your child is used to. Please talk with your Early Head Start teacher if you have questions.

Please send a tote bag or backpack with your child every day. Your child's name needs to be marked on the bag. The bag is used to send artwork and notes home, so make sure to check it every day.

It is important to dress your child for weather conditions. When it is winter, please remember mittens, boots, hat, warm coat,

and snow pants. Children will be playing outside each day unless there are severe weather conditions. Please do not dress your child in sandals, clogs, or slippery dress shoes. Sneakers are much safer.

Children are not allowed to bring toys, money, food, drinks or candy to school.

If you have ideas for classroom activities, please let our staff know. If your child needs any of these items please see your family advocate as they will be able to help with this need.

Outdoor Play

It is important for children to learn outdoors even in all kinds of weather. Children go outside every day, unless it is too cold (risk of frostbite), too hot, or there is a thunderstorm. We will take extra steps to keep children safe in the sun when they are outside between May and September.

All children are provided rain suits and rain boots. Please check your child's cubby for soiled clothing daily as clothing will become wet and muddy from outdoor play. A clean set of clothing should be on hand daily.

Cultural Diversity

Every individual is rooted in their own unique culture. Culture has an influence on the beliefs and behaviors of everyone, is passed from generation to generation and is closely involved in how children learn. Our materials, equipment, and activities reflect the diversity of children and families in the program and community. We encourage an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families and community.

Field Trips and Outings

At times, classrooms may go on a walk around the neighborhood. Children are accounted for at all times. Parents will be notified in advance of field trips and permission slips will be sent home with your child for each field trip. Parents are invited to share field trip ideas. All ideas will be considered as to appropriateness, distance, cost, classroom composition, and cultural heritage.

Sickness and Injury while at School

If your child becomes sick or injured while at school, we will ask you to pick him/her up as soon as possible. If we cannot reach you, we will call your emergency contact person(s) (ID will be requested). If your child needs emergency care, we will take him/her to the hospital while trying to find you.

If your child has an accident or is injured during the school day, the parent or guardian will be notified and an 'Accident and Injury Report' will be sent home with the child at the end of the day.

HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Communicating with Families

Head Start, Early Head Start teachers, and family advocates will be in regular contact with you about your child's learning and family needs. Head Start will communicate with you in the following ways:

- Telephone
- Email
- Text messages
- Notes in your child's backpack
- Regular newsletters
- Parent meetings

Home Visits

Rutland County Head Start works in partnership with families. Head Start strives to build goal-oriented, respectful and trusting relationships with families where we can share ideas and knowledge and learn from each other.

The purpose of the home visit is to help connect families and classrooms. Family Advocates and your child's Teacher work as a team to assist you throughout the year by conducting home visits, parent teacher conferences and more as needed to help meet your identified goal(s).

There may be times when a home visit needs to be held by computer and/or telephone. Talk with your classroom teacher or family advocate if you have concerns about accessing technology.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Your child's teachers will meet with you at least two times each year to discuss your child's learning and progress. This is a great opportunity for you to ask questions, share feedback, and learn ways you can help your child continue learning at home.

EDUCATION SERVICES

Play-Based Early Education

At head start our goal is to help your child grow and develop. We believe that young children learn best when they play. Children learn by exploring, trying new things and asking questions. When children play, they use their imaginations, bodies, power of choice, and problem-solving skills. This helps them to become good learners.

RCCHS utilizes The Creative Curriculum for Infants Toddlers and Twos along with Creative Curriculum for Preschool.

Screening & Assessments

Developmental screenings are an important part of Head Start's educational program. Within 45 days of your child's first day, teachers will work with you to conduct educational and social emotional screenings. This short screening is to help show any areas where he/she may need some help or more practice.

RCCHS uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaires. ASQ-3 is a developmental screener and ASQ-SE is a social emotional screener. We also complete four checkpoints for Early Head Start and three checkpoints for Head Start using Teaching Strategies GOLD. All of this information is used to make individual child plans, and to be sure our activities help your child to grow and learn best.

Transitions Between Learning Environments

Your child's transition in Head Start should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition, as new routines and new people are introduced.

Home to school transition: Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with a Family Advocate and visit a classroom. Head Start staff are dedicated to making transitions go as smoothly as possible.

Transitions between learning programs: At times children may transition from Early Head Start to a Head Start site or to another program. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet to develop a plan to

introduce your child into the new program and to review current developmental and learning skills.

Transition to Kindergarten: Transition activities such as; reading books with teachers in the classroom, creating a special mural of friends and fun times at Head Start, a family celebration, and “What to Expect in Kindergarten” meetings, that focus on ways to prepare the family and child for elementary school. Your child’s teacher will meet with each family and review the “Kindergarten Transition packet” that will be shared with the elementary school your child will attend.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Rutland County Head Start works with community professionals to provide services and support to children with special needs. All Head Start and Early Head Start services, including all center activities, group events and field trips, are open to all children, with or without special needs.

As part of the screening process Rutland County Head Start staff and families will complete the students ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE. shortly after enrollment.

This questionnaire, along with input from you and our staff, allows us to see if a more in-depth evaluation should be done. If staff and parents agree that more should be done, we will help you meet with the right agency to do it. RCHS staff will offer support during the whole process. If the evaluation shows that your child can receive special services through ECSE or CIS (see below), we will help you learn about these services and take part in making a plan to meet your child’s

needs. We will work together with you and the other service providers to follow this plan.

Children’s Integrated Services – Early Intervention Services for Children Birth to Age 3

CIS Early Intervention programs provide services to children from birth to age three and their families. This program serves children who have developmental delays or a health condition that may lead to a developmental delay. Program services are provided at your home or at your child’s school. Some examples of services include assistive devices, family support and training, home visits, nutrition services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy.

If your child still needs services when they turn 3, they will transition to the EEE program. Early Head Start staff will work with you, starting up to six months prior to your child’s third birthday, to move from CIS to EEE.

Early Childhood Special Education – Services for Children Ages 3 to 5

Early Childhood Special Education [EEE] is special education and services for children ages three to five years old. Your local school district provides these at no cost to parents. Special education is instruction that meets your child’s unique needs. Related services are services a child needs in order to benefit from special education, such as physical therapy or speech therapy.



HEALTH SERVICES

The Head Start program is a full model of services which include: Education, Family Services, Special Needs, and Health Services (medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health). All of these different pieces together support the overall health and wellness of children and families. Head Start believes that the health and well-being of every child and family is important. We also believe that parents play an important part in keeping their child up to date with health and dental exams.

If your family does not already have health insurance, Head Start will help you to apply for public health coverage programs like Dr. Dynasaur. If your child is not eligible for these programs and has no insurance, we will try to help.

Physical Exams and Treatment

Vermont Child Care Licensing requires children to be up to date with physical exams, based on their age, within 45 days of enrollment. Physical exams, also called well-child exams, are visits your child has with their doctor when they are not sick. Sometimes they will get shots at these visits, but not always. We follow the State of Vermont's rules about what ages children need a physical exam:

Age of child for Physical Exam (Well-Child):

1 month	✓
2 months	✓
3 months	✓
4 months	✓
6 months	✓
9 months	✓

12 months	✓
15 months	✓
18 months	✓
24 months	✓
30 months	✓
36 months	✓
4 years	✓

If your child has not had the required well child visit, we will help you make and attend a visit so your child will be up to date. Head Start will call your child's doctor to get the results of his/her last physical exam before your child begins our program. If your child has a physical exam during the school year, we also get these results so we know what happened during the exam.

If your child's health provider says that your child needs more treatment (extra care or medicine for asthma, an allergy, or something else), we will work with you to make sure that treatment is received. If your child has a health condition, we will work with you to make a health plan for your child's teacher to use in the classroom. These plans are very important for children who have asthma and need inhalers, allergies that need Epi-pens, and seizures.

Health Screenings

Within the first 45 days of starting our program, RCHS will do vision and hearing screenings on all children who have not had one within the last 6 months. We will let you know the results of these screenings, and if any follow-up is needed.

- Vision Screening: For children over 6 months of age, we use a Spot Vision Screener that can predict how well your child's eyes work. It also checks to be sure the two eyes are working

together. For children under 6 months of age, we will ask you questions about the child's vision to determine if any follow-up is needed.

- **Hearing Screening:** We use a machine called an OAE to check the hearing of children of all ages. This machine uses a small ear bud and plays low sounds. The machine tells us if the child's ears are working well. Children in Early Head Start are screened using the OAE machine. Head Start children may be tested with the OAE or an audiometer. The audiometer uses headphones that make different sounds to see how well your child hears.

We will also find out if your child was tested for lead and anemia (low iron) before they came to Head Start. Many times, these tests are done at 12 and 24 months of age. They may have been done at a WIC visit or by your child's doctor. If you know that your child has not had these screenings, you can ask your child's doctor to do them during their physical exam or at another visit.

Dental Exams and Treatment

Another one of Head Start's main goals is that your child is up to date with dental exams. It is recommended that all children visit the dentist every six months beginning at age 1.

If your child does not have a dentist, a Head Start staff person, or one of our Tooth Tutors (dental hygienists) can help you find one. If your child has a dental exam during the school year, we also get these results so we know what happened during the exam.

Tooth decay can start when a child is very young. Preventing decay is the key to good dental health. Starting when the first tooth comes in, brush your child's teeth two times a day. Your child will need your help to brush their teeth until age 8. Children in our classrooms, with adult help, brush teeth every day. Please help your child brush at home in the morning and before they go to bed.

Nutrition & Nutrition Education

Head Start and Early Head Start can help you and your child make good food choices. This is done by:

- looking at what your child eats (a nutrition assessment)
- nutrition education
- children's classroom activities include working with healthy foods
- parent information about good nutrition (workshops or written)
- providing healthy meals and snacks for children in our classrooms

Head Start will also weigh your child and see how tall they are two times each year. We want to be sure that your child is growing in a healthy way.

Nutrition Assessment

A nutrition assessment is done for every child.

- Parents and staff do the assessment together.
- If there are any concerns, your staff person will discuss them with you.
- We are happy to connect you with a Nutritionist or Registered Dietician if you have questions about food choices and nutrition.
- Please let us know about eating problems or nutrition concerns that come up during the year.

Meal Service

Head Start supports families in learning about and practicing good eating habits to help with growth, development and health.

Your child will receive three meals while at the center (breakfast, lunch and snack). Head Start staff plan meals to be healthy, and low in salt, fat and sugar. The menus are made so that children can try some foods that they may not have tried before.

Rutland County Head Start participates in the U.S.D.A. Child and Adult Care Food program. (CACFP) All enrolled children are eligible for free meals and snacks. All meals are served 'family style' where children learn to pass foods at the table and serve themselves with supervision. Caregivers are welcome to join meals with their child and support the classroom.

Most infants will be fed with a bottle while in care, and then transition to drinking from a cup when ready. Breastmilk and iron-fortified infant formula are the only liquids that can be offered to a baby that meet our CACFP meal program requirements. If the infant requires a special formula, additional documentation from the doctor may be requested. Our staff are trained in the safe handling and storage of breastmilk and formula, to ensure the quality of the milk and health of the baby.

RCHS does not allow food from home to be brought into the classrooms.

Safe Sleep Practices

All Early Head Start staff working with infants in our centers, follow safe sleep recommendations for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

(SIDS), Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), and the spread of contagious diseases. staff follow the safe sleep practices as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Wellness, Mental, and Emotional Health

Mental Health is an important part of good overall health. Head Start works with professionals in our community to support the mental health of our families. Our mental health consultants visit classrooms twice a year to conduct a whole room observation. The classroom observations focus on the environment, teacher/child relationships and the teaching of social emotional skills.

At registration families complete a Mental Health Release Form for general classroom observations. Individual child observations are also available at the request of the parent/guardian or teacher and must have an additional mental health release form completed. For more information, or to request services, talk to your child's or Family Advocate.

FAMILY SERVICES

Family Partnership Agreements & Goal setting

When you think about what you would like for your child and family in one year, two years, or even five years, you are thinking about family goals. Rutland County Head Start can help your family set goals and work towards making them happen. We call these *Family Partnership Agreements* and we use them to help families in figuring out their strengths and challenges, set goals for the future, and make plans to meet those goals. These goals are identified and developed by you for your family. They could include things like reading

with your child every day, finding better housing, learning computer skills, making a household spending plan, or cooking more meals at home. Your family advocate is available to support you in making plans to meet your goals. She/he will check in with you during the year as you make progress toward completing your goals.

General Behavioral Guidance

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. One of our goals is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop.

Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of Rutland County Head Start, but is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters a Rutland County Head Start site.

We will not tolerate hostile and aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior, limit or restrict access to the facility, may be reported to law enforcement and to remove your child from our care.

Rutland County Head Start has a “No Weapons” Policy. No weapons including firearms, hunting knives, archery equipment or weapon accessories such as ammunition are allowed on property.

Social Networking: Parents and Staff

Rutland County Head Start discourages employees from connecting with families on social media platforms including; Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc. Having families of enrolled Head Start children as online “friends” poses a personal boundary issue for Head Start’s staff. Please respect this

boundary and know that we offer times for interaction with you and your child every day, and invite you to interact with Head Start’s staff during family engagement activities

Pyramid Model Positive Solutions for Families

Positive Solutions for Families (PSF) is an evidence-based, family-friendly curriculum that offers families resources that promote positive and effective parenting relationships. Positive Solutions for Families curriculum promotes children’s social and emotional skills and offers resources with positive approaches to help children and families learn health relationship and behavior skills. A series of seven parenting education workshops are held throughout the school year. Contact your Family Advocate or let your child’s teacher know that you want to learn more about Positive Solutions for Families.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT: THE FOUNDATION OF HEAD START

Head Start believes that parents/guardians are important partners in a child’s education. Please read this section of the handbook to find out the many ways you can make a difference for your child. Every parent and family have different experiences, talents, and ideas, and we welcome your input in whatever way works best for your family.

Volunteering in Head Start: We Need You!

Rutland County Head Start encourages all family members to be actively involved in their child’s preschool experience. Volunteers participate in various roles in the classroom, family engagement activities, community events, school projects and home-based projects. Please ask your child’s teacher or

your Family Advocate know if you would like to volunteer at Head Start.

Parent Committee Meetings and Activities

Each Head Start program option has a Parent Committee. As a parent or guardian of a Head Start child, you are automatically part of the Parent Committee for your classroom, center, or home visitor group. Participating in the Parent Committee and Activities is very important to Head Start. We need parents to attend Parent activities to make our program the best it can be for the children! Parent Committee meetings and activities are scheduled throughout the year and at times that are convenient for parents.

Parents come together for Parent Committee meetings to talk about their children, Head Start education and activities, community issues, and family issues. Parents work together to have fun, support each other, and make the Head Start program successful for children. Parents bring to these meetings their knowledge of their own children and the needs of their families.

Discussions may focus on:

- What sort of activities do I want in my child's classroom?
- What sort of activities do I want Head Start to provide for my child?
- What sort of activities do I want to do with other Head Start families?
- What do I think about current Policy Council issues?
- Issues concerning children
- Community issues or events

Each Parent Committee elects 2 parent leaders to the Head Start Policy Council (described on the next page). The Policy Council representatives make sure each Parent Committee has a "voice" for important decisions. The parent leaders also report

back to their Parent Committee on Policy Council issues and decisions.

Parent Committees choose parent leaders every year. The parent leaders help to organize the meetings and make sure important information is shared with everyone.

Rutland County Head Start Policy Council

Every Head Start program has a Policy Council. The Policy Council is similar to a school board or "PTO" for the Head Start program. Policy Council members include parents whose children are currently enrolled in the program and people from the community.

Each Parent Committee elects 2 parent leaders to be on the Head Start Policy Council to represent Head Start families at Policy Council meetings. Every Parent Committee has one vote to help make important decisions at Policy Council. Parent Committees must choose their Policy Council members. The Policy Council members are responsible for attending monthly Policy Council meetings, and sharing Policy Council information with the Parent Committee. Policy Council members are elected for one year, and they are on the Policy Council from November to the following October. Policy Council continues to work through the summer which is one of the busiest times of the year. Policy Council always welcomes any current Head Start parent to come to meetings to find out what's happening or watch how it works.

Function of Policy Council: Policy Council is part of the Head Start "governance structure." This structure includes the Policy Council, CCN Board of Directors, CCN Executive Director and Head Start Director.

Policy Council works with the Head Start management team to develop and approve important program policies and procedures including:

- Guidelines to use in selecting children and families for Head Start
- The program's goals and objectives
- All funding applications and grant proposals to U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services
- The annual Head Start self-assessment
- The procedures for resolving community complaints
- The Head Start personnel policies

Meetings: The meetings usually take place on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 6:00–7:00pm.

Officers: Policy Council elects the following Officers at the first meeting of the new Policy Council in November. These officers serve as an advisory group to the Head Start Family Services Manager/Director:

- **Chairperson:** Works with Head Start Family Services Manager/Director to develop the agenda for Policy Council meetings, and facilitates Policy Council meetings
- **Vice-chair:** Facilitates Policy Council meetings in the absence of the Chairperson
- **Secretary:** Takes minutes of the meeting and attendance

Location of Parent Events

Head Start parent events take place at:

- Child care classrooms
- Meadow Street Art/Literacy Center
- Public places such as a library, museum, or park

Our insurance rules say that Head Start events cannot take place at anyone's house.

Parent events include things like:

- Parent meetings
- Family School Events
- Gatherings to learn from mental health professionals, parenting experts
- Open houses and end of year celebrations



RGHS Facility Information

Visitation Procedure

Family Engagement is the cornerstone of the Head Start program. Families are welcome to stop by and visit their children at Head Start at any time during our program hours. Teachers will always do their best to speak with families during pick up and drop off time, however, since staff are devoted to caring for children at these times, it is not the best time to have long discussions. If a discussion requires time and privacy please arrange for a meeting with the teacher, or request that a family advocate reach out to speak with you.

Security at Meadow Street

Head Start's Meadow Street center uses a magnetic card system to gain entry to the building. Only staff members with a magnetic card can enter using the interior first or second floor doors. A staff member will be available every morning from 8:00 am to 8:30 am, and every afternoon from 1:45pm to 2:15pm, to greet you and open the safety door for you. A video intercom system is located at the first and second floor interior doors alongside a phone and phone directory for use in the event that you are dropping off,

or picking up a child outside staffed, morning and afternoon greeting times.

Emergency Procedures

In the event that RCHS determines that there is an emergency situation, each site and classroom will follow the steps outlined in the Emergency Procedure Manual which are located in each classroom. The definition of an 'emergency' is as follows; a serious, unexpected situation requiring immediate action. Each classroom participates in monthly drills. Children practice evacuating the building in event that there an emergency, such as:

- a fire;
- other event which requires exiting the building;
- an event that requires 'shelter-in-place' or lockdown drills.

During a 'shelter in place' or lock-down drill, children are asked to remain quietly their classrooms until the drill is over and an all-clear has been announced.

What parents need to know in the event of an emergency:

- Family members/caregivers will be notified according to order of the contacts listed on the Authorization and Consent form filled out during registration. Please ensure that all phone numbers for contacts listed are kept up-to-date.
- Family members/caregivers may contact their child's school/classroom using the numbers provided in the Parent Handbook.
- All classroom staff and members of the onsite management team are certified in Adult/Pediatric First

Aid and CPR, by a certified Instructor.

- In the event that it is not safe to remain in the building, all children and staff will walk to St. Peters church which is located next door, at 134 Convent Ave, Rutland Vt. 05701.

Notification in case of emergency or non-weather-related closure

RCHS will notify all families in the case of an emergency or non-weather-related closure in the following manner: All families will receive a phone call or text according to their preferred method of contact, to the emergency contact phone number indicated on each child's Authorization and Consent form(s). Please assure your contact information is up to date.



Rutland County Head Start
Early Care and Education

USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program information for caregivers.

Rutland County Head Start participates in the U.S.D.A. Child and Adult Care Food Program, or CACFP. All enrolled children are eligible for free meals and snacks. The program does not keep any eligible children from participating and follows the statement below:

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 on the basis of 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 a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.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:

1.mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or	2.fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or	3.email: Program.Intake@usda.gov
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Rutland County Head Start Contact Information

Administrative Office

78 Meadow Street
Rutland, VT 05701
(802)775-8225
Fax (802)747-3583

Discovery Center

15 Juneberry Lane
Rutland, VT. 05701
802-747-7547

Mailing Address

PO Box 222
Rutland, VT 05702

Connect with us on the web www.Rutlandcountyheadstart.org, by email: headstart@rmhscn.org or simply scan this QR code:



Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RutlandCountyHeadStart>



Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 2:00 pm

Administrative Staff

Name	Position	Contact Info
Donna Barrow	Director	(802) 665-2608/ dbarrow@rmhscn.org
Vacant	Family Services Manager	
Missy Burke	Education Manager	(802) 665-2618/ burkem@rmhscn.org
Jennifer Drew	Administrative/ Fiscal Coordinator	(802) 665-2631/ jdrew@rmhscn.org
Angela Goepel	Health Services Manager	(802) 665-2615/ agoepel@rmhscn.org
Hailey Paschold	ERSEA/Data Manager	(802) 665-2625/ hpaschold@rmhscn.org
Bonnie Wilson	Classroom Team Supervisor	(802) 665-2624/ bwilson@rmhscn.org
Melissa Hoyer	Classroom Team Supervisor	(802) 665-2634/ mhoyer@rmhscn.org

Family Services Staff

Name	Position	Contact Info
Kaitlynn Cook	Family Support Advocate	(802) 665-2639/ kcook@rmhscn.org
Alexa Ritchie	Family Support Advocate	(802) 665-2622/ aritchie@rmhscn.org

Meadow Street Classroom staff

Adventurers: Head Start Preschool (802) 665-2602

Name	Position	Contact Info
Alyssa LeTourneau	Lead Teacher	(802) 665-2628/ aletourneau@rmhscn.org
Melinda (Mindy) Pettit	Teaching Assistant	mpettit@rmhscn.org
Samantha (Sammie) Neilson	Teaching Assistant	sneilson@rmhscn.org

Innovators: Head Start Preschool (802) 665-2619

Name	Position	Contact Info
Raleigh Steinhour	Lead Teacher	(802) 665-2638/ rsteinhour@rmhscn.org
Kimberly Melen	Teaching Assistant	kmelen@rmhscn.org
Kayla Reed	Teaching Assistant	kreed@rmhscn.org

Explorers: Early Head Start Infant/Toddler (802) 665-2629

Name	Position	Contact Info
Erin Gebo	Lead Teacher	(802) 665-2617/ egebo@rmhscn.org
Melissa Neilson	Co-Lead Teacher	mneilson@rmshccn.org
Lisa Patterson	Co-Lead Teacher	lpatterson@rmhscn.org

Dreamers: Early Head Start Infant/Toddler (802) 665-2626

Name	Position	Contact Info
Joellen Winters	Lead Teacher	(802) 665-2620/ jwinters@rmhscn.org
Laura Scully	Co-Lead Teacher	lscully@rmhscn.org
	Co-Lead Teacher	

Children's Discovery Center Classroom staff

Visionaries: Head Start Preschool (802) (802)747-7547

Name	Position	Contact Info
Kelly O'Neill	Lead Teacher	(802)747-7547/ koneill@rmhscn.org
Ashley Cormier	Teaching Assistant	acormier@rmhscn.org
Kylie Moore	Teaching Assistant	kmoore@rmhscn.org

Discovery: Early Head Start Infant/Toddler (802)772-4699

Name	Position	Contact Info
Jessica Christian	Lead Teacher	(802)772-4699 / jchristian@rmhscn.org
Amber Boutwell	Co-Lead Teacher	aboutwell@rmhscn.org
Eliza Corsones	Co-Lead Teacher	ecorsones@rmhscn.org