



Tri-County Community Council Head Start/Early Head Start

Policy Council Meeting
October 5, 2026

Call to order, Welcome

Roll Call

Seat New Members

Approval of Minutes from September 14, 2026

Reports

Center Committees

Director's Report

Financial Reports

Old Business

New Business

FYI/Discussion

Monthly Training Topic – Directors Report & Self-Assessment

Update from Complaint

Recruitment Plan

Head Start & Early Head Start Waiver Request

IM – Enrollment Reduction

Approvals

Sexual Offender/Predator

Approval

Hires

Adjourn

TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY COUNCIL, INC.
HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START
POLICY COUNCIL MEETING
2499 CYPRESS STREET
WESTVILLE, FL. 32464

September 14, 2026

Present:	Absent:	Staff:	Guests:
Kayla Williams	Patty Baxley	Kim Gillis	Janice Flowers- Bod
Bridgette Capps	Rochelle Howard	Nicole Thomas	Liaison
Shannon Medina	Layla McDowell	Heather Craft	Regina Boker
Leana Andrews		Amy Padgett	Brittney Blair
Jabrona Lee			Brianne Boles
Stephanie			
Underwood			
Jessica Gilley			
Tonya Smith			
Britttni Kocon			

Nicole Thomas called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM. Nicole called roll with five members present, a quorum was present. Nicole introduced the individuals elected to serve on the council for the 2026-2027 school year as follows: Britttni Kocon to replace Jabrona Lee as Chipley parent representative, Layla McDowell to replace Jennifer Underwood as EHS-Defuniak parent representative, Stephanie Underwood to replace Shannon Medina as Walton parent representative, Jessica Gilley to replace Mykenzi Straw as Westville EHS parent representative with Brittany Blair as an alternate, and Tonya Smith to replace Leana Andrews as Westville HS parent representative with Crystal Bane as an alternate. The following members were re-seated in their previous roles for the 2026-2027 school year: Rochelle Howard for Walton Parent representative, Kayla Williams as Holmes county community representative, Patty Baxley for Washington county community representative and Bridgette Capps for Walton county community representative.

Bridgette Capps made a motion to seat all members as described, Kayla Williams and Shannon Medina seconded, with all in favor. A new roll call was taken with the new members seated, with a total of six present, a quorum was established.

Tonya Smith made the motion to approve the minutes from the August 2026 Policy Council meeting. Bridgette Capps seconded with all in favor. The group elected to choose officers to serve as Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary at the next meeting.

CENTER COMMITTEE REPORTS

Stephanie Underwood gave the report for the Walton Head Start: The most recent parent meeting was held on August 28, 2026. All classrooms participated in a parent child activity. Policy Council representatives were elected. There are events scheduled for Walton Homecoming and parents and staff will meet to discuss all of these activities.

Tonya Smith gave the report for the Westville HS & EHS Centers: The most recent parent meeting was held on 8/26/26 for EHS and 9/11/26 for HS. Policy Council representatives were elected during these meetings. Open House was on 8/10/26 and there was a very good turnout in all classrooms. Classroom 3 did a parent/child activity on 8/26/26 with a good turn out by parents. Classroom 2 did a parent child activity on 8/28/26 with a good turn out by parents. Pancare came to do Hemoglobin and Lead testing and will come back in September to do physicals. Holmes county health department came out and did dental exams. Sertoma completed hearing and vision screenings. EHS parents asked about a CPR training for parents. Mrs. Ruth said she can do something in October. Parents suggested some information on milestones for their child's age and information was sent home. HS parents discussed concerns about bus escorts not checking individual's ID to confirm that they are on the pickup list at drop off. They also asked for daily schedule and menu print outs to be sent out to all parents.

Nicole Thomas gave the report on behalf of the EHS Center: The most recent parent meeting was held on 9/10/26. No activities were held in August due to staff shortage. Parents discussed having a dance as a big event and also discussed doing a fall festival in October.

Brittni Kocon gave the report for the Chipley Head Start: The most recent parent meeting was on 9/1/26. The children have gotten off to a great head start and enjoying their classroom and new friends at school. The staff have been working hard and preparing for exciting educational activities for this school term. We have had health screenings in August and September with Pan Care, Sertoma and the Washington County Dental Clinic. We had story time with Patsy Justice form Chipley Kiwanis Club on September 1. The next parent meeting is November 10. The parent committee is requesting \$125 to purchase supplies and materials for the first big event, a fall festival at shivers park in Chipley on October 30. Stephanie Underwood made the motion to approve the fund request, Jessica Gilley seconded with all in favor. Motion carried.

DIRECTORS REPORT

Kim Gillis went over the numbers on the Directors Report, pointing out that our waitlist is very low and encouraged everyone to be spreading the word and encouraging families to apply. Two members expressed interest in passing out flyers locally to promote the program.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Heather Craft shared the financial reports, explaining how the budget was set up. She explained that Head Start saw an increase in building repairs needed which explains why the maintenance fund is overspent. She also discussed the purchases made on the First Federal, Lowes and Wex statements. No one had any questions regarding the financial information.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

FYI/DISCUSSION

Training Topic

A copy of the Family Information Report and Enrollment Statistics Report was shared with members and Kim Gillis explained the information that is shared in these reports. PIR information is gathered throughout the year and reported to OHS annually. Kim also discussed the active supervision policy and talked about the rules that are in place to ensure children are supervised at all times, as well as the six strategies staff implement to maintain active supervision.

End of Year Child Outcomes Report

Amy Padgett reported the 2025-2026 child outcomes, explaining that children are assessed throughout each quarter and the results are finalized at the end of each quarter. Once the data has been finalized it is analyzed by the Education Team to track child growth and progress for the school year. While each area showed gains to some degree, Social Emotional development had the most gains and Mathematical Thinking had the least. This shows a need for enhancements to math activities that are provided and professional development can be geared toward this.

Complaint

Kim reported that the OHS received a complaint about our program in which someone had filed a statement about our Sexual Offender policy not being followed. OHS asked that the concern be investigated so we have been in correspondence with licensing, our attorney and board of directors to look into the validity of the complaint. Kim invited any policy council member who is interested in helping to review the policy and give input on changes to do so and to reach out to her to set up a time to go over it. The Board members have also been invited to give input, but they had to be contacted individually due to being unable to meet as group due to the Sunshine Law. There were statements made in the complaint that were not entirely true, however the policy is still going to be revised to make it stronger and more clear.

Monitoring Summary

Kim Gillis went over the results from the monitoring completed for the last quarter of the 2025-2026 school year, which was inclusive of May through July. No questions were asked regarding the monitoring report.

Grant Returned

The continuation grant for the 2026-2027 budget year was submitted, but got returned to us due to needing clarifications with cost allocated amounts. Once these corrections have been made, the grant will be resubmitted.

2025-2026 Annual Report

A copy of the annual report was provided prior to the meeting for review.

Kim again stressed the importance of recruitment for our program and the need to establish a wait list so that slots can be filled if and when children drop from the program.

APPROVALS

Selection Criteria- Nicole Thomas explained the changes made to include removing Kinship Care for categorical eligibility, due to guidance received from NHSA, as well as the removal of the points given for high risk pregnancies since we no longer enroll pregnant women.

Policy Council Handbook and Bylaws- Nicole Thomas explained that the handbook and bylaws that were provided in mail out detail the changes made to the document and would need approval.

End of Year Outcomes- as explained by Amy Padgett earlier in the meeting.

Monitoring Summary- as given by Kim Gillis earlier in the meeting.

2025-2026 Annual Report-as discussed earlier in the meeting.

Motion: Tonya Smith Second: Jessica Gilley Motion carried.

New Hires:

Kim Gillis explained the new hires as listed on the agenda.

Motion: Tonya Smith Second: Jessica Gilley and Bridgette Capps Motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next policy council meeting will be held on October 5, 2026.

Kim Gillis mentioned that the NRPM that was released is in the works as a way to reduce burden on federal programs. However, the rule changes that have been proposed could significantly decrease the quality and services that the program is able to provide. One example would be reverting ratios to state/licensing requirements instead of the small staff to child ratios we currently have. While the Head Start Act itself was voted on by Congress and cannot be changed, the Performance Standards could be revised to eliminate some of the rules and services that have been able to provide us with the ability to maintain high quality child care. The proposed changes are under a review period and anyone can place a comment to advocate against these rule changes. Our Facebook page will have a link and information about how to make a comment on these changes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:22 pm.

As recorded by Nicole Thomas

SECRETARY

DATE

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START REPORT TO POLICY COUNCIL AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DATE October 1, 2026

MONTH: September 2026

ENROLLMENT

ITEM	CHIPLEY	WALTON	WESTVILLE	HS TOTAL	EHS		EHS TOTAL
					West	DFS	
Funded	17	71	37	125	16	24	40
Actual in Center/Home- Base	17	71	37	125	16	24	40

ERSEA

ITEM	CHIPLEY	WALTON	WESTVILLE	EHS	
				Westville	Walton
Waiting List	1	4	0	6	23
Eligible	2	1	0	3	16
Over income	0	3	0	3	7
Vacancies	0	3	1	2	2
How Long	n/a	4 & 12 days	4 days	1 day & 2 days	3 days & 1 still vacant
Attendance	87%	82%	80%	80%	84%
Overall Monthly Attendance for School Year	82%			83%	

DISABILITY

ITEM	CHIPLEY	WALTON	WESTVILLE	EHS	TOTAL		Percentage	
					HS	EHS	HS	EHS
Diagnosed with an IEP/IFSP and receiving services	1	0	4		5	6	4%	15%
Dropped children with an IEP/IFSP/ IEP/IFSP closed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concerns/In waiting/further evaluation/referral process/staffing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Referral Follow- up parent has not followed through	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS AND VISITS

CHIPLEY		WALTON		WESTVILLE		EHS	
Referral/s	Visits	Referral/s	Visits	Referral/s	Visits	Referrals	Visits
0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

IN-KIND TOTALS

ADMIN.	CHIPLEY	WALTON	WESTVILLE	EHS DFS	EHS Westville	TOTAL	Percentage
Required non-federal share for HS/EHS \$690,042 In-kind for - HS - \$426,111; EHS - \$263,931							
\$7,077.15	\$16,835.43	\$62,488.26	\$22,879.97	\$43,469.76	\$20,476.28	\$109,280.81/ \$63,946.04	26%/ 24%

USDA

ITEM	CHIPLEY	WALTON	WESTVILLE	EHS		TOTAL
				Westville	Walton	
August Meals						
Breakfast	197	904	613		315	2029
Lunch	196	906	614		315	2031
Snack	183	875	608		307	1973
Total Meals	576	2685	1835		937	6033
August Cost/Expense						
ITEM	CHIPLEY	WALTON	WESTVILLE	EHS		TOTAL
				Westville	DFS	
Reimbursement	\$1,733.96	\$8,036.14	\$5,466.54		\$2,799.40	\$18,036.04
Expenses	2,523.59	6,040.46	2,014.38	2,364.17	2,488.94	15,431.54
Difference	-\$789.63	+\$1,995.68	+\$1,087.99		+\$310.46	+\$2,604.50

STAFF STATUS

ITEM	ADMIN.	Chipley	WALTON	WESTVILLE	EHS		TOTAL
					West	Wal	
Reported	8	4	15	9	5	7	48
Hired	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resigned/Let Go	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Floater	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Parent in Training	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Substitute/Temporary	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	8	6	16	9	5	8	52
Vacant Position	0	0	0	1	0	1	2

Community Events/Collaboration COMMENTS

Annual Report
Self-Assessment
Program Summary

PIR
Outcomes
Community Assessment



Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center

Enrollment Reductions | HeadStart.gov

 headstart.gov/policy/im/acf-ohs-im-26-01

August 5, 2026

Enrollment Reductions ACF-OHS-IM-26-01

U.S. (United States) Department
of Health and Human Services

ACF
Administration for Children and Families

1. Log Number: ACF-OHS-IM-26-01
2. Issuance Date: 08/06/2026
3. Originating Office: Office of Head Start
4. Key Words: Enrollment Requirements

Information Memorandum

To: All non-Tribal Head Start Grant Recipients

Subject: Enrollment Reductions

Information:

This Information Memorandum (IM) is intended to support timely and consistent decision-making while preserving the availability of Head Start Preschool (HSP) and Early Head Start (EHS) enrollment slots. The Head Start Act allows programs to propose a reduction of their funded enrollment to maintain quality services (Section 640(g)(3)).

In recent years, the Office of Head Start (OHS) received a substantial increase in Change in Scope requests for enrollment reductions. The volume of submissions has contributed to prolonged review times.

This IM establishes a clearer review process and identifies the information non-Tribal grant recipients should submit. OHS will use these standards to evaluate and approve or deny Change in Scope requests for enrollment reductions in a timely, consistent, and transparent

manner. While grant recipients may submit Change in Scope requests for a variety of purposes this IM only addresses requests for enrollment reductions for non-Tribal grantees. This IM does not address conversion of HSP slots to EHS slots and encourages grantees to communicate with OHS for the most up to date guidance on submission guidelines for these requests.

Background

The Trump Administration is committed to ensuring that children and families have access to high-quality child care and early learning services. Consistent with congressional appropriations, the Administration supports maximizing the availability, effectiveness, and efficiency of Head Start agencies.

Actions taken during the previous administration contributed to the largest reduction in the number of HSP and EHS slots available to children and families in the history of the United States. This reduction occurred primarily through two mechanisms:

1. In 2024, the final rule titled *Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming* (89 FR 67720) imposed mandatory compensation-related requirements. The rule was estimated to place more than 100,000 Head Start slots at risk nationally, including approximately 84,000 HSP slots and 22,000 EHS slots.
2. Change in Scope requests increased substantially from FY2022 to FY2024, with many requests proposing reductions in funded enrollment (Figure 1). ACF received 746 requests for reductions in enrollment in FY2024 as compared to just 39 in FY2021, an increase of over 1,800 percent. A recent Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) report¹ found that these actions between FY2022 and FY2024 resulted in the elimination of more than 97,000 slots.

Together, these developments contributed to a reduction in access to Head Start services at a rate unprecedented in the program's 61-year history (Figure 2).

Change in Scope requests can be necessary to protect program quality, financial stability, and long-term viability. However, requests that would reduce enrollment should be evaluated carefully to ensure that grant recipients continue to address demonstrated community needs and preserve access for eligible children and families.

This memorandum is intended to balance those objectives by establishing a consistent process for evaluating program viability, community need, service quality, and the effect of proposed changes on the availability of HSP and EHS slots.

Figure 1. Head Start Change in Scope Requests (2021-2026)

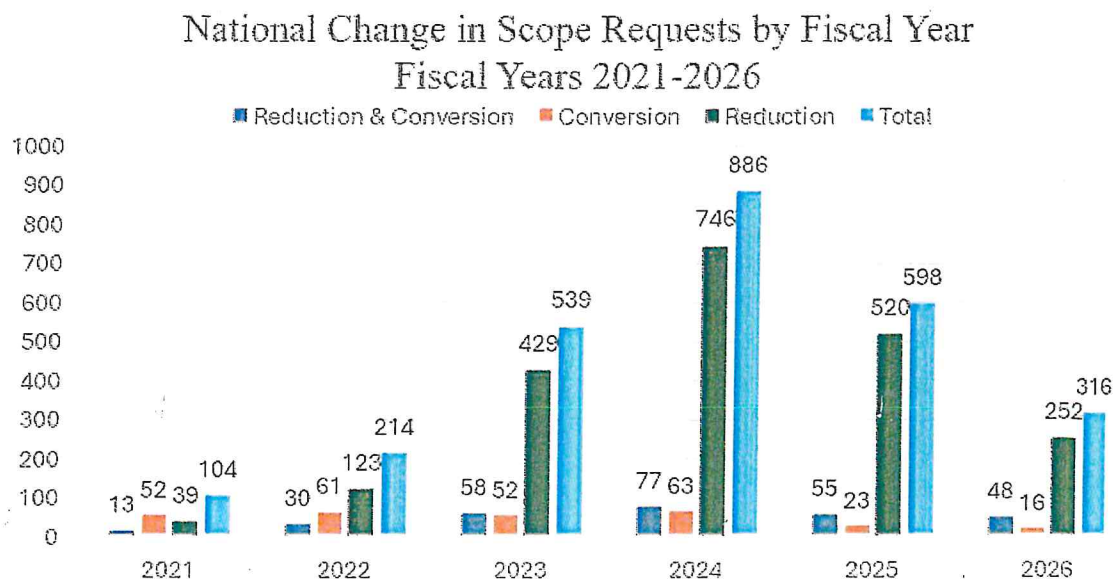
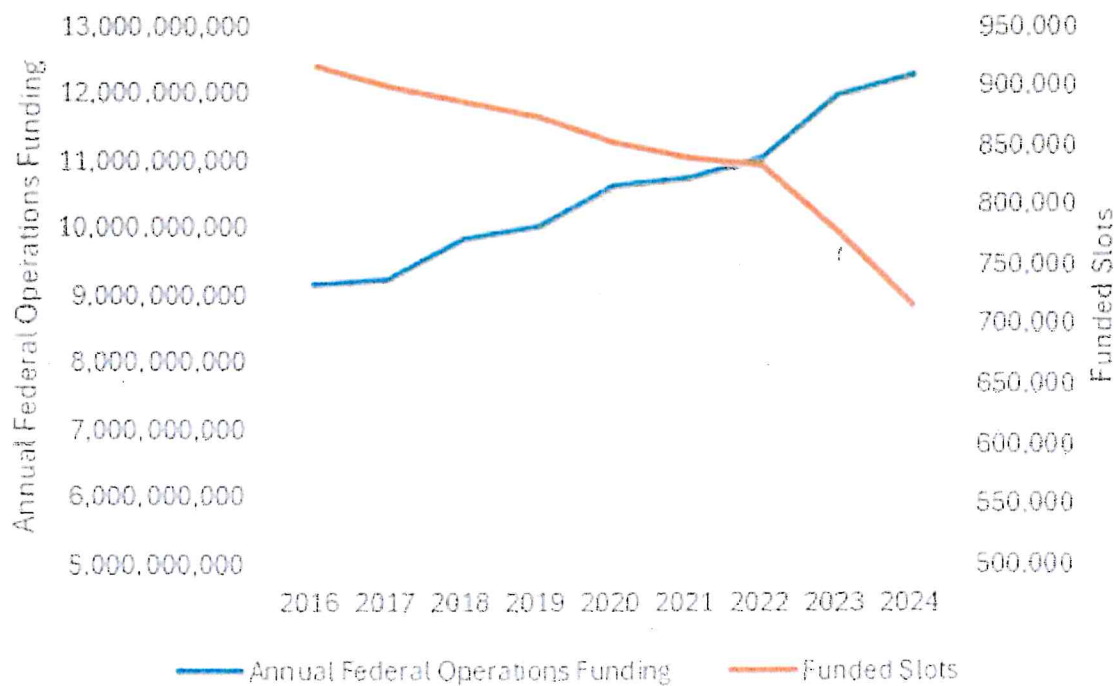


Figure 2. Head Start Funded Slots vs. Annual Operations Funding (FY 2016-2024)



Grant Recipient Application Review Pathway for Change in Scope Requests

To help ensure that Head Start agencies continue to meet community needs, ACF will use either an expedited or comprehensive review pathway for select Change in Scope requests. The two pathways are explained below and in Figure 3.

Proposed Enrollment Reductions

A request that pairs a reduction in funded enrollment **with** a proportional reduction in federal funding will receive expedited consideration with an intended timeline of no more than 30 days.

A request that proposes a reduction in funded enrollment **without** a proportional reduction in federal funding will undergo comprehensive review.

Documentation Requirements

All Change in Scope requests should be submitted, at a minimum, 90 days before planned implementation. The application is submitted via the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) as an Amendment: change in scope. The application must include the following documents:

- SF-424
- SF-424A
- Governing board and Policy Council approvals
- Program narrative
- Budget narrative
- Proposed program schedule
- Supporting documents

All applications must address the key requirements in the [Enrollment Reduction and Conversion Considerations Appendix](#).

Comprehensive Reviews

Grant recipients subject to comprehensive review should submit the following additional documentation addressing community need and community support.

1. *Community Needs Assessment*

A clear demonstration of community need is essential to the review of a Change in Scope request. The grant recipient should provide a concise explanation of why the proposed change is in the best interests of the community and how it is responsive to identified community needs.

The grant recipient should also include a cover sheet as the first page of its submission. The cover sheet should provide the following information:

- The number of current funded slots, the number of proposed funded slots following the Change in Scope request, and the resulting percentage change.
- The current budget, the proposed budget following the Change in Scope request, and the resulting percentage change.

- The current per-slot funding and the proposed per-slot funding (federal funding only) following the Change in Scope request and how this compares to the ASPE-reported state-specific medians.
- The estimated number of children in the community who are within the applicable age range and need care.
- The estimated number of children in the community who are eligible for Head Start services.
- The number of children on the program's waiting list.
- An attestation that the proposed action will not create barriers for parents or children, including an inability to locate or obtain child care services.
- All other information as required by Sec. 645(a)(5)(A) of the Head Start Act.

The documentation should explain the data sources, assumptions, and methodology used to develop each estimate. Grant recipients should submit the most recent reliable data available.

2. Demonstration of Community Support

Evidence of community support is also essential to the comprehensive review process. Grant recipients should include letters or other written evidence demonstrating support for the proposed change from relevant community stakeholders.

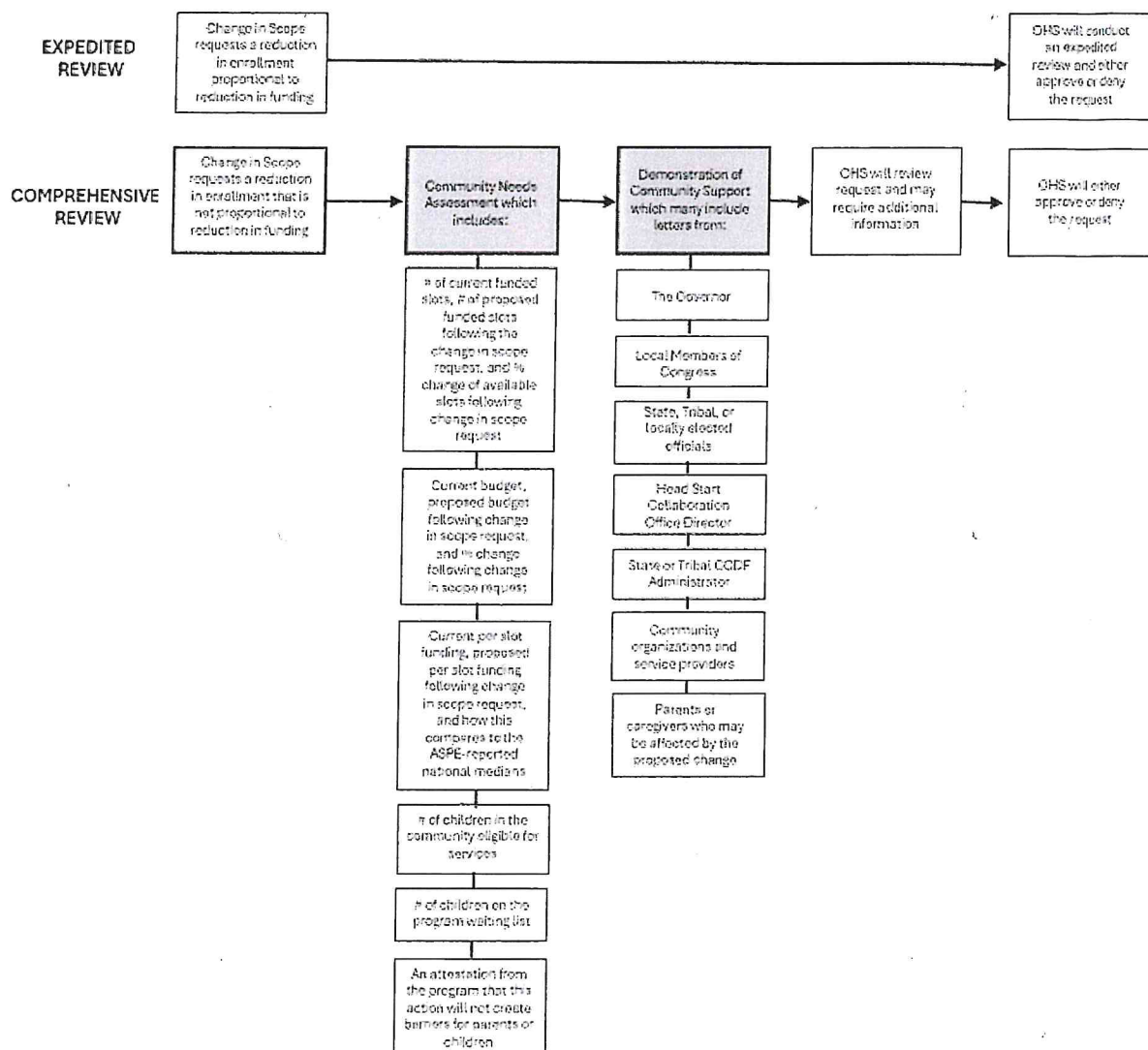
Relevant stakeholders may include:

- The Governor.
- Members of Congress representing the affected service area.
- State, Tribal, or locally elected officials.
- The Head Start Collaboration Office Director.
- The State or Tribal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administrator.
- Community organizations and service providers.
- Parents or caregivers who may be affected by the proposed change.

This list is illustrative and not exhaustive. OHS may consider other written statements or documentation that demonstrate community support or assist OHS in assessing the likely effects of the request.

Letters and other supporting materials should identify the stakeholder's relationship to the affected community, indicate whether the stakeholder supports or opposes the proposed change, and explain the basis for that position. Letters should also include an acknowledgment of the percent change in slots, budget, and per-slot spending.

Figure 3. Review Pathway for Proposed Reductions in Funded Enrollment



OHS Review and Determination

OHS may request additional information when a submission is incomplete or when additional documentation is necessary to evaluate the effects of the proposed change. In reviewing a request, OHS may consider:

- The completeness and reliability of the information submitted.
- The extent to which the proposal addresses demonstrated community needs.
- The effect of the proposal on eligible children and families.
- The availability of alternative child care and early learning services.
- The grant recipient's financial and operational viability.
- The level of community support for the proposed change.
- The grant recipient's compliance and performance history.
- Any other information relevant to protecting access to HSP and EHS services and ensuring responsible stewardship of federal funds.

An expedited review does not guarantee approval. All Change in Scope requests remain subject to applicable statutory, regulatory, programmatic, and grants-management requirements.

OHS will provide the grant recipient with written notice of its determination.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of children and families.

Sincerely,

/Lizbeth Casco White /

Lizbeth Casco White
Director
Office of Head Start

¹ Schreier, A., Benton, A. (2026). Increases in Head Start Change in Scope Requests from FY21 to FY24 Have Resulted in the Largest Reduction of Funded Slots in the History of Head Start. ASPE. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/head-start-change-scope>

Last Updated: August 25, 2026

Tri-County Community Council, Inc.
Head Start/Early Head Start

Part: 1302 Program Operations
Subpart: D- Health Program Services
Section: 1302.45 Child Mental Health and Social & Emotional Well Being
1302.47 Safety Practices
Subject: Sexual Offender/Predator Policy

Policy

To keep children enrolled in the Tri-County Head Start & Early Head Start Programs safe while supporting appropriate family involvement.

Procedure

It is the policy of Tri-County Head Start/Early Head Start to follow applicable DCF licensing Law requirements, Law Enforcement guidance, court orders, probation/community control conditions, and guidance from the program's attorney regarding persons placed on the sexual predator list. Recognizing that Local Law Enforcement officials usually notify the public regarding sexual predators in the community, the following steps will be taken:

1. Twice a year, at the beginning and mid-year, Center Directors and FSA's will conduct a search of the public sexual offender/predator registry for the county in which their Head Start center is located to identify whether any registered sexual offender or predator is a parent guardian or know relative of a currently enrolled child. Any potential match will be reported to the Center Director and handled in accordance with applicable law, licensing requirements, court orders, probation community control conditions, and guidance from law enforcement and/or the programs attorney. A search will also be conducted that will identify registered offenders/predators within a three-mile radius of each site. Staff will not independently make determinations regarding an individual's level of danger or legal restrictions. check the internet neighborhood predator list at the beginning of each school year to determine if there is anyone in the community or vicinity of the center that has a history of sexual abuse of young children. Any individual identified on the list will not be permitted on-site unless confirmed with law enforcement that they are not dangerous.
2. The following websites can be used to conduct registry searches:
 - a. For county-wide search:
<https://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/sops/offenderSearch.jsf>
 - b. For location search (3 mile radius of school): <https://www.nsopw.gov/?home=>

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~~2.3.~~ Head Start/Early Head Start staff will take necessary precautions to protect the children, following the advice of licensing (DCF), local law enforcement, probation orders and the program's attorney, as needed. ~~advice.~~

~~3.4.~~ Head Start/Early Head Start children will **never** be left alone with anyone other than a contracted, credentialed service provider (therapist).

~~4.5.~~ Each incident of a sexual predator in the community will be treated on an individual basis.

6. If a parent or other individual expresses concern regarding a specific person, the Center Director will review the public sexual offender/predator registry. If the person of concern is found to be a registered sex offender/predator, that individual will not be allowed access to the facility for any purpose. If the offender/predator is a parent/guardian of a currently enrolled child, and is granted permission through a court order to pick up and drop off their own child, the following guidelines will apply:

a) the individual must provide a copy of court order that documents they are not prohibited from picking up or dropping off their children.

b) When a parent/guardian is subject to an established program access restriction that prevents them from entering the facilities, and is the **only person available to drop off or pick up their child**, the parent/guardian must remain in their vehicle and contact the Head Start/Early Head Start office upon arrival. For **drop-off**, a designated staff member will receive the child from the vehicle. For **pick-up**, a designated staff member will bring the child to the vehicle. The parent/guardian will not enter the facility, classrooms, playgrounds, or other program areas.

~~5. If a parent comes to HS/EHS staff regarding their concern about a specific individual, the Center Director will contact Law Enforcement to see if that person is considered a danger for young children and take appropriate actions, as recommended by Law Enforcement. If the person of concern is a HS/EHS parent or significant other, the above guidelines will be followed. If that person (parent or significant other) is considered dangerous to young children, the following steps will be taken:~~

~~a) That person will not be allowed to volunteer in the classroom.~~

~~b) If that person arrives at the center to pick up their child, staff will take the child to the door to meet the person. He or she will not be allowed in the classroom.~~

~~c) That person will be allowed to attend family activities with their child, but will be monitored at all times by staff, and will not be allowed to be alone with any child other than their own.~~

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Head Start/Early Head Start

7. Staff will be trained on these policies and procedures at orientation and annually thereafter.

6.8. Every effort will be made to keep HS/EHS children safe while also supporting appropriate parent and family involvement. Restrictions will be applied to the individual as necessary and will not result in the child's exclusion from HS/EHS services. Family involvement will be supported through appropriate alternatives when necessary and legally permissible. At the same time every effort will be made to allow HS/EHS parents and significant others to be involved with their child at Head Start and Early Head Start, unless there are court orders stating that they should have no contact with young children.

At all times, the safety of the children will be of the utmost importance, and appropriate steps will be taken to ensure their safety.

POLICY COUNCIL ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

OCTOBER 5, 2026

POLICIES

Active Supervision of Children
Transportation Training
Parent Committee Meetings

Tri-County Community Council, Inc.
Head Start/ Early Head Start

Part: 1302 Program Operations
Subpart: D Health Program Services
Section: 1302.47 Safety Practices
Subject: Active Supervision of Children

Policy:

In compliance with Head Start/ Early Head Start performance standards, all children must be under the direct supervision of at least two paid staff at all times during Head Start/ Early Head Start's hours of operation. The six strategies of active supervision will be followed: 1) set up environment, 2) position staff, 3) scan and count/periodic roll call 4) anticipate behavior, 5) listen, and 6) engage and redirect. Staff will be trained on these strategies and the Active Supervision of Children policy upon hire and at least annually thereafter. **No child will be left unsupervised while in the care of Head Start/Early Head Start.**

Procedure:

- 1. Staff-Child Ratios:** At all times, including rest/nap time, there will be a minimum of two Head Start/ Early Head Start staff supervising children.
 - a. Staff must ensure that proper ratios are maintained constantly in accordance with the Center-based Option policy.
 - b. On special events or field trips there must be one extra Head Start staff member per classroom.
 - c. Volunteers, who have been background screened and trained on Tri-County Community Council's policies regarding the code of ethical conduct, reporting child abuse and neglect and active supervision of children as well as trained on confidentiality and age-appropriate development, may be counted for ratio only on the playground. The majority of the ratio must be paid staff members.
- 2.** All staff are responsible for ensuring the safety and security of children at the center. If staff observe safety concerns related to supervision, they must immediately inform the center director, or designee.
- 3.** Upon arrival or departure, parents must sign their child in/out according to the Signing Children In & Out policy. For children who are transported by bus, the staff will sign the children in/out.
- 4. Set up the environment:** The environment must be set up so that staff are able to always supervise children. This will include:
 - a. Posting daily schedule for children and all adults to help keep day predictable.
 - b. Height and arrangement of classroom furniture and outdoor equipment must be considered to allow effective monitoring and supervision of children.

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Head Start/ Early Head Start

- c. Be aware where children will be and how they will use classroom materials & equipment (i.e., Scissors, wooden blocks, trucks etc.)
- d. Keep environment clutter-free.

5. Position Staff: Staff must be strategically located in the classrooms, lunchrooms, on the playground and on field trips so that all the zones are covered to ensure all children are within view.

- a. When in a classroom/lunchroom, staff will position themselves strategically, to observe all children.
- b. At any time when children and staff are leaving the classroom, bathroom, kitchen or any part of a building or playground, the staff will sweep the classroom, bathroom, kitchen or any part of a building or playground to ensure no child is left unattended, one staff will lead at the front of the children and one staff will follow at the end of the line of children
- c. Staff must constantly walk/circulate around the playground to maintain visual contact with children. Sitting is limited while supervising children on the playground (i.e., during engagement activities, holding infants while engaging with other children.).
- d. Staff must be engaged the entire time.
- e. Staff will monitor children using the bathroom.

6. Scan and Count: It is the responsibility of all staff to maintain direct supervision. At a minimum staff must scan and count the children when:

- a. Transitioning children in/out of the classroom
- b. Transitioning between classroom activities
- c. Staff is returning from breaks and meals
- d. Children come and go from the restroom
- e. On the playground and when transitioning between indoor and outdoor
- f. Anytime Staff are transitioning in/out of ratio
- g. On field trips or when special guests are in the building
- h. Boarding and exiting the bus
- i. When classrooms are combined together or divided into separate groups

7. Transitional Periodic Roll Call: Supervision during transitions is extremely important and is often complex. Staff must know when a transition takes place and be in a position to prevent a child from leaving the premises and getting into unsafe or unsupervised areas. In addition to scanning and counting, staff must conduct a Transitional Periodic Roll Call during any transition to or from the classroom, playground, lunchroom etc.

- a. Upon arrival, staff must mark children present using a check mark under the "Present" column.
- b. If the child is not present, staff will mark an A for the absent child.
- c. When a transition occurs, staff must record the time the transition is occurring in a new column. One teacher in the class will call the child's name and once the child is visually identified, both staff members will simultaneously record the appropriate code listed at the bottom of the roll call form for that transition.

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- d. Staff will record the total number present for the transition and initial. If there are discrepancies in the total number at the end of roll call, it must be redone to ensure all children are accounted for.
- e. During all transitions, staff must utilize a visual or auditory aid that actively engages children in the process. This may include, but is not limited to, the use of transition songs, visual cue cards/pictures, movement games, or rhythmic clapping patterns. These tools are designed to maintain children's attention, support smooth transitions, and ensure staff can effectively supervise all children while keeping them within sight and sound at all times.
- f. If any one child or group of children leaves the classroom, lunchroom, playground etc. for any purpose (i.e., therapy, speech, signed out by parents), staff must update the Transitional Periodic Roll Call form accordingly.
- g. If a regular transition from the classroom does not occur during the day, staff will periodically scan and count to ensure all children remain accounted for. ~~must conduct the roll call at the times they would typically be transitioning from the room, noting the time on the transitional periodic roll call form.~~
- h. Kitchen staff will conduct a visual head count at mealtimes (point of service) in conjunction with the USDA meal count. Kitchen staff will verify their head count with teaching staff to ensure all children are accounted for.
- i. All staff, including the floater, will carry a roll call on their person to assist in accounting for children at all times. When relieved for any reason, (e.g., break) the person relieving classroom staff must be given the roll call, then it will be given back to classroom staff upon their return.
- j. If a therapist or Head Start/Early Head Start staff member removes a child from the classroom, they must sign the child in/out and classroom staff must use the roll call to document the reason that the child is out.
- k. Completed Transitional Periodic Roll Calls must be filed and kept in the Center Director's office for monitoring access.
- l. The Transitional Periodic Roll Call form does not take the place of the teacher's Daily Attendance Roll Book.
- m. All staff will be trained in how to effectively use the Transitional Periodic Roll call form during onboarding training, annual pre-service training, and periodically throughout the year.

- 8. Listen:** Staff must listen closely to children to identify signs of potential danger.
- a. Specific sounds or the absence of them that may be reason for concern include but are not limited to, sniffing, crying, yelling, knocking, or banging noises and noises from the environment, such as an alarm or bells on a door when it opens.
 - b. Staff must communicate with each other, so everyone knows where each one is and what each one is doing.

- 9. Anticipate Children's Behavior:** Staff must be proactive and use what they know about each child to predict what may happen next.
- a. Teachers must be aware of children's developmental needs and offer individual levels of support.
 - b. Children with early signs of illness or atypical behavior must be monitored closely.

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- c. Staff must pay attention to changes in a child's mood or health in order to anticipate when they may get upset, wander off, or take a dangerous risk.

10. Engage and Redirect:

- a. Staff will use active supervision skills to know when to offer children support.
- b. Staff will encourage children to solve problems on their own and wait to get involved until children are unable to do so safely.
- c. Levels of assistance and redirection will be individualized, depending on each child's needs.

11. Staff using cell phones while responsible for the direct supervision of children will be subject to disciplinary action.

12. In the event a child is unsupervised the following actions will be taken.

- a. If it is determined that a child has been left alone in the classroom, on the playground, or on the bus, the incident will be reported to the Director immediately.
- b. Once reported to the Director, the Director will gather the facts (when, where, who, and how long) and report them to the Executive Director.
- c. The Director will advise staff to report the incident to the parent/guardian.
- d. If any serious harm, injury or endangerment of a child results from a lack of supervision, the Director will report the incident to the abuse hotline, the DCF licensor, and the Program Specialist at the regional office within seven days.

*** Failure to follow this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action. Disciplinary action will be determined by the severity of the departure from policy.**

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Part: 1303 Financial and Administrative Requirements

Subpart: F-Transportation

Section: 1303.72 Vehicle Operation

Subject: Transportation Training

Policy:

All Staff used in transporting children will receive training before being permitted to act as an escort/driver on the bus.

Procedure:

Bus Monitors

1. Before bus monitors are assigned to be bus escorts, they will be trained on child boarding/exiting procedures, use of child restraints, how to perform a sweep of the bus after children have exited, appropriate pick up and release procedures, emergency evacuation, and how to complete the daily transportation log and pre/post trip check sheet.
2. An adult escort will meet at a specific time and place to ride the bus, which will begin its pickup route at or before 7:00 am.
3. Drop off routes begin at 2:00 pm. Staff will assist in loading children safely onto the correct vehicle, so they are ready to leave the center by 2:00 pm. The escort will check their list making sure that all children are accounted for.
4. Each escort will have a book that contains a list of the child's name in the order of the pickup and contains emergency contact information, list of individuals authorized to release the child to and emergency medical consent. .
5. The Center Director will update the escort book as needed, as well as the Center Directors book kept on site that includes information of all routes.
6. Escorts will assist children in safely boarding and exiting the bus after the driver opens the door. The parent/authorized person will be encouraged to help see that their child gets on/off the vehicle safely.
7. Backpacks and carry-ons will be stored in a safe manner behind the driver's seat or in another area that does not interfere with safety.

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8. Escorts will sit in the middle of the bus and use a seat belt when one is available.
9. All children are to remain in their seats at all times, using inside voices. The escort will ensure that there is no talking at Railroad Crossings.
10. The escort will only release children to authorized persons, who must be at least 16 years old and listed on the pick-up list. The escort must see the responsible person before letting the child off the bus. The authorized person receiving the child will be greeted pleasantly by the escort.
11. If the responsible person is not there to receive the child, the escort will take the child back to the center and call the parent or next on the contact list. The escort, or other designated staff must stay with the child until an authorized person arrives to receive the child.
12. After the last child has exited the bus, the escort will walk to the back of the vehicle, checking all seats and the floor under the seats, to verify that no child remains on the vehicle.

Bus Driver

1. Bus Drivers must have copies of a current CDL License, Annual Drivers Physical, and CPR/First Aid Certification on file at each Head Start Center where they provide transportation.
2. Background screenings for each driver are filed at the administrative office.
3. Each bus driver must receive clearance annually through the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles including disclosure of any moving traffic violations.
4. Drivers will demonstrate the ability to operate the bus in a safe, efficient manner.
5. Drivers will have training and knowledge of how to conduct routine maintenance, vehicle checks, paperwork, administer first aid, handle emergency situations/evacuations, and observe safety guidelines as well as any other necessary training to ensure the safety of the children.
6. An annual evaluation of each driver will include an on-board observation of road performance and safety practices.

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Part: 1302 Program Operations

Subpart: E-Family and Community Engagement Program Services

Section: 1302.50 Family Engagement

Subject: Parent Committee Meetings

Policy:

Head Start/Early Head Start must promote parent engagement and education activities in addition to involving parents in program policymaking and operation of the program.

Procedure:

1. Each center will have a Parent Committee, which will hold regular meetings, at least, bi-monthly at the center or a place mutually agreeable by the parent committee. Parents will be elected as President, Vice President, and Secretary and they will run the parent meeting with assistance from staff as needed.
2. Notice of the meeting will be posted at least one week in advance and notice should be sent home with the child three days prior. Family Service Advocates, Center Directors and Teaching staff will also routinely remind parents of the upcoming meeting.
3. The parent committee members, with help from Family Service Advocates or Center Directors will prepare an agenda and information on the training topic will be prepared prior to the meeting. Whenever possible, parent/child activities and parent meetings should be conducted on the same day.
4. Each parent must sign in at the meeting.
5. The parent meeting shall be conducted by the elected President of the Parent Committee or designated person.
6. The elected secretary will take minutes at each meeting; copies of the minutes will be submitted to the Center Director or Family Service Advocate. Minutes of each meeting will be taken and contain the main point of items discussed as well as any topics that need to be reported to the Policy Council. Minutes from the previous meeting will be reviewed and voted on.
7. A parent committee notebook will be kept in the center's office, updated monthly, and must include the meeting agenda, meeting minutes, sign-in sheet, and any handouts provided at the meeting. Copies of any information/handouts sent home as part of the monthly Parent Training Plan will also be filed in the Parent Committee notebook.

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8. A copy of the agenda, minutes, and sign-in sheet are to be e-mailed to the Family/Mental Health Coordinator as they occur.
9. Meeting topics are documented on the monthly parent training plan and must be presented at the meetings or information sent home. The date that the topic is covered should be written on the plan.
10. Topics can be addressed through discussion, speaker, written material, or other means.