



Early Learning

ESSENTIALS



Early Head Start Parent Handbook 2026-2027

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Dear Parents,

Welcome!! We are so excited to have you join our Early Head Start family here at Early Learning Essentials. We feel it is a great honor and privilege to work with your family towards one of the greatest goals our community could have; the long term success of your child and family.

Did you know that according to First Things First...

- More than 80% of a child's brain is fully developed by the time they turn 3 and 90% is developed by the time they turn 5.
- "A child's relationships with the adults in their life are the most important influences on their brain development."
- "From birth to age 5, a child's brain develops more than at any other time in life. And early brain development has a lasting impact on a child's ability to learn and succeed in school and life. The quality of a child's experiences in the first few years of life – positive or negative – helps shape how their brain develops."

Early childhood (0-5) is a critical time in the life of every individual. So much happens during these first five years that will impact the life-long success of children. That puts a lot of responsibility on parents. We honor parents as the first, most important, and life-long educators of their child(ren). In most cases, no other individual will have a more profound influence on your child as you. If you feel overwhelmed by this idea, we understand. We have the highest respect for our parents who carry this heavy responsibility. Our goal at Early Learning Essentials is to support and empower you in that role and partner with you in helping your child(ren) be successful throughout their life.

The mission and services of Head Start are unlike any other program in our community. Our mission is not just to provide children with the skills they need to succeed in school. Head Start is a program which takes a two generational approach to serving our community. We exist to not only help your child succeed, but your whole family.

To that end, throughout the year we will provide your whole family with a wide array of services to support your goals and success. We share at least two common goals. First, we want every child to have the opportunity to be successful throughout their lives. We want him/her to succeed in school, in work, and in his/her relationships. Secondly, we want every family to have the strength, knowledge, resources, and

support required to be self-reliant, happy and achieve their own goals. We believe that by partnering with you, we can achieve these goals. *We invite you to take full advantage of every opportunity that Early Learning Essentials provides.*

While you are aware of our home visiting services, you may not be aware of the holistic set of services that we provide and individualize to each family. Therefore, we have prepared this Parent Handbook as a resource to you. In it we will share the information that we feel is vital for this year to be a successful one for your child and family. Please read through the entire handbook if possible. We have tried to only include information that is necessary and beneficial, although it is not all-inclusive. We also invite you to share anything with us that would be helpful to know which we haven't included. We welcome your communication as your perspective on your child is very important. Our Website, www.eleutah.org, is also a fantastic resource for you.

Again, welcome to Early Head Start. We look forward to an amazing year together.

Sonia Pineda
Executive Director

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Deputy Director

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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What Is Early Learning Essentials

Early Learning Essentials is a non-profit agency that receives a federal grant to provide high-quality, no cost home-based early childhood services to parents of young children and social services to their entire family. Our Administrative Office is located at 105 S 400 E in Springville with regular business hours of operation. Early Head Start services are provided to qualifying families in south Utah County and Juab County. Additionally, we currently have twelve preschool sites located throughout Juab, Utah, and Wasatch Counties for Head Start services. These classes are for three and four-year-old children and many of our Early Head Start children transfer to one of these classrooms when they are age eligible. Our mission as an agency is to empower young children and families along a path to their highest potential. But what does that look like in real life?

Child and Family Outcomes

Early Head Start is intentionally designed to achieve certain child and family outcomes, and all of our work is designed to partner with you in achieving these outcomes.

We as an organization are designed to help the entire family achieve certain outcomes. While each of these outcomes are worthy of our support in and of themselves, they are also family factors which research has shown to be critical to the child outcomes already mentioned. They are as follows.

- Family well-being
- Positive parent-child relationships
- Families as lifelong educators of their families
- Families as learners
- Family engagement in transitions
- Family connections to peers and the community
- Families as advocates and leaders

The following are the child outcomes we are designed to achieve.

Children are...

- Safe
- Healthy and well
- Learning and developing
- Engaged in positive relationships with family members, caregivers, and other children

- Ready for school, and
- Successful in school and life

We believe that these are shared goals with every Early Head Start family. If you ever have a question as to why we do something, it is because we believe it will positively impact one of the above mentioned outcomes. We invite you to partner with us so that we can more fully achieve all of these outcomes.

Program Options

We recognize that every family is unique and has differing needs and expectations in regards to support. Our goal is to be able to provide program options that match your family's unique situation. Unfortunately, for Early Head Start we only have one program option available.

1. **The full-year Early Head Start home-based option:** This option is only available at Early Learning Essential for children ages 0 -3 and pregnant mothers, living in Juab county or southern Utah County (Spanish Fork and south). In this option the Family Educator visits the child's home weekly for 1.5 hours and works with the parent, co-teaching the child in the home environment. A total of 46 home visits are expected annually. Additionally, Early Head Start families meet twice a month (22 times annually) for an hour to build peer support and help children with socialization opportunities. If you are interested in this program option but live north of Spanish Fork, please contact Kids on the Move through their website www.KOTM.org.

Eligibility, Tuition, and Fees

Early Learning Essential's full array of services are provided to qualifying families at no cost. Eligibility is determined by age and family income. Early Head Start services are for both pregnant mothers and children newborn through age two. We prioritize services for low-income families and children with disabilities. Once a child is found income eligible, they are considered eligible until they are no longer age-eligible. They do not have to re-verify income annually, unless they are over income. When a child transitions from Early Head Start to Head Start we do need to re-verify family income, but they also receive priority points for enrollment. Enrolled pregnant mothers are eligible for the duration of their pregnancy and do not need to re-verify income if their infant is enrolled in their slot.

Transitioning Into Preschool

The preschool transition is a critical time and often has an impact on the child's long term success in school. If your child will be transitioning into preschool the next school year, staff will begin talking with you about this transition at least six months before your child's third birthday. The Family Advocate and the Family Educator will provide lots of information during home visits about the transition and about options you have for preschool, including Head Start. We believe that it is important for parents to be supported during these transitions as well. Your knowledge about the transition will empower you to make informed decisions and better help/advocate for your child. If you choose to attend a preschool other than ELE, we will help with transitioning your child as well as providing, with your permission, information to the preschool.

Withdrawal

Should you decide to withdraw your child from our program during the year for any reason, we'll request a home visit with you in order to assist in transitioning your child out of the program and into another program (if applicable). The Family Advocate can help you find another Early Head Start or other program if you are leaving the area. They will also follow up one last time with things you have discussed already during the year.

Home Visit Curriculum, Socializations & School Readiness Goals

In order to help each child be ready for school we focus our efforts on five central domains of development necessary for school success. They are visually represented in the Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework below. There are domains for both infant/toddlers and preschool-age children. These domains align with state standards and school district expectations for children coming into kindergarten. If you would like to learn more about the state standards for either preschool or kindergarten you can see them at <https://www.uen.org/core/#k12>. We invite you to be aware of these expectations so that we can partner together in achieving them.

	CENTRAL DOMAINS				
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
			Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	

The curriculum we have chosen to use is Parents As Teachers and it meets all Head Start and state requirements. If you have questions or concerns regarding the curriculum we invite you to please discuss them with your Family Educator

Our home-based option uses the Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum, which recognizes the parent as the child's first and most important teacher. The PAT model views the parent as the primary learner during visits. The Family Educators coaches and guides parents in understanding child development, recognizing teachable moments, and confidently engaging in age-appropriate, play-based activities. The educator supports parents in building their own capacity to foster learning and development every day. This model promotes strong parent-child relationships and lifelong parenting skills that extend far beyond the scope of the program.

This curriculum is implemented during a weekly home visit between the Family Educator, a parent, and the enrolled child or pregnant mother. The duration of the home visit is typically 1.5 hours and focuses on both helping the parent understand the development of their child and discussing and supporting the family's strengths and needs. There are a required 46 home visits during the year. If staff need to cancel an appointment they will work with you to reschedule. If you need to cancel a home visit for any reason the visit may or may not be rescheduled, depending on your availability.

Additionally, there are 22 socialization activities designed to help parents and children connect with each other and learn more about child development. Parents are invited to help plan the topics and activities of the socializations. They may occur at the center but may also occur at a location in the community.

Socialization activities include activities designed for both children and parents. Parents will have opportunities to connect with staff and other parents and share their parenting experiences with each other. Parents will also participate in a large group activity that reinforces Conscious Discipline or Pyramid Model social emotional principles. Parents will also have the opportunity to follow up with any disability or mental health concerns they may have. This may include, but is not limited to, follow up on developmental concerns, follow up on referrals to Early Intervention services (such as Kids Who Count, PEIP, or Kids on the Move EI), follow up on how IFSPs are going, etc. Children will engage in developmentally appropriate activities that reinforce and support the principles discussed during home visits.

School-to-Home Forms

- Each month the teacher outlines ideas or activities that parents can do at home to support their child's learning. We request that parents track the time spent doing these activities with their child and then complete the [online form](#) by the end of every month. This not only extends learning outside of the home visits but also helps us meet our required in-kind for the year.

Staff Structure and Roles

Great programs are made up of great staff. This is especially true for ELE staff. Our Family Educator and Center Manager are trained in early childhood development and education and provide high-quality learning and instruction. In addition to a Family Educator, your family has an entire team of dedicated staff to support your goals. This team consists of the Family Educator, a Center Manager, a Health Specialist, and a Family Advocate. There are other staff available to help and support as needed including disability and mental health specialists and the health and nutrition coordinators. The roles of the support team members you will most frequently interact with are outlined below.

Family Educator - The Early Head Start (EHS) Family Educator serves as the primary home visitor for families enrolled in the home-based option. They support pregnant women, infants, and toddlers by delivering weekly, individualized home visits and facilitating twice-monthly socializations. The Family Educator partners with families to support healthy prenatal outcomes, child development, and strong family relationships, emphasizing the parent-child bond. They coordinate comprehensive services in collaboration with other program staff, addressing areas

such as health, nutrition, mental health, and family goal setting. Through developmental screenings, assessments, and tailored learning experiences, Family Educators empower parents with the knowledge and tools to nurture their child's early development and school readiness.

Health Specialists- Health Specialists have the critical role of helping you to ensure that your child is healthy and ready to learn so that he/she can achieve their best possible development. Few things will impede your child's success more than an undiagnosed or unaddressed health concern. Health Specialists will work with pregnant mothers to understand and meet their baby's health needs in utero and the mother's health needs while pregnant. They will also work with you to ensure your child is screened for health concerns at the beginning of enrollment by both ELE staff and your primary care doctor and dentist. They will ensure that some of these screenings are completed within the first 45 days of enrollment or at age appropriate times. Once the screenings are complete the health specialist will assist you in completing any needed follow-up care as recommended by your medical and dental professionals to ensure your child is healthy and developing as much as possible.

Family Advocates- Your Family Advocate is a caring and highly trained professional who can offer your family a variety of basic support services ranging from financial management and employment to parenting education and child development. Their specific responsibility is to help your family achieve the family outcomes mentioned previously that promote your child's school outcomes. They are also trained on the varied social services available in the community and can direct you, as needed, to those which will meet your family's needs. They will meet with you several times throughout the year at your home, with your permission, to help identify any goals your family has and support you in achieving those goals.

Communication with Staff

One of the most important and valuable things parents can do for their child is to take an active role in building a relationship with school staff. Please watch for and read the monthly electronic Parent Newsletter which will be sent to your email.

Calling the Staff

Contact information for centers can be found on our website under the "For Parents" tab. When calling a center that has more than one classroom there will be a prompt to enter the classroom number.

Updating Contact Information

In order for us to better serve you, it is crucial that your contact information remains current. If your address, email or phone number changes, please share that information with the Family Educator or your Family Advocate.

Staying Connected

We also invite you to connect with us on our social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and X. Here we will be providing ongoing resources, helpful parenting tips, and announcing upcoming events. Our handles are as follows.

@earlylearningessentials for Facebook and Instagram

@EarlyEssentials for X

Children's Health and Development

At time of application your family should have completed a health history and nutrition assessment identifying any individual concerns for your child. Your Health Specialist will work with you to make sure you, if you are an expecting mother, and/or your child are receiving the proper care to promote your best health.

- Immunizations: If you need assistance getting your child current on immunizations, your Health Specialist can assist you. You will need to provide us with your child's completed immunization record or personal exemption form from the [health department](#).
- EPSDT Events: ELE follows the periodicity schedule set by the American Academy of Pediatrics which outlines the age at which it is recommended that children get appropriate medical prevention and care. Your Health Specialist will work with you to make sure your child is getting the correct care at the appropriate age.

Screenings and Evaluations

One of the greatest barriers we see to a child's success in school is an undiagnosed or unsupported developmental or physical impediment/delay. The earlier delays are identified and interventions started the better the developmental outcome a child will have. Prior to your child attending class and throughout their first 45-90 days of enrollment, our staff will work very closely with you to screen your child in several areas. It is important that these screenings occur right at the beginning of the year as each area will affect your child's learning and development. We invite you to please work closely with your child's Head Start Health Specialist to complete these in the indicated timelines. Those completed at Head Start will be

done based upon the permission granted to staff by you on the screening consent form completed at the time of application.

ELE staff will work with you to ensure that all screenings are complete on time. We expect that parents will collaborate respectfully with staff to complete all screenings. The following screenings will need to be conducted for your child, either by an ELE staff member or your family's primary health care provider (PCP). Some of them will be based upon the age of your child.

Within the First 45 Days of Enrollment

- Hearing Screening (HS)
- Vision Screening (HS)
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (Parents)
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire: 3 (Parents)
- Preschool Language Scale- Language & Speech Articulation (HS)

Within the First 90 Days of Enrollment

- Growth Assessment (HS or PCP)
- Blood Pressure (HS or PCP, if needed due to risk factor or 3 years of age)
- Lead (HS or PCP, 12 & 24 months)
- Dental Exam (PCP, risk assessment from 6-30 months, exam after 3 years)
- Well Child Checks at various ages

If you have questions as to what any of these screenings are and/or why they are necessary please speak with your child's health specialist. They would be more than happy to explain them to you. Again, we will need your help in completing these screenings upon enrollment in the program.

Conscious Discipline and Pyramid Model

One of the major determinants of children's success in preschool, kindergarten and beyond is their ability to regulate their own emotions and establish healthy relationships and interactions with others. Conscious Discipline (CD) is a research-based behavioral curriculum we use during Socializations. It focuses on helping children feel emotionally safe and connected with others. CD helps children master self-regulation, empathy, and social skills which in turn help children learn the importance of social interactions and cooperation. Children learn how to recognize their emotions, manage them, and calm themselves to a state of mind where they can problem solve and learn from their own experience.

In addition to Conscious Discipline, Early Learning Essentials uses the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Young Children. This research-based framework helps Family Educators and families support the social-emotional development of children in a positive, proactive, and consistent way.

The Pyramid Model emphasizes building strong relationships and teaching social and emotional skills in a structured, step-by-step approach. It equips staff to recognize and respond to children's needs before behaviors become challenging and offers strategies to support all children—including those who require more individualized interventions.

Just like with Conscious Discipline, these strategies are most effective when reinforced at home. The Family Educator and Family Advocates may share simple ideas—such as offering choices, using visual routines, or helping children name their emotions—that can help you support your child's development. You may also be invited to parent workshops or family events that include information and resources from the Pyramid Model. When families and educators work together to support social-emotional growth, children are better prepared to build healthy relationships, develop resilience, and succeed in school and beyond.

We see the greatest benefits to a child's ability to self-regulate their emotions when the skills they are learning at ELE are complemented with parents' efforts. A major component of the curriculum is helping parents to understand how the principles of Conscious Discipline and the Pyramid Model can be applied at home. Several opportunities will be provided for you to learn Conscious Discipline and the Pyramid Model principles and techniques. Family Advocates will share information from these curriculums with you. We also provide a two session course on the Conscious Discipline curriculum specifically for parents. If you are struggling with behavioral issues or discipline at home this is a great resource available to you. When a child struggles with behavior in spite of support we may provide the additional support and interventions discussed below.

Developmental Concerns, Delays and/or Disabilities

Early Learning Essentials values the opportunity to serve children in our program with developmental delays and/or disabilities. These children make great strides in our program and enhance learning opportunities for other children. If your child already has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) through a local intervention

program then Early Learning Essentials will work closely with the program responsible for the IFSP to ensure that IFSP goals are being met. If your child has an IFSP, the Disabilities and Mental Health team will be contacting you, if they have not already done so, to make sure all needed services are received.

Some children who come into our program may have a delay or disability that has not already been diagnosed. Early Learning Essentials staff observe each child very closely and note their development. If you or the staff have a concern for your child's development they will speak with you about it and may seek additional support. They may also request that a member of our disabilities team observe the child to determine if a referral for an official evaluation is needed. If a referral is recommended, the disabilities team will coordinate with you and the local Early Intervention program to schedule an evaluation.

Safety During Home Visits

To ensure a safe and productive experience for everyone, Early Learning Essentials has guidelines in place for staff conducting home visits. For the safety of participating families the Family Educator and other staff will always carry official identification with them. We expect staff to conduct themselves with the same professionalism and respect that we ask of families receiving services. If there is a concern with staff behavior please follow our parent concern protocol.

While we enjoy building strong relationships with our families, home visits are conducted only with the child's parent or legal guardian. To ensure the safety of our staff, they are trained to assess the environment when they enter the home and will end the visit if they ever feel unsafe, notifying their supervisor immediately.

Material or behavior that is threatening, vulgar, or indecent would also elicit the end of a home visit. It is expected that the home environment be safe and sanitary for the home visitor. Animals should be safely and appropriately contained during home visits. If a home visit cannot safely or appropriately take place in the home, we may arrange to meet at the center, in a public space, virtually, or by phone, as long as it continues to meet Head Start guidelines.

Confidentiality

We take great effort to ensure that any information provided to us is protected and confidential. Personal and family information is maintained in a secure software program designed specifically for educational use. Upon your request and with

appropriate prior notification, you may review your family's file at any time during the year. You may also request a copy of any information shared with third parties. Policies and procedures regarding personally identifiable information and its protection is shared with parents during the application intake. Early Learning Essentials staff and guests will only take pictures and videos of your children if you have provided us with permission on the Media Consent form. These images will also only be used for those purposes for which you have given permission.

Parent Involvement

Parents are the key to the life-long success of children, and as such our main goal is to partner with you. We hope that you will communicate with staff as needed, but please be considerate of the staff's personal time and find a time to speak when all parties are available.

Parent Volunteering

Each month your Family Educator will send activities for your child to work on at home with your assistance. We ask that you keep track of the time you spend helping your child learn and report that time to us by the end of each month. Below is the Parent link, (QR CODE) where you will report the time you have spent working at home with your child(ren). It would be good to bookmark this link for easy access going forward. It is important to know that you can enter your time on the following devices:

- Personal computers QR Code (Scan with your Smartphone)
- Smartphones
- Classroom computers
- Teacher iPad
- Center Manager Laptop

By clicking on [this link](#) or scanning the QR code below you will be taken to the form to document your volunteer hours.

The information you enter will be generated automatically for staff to see. It is very important to enter your time on or before the last day of the month. You can enter daily, weekly or before the last day of the month. Whatever works best for you. We appreciate and thank you for working with your child's teacher throughout the month on the School-to-Home activities as you are engaged in your child's

education. If you have questions please let your Family Education or Family Advocate know. They are happy to help you.



Parent Communities

Early Learning Essentials works tirelessly to provide many opportunities for parents to get involved. Every parent at Early Learning Essentials forms part of their center's Parent Community and each community elects officers from their center to represent them. These officers plan activities, workshops and/or training based on the interests expressed by all parents at the center. We encourage you to attend these activities and to also consider serving as an officer in this community. It's a great opportunity to develop leadership skills and it's a valuable experience you can add to your resume. Some of the officers also participate on our Policy Council which provides Early Learning Essentials with parents' perspectives when making important policy and agency-level decisions.

Family Activities

Families that take the time to have fun, to share experiences, and to reconnect with each other create strong emotional bonds between parents and children. Throughout the school year we plan family-friendly activities that families can attend together. We highly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to spend quality time together at these events and if you have any fun ideas that you would like us to consider for a family activity, let your Family Advocate know.

Male involvement

Every child needs someone who will encourage, motivate and support them—whether it's coming from a man or woman. Research has shown, however, that males and females not only interact differently with children, but they also teach and encourage different personality traits. Thus, Early Learning Essentials works hard to also involve positive male role models in program activities, they being

statistically less likely to participate. A male role model doesn't necessarily have to be a father. It can be an older brother, a family friend, uncle, grandfather or coach. We also encourage men to be present during the weekly home visit, socialization activities, and other organizational activities.

Early Learning Essentials also has a group specifically designed to help men participate consistently with a HS child. This group is called the D.U.D.E (Dads United Dads Engaged) group. We hold D.U.D.E activities where the student and their male role model can go and have a fun time together. Males are not the only ones who can participate with the Head Start child in these activities, females are also welcome to attend, especially where a male role model is not present.

Dads (or other male role models) can also earn a free book for their child's library by reading fifteen minutes six times during the month with the HS child. They can also earn a math oriented toy or activity by completing math related activities. Each month you will receive a D.U.D.Es reading or Math slip. At the end of the month, turn it into your Family Advocate to get a reward.

Mutual Respect & Safety

ELE expects that children and parents treat themselves, other parents and children, and staff with respect and dignity. Any exhibiting of violent behaviors by parents on agency property, during home visits, or during agency events towards children, other parents (including spouses) or staff, will not be tolerated. Violent behaviors include, but are not limited to, yelling, name calling, swearing, intimidating, threatening, grabbing, pushing, stalking, following, or causing physical or emotional harm to the person or property of another individual. Any such acts may result in the adult being dismissed, temporarily or permanently, from ELE property and/or subject to a call to the proper authorities. Possession of dangerous weapons and firearms on agency property are prohibited except as authorized by state and federal law and may not be used to harm or threaten others either directly or implied.

ELE tries to continually improve and thus welcomes parents' perspective and feedback. Any concerns parents have should be respectfully discussed with the staff member who it concerns. If parents are unable to resolve their concern by speaking directly with the staff member, the concern should be addressed following ELE's [***community complaint policy***](#) available for download on ELE's website under contact us at the bottom of the homepage. For policy concerns, parents are

encouraged to discuss the concern with Family Educator and the center Policy Council representative who will bring the concern to the attention of the Policy Council. Consequences for breaking the Mutual Respect & Safety Policy could include removal of parental rights to be on Early Learning Essentials property.

With that in mind, it is important to know that all staff, including Family Educators, are mandatory reporters of any suspected or real child abuse. That means that if ever they observe behavior or signs of potential child abuse, they are under legal requirement to report it immediately to the Division of Child and Family Services. While staff may discuss concerns with you, Early Learning Essentials policy prohibits them from discussing any reporting that may occur. As this is a requirement of all staff, any parent/guardian who threatens or attacks a staff member as a result of a report will be immediately subject to the steps outlined in our Mutual Respect & Safety policy.

Concealed Weapons

Possessions of weapons, including firearms, on Early Learning Essentials property is prohibited unless otherwise authorized by Utah state law.

Parent Behavior While at Socializations

We consider being in a Head Start center to be a great honor. As we hope you will attend socializations at the center, we extend to you a high level of trust and have high expectations for your behavior while there. Please don't do anything that would take away from the children, staff, or other parents' experience. Safety of the children is of ultimate importance to us, therefore, we will make every effort to keep your child safe. Whenever you are on Head Start premises we will expect you to be respectful of the children, staff, and other parents' persons and property.

Custody Concerns

We recognize that custody is a delicate matter and often requires great care to protect children and families. Therefore, in order to protect your child, we ask you to provide us with any custody, protective or restraining order documentation. Until we have received this documentation, we will operate as though whoever is on the child's birth certificate has full rights to the child and their information. We can only enforce whatever legal documentation is provided to us. If anything changes in regards to custody please inform your Family Advocate as soon as possible.

If there is a sensitive custody issue in your family, we expect you to please resolve details of its implementation outside of Socialization. Early Learning Essentials and/or staff will not get involved in custody disputes or visitation rights of either parent. The only exception to this procedure is when we receive a subpoena.

Family Services

We believe that every family enrolled in our program has incredible strengths and knowledge that can support and lift themselves, other families in the program and the community. We also recognize that each family comes with unique challenges and barriers to their desired goals, specifically as it relates to their children. There are many variables related to the home environment that are critical to the child's optimal growth, development, and success. Several of the variables that have the greatest impact on children in the home are articulated as outcomes in the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement framework described at the beginning of the handbook.

Early Learning Essentials is committed to helping parents use their strengths and program/community resources to overcome their challenges and create a home environment that will help their child to be most successful. We therefore provide highly trained Family Advocates to every family to help define the family's goals and create a plan to achieve those goals with whatever support is necessary and available.

Family Advocate Visits

Your Family Advocate will schedule several visits with you throughout the year. The purpose of these visits is to partner with you in achieving your family's goals. The first event is called an Orientation and the purpose is to orient you further to the program and develop a plan for participation and engagement.

The other visits will be individualized to your family's needs and interests. The topic of each home visit is also determined by you and the FA, based upon the self-evaluation you completed at intake. Topics may include financial literacy, Conscious Discipline, parenting and discipline, housing, learning English as a second language, nutrition, and any number of other topics. While we can provide many services directly to your family, if you have any needs that we can't address we will provide referrals and support you in accessing any quality resources in our community that meet your needs. Family Advocates will also encourage and partner with you to set a family goal of your choosing, and if you want support in its

completion, they are ready and willing to assist you as you work towards meeting your goals.

Classes for Parents

Throughout the year we offer various classes to parents on a variety of subjects such as health and nutrition, parenting, relationships, ESL, work preparation, and financial literacy. Classes are offered at different times and in different locations throughout the year including 2-session Conscious Discipline Parenting class. If you are interested in a specific class, please let your Family Advocate know. Child care is often provided for these classes.

Financial Literacy

We have had many families express an interest in learning about and improving their financial literacy and skills. Throughout the year, look for opportunities to attend workshops offered by community agencies who specialize in this area.

Other Resources

Please speak to your Family Advocate about any need you may have. They receive ongoing training to learn first hand about the resources that are available within the communities which we serve. They are knowledgeable and helpful and can share this information with you.

Refer a Friend

We take applications continually throughout the school year. If you have friends with children who are newborn through age two, we would love to have you refer them to us. Word of mouth is by far the best way to let people know about Early Head Start, and we want to serve those who can be benefited by our wonderful program. To refer a friend please visit our website under the “Apply Now” tab.