



**Parent / Guardian
Handbook**

MY SITE INFORMATION

NAME OF SITE: _____

PROGRAM TIME: AM PM

Social Worker: _____

Teacher: _____

Early Childhood Educators: _____

Home Educator: _____

If applicable:

<p>TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Bus Driver's Name:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Phone Number:</p> <p>_____</p>
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1. What is ABC Head Start Society?

ABC Head Start Society has been a part of the Edmonton region since 1985 and became a registered Canadian charity in 1991.

For over 30 years we have offered early learning, child care, family support and community connection programs for vulnerable children and their families.

Each year we work with over 900 children and their families in locations throughout the city and region. We employ over 100 staff and work with many community volunteers, partners, donors and sponsors.

Together we envision a society where:

***Children and families thrive
as actively engaged citizens
of strong and
inclusive communities.***

**ABC Head Start is a Registered Charity
Charitable registration #
137044962RR0001**

We Believe:

The first five years of a child's life are very important.

Raising a family can be a challenge and it helps to know that you are not alone.

Respecting cultural diversity and needs of our children and families is fundamental.

Families are valued and when responding to their it is important to provide:

- A positive learning experience for young children (*½ day morning OR afternoon early learning program that runs Tuesday to Friday from September to June*)
- Help to families to identify and achieve their goals.
- Opportunities for families to connect to health, education, community services and other parents.

ABC Head Start believes in a world of equal opportunity. We actively advocate for programs, services and social policy that works towards poverty reduction and builds resiliency in children and families.

Entry into Head Start:

ABC Head Start provides services to:

- Families with children between the ages of 2.8 to 5.0 years old
- Families that fall within our income and vulnerabilities guidelines
- Families who live (or who access child care) within transportation boundaries
- Kindship and foster parents who are within our geographical boundaries
- Families who are underserved by other programs



Attending Head Start:

Before you start our Head Start program, you will receive a letter letting you know the location, if your child will be in a morning or afternoon program, and a name tag for your child to wear during the first week of class.

Updating Information:

During the year, it is important we have up to date contact information. **You need to tell the ABC Head Start Social Worker at your child's site as soon as you know about a change.**

Changes of information include:

1. Address
2. Phone number
3. Child Care location
4. Emergency contact name, address, or phone number

If you are using busing services please understand, it will take several days to update our records and it **usually takes 2 weeks for the bus company to make changes to the bus route.**

See the Ministry of Education website for details on transportation eligibility www.alberta.ca/ministry-education.aspx

Transportation (If you are Eligible):

Just days before the program begins you will be contacted by ***one of our busing companies***. They are companies which provide bus service to some ABC Head Start program children and families. If you have any questions about bussing, please contact your site Social Worker.

The bus company or the driver will confirm your contact information and tell you when and where your child will be picked up and dropped off.

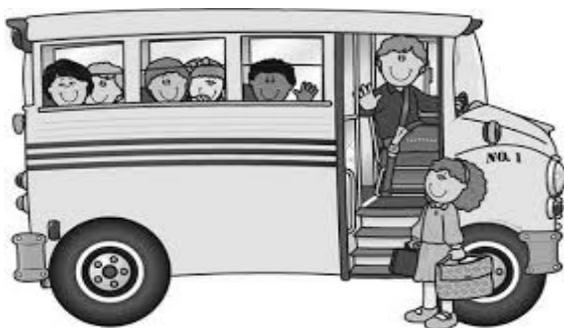
If your child is not going to ABC Head Start Program that day (e.g. he/she is sick) you need to:

- Call the bus company and tell them your child's name, program location and your phone number

It is important you keep the bus phone number available:



- Please have your child ready and waiting for the bus. Drivers can only wait 2 minutes.
- You or other caregivers **must** walk your child to and from the bus. This is because the bus driver is not allowed to leave the bus.
- No one other than the children can ride on the bus however you may need to help buckle your child in during the first week of the program.
- Food is not allowed on the bus.
- Medication or inhalers may be transported in the child's backpack which must then be given to the bus driver to be kept at the front of the bus.



Picking up your child from Head Start:

We encourage you to visit us at your child's ABC Head Start site as often as you like. When you visit you can take your child home with you.

We **ONLY** allow children to leave ABC Head Start on the bus, OR with their parent (s) or legal guardians. If you give us permission in writing, we will allow your child to leave with another person you trust. If you (or the legal guardian) are not the one picking up your child, we will ask for identification or we will call you.

Your child **will not** be allowed to leave with someone without your written or verbal permission.

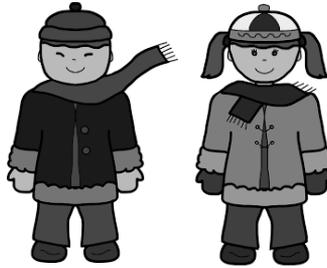


Our Head Start program begins every September. The rest of this handbook gives you an outline of what you can expect from our early learning program.

Proper Clothing:

On cold or rainy days, children should be dressed for outdoor play or bussing emergencies. In the winter, this means:

- a hat
- scarf
- gloves
- warm boots
- snow pants
- socks
- winter jacket



PLEASE DRESS YOUR CHILDREN ACCORDING TO THE WEATHER

Extra Clothing:

- In the first week of the program, please send an **extra pair of shoes for inside, and extra clothing in case of spills or other accidents.**
- You will be given the extra clothing back at the end of the program.
 - If you need help with these items, please speak to your social worker.

To avoid lost items, please print your child's name on coats, footwear, backpacks and any other things they bring to ABC Head Start.

If you are unable to get warm clothing or boots, please let our staff know.

Backpacks:

Please always check your child's backpack at the end of each day. Our staff send home important documents and forms in your child's backpack.

Parents are also encouraged to return completed documents in the child's backpack for our staff.



Field Trips:

Field trips help children connect what they are learning to real life situations and experiences. Past field trips include: the Edmonton Valley Zoo, TELUS World of Science, Safety City, and walking tours of neighborhoods.

We will send a note home to ask for your permission for your child to go on the field trip. You are welcome to come on field trips.

As a parent, you **must** have given written permission for your child to go on field trips. If we do not have a current signed permission slip on file, the bus will not pick up your child that day.

2. Medical Information

Please tell the Social Worker during the intake meeting if your child has any special medical needs, such as allergies or asthma. Your child may not begin program until all forms have been completed and returned.



Allergies:

Please tell us if there are any foods your child cannot eat or drink because of allergies, cultural norms or other reasons.



Allergy information will be posted in the classroom, so all staff and visitors are aware of children's allergies, cultural traditions or food restrictions.

If there are any physical activities your child cannot do because of medical concerns, please let the Social Worker know.

Children's Medication:

Plan with your doctor so your child can take his/her medicine before or after ABC Head Start, not at the program.

If medicine **must be taken** when your child is at Head Start, we will require instructions and authorization from your doctor, and written permission from you ***prior to your child starting the program.***



You will need to bring the medicine to ABC Head Start yourself. The medication must be in the same container you got it in.

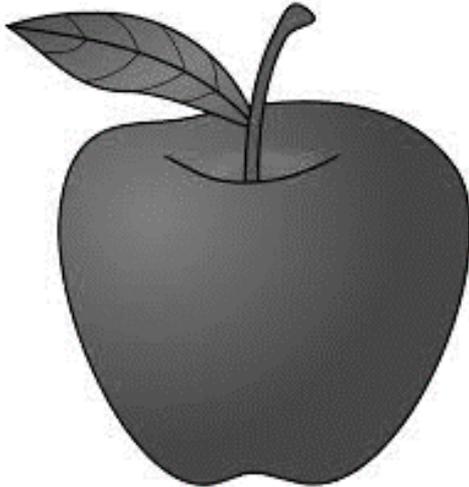
If children need to bring medicine to Head Start everyday (like an asthma inhaler) you will need to give the medication directly to the bus driver, so they can give the medication to the ABC Head Start staff each day.

If children are sick, please keep them at home until they are feeling better.

Nutrition and Healthy Living:

ABC Head Start, along with the Head Start Health Team, help children learn about healthy choices every day by:

- Providing chances to exercise
- Providing a healthy, nutritious snack based on the *Canada Food Guide*
- Teaching children about hand washing and good teeth brushing habits
- Respecting ethno-cultural traditions



3. Information about ABC Head Start

Head Start programs originated in the United States during the 1960s and have been a part of Edmonton communities for over 34 years. ABC Head Start Society is a member of the Interagency Head Start Network (IHSN) which provides a wide range of early childhood, family and community programs for Edmonton families.

Early Learning Program:

The overall goal of the children's program is to support children in their everyday learning and life.

We:

- Provide children with experiences that develop social skills, healthy living, language and thinking skills that will help them be successful learners.
- Identify children's interests, strengths and needs early.
- Help families be involved in their children's development and learning experiences.

Our Staff and Allied Professionals:

At each location there is an ABC Head Start team which includes:

- A certified Teacher,
- Early Childhood Educator
- Speech and Language Pathologist
- Social Worker
- Other Allied Professionals
- Volunteers

Additionally, families in our program have access to Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and allied Health Services based on children's needs.

All our staff and volunteers complete a ***Police Record Check*** prior to working at any of our program sites.

Follow us on:



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Twitter



Instagram

Assessment & Responsive Programming:

All Head Start children have personal learning plans. These plans are unique to each child, depending on the child's strengths and learning needs.

We will meet with you several times in the year to let you know about your child's accomplishments at Head Start.

- We **always** want to hear from you about what you feel is most important for your child's well-being and development.

One way we get to know your child and their learning needs is through assessment. It is an ongoing process that happens in throughout the year.

- The Ages & Stages questionnaire you completed during intake is one of our assessments. <https://agesandstages.com>

We will always ask for your permission and talk with you before we conduct a specialized assessment.

- Assessment usually happens at a program location. Once the assessment is done, we talk with you about the results and build a plan to help your child learn new skills in the classroom and at home.

The results of these assessments will also tell us if your child is eligible for Special Education Funding and if so, together we will develop a more detailed Individual Program Plan (IPP) for your child.



Home Education (HE):

Home Educating is for children who would benefit from extra services and are eligible for additional Funding through Alberta Education. This allows us to provide extra services, including weekly in-home visits so you can learn and practice some new skills at home.

The Home Educator visits you and your family (usually in your home) each week to extend your child's learning.

Your involvement during these home visits is very important. Visits are planned with your input and focus on your child's individual needs and interests.

Follow us on:



Facebook



Twitter



Instagram

Family Engagement:

Your involvement is very important to your child's success.

- The first five years are critical to a child's development. The earliest home and community experiences set the foundation for educational and life success.
- All families are unique and have individual strengths. ABC Head Start recognizes and builds on the goals of each family and invites families to share their strengths with one another.
- Differences should be celebrated. ABC Head Start serves families from a wide variety of cultures, traditions, compositions and with many life experiences.

Parental Involvement/Volunteering:

- We always encourage families to spend some time with your child at ABC Head Start program or events. Join us for snack or story time.
- Parents and families are a big part of the success of ABC Head Start Society. Many parents volunteer well after their child has graduated from the program and are valued part of our agency.

Family Group:

You can attend our family program. Each ABC Head Start site offers family groups where:

- Free child care is provided for your child's younger siblings while you participate in the group.
- Older siblings are also welcome
- Great snacks and coffee are served.
- ABC Head Start families make new connections and new friends.

Families identify topics such as:

- self-care
- healthy eating
- child development
- "positive parenting" tools
- learning through play
- building children's self-esteem
- financial literacy
- and community resources

You can drop in or arrange a time to meet with the Social Worker to discuss additional help with parenting, family life, or personal issues.

You can suggest topics or guest speakers for a family gathering. Tell us what you would like to learn more about. Let us know in person or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/abcheadstart.

Parent & Guardian Responsibilities:

You can help us with evaluation. Each year we send home parent surveys and your answers give us important information on how we are doing and where we can improve.

The information you provide helps us find donors or sponsors who believe in helping young children get the best start in life.

At ABC Head Start Society we DO NOT tolerate disrespectful or aggressive behavior towards any staff or families that participate in programming.

If you have concerns, we want to hear about it. We have a client complaint process to address problems in a timely and supportive way. We encourage you to talk directly with your Head Start team if you have a problem.

Sometimes you may want to talk with someone else. If so, you can phone the ABC Head Start central office and speak to your site's supervisor. You can also call and speak to the designated manager:

780-461-5353

We will do our best to try and understand your concern and work with you to address the problem in a respectful way.

Volunteers:

The safety, wellbeing and privacy of the children and families in Head Start are very important to us. Volunteers are supervised by ABC Head Start staff and they must always give us security clearances and attend an orientation before they start.

Maybe you or a friend would like to volunteer? If so, give us a call. We encourage parents and family members to volunteer. Volunteers can help facilitate:

- family meeting
- administrative support
- help with data input
- help with fundraising



Bring your skills and interests as a volunteer & we will do our best to find an opportunity that is mutually beneficial.



Transition from *(or leaving)* Head Start:

Many families are connected to our Head Start program for only one year. A part of our job is to help your child be ready for another program such as Kindergarten and to connect your family to services that can continue to help you meet your family's needs.

Throughout the year we can work with you on those connections – and well before June we are working with you to think about the next school year.

4. Reference Section

Partner Agencies:

Each family has their own needs and often they would like to have support after they leave our program.

ABC Head Start Society relies on the help of other agencies to help us do the work we do. Many of these partner agencies work directly in Head Start classrooms. Other partners provide support to you outside of Head Start and can continue to work with your family even when your child attends Kindergarten.

Below are a few of the partner agencies ABC Head Start works with on a regular basis.

Head Start Health Team (HSHT)

Alberta Health Service (AHS) provides Public Health Nurses and Dental Hygienists who visit Head Start to:

Provide child health screening for

- height & weight
- immunization
- vision
- hearing
- dental concerns
- and provide parent group and classroom presentations on a variety of health topics

Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB) Cooperative & Centralized Interpreter Services (CIS)

ABC Head Start families come from many cultural and language backgrounds with varied life experiences. ABC Head Start works closely with brokers and interpreters to help understand and to build relationships with all families.

Edmonton School Boards

ABC Head Start works closely with both Edmonton School Boards: Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD), and Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB). With their help we can ensure a successful transition from Head Start to Kindergarten.

Other Community Based Organizations

ABC Head Start Society also works with many other community services such as:

- Edmonton Public Library
- Edmonton Food Bank
- Capital Region Housing
- Centre for Family Literacy
- The Welcome Center for Immigrants
- The Family Centre

Appendix:

Special Needs Funding for Preschool

Alberta Education and ABC Head Start work with you to make sure we have the resources to support all children in Head Start.

Young children learn and develop at different rates. Some children need more time and extra help to become strong learners in school. Other children will benefit from ongoing extra help as they move through school.

ABC Head Start works as a team with you and a number of other people with special skills in working with young children (Social Workers, Teachers, Speech Language Pathologists (SLP), Occupational Therapists, health service providers and preschool therapists).

To assess your child's learning these people will spend time with you and your child asking questions and exploring with you your child's needs. They will ask you and your child questions, ask your child to show them what they can do and observe your child in the classroom and with other children their age.

This assessment process may identify that a child would benefit from extra help in his/her Head Start year. When a need for additional support is identified we can apply for additional funding from Alberta Education. Alberta Education asks us to provide the assessment results, which explains what additional help is needed for each child.

Early Learning Programs in Edmonton

It takes a wide range of services to meet the needs of Edmonton families. ABC Head Start is only one service but we can help you find others. Following are just a few of the services available in Edmonton. Feel free to call, browse the internet, share this list with your friends or ask us about these services.

Call 211 - COMMUNITY REFERRAL LINE

211 is a 24-hour information and referral line that helps people connect to social, health and government services. <https://edmonton.cmha.ca/>

PARENT LINK CENTRES: There are several parent link centres in Edmonton – these provide services to families or can help you find a program for your family. Visit www.parentlinkalberta.ca

EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Check with the library closest to your home to find out the times for preschool story time programs. www.epl.ca/

LEISURE ACCESS PROGRAM

The Leisure Access Program gives low-income Edmontonians unlimited free admissions to City of Edmonton recreation facilities and registered programs at a lower cost.

www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/leisure-access-program.aspx

ASSIST COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTRE

Provides programs for families and children new to Canada. <http://assistcsc.org/en/>

School Boards: In Edmonton each of the school boards offer a variety of early learning programs – visit their website or drop-in at your community school for more information

EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT (ECSD)

www.ecsd.net/schools/GELC/Pages/Early-Learning-Program-Information.aspx

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD (EPSB)

www.epsb.ca/programs/earlyyears/

WELCOME TO THE **ABC HEAD START** FAMILY

**The ABC Head Start Society
Central Office
is located at:**

12122 68 St NW
Edmonton, AB T5B 1R1

Phone: (780) 461-5353

E-mail: info@abcheadstart.org

Hours of operations: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

www.abcheadstart.org

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