

PARENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027



5827 ORLEANS ROAD
ORLEANS, MI 48865
616.754.9315

[Main](#) | [8cap](#)

[EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start Programs](#) | [Orleans MI](#) | [Facebook](#)

Proudly serving children and families in Clinton (EHS only), Gratiot, Ionia, Isabella and Montcalm Counties.



Revised 7/2026

EIGHTCAP, INC. PARENT HANDBOOK

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COUNTY OFFICES

EIGHTCAP, INC. – IONIA OFFICE
5827 ORLEANS, RD
ORLEANS, MI 48865
616.754.9315

EIGHTCAP, INC. – MONTCALM OFFICE
906 OAK DRIVE
GREENVILLE, MI 48838
616.754.9315

EIGHTCAP, INC. – GRATIOT OFFICE
525 N. STATE ST., STE. 2
ALMA, MI 48801
989.463.5693

EIGHTCAP, INC. – ISABELLA OFFICE
2480 CAMPUS DR., SUITE C200
MT. PLEASANT, MI 48858
989.772.0110

INFANT/TODDLER CENTERS

BUILDING BLOCKS 1
2009 E. PRESTON ST.
MT. PLEASANT, MI 48858
989.773.9186
616.894.7431 (CELL)

BUILDING BLOCKS 4
1479 S. US 27
ST. JOHNS, MI 48879
616.894.8286 (CELL)

BUILDING BLOCKS 2
124 6TH ST.
LAKEVIEW, MI 48850
989.842.6005
616.824.4503 (CELL)

BUILDING BLOCKS 5
830 HARRISON ST.
IONIA, MI 48846
616.236.1024
616.894.8593 (CELL)

BUILDING BLOCKS 3
125 S. MAPLE ST.
ITHACA, MI 48847
989.875.4445
616.894.8120 (CELL)

BUILDING BLOCKS 6
2009 E. PRESTON ST.
MT. PLEASANT, MI 48858
616.236.1026
616.894.3842 (CELL)

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PRESCHOOL CENTERS

ALMA COLLEGE HEAD START
270 PURDY DR.
ALMA, MI 48801
989.463.2797
616.894.0839 (CELL)

ALMA HEAD START
608 WRIGHT AVE.
ALMA, MI 48801
989.462.1254
616.894.0574 (CELL)

BELDING HEAD START
755 ORCHARD ST.
BELDING, MI 48809
616.225.5980
616.894.0916 (CELL)

BELDING HEAD START/GSRP
755 ORCHARD ST.
BELDING, MI 48809
616.236.1014
616.894.2508 (CELL)

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
CHILD DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING LAB
195 OJIBWAY CT.
MT. PLEASANT, MI 48858
989.774.9760

CRYSTAL HEAD START
217 W. PARK ST.
CRYSTAL, MI 48818
989.584.4009
616.894.2897 (CELL)

EDMORE 1 HEAD START
321 N. FIFTH ST.
EDMORE, MI 48829
989.427.5913
616.894.3743 (CELL)

EDMORE 2 HEAD START
321 N. FIFTH ST.
EDMORE, MI 48829
989.889.3070
616.894.3755 (CELL)

GREENVILLE 1 HEAD START
906 OAK DR.
GREENVILLE, MI 48838
616.225.5984
616.849.5921 (CELL)

GREENVILLE 2 HEAD START
906 OAK DR.
GREENVILLE, MI 48838
616.225.5986
616.894.4593 (CELL)

GREENVILLE 3 HEAD START
906 OAK DR.
GREENVILLE, MI 48838
616.225.5983
616.894.4638 (CELL)

GREENVILLE 4 HEAD START
906 OAK DR.
GREENVILLE, MI 48838
616.225.5990
616.894.4783 (CELL)

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PRESCHOOL CENTERS (cont.)

HOWARD CITY HEAD START
415 CEDAR ST.
HOWARD CITY, MI 49329
231.937.4391 x 3101
616.894.4869 (CELL)

LAKEVIEW HEAD START
124 6TH ST.
LAKEVIEW, MI 48850
989.775.3795
616.894.5563 (CELL)

IONIA 1 HEAD START/GSRP
830 HARRISON ST.
IONIA, MI 48846
616.236.1012
616.894.4993 (CELL)

MT. PLEASANT 1 HEAD START
3771 N. MISSION RD.
ROSEBUSH, MI 48878
989.433.2962 x 43121
616.894.5565 (CELL)

IONIA 2 HEAD START
830 HARRISON ST.
IONIA, MI 48846
616.236.1013
616.894.5008 (CELL)

MT. PLEASANT 2 HEAD START
3771 N. MISSION RD.
ROSEBUSH, MI 48878
989.433.2962 x 43100
616.894.5663 (CELL)

IONIA 3 HEAD START
830 HARRISON ST.
IONIA, MI 48846
616.236.1023
616.894.5181 (CELL)

MT. PLEASANT 3 HEAD START
3771 N. MISSION RD.
ROSEBUSH, MI 48878
989.433.2962 x 43101
616.894.5721 (CELL)

IONIA 4 HEAD START
830 HARRISON ST.
IONIA, MI 48846
616.208.1577
616.894.5242 (CELL)

ORLEANS HEAD START
5827 ORLEANS RD.
ORLEANS, MI 48865
616.208.1551
616.894.5750 (CELL)

ITHACA HEAD START
125 S. MAPLE ST.
ITHACA, MI 48847
989.875.4441
616.894.5478 (CELL)

SARANAC HEAD START
250 PLEASANT ST.
SARANAC, MI 48881
616.642.1267
616.894.5923 (CELL)

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PRESCHOOL CENTERS (cont.)

SHEPHERD HEAD START
225 S. CHIPPEWA ST.
SHEPHERD, MI 48883
989.828.5453
616.894.5948 (CELL)

STANTON 1 HEAD START
710 N. STATE ST.
STANTON, MI 48888
989.546.6113
616.894.5985 (CELL)

STANTON 2 HEAD START
710 N. STATE ST.
STANTON, MI 48888
989.546.6115
616.894.7196 (CELL)

ST. LOUIS 1 HEAD START
121 I & K STREET
ST. LOUIS, MI 48880
989.224.8147
616.894.7251 (CELL)

ST. LOUIS 2 HEAD START
121 I & K STREET
ST. LOUIS, MI 48880
989.359.3118
616.894.7425 (CELL)

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INFANT/TODDLER SCHEDULES AND CALENDAR

Infant/Toddler Centers

EightCAP, Inc. Infant/Toddler centers provide year-round early learning experiences four days per week (Monday through Thursday), with occasional Friday programming as scheduled. Program hours vary by center location. Your child's teacher will provide a daily classroom schedule, an annual program calendar, and monthly calendars highlighting upcoming events, activities, and important dates.

Below are sample daily schedules and the At-a-Glance Calendar for centers. Your child's teacher will provide a classroom-specific daily schedule, an annual program calendar, and monthly calendars that include upcoming events, activities, and important dates. All schedules and calendars are subject to change. Families will be notified of changes through teacher communications, the One Call Now notification system, and program Facebook updates.

Infant/Toddler Home Visits

The EightCAP, Inc. home visiting program provides year-round services through weekly home visits. Families receive one 90-minute (1½ hour) home visit each week with a designated Home Visitor. Home visits are parent-led and focus on supporting parents as their child's first and most important teacher.

SAMPLE INFANT/TODDLER CENTER DAILY SCHEDULE (7.5 HOURS/DAY)	SAMPLE INFANT/TODDLER HOME VISIT WEEKLY SCHEDULE (90 MINUTES/WEEK)
ARRIVAL	GREETING
HANDWASHING/BREAKFAST	REVIEW LAST WEEK'S ACTIVITY/IN-KIND
DIAPERING/BATHROOM	PARENT LED ACTIVITY
SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY	QUESTIONS/CONCERNS
CHILD INITIATED PLAY	PLANNING FOR NEXT WEEK'S HOME VISIT
LARGE GROUP TIME/TEACHER INITIATED PLAY	
OUTDOORS	
DIAPERING/BATHROOM	
HANDWASHING/LUNCH	
DIAPERING/BATHROOM	
QUIET TIME	
DIAPERING/BATHROOM	
HANDWASHING/SNACK	
DEPARTURE	

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INFANT/TODDLER SCHEDULE AND CALENDAR (cont.)

2026-27 At-a-Glance Infant/Toddler Center-Based Calendar

August 2026	
TBD	Beginning of Year Home Visit
26	Policy Council Meeting
September 2026	
7	No School: Agency Holiday
9	Parent Committee Kick-off
23	Policy Council Meeting
October 2026	
7	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 1
30	End of Fall Checkpoint
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
November 2026	
4	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 2
11	No School: Agency Holiday
26-27	No School: Thanksgiving Break
TBD	Parent/Teacher Conference
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
December 2026	
2	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 3
17	Last Day for Children: All Centers
21-31	No School: Winter Break: All Centers
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
January 2027	
1	No School: Winter Break
4	No School: Teacher Prep Day
5	School Resumes
6	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 4
8	Make-Up Day: All Centers
18	No School: Agency Holiday
TBD	Policy Council Meeting

February 2027	
3	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 5
12	End of Winter Checkpoint
15	No School: Agency Holiday
TBD	Parent/Teacher Conferences
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
March 2027	
3	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 6
24	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 7
29-31	Spring Break: Gratiot/Isabella/Clinton
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
April 2027	
1-5	Spring Break Cont: Gratiot/Isabella/Clinton
5-12	Spring Break: Ionia/Montcalm
6	School Resumes: Gratiot/Isabella/Clinton
9	Make-Up Day: Gratiot/Isabella/Clinton
13	School Resumes: Ionia/Montcalm
16	Make-up Day: Ionia/Montcalm
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
May 2027	
7	End of Spring Checkpoint
31	No School: Agency Holiday
TBD	Home Visits
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
June 2027	
18	No School: Agency Holiday
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
July 2027	
2-12	No School: Summer Break-All Centers
13	School Resumes: All Centers
16	Make-Up Day: All Centers Run
23	End of Summer Checkpoint
TBD	End of Year Home Visits
TBD	Policy Council Meeting

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PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE AND CALENDAR

Most EightCAP, Inc. Preschool centers are open four days per week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The Strong Beginnings preschool classroom operates Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Start and end times vary by center location. When necessary, make-up days may be scheduled on Fridays, Wednesdays for Strong Beginnings, and will be communicated to families in advance by your child's teacher.

Below is a sample daily schedule and the At-a-Glance Calendar. Your child's teacher will provide a classroom-specific daily schedule, an annual program calendar, and monthly calendars that include upcoming events, activities, and important dates. All schedules and calendars are subject to change. Families will be notified of changes through teacher communications, the One Call Now notification system, and program Facebook updates.

SAMPLE PRESCHOOL DAILY SCHEDULE 7.25 (HOURS/DAY)
ARRIVAL
HAND WASHING/TOILETING
BREAKFAST
HAND WASHING
SMALL GROUP
PLANNING TIME
WORK TIME (FREE CHOICE)
CLEAN-UP
HAND WASHING
LUNCH
RECALL
LARGE GROUP
OUTSIDE
HAND WASHING
QUIET TIME
HAND WASHING
SNACK
HANDWASHING
PREPARE FOR DEPARTURE
DEPARTURE

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PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE AND CALENDAR (cont.)

2026-27 At-a-Glance Preschool Calendar

August 2026	
17-21	Home Visits
24	First day of school
26	Policy Council Meeting
TBD	Center Open House
September 2026	
7	No School: Agency Holiday
9	Parent Committee Kick-off
23	Policy Council Meeting
October 2026	
7	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 1
30	End of Fall Checkpoint
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
November 2026	
4	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 2
11	No School: Agency Holiday
26-27	No School: Thanksgiving Break
TBD	Parent/Teacher Conferences
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
December 2026	
2	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 3
17	Last Day for Children
21-31	No School: Winter Break
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
January 2027	
1	No School: Winter Break
4	No School: Teacher Prep Day
5	School Resumes
6	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 4
8	Make-Up Day: All Centers Run
18	No School: Agency Holiday
TBD	Policy Council Meeting

February 2027	
3	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 5
12	End of Winer Checkpoints
15	No School: Agency Holiday
TBD	Parent/Teacher Conferences
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
March 2027	
3	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 6
24	Positive Solutions for Families-Session 7
29-31	Spring Break: Gratiot/Isabella
TBD	Parent/Teacher Conferences
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
April 2027	
1-5	Spring Break Cont.: Gratiot/Isabella
5-12	Spring Break: lonia/Montcalm
6	School Resumes: Gratiot/Isabella
9	Make- up Day: Gratiot/Isabella
13	School Resumes: lonia/Montcalm
16	Make Up-Day: lonia/Montcalm
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
May 2027	
28	End of Spring Checkpoints
31	No School: Agency Holiday
TBD	Policy Council Meeting
June 2027	
3	Last Day of School
7-11	Home Visits
TBD	Policy Council Meeting

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ADVERSE WEATHER INFORMATION

Preschool Centers

School may be closed or delayed due to weather conditions. EightCAP follows the lead of local public schools. If the public schools close, Head Start centers will generally close as well. However, there may be occasions when EightCAP closes even if local schools remain open.

For school closing information:

- EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start Programs Facebook page
- One Call Now text notifications

Preschool centers are allowed five adverse weather closure days. If public schools close for a sixth day, staff will provide virtual services for children. Please notify teaching staff if you need assistance connecting virtually.

Infant/Toddler Centers

Center closures are determined on a case-by-case basis. Families will be notified directly by EightCAP staff and/or One Call Now text notifications.

Infant/Toddler Home Visits

In rare instances, home visits may be canceled due to severe weather. If canceled, the home visitor will contact the family, and every effort will be made to reschedule the visit.

ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING

All newly enrolled children receive developmental and sensory screenings, including hearing and vision screenings, within 45 calendar days of entry into the program.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) – A developmental screening tool used for young children, typically from birth to age 5. It helps identify whether a child is developing skills expected for their age or if additional support or evaluation may be helpful. The ASQ-3 looks at five main developmental areas:

- Communication – talking, listening, understanding language
- Gross Motor – large movements like running, jumping, climbing
- Fine Motor – small movements like holding crayons or using scissors
- Problem Solving – learning, thinking, and reasoning skills
- Personal-Social – interacting with others, self-help, and emotional skills

Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) – An assessment tool used to support and evaluate the social and emotional development of young children, typically ages 0–5. The DECA is administered to better understand a child's:

- Initiative – ability to make choices, solve problems, and be independent

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- Self-Regulation – managing emotions and behaviors appropriately
- Attachment/Relationships – forming positive relationships with adults and peers

If concerns are identified through either assessment, a support plan may be developed and/or referrals may be made for further evaluation by special education or mental health professionals.

Ongoing Assessment - EightCAP uses Teaching Strategies GOLD®, an ongoing observation-based assessment system used in early childhood programs to track children's development and learning over time. Staff observe children and document observations in SmartTeach™.

These observations help staff:

- Assess developmental progress
- Complete checkpoints throughout the year
- Plan individualized activities for each child

Parents receive progress reports three to four times per year, depending on the program in which their child is enrolled, during Parent/Teacher Conferences and Home Visits.

ATTENDANCE

Consistent attendance in both the classroom and home visits helps children feel secure in their learning environment, gain independence, and master the skills needed for school readiness. Regular attendance also ensures that children receive the full range of services offered through the 0-5 Head Start Program.

A child may be withdrawn from the Early Head Start or Head Start program at any time at the request of the parent or guardian.

Preschool and Infant/Toddler Centers

When a child is absent and the school has not been notified, teaching staff will call or text the family to determine the reason for the absence.

If a child has frequent absences and attempts to re-engage the family are unsuccessful, the child may no longer be eligible for center-based services. EightCAP staff will work with families to identify barriers to attendance and provide appropriate support as needed.

If your child is absent for any reason, please contact your child's Teacher or Family Service Staff as soon as possible.

When a child is going to be absent, it is important to understand the reason they are unable to attend the center or complete a home visit. The program recognizes that regular attendance may sometimes be affected by a lack of basic needs (e.g., warm clothing for outdoor weather, winter boots, transportation, etc.). EightCAP, Inc. may be able to assist families in addressing these needs.

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Infant/Toddler Home Visits

While illness is unavoidable and occasional emergencies may occur, it is important that parents follow through and commit to scheduled home visits. Home visitors are required to provide 48 home visits for each enrolled child per year.

Home visitors will attempt to contact families if no one is home at the time of a scheduled visit and will leave a note if they are unable to make contact. Missed visits must be rescheduled in order to meet the required 48 home visits annually.

If a family experiences multiple absences or ongoing inconsistent attendance, the home visitor will consult with their supervisor to develop an action plan. EightCAP, Inc. staff will work with families to identify barriers to attendance and provide appropriate support.

If you need to cancel a home visit, please contact your home visitor as soon as possible to cancel and reschedule the visit.

BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS

EightCAP, Inc. staff receive training on bloodborne pathogens to ensure they understand and follow proper procedures for handling blood and other potentially infectious materials (bodily fluids). Staff are trained to use universal precautions at all times, treating all blood and bodily fluids as potentially infectious.

Non-latex gloves are available and used when handling any potential exposure. Appropriate cleaning and sanitizing procedures are followed to maintain a safe and healthy environment.

If a child's clothing or personal belongings become soiled, items will be placed in a sealed plastic bag and returned to the parent/guardian.

CELEBRATION GUIDELINES

Holidays are special occasions that many children and families enjoy; however, not all families celebrate holidays, or they may celebrate in different ways. If a parent has a special day or tradition they would like to share, or suggestions for the classroom, please talk with staff.

Please note:

- We are unable to send home invitations
- We cannot serve sugary snacks
- Healthy snacks may be shared with the class if a family would like to provide something

If you would like to review the full Celebration Procedures and Guidelines, you may request a copy from center staff.

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CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PROTECTIVE SERVICES REFERRAL POLICY

All EightCAP, Inc. staff are mandated reporters.

Under the Child Protection Law, mandated reporters are required to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

CHILD CUSTODY

EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start presumes that the enrolling parent(s) or guardian(s) have custody of the enrolling child unless legal documentation states otherwise.

At enrollment, parents complete a Child Information Record. The information provided is considered valid and current until a legal custody order is submitted indicating changes.

Unless a court order restricts access, the program also presumes that both parents or guardians have the right to:

- Receive information about the child's educational progress
- Visit the child
- Pick up the child from the program

If conflicting court orders are presented, staff will follow the most recently filed order.

EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start is not a party to custody agreements. Parents are responsible for resolving custody and parenting time issues through the courts and should not rely on the program to enforce custody arrangements.

The program makes every effort to maintain confidentiality while protecting the safety of children and respecting the rights of parents and guardians.

CLEANING, SANITIZING AND DISENTECTING

Our program follows current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and applicable licensing regulations for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting classrooms, equipment, toys, and high-touch surfaces to help maintain a safe and healthy environment for children and staff.

CLOTHING

It is recommended that children dress in casual, comfortable clothing for home visits, playgroups, and center-based attendance. Many activities involve hands-on learning and may become messy, such as water and sand play, painting, or occasional bathroom accidents.

Centers will have extra clothing available for children to change into if needed. However, families are encouraged to send an extra set of clothing in their child's backpack.

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Children go outside daily, so it is important to send appropriate outdoor clothing, especially during colder weather. Recommended items include:

- Warm coat
- Boots
- Hat
- Mittens
- Snow pants

For safety reasons, shoes with straps or laces that tie are preferred. Labeling your child's belongings is strongly encouraged to help prevent items from being lost or mixed up.

If you need assistance obtaining clothing or other basic necessities, please contact your child's Teacher, Home Visitor, or Family Service Worker.

CODE OF CONDUCT – APPROPRIATE ADULT BEHAVIOR

As a parent, guardian, or adult, you play an important role in your child's development. We rely on all adults to model positive behavior and set a strong example for children. Staff will also follow these same expectations.

All adults are expected to:

- Recognize that communication is a two-way process
- Communicate in an open and honest manner
- Be respectful and courteous at all times

In rare situations, a parent, guardian, or adult who violates the Code of Conduct may be asked not to visit EightCAP, Inc.'s property. Children will continue to be welcomed and served in the program.

COMMUNICATION

Strong communication between parents and staff helps reduce confusion, increase understanding, and strengthen relationships.

Communication occurs in many forms throughout the program, including:

- Face-to-face conversations
- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Video chats
- Email
- Teaching Strategies Family App
- Newsletters
- Journals

Parents are encouraged to inform staff of their preferred method of communication. Families are also encouraged to reach out at any time with questions, concerns, or information they would like to share.

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CONFIDENTIALITY

EightCAP, Inc. is committed to protecting the confidentiality of personal information about children and families.

Children's health records, education records, and family service records are accessible only to EightCAP staff and consultants on a "need-to-know" basis, and only to the extent necessary to carry out job responsibilities and provide services to families.

No information is released to individuals or agencies outside of EightCAP, Inc. without written consent from the family. Volunteers are not permitted to review records, and parents may only access records related to their own child.

Exceptions to Confidentiality - While confidentiality is a priority, there are legally mandated circumstances in which staff must report information, including:

- Suspected physical abuse or neglect
- Suspected sexual abuse
- Witnessing any abuse or neglect of a child

Photographs and Media - With parental permission, staff may use photographs of children for Early Head Start, Head Start, GSRP, or Strong Beginnings program purposes only (such as classroom projects). Volunteers are not permitted to take photographs of children in classrooms or on field trips. Parents or legal guardians who are volunteering may only photograph their own child(ren).

Data Reporting and Studies - EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start may report limited information, as required, to the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). MSDS reporting is used for accountability, funding, and ensuring quality education services. The GSRP program may also be selected to participate in national, regional, or statewide studies requiring collection of participant information. If requested, EightCAP, Inc. will comply with these requirements.

CONTROLLING INFECTIONS

EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start follows the Communicable Disease Mitigation Plan to help prevent and control the spread of infections within our programs.

For guidance on specific communicable diseases, the program uses the Managing Communicable Diseases in Schools Manual, published by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). Parents may request a copy of these documents at any time for reference.

Illness and Pick-Up Procedures - There may be times when a child becomes ill during the program day and parents are contacted to pick up their child. If a parent or guardian is unable to pick up their child, they are asked to contact an alternate person listed on the Child Information Record who is available to

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do so. Children will only be released to individuals listed on the Child Information Record. A valid driver's license or photo identification must be presented at the time of release.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

The safety and well-being of children is a top priority at EightCAP, Inc. All prospective employees are required to successfully complete comprehensive background checks before working with children. These checks include, but are not limited to, the National Sex Offender Registry, FBI fingerprinting, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services clearances, and the Michigan Internet Criminal History Access Tool (ICHAT) criminal history check.

Parents, guardians, and other volunteers who wish to participate in classroom activities or volunteer within the program must also complete required background screening procedures, including clearance through the National Sex Offender Registry, in accordance with program policies and licensing requirements. Additional screenings may be required based on the nature of the volunteer activity.

CURRICULUM

All curricula used in EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start programs are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF). Curricula are selected to ensure children receive developmentally appropriate, research-based learning experiences that support school readiness and overall growth in all domains of development.

Preschool Centers

Preschool classrooms use Creative Curriculum® for Preschool (Sixth Edition). This curriculum focuses on helping children ages 3–5 learn through hands-on exploration, play, and purposeful activities in a structured classroom environment. Classroom environments, activities, and materials are intentionally designed and selected based on children's individual interests, strengths, and developmental goals.

Infant/Toddler Centers

Early Head Start classrooms use The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, a research-based early childhood curriculum designed for children from birth through age 3. This curriculum focuses on helping very young children learn and develop through relationships, routines, and everyday experiences.

Infant/Toddler Home Visits

Early Head Start Home Visitors use Baby TALK Curriculum in addition to The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos. Baby TALK is a research-based home visiting curriculum that focuses on supporting infants and toddlers through strong relationships, responsive caregiving, and family engagement.

EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start programs use the Teaching Strategies Family App to strengthen communication and partnership between families and staff. The app provides a secure platform where families can stay connected to their child's learning and development.

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Through the app, families may:

- View photos, videos, and classroom updates
- Receive messages and communication from teachers
- Share observations about their child's learning and development at home
- Support ongoing collaboration with teachers and home visitors

The Family App helps strengthen the connection between home and school by keeping families informed, involved, and engaged in their child's educational experience. Teachers and home visitors will provide information on how to access and use the system.

If you would like more information about the curriculum or wish to provide feedback, please contact your child's teacher or home visitor.

DENTAL POLICY

Good oral hygiene is important for children's overall health and development. If your child needs a toothbrush at home, please reach out to any EightCAP 0-5 Head Start staff member.

During center-based experiences, children will have the opportunity to brush their teeth daily while at school.

Children enrolled in the 0-5 Head Start program must follow an age-appropriate dental care schedule. For all children over 12 months of age, a dental examination is required within six (6) months prior to the first day of school, or no later than 90 days after enrollment, and every six (6) months thereafter. Health staff will obtain documentation of dental visits from the child's dentist to determine if any follow-up care is needed and may contact families via text, email, or phone to ensure they have the support and resources needed to access required treatment.

DISABILITY / SPECIAL NEEDS INFORMATION

EightCAP, Inc. is committed to the success of all children. Staff work in partnership with families to plan for and support each child's individual needs. Parents of children with special needs may request a daily written record that includes information such as:

- Food intake
- Sleeping patterns
- Elimination patterns
- Developmental milestones
- Any changes in unusual behavior

This information helps ensure consistent communication and supports the child's health, development, and overall well-being.

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DISCIPLINE: BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

EightCAP, Inc. staff are trained in Conscious Discipline, a classroom management approach that supports both teachers and children in addressing daily conflicts in a positive and developmentally appropriate way. Staff use positive child guidance strategies and do not engage in:

- Corporal punishment (including spanking or hitting)
- Emotional or physical abuse
- Humiliation or shaming

In addition, staff do not use discipline methods involving:

- Isolation or exclusion (including time-out)
- Denial of basic needs
- Food as punishment or reward

Positive Behavior Support Practices - Staff are expected to incorporate the following practices into daily interactions with children:

- Use visual supports to review rules and routines
- Help children understand and follow routines
- Listen and respond to children's needs and communication
- Use calm, clear, and positive language
- Support children in using calming strategies (such as a "Safe Place")
- Plan smooth transitions and appropriate wait times
- Recognize and support children during challenging times
- Ignore minor, isolated behaviors when appropriate
- Offer choices when possible
- Provide activities based on individual interests
- Focus on children's strengths
- Use logical consequences that support learning

Behavior Support Planning - When unsafe or persistent challenging behavior interferes with learning, staff will collaborate with the Education Coordinator, Mental Health Coordinator, and the child's family to develop a Targeted Support Plan.

If the behavior continues after approximately three weeks of implementation, an Alternative Teaching Plan may be considered. All Alternative Teaching Plans must be approved by the 0-5 Head Start Director and Mental Health Coordinator prior to implementation.

Note: During home visits, playgroups, and other EightCAP-sponsored events, discipline remains the responsibility of the parent or guardian. Staff are available to provide support and guidance as needed.

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DROPPING OFF AND PICKING UP YOUR CHILD

For safety reasons, children should never be left unattended in a vehicle. Although it may be convenient to leave other children in the car during drop-off or pick-up, this is very dangerous. Staff are required by law to notify Protective Services if young children are left unattended in a vehicle.

To support classroom routines, learning opportunities, and children's sense of security and predictability, parents/guardians are expected to maintain consistent drop-off and pick-up times whenever possible. Drop-off and pick-up times should align with the program's established class start and end times, except in cases of approved schedule changes or unforeseen circumstances.

Drop-Off Procedures

- Please park in designated parking areas.
- Children must be signed in by the adult that is dropping them off upon arrival
- If arriving at a time other than the regular drop-off time, please call your child's classroom
- Never leave a child unattended at the center. Always ensure your child is in the care of an EightCAP staff member before leaving
- Children should arrive no more than five (5) minutes before the start of class

Pick-Up Procedures

- Please park in designated parking areas.
- Children must be signed out by the adult that is picking them up before departing the center
- If picking up at a time other than the regular pick-up time, please contact your child's classroom
- Parents/guardians, or an authorized adult are expected to pick up their child promptly at the end of the program day.

At enrollment, parents complete a Child Information Record listing individuals authorized to pick up their child. Children will only be released to individuals listed on this form. If there are any changes to authorized pick-up information, parents must notify the teacher or family service worker. A password may be required for verification.

If someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up the child, they must:

- Be listed on the Child Information Record
- Be authorized in advance by the parent through written note, phone call, email, or text
- Present valid identification upon request

Note: A child may be released to either parent unless a court order prohibits release to a specific parent (a copy of the court order must be kept on file at the center). Please refer to the Child Custody section for additional information.

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ENROLLMENT

EightCAP, Inc. enrolls eligible children and families according to Enrollment Priority Policies that are reviewed and approved annually by the EightCAP, Inc. Policy Council and Governing Board. When an application is received, program staff determine eligibility and assign priority points based on the approved enrollment criteria.

Applicants are entered into the ChildPlus data management system, where priority points are recorded. Enrollment opportunities are offered to eligible children and families with the highest priority point totals first. When all available enrollment slots are filled, eligible applicants are placed on a waiting list. The waiting list is maintained and updated regularly to ensure that openings are filled promptly as they become available.

EXCLUSION POLICY

EightCAP, Inc. is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment for all children. Children will not be excluded, suspended, or expelled from the program due to behavioral challenges, the need for behavioral support services, assistance with toileting, developmental delays, disabilities, or staff attitudes or apprehensions.

However, there are circumstances in which a child, volunteer or staff member may be temporarily excluded from the classroom and/or playgroup when required by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) or Child Care Licensing regulations, such as certain health and safety concerns. In these situations, families will be notified promptly and provided with information regarding the child's return to the program. For additional information, families and staff may request a copy of the Health Exclusion Policy, Health Exclusion Procedure, Communicable Disease Mitigation Plan, and the Managing Communicable Diseases in School protocol.

Immunizations / Illness Exclusion Criteria

In EightCAP, Inc. early childhood programs, the health and safety of children, families, volunteers, and staff is a top priority. The purpose of this policy is to prevent the spread of communicable diseases within EightCAP, Inc. licensed child care centers and during home visits conducted through Early Childhood Education programs. This policy also complies with Rule 400.8263(5) of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers.

Preschool and Infant/Toddler Centers

Children enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start center-based classrooms may be excluded from attendance for the following reasons:

- Failure to have required State of Michigan immunizations on file or a signed State of Michigan Immunization Waiver Form
- Presence of communicable diseases or parasites as required by Child Care Licensing (see “Controlling Infections” section for additional illness-related exclusions)

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- Failure to have an up-to-date physical examination on file within 30 calendar days of the start of attendance, as required by Child Care Licensing
 - Children experiencing homelessness will not be excluded after the 30-day period and will have 30 days from the date they secure housing to submit an updated physical.
- Failure to provide required life-saving medication (such as an EpiPen, seizure medication, or inhaler) when medically necessary for attendance

Many illnesses do not require exclusion from the program. However, children may be excluded if the illness prevents them from participating comfortably in school activities or if there is a risk of spreading a harmful disease to others. Exclusion decisions are based on the following criteria:

- Severe illness: A child who is lethargic or less responsive has difficulty breathing or has a rapidly spreading rash with fever.
- Fever: A child with a temperature of 101°F or greater accompanied by behavior changes or other symptoms (such as sore throat, rash, vomiting, or diarrhea). The child may return after being fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
 - During influenza-like or COVID-19-like activity in the school or community, fever criteria may also include a temperature over 100.4°F with respiratory symptoms (such as cough or sore throat).
- Diarrhea: A child with two or more loose or watery stools. The child must be free of diarrhea 24 hours before returning to care.
 - Exception: A healthcare provider determines the condition is not infectious.
 - Diarrhea may be caused by antibiotics or new foods.
 - For confirmed cases related to Campylobacter, E. coli, Salmonella, or Shigella, refer to the Managing Communicable Diseases in School protocol for exclusion and clearance requirements.
- Vomiting: A child who has vomited two or more times. The child must be free of vomiting 24 hours before returning.
 - Exception: A healthcare provider determines the condition is not infectious.
- Abdominal pain: Persistent abdominal pain lasting two hours or longer, or intermittent pain accompanied by fever or other symptoms.
- Rash: A child with a rash and fever or behavioral changes. Exclusion is required until the rash subsides or a healthcare provider determines it is not infectious.
 - Note: Rapidly spreading bruising or small blood spots under the skin require immediate medical attention.
- Skin sores: Open, weeping sores on exposed areas that cannot be covered with waterproof dressing.

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- Certain communicable diseases: Children or staff diagnosed with specific communicable diseases may require exclusion for a designated period of time as determined by health guidelines.

Infant/Toddler Home Visits

Children enrolled in Early Head Start Home-Based services may be excluded from playgroups due to communicable diseases or parasites when required for health and safety.

FAMILY SERVICES

EightCAP's Early Head Start and Head Start programs recognize parents and caregivers as their child's first and most important teachers. Family Services staff provide opportunities, resources, and support to help families identify their strengths, address their needs, and pursue their goals.

Each family is offered the opportunity to develop a Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) with Family Services staff. The FPA is a collaborative process that builds upon a family's individual strengths and supports them in establishing and working toward goals that are meaningful to them. Family Services staff can also assist families in accessing community resources, strengthening family well-being, and supporting their child's growth and development.

For families enrolled in center-based programs, Family Services staff serve as an additional support resource separate from classroom teaching staff. For families enrolled in home-based programs, the Home Visitor serves as the family's primary Family Services contact. For families participating in both Early Head Start and Head Start services, support staff collaborate to ensure coordinated and comprehensive services that best meet the family's needs.

FATHERHOOD SUPPORT

EightCAP, Inc. recognizes the important role that fathers and positive male role models play in the healthy development and education of children. Research shows that children benefit when fathers and father figures are actively involved in their lives, demonstrating improved learning outcomes, stronger school performance, and healthier social and emotional development.

Fathers and significant male role models are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the program. Opportunities for involvement include enrollment activities, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, participating in family events, serving on parent committees, and engaging in other program activities. Whether or not they live in the same household as the child, fathers and male role models are valued partners in supporting children's growth, learning, and success.

FEES

EightCAP, Inc. Early Head Start and Head Start programs are federally funded and provided at no cost to eligible children and families. No fees, tuition, or enrollment charges will be assessed for participation in program services.

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FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are planned to enhance children's learning experiences and provide opportunities to explore the community. Walking field trips may be scheduled throughout the year, and families are encouraged to participate whenever possible. Parents and guardians are also welcome to share ideas and suggestions for future field trip opportunities.

General permission for walking field trips is obtained during the enrollment process; however, families will receive detailed information about each field trip at least one week in advance whenever possible. Information provided will include the destination, date, time, and any special instructions.

Each spring, preschool children may have the opportunity to participate in a kindergarten field trip to their local public school. Transportation for this trip is typically provided by the local school district using its school buses. A signed permission slip is required before a child may participate in the trip or ride the public-school bus.

All field trips are planned and supervised to ensure the safety and well-being of participating children.

FOOD ALLERGY, SENSITIVITY, OR INTOLERANCE

The Parent/Guardian will complete a Food Allergy or Sensitivity Questionnaire at enrollment indicating whether the child requires a food substitution due to sensitivity or intolerance. Health Staff will then contact the child's physician to obtain a completed Food Allergy–Sensitivity Statement. This form identifies foods that must be omitted or limited and approved substitutions. A physician-signed form must be received before staff are permitted to purchase or provide specialized food items.

Food accommodations requested for personal or religious reasons (not based on parent or child preference) will be considered after a Food Accommodation Parent Statement has been completed and submitted.

The full Food Substitution Procedure is available upon request.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

EightCAP, Inc. values open communication and encourages families to share questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding their child's Early Head Start or Head Start experience. If you have a concern related to your child's program services, the first step is to discuss the matter with your child's teacher or Home Visitor. Many concerns can be resolved quickly through direct communication and collaboration.

If the concern cannot be resolved at that level, families are encouraged to contact the Head Start/Early Head Start Director, Janel Boulis, at (616) 754-9315, or the appropriate Education Coordinator serving their county. Program staff will work with families to review concerns, explore possible solutions, and ensure that all concerns are addressed in a respectful and timely manner.

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Families may submit concerns without fear of retaliation, and every effort will be made to resolve issues fairly and confidentially.

HAND WASHING

Proper hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness in child care settings. EightCAP, Inc. staff support and teach children correct handwashing techniques and ensure that hand hygiene is practiced consistently throughout the day.

Classroom staff and volunteers will wash their hands:

- Prior to starting the workday at the center
- Prior to care of children
- Before & after preparing, serving food & feeding children
- Before & after giving medication
- After each diapering
- After using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet
- After handling bodily fluids
- After handling animals and pets and cleaning cages
- After handling garbage
- When soiled
- After playing outdoors or in the gym

Children will wash their hands:

- Before & after meals, snacks, and food prep experiences
- After toileting, diapering and toothbrushing
- After handling animals and pets
- After contact with any bodily fluids
- When soiled
- After playing outdoors or in the gym

Staff will actively supervise and assist children with handwashing as needed to ensure proper technique, including scrubbing all surfaces of the hands for at least 20 seconds, rinsing thoroughly, and drying with a disposable towel.

Handwashing sinks are always stocked with soap and single-use disposable towels. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used only when soap and water are not immediately available and are not a substitute for proper handwashing when sinks are accessible.

Consistent hand hygiene is an important part of maintaining a healthy classroom environment and reducing the spread of illness among children and staff.

HEAD LICE POLICY

The EightCAP, Inc. Head Lice Policy is designed to support children and families enrolled in EightCAP, Inc. programs while meeting the requirements of Michigan Child Care Licensing. Families are supported throughout the process of addressing head lice. The program considers head lice a nuisance, not a communicable disease. Children will not be excluded due to head lice unless there are extenuating

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circumstances that impact the health and safety of the classroom. If you would like to review the full Head Lice Policy & Procedure, you may request a copy from center staff.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

All children participating in EightCAP, Inc. center-based programs are required to have an up-to-date well-child physical examination completed within the required timeframes prior to or shortly after enrollment. Physical exams must be completed within the proceeding 13 months of initial attendance as outlined by Child Care Licensing Rule 400.8112(5).

EightCAP, Inc. advocates for regular physical and dental visits as outlined within the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) guidelines. Children must also be up to date on immunizations in accordance with the State of Michigan's immunization schedule adopted from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Physical examinations, dental exams, and current immunization records will be maintained on file for Head Start and Child Care Licensing compliance purposes. Federal regulations also require that children receive ongoing health screenings to identify and address any health concerns in a timely manner.

HEALTH RESOURCES

Upon request, EightCAP, Inc. provides families with information regarding local physicians, dentists, and specialists who are available to provide services to children and families. Additional health, wellness, and community resources are shared through the EightCAP website and Facebook page. Families with questions or concerns regarding health services or community resources are encouraged to contact their Family Service Worker or the Health Services Supervisor for assistance.

HOME VISITS AND PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES (Center-Based Programs)

Home visits and parent-teacher conferences are valuable opportunities for families and staff to build strong relationships and work together to support each child's growth and development. Classroom staff conduct home visits and conferences with respect, sensitivity, and a commitment to partnering with families.

Families enrolled in center-based programs are expected to participate in two home visits and two parent-teacher conferences during each program year. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the child's progress, celebrate achievements, identify areas for growth, and establish goals together.

Home visits and parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in advance, with both daytime and evening options available whenever possible. During home visits, staff focus on getting to know the child and family, strengthening partnerships, and supporting learning and development. The purpose of a home visit is not to evaluate the home environment, but rather to spend time with families and build meaningful relationships that support children's success.

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HOME VISITS AND PLAYGROUPS (Home-Based Program)

Early Head Start Home-Based services are designed to support both children and their families. Parent involvement is a cornerstone of the program because parents and caregivers are recognized as their child's first and most important teachers.

The purpose of the home-based program is to strengthen family relationships and support the healthy physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of infants and toddlers within the comfort of their home environment. Home visiting is a family-centered approach that brings services directly to families, where children and parents are often most comfortable and engaged.

Each enrolled family receives a weekly home visit lasting approximately 90 minutes. During these visits, parents play an active role in their child's learning and development by participating in activities and planning future visits with support from their Home Visitor. Consistent participation is important to ensure families receive the full benefit of the program and to promote positive outcomes for children.

If a scheduled home visit must be canceled, families should notify their Home Visitor as soon as possible. If direct contact is not possible, families should leave a note at the home. Program staff will work with families to reschedule and complete missed visits whenever possible.

In addition to home visits, playgroups are offered twice each month. Families are encouraged to attend regularly and are expected to participate in at least one playgroup each month with their child.

Playgroups provide opportunities for children to interact with peers and develop school readiness skills while allowing parents to connect with other families, share experiences, learn about child development, and discuss topics of interest. Mileage reimbursement may be available for families who transport their child to and from playgroup activities in accordance with program procedures.

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

Immunizations are required in accordance with the current schedule recommended by the State of Michigan's immunization schedule adopted from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children must maintain either a provisional or complete immunization status in order to remain in attendance.

Children who have received their 1st dose in all age-eligible vaccine series but do not have complete immunizations will be allowed up to four (4) months to obtain provisional or full compliance status. After this timeframe, children will be excluded from attendance until immunization requirements are met.

Parents/guardians who choose to forego immunizations for religious or philosophical reasons must obtain a waiver through the local Health Department prior to the child attending the program.

EightCAP, Inc., follows Child Care Licensing regulations regarding the attendance of children who are not immunized for medical or religious reasons. Unimmunized children may be excluded during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses, as directed by the state health department.

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For additional information, please refer to the Immunization Policy.

LICENSING NOTEBOOK

EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start does not maintain a hard copy of a Licensing Notebook; however, internet access is available on site. All licensing inspection reports, special inspection reports, corrective action plans, and approval letters from the past three calendar years can be accessed at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

MEALS AND SNACKS

Preschool and Infant/Toddler Centers

Breakfast, lunch, and snack times are considered important educational experiences for children and adults in EightCAP classrooms. Classroom staff and volunteers are expected to plan for and support positive, developmentally appropriate mealtime environments that promote learning, social interaction, and healthy eating habits.

Children are provided with meals and snacks that meet the standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All meals are approved by a Registered Dietitian. All meals and snacks served to enrolled children will be free of charge to families. Each child receives breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack daily through CACFP. A mid-morning snack will also be offered. Mid-morning snack items may occasionally be provided through donated items, which may be counted as an in-kind contribution.

Approved mid-morning snack donations are limited to items on the approved snack list. Whenever possible, snacks should be individually wrapped. Donations should be provided in sufficient amounts to serve the entire classroom. All snack donations must also be pre-approved to ensure they are safe for children with food allergies and comply with posted classroom allergy restrictions.

Approved Mid-Morning Snack List

- | | |
|--|--|
| ● Crackers (preferably whole grain, non-cookie type) | ● Granola Bars (chewy, non-chocolate options) |
| ● Wheat Thins, Ritz, plain animal crackers, Goldfish | ● Pretzels |
| ● Veggie Straws | ● Regie Rainbow tasting options |
| ● Cheese Sticks | ● Fruit and vegetables (keeping limitations on preparation, service, and cost in mind) |
| ● Fruit/Grain Bars (ex. Nutri-Grain Bars type bars) | |

Additional Information

- Infants and toddlers are fed on demand to support individual needs and routines.
- Infants requiring bottles are held during feeding; bottles are never propped.
- Mealtimes are intended to be relaxed, social experiences that support learning and nourishment.

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- Food is never used as a form of reward or punishment.
- All foods listed on the menu for meals are served at the same time.
- Children have a brief transition period after handwashing before meals are served.
- Staff support children in learning proper use of eating utensils and encourage independence.
- Children may have second helpings of preferred foods without being required to finish or try other foods first.
- Any special dietary needs must be supported by physician documentation outlining required substitutions, in accordance with USDA guidelines.
- Food allergies are documented by Health Staff, posted appropriately, and meals are served according to physician instructions.
- A Nutrition Consultant provides training, support, and consultation to staff and families as needed.
- Children always have access to filtered drinking water while in care.

Food Experiences: In addition to regular meals, staff may serve small portions of food related to classroom Project Studies or Regie's Rainbow Adventure. Regie's Rainbow Adventure is a health-based curriculum for early childhood learners. It provides activities that support oral health, literacy, language development, mathematics, scientific understanding, creative arts, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, and physical health and development. A list of food items that may be used as part of Regie's Rainbow Adventure activities is available in the classroom.

Infant/Toddler Home Visits

Staff will occasionally assist parents in preparing nutritious snacks during home visits. Nutritious snacks and beverages will also be provided at playgroup sessions.

Food Preparation/Storage Practices

- Refrigerators will be maintained at a temperature below 40°F, and freezers will be maintained below 0°F. Refrigerator and freezer temperatures will be monitored using thermometers that are checked daily to ensure proper temperature control.
- Hot foods will be kept at or above 140°F, and cold foods will be kept at or below 40°F. These temperatures will be maintained until food is served. Staff will use a food thermometer to check and document food temperatures daily.
- All food stored in the refrigerator, except fresh whole fruits and vegetables, will be covered, wrapped, or otherwise protected from contamination.
- Food preparation, storage, and service areas will be kept clean and sanitary and will comply with national food safety guidelines.
- Foods that do not require refrigeration will be stored at least six inches above the floor in clean, dry, and well-ventilated storage areas. Storage practices will be arranged to allow for easy cleaning and sanitation.

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- Food containers will be rodent- and insect-resistant. Dry bulk foods (such as cereal) that are not kept in original, unopened packaging will be stored off the floor in clean, food-grade metal, glass, or plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. All containers will be labeled and dated.
- A dishwasher will be used to clean dishes and food service utensils whenever possible. When handwashing is required, staff will follow EightCAP, Inc. dishwashing procedures.

MEDICATION

We encourage all medications, both prescription and over the counter, to be administered at home whenever possible. When administration during program hours is necessary, the following procedures must be followed:

Prescription Medication

If a physician determines that a prescription medication must be given or made available during program hours for recurring conditions, emergencies, or chronic health needs, the following requirements must be completed before the child may attend school with the medication:

- The medication must be provided in the original prescription container and clearly labeled with the child's name, medication name, prescribing physician, dosage, frequency of administration, and storage instructions.
- The child's physician must complete a Physician Medical Health Alert Follow-Up / Individualized Health Plan, which includes:
 - The medical condition being treated
 - Required medication instructions
 - Any precautions, including side effects or overdose symptoms
 - Emergency response procedures
 - Clear indication of whether the medication is required for school attendance
- A Medication Permission and Instructions form must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian prior to staff administering any medication. All sections must be fully completed and must match the prescription label and/or physician documentation.
- Completed Medication Permission and Instruction form must be submitted to the Health Services Supervisor for approval, along with a photo of the medication label.
- Staff will document each dose administered and record any unusual reactions on the Medication Permission and Instructions form.

Over The Counter Medication

If a child requires over the counter (OTC) medication to be administered during program hours, the following requirements must be met:

- The medication must be used only for the purpose recommended on the manufacturer's label.
- The medication must be provided in its original container.

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- The container must be clearly labeled with the child's name.
- Instructions and dosage appropriate for the child's age and/or weight must be clearly stated.

If a parent requests a dosage or use that differs from the manufacturer's instructions, a signed authorization from the child's physician is required BEFORE EightCAP 0-5 Head Start staff may administer the medication.

A Medication Permission and Instructions form must be completed by the parent/guardian prior to staff administering any OTC medication. All sections of the form must be fully completed and must match the medication label and/or physician instructions.

Completed Medication Permission and Instruction form must be submitted to the Health Services Supervisor for approval, along with a photo of the medication label.

Staff will document each dose administered and record any unusual reactions on the Medication Permission and Instructions form.

Topical Non-Prescription Medication

This includes, but is not limited to, sunscreen, diaper cream, and insect repellent. These items require written parental authorization on an annual basis and are included on the Enrollment Permission form, depending on the program in which the child is enrolled. This form is completed at enrollment with the Family Service Worker.

Parents may choose to provide their own topical non-prescription medications. In these cases, a Topical Non-Prescription Medication Permission Form must be completed for each approved item.

Additional information

- Parents are required to review all Medication Permission and Instructions forms at a minimum during Home Visits and Parent-Teacher Conferences and update them as needed. Any changes to medication instructions or authorizations will require completion of a new form to ensure accuracy and compliance.
- Medicines must be given directly to EightCAP, Inc staff, in the original container. Medications may not be transported in the child's backpack.
- Under no circumstances will medication be administered if it is past its expiration date.
- All medications will be kept at the temperature recommended for its type, and in a container that is inaccessible to children and prevents spillage.

NUTRITION / FEEDING

Infant formula and baby food will be provided by the center for infants and toddlers; however, parents may choose to supply their own formula. Staff will collaborate closely with parents to determine the appropriate time to introduce finger foods based on each child's developmental readiness. Meals and

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snacks for preschool-aged children are also provided by the center. Only nutritious, low-sugar foods will be served.

Note: If the program provides formula, it must be commercially prepared and ready-to-feed, in accordance with Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers (R 400.8335(5)). If powdered formula is used, parents/guardians must prepare bottles at drop-off.

Children with special dietary needs will be provided with formula and meals that meet those needs, based on written instructions from the parent/guardian and a licensed physician. Menus will be posted in the center, and any required substitutions will be clearly documented.

EightCAP Head Start supports breastfeeding as a healthy choice for infants and families. Nursing mothers are welcome to breastfeed their child at the center at any time during program hours. The program provides a private, comfortable space for mothers who wish to nurse or express breast milk. Staff will work with families to support each child's feeding plan and to ensure that expressed breast milk is properly labeled, stored, and handled according to health and safety guidelines. Families are encouraged to discuss their breastfeeding needs with program staff so appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

Infant Feeding

- Formula will be provided by the center.
- Bottles and nipples are provided by the center, cleaned, and sanitized between uses.
- Parents may provide bottles and nipples; however, each bottle and nipple supplied by a parent will be used for a single feeding only and then returned home.
- Breastfeeding parents are welcome to nurse their child at the center or provide expressed breast milk in a labeled, assembled bottle.
- Infants who cannot sit independently will be held during feeding.
- Infants who cannot hold their own bottle will be fed by staff; bottle propping is strictly prohibited.
- Introduction of solid foods will be based on parent input and/or physician guidance.
 - Solid foods are typically introduced between 4–6 months of age, depending on the child's developmental and nutritional needs.
 - Any dietary modifications must be provided in writing by the child's health care provider.
- After six months of age, infants will be encouraged to self-feed as developmentally appropriate. Foods will be prepared in advance to support self-feeding, and children will be encouraged, but not forced, to try a variety of foods.
- Infants under 12 months will be fed on demand when hungry.

Toddler Feeding

- The child's primary caregiver will remain nearby during feeding times.

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- Foods will be cut into 1/4–1/2-inch pieces to support safe finger feeding for children six months and older. Utensils will be provided for children who are developmentally ready to use them.
- Round, firm foods that present a choking hazard are not permitted. This includes, but is not limited to, hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, and hard candy.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Children need opportunities to play outdoors every day, including during winter months, as weather allows. Outdoor play promotes physical health and reduces the spread of illness compared to enclosed indoor environments. All children are closely supervised during outdoor play, and no child is permitted to move beyond a caregiver's range of direct supervision.

- Children will go outside at least once daily when conditions permit.
- Children will not go outside when the temperature (including wind chill) is 15°F or below, or when heat conditions reach 90°F or above.
- During periods of extreme heat or cold, outdoor time will be limited and shaded areas or appropriate shelter will be provided.
- Please send your child with clothing that is appropriate for the weather conditions. Families are encouraged to communicate with their Home Visitor, teacher, or Family Service Worker if assistance is needed in providing appropriate cold-weather clothing.
- Staff will encourage children to develop independence by learning to dress themselves for outdoor play. We will help children recognize what their bodies need for different weather conditions and will encourage and model appropriate clothing choices. While we will provide guidance and support, we cannot force a child to wear a coat, hat, mittens, or other clothing. Our goal is to help children build the skills and confidence to make safe, weather-appropriate choices with caring adult support.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

EightCAP, Inc. and its community partners work collaboratively to provide families with meaningful opportunities to participate in program planning, decision-making, and leadership through a variety of committees.

- **Center Committee:** A group of parents and teachers from the 0-5 Head Start program who work together to plan center events, support family engagement activities, and encourage parent involvement and leadership within the center.
- **Outcomes Committee:** A collaborative group of Head Start and GSRP parents, community partners, and EightCAP, Inc. staff that meets quarterly (September, January, March, and June) to review, analyze, and recommend updates to child and family outcomes. Staff and families also review data for their center and individual children following each assessment checkpoint.

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- **Policy Council (PC):** The Policy Council functions similarly to a local school board. Members are elected from families enrolled in Early Head Start, Head Start, and the community. The Council participates in program governance and decision-making, including policy development and advisory input on health, curriculum, and budget matters. Meetings are held monthly throughout the year, including during the summer months.
- **Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC):** The HSAC is an advisory body that supports program decision-making related to health services and community wellness. Members include local health professionals such as pediatricians, nurses, nurse practitioners, dentists, nutritionists, and mental health providers, as well as Head Start staff and parents.

PARENT NOTIFICATION PLAN FOR ACCIDENTS, INJURIES, INCIDENTS, AND ILLNESS

EightCAP, Inc. is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all children. Prompt and consistent communication with parents/guardians is an essential part of this commitment.

Detailed emergency plans are posted in each center, and regular emergency drills are conducted with children. Safety lessons are also provided on a regular basis to help children understand emergency procedures in a developmentally appropriate way. Detailed emergency procedures are available for review in all preschool and infant/toddler classrooms.

Parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible following any accident, injury, incident, illness, or emergency involving their child while in care. The method and timing of notification will depend on the severity of the situation and may include phone calls, text messages, emails, or written reports sent home the same day.

- **Minor incidents or injuries:** Parents/guardians will receive a written Ouch Note at pick-up or by the end of the program day.
- **Moderate concerns (non-emergency):** Parents/guardians will be contacted by phone and provided with details of the incident and any care provided. A written Child Incident Report will also be provided.
- **Serious injuries or medical emergencies:** Emergency medical services (911) will be contacted immediately when necessary. Parents/guardians will be notified without delay and provided with all relevant information regarding the incident and actions taken. A written Child Incident Report will also be provided.
- **Illness during program hours:** If a child becomes ill, families will be contacted promptly and may be required to pick up their child based on health exclusion guidelines.
- **Emergency situations (e.g., fire, tornado, lockdown, evacuation, or other critical events):**
 - Staff will follow established emergency procedures immediately to ensure the safety of all children and staff.
 - Emergency services will be contacted as required by the situation.

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- Parents/guardians will be notified as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so after children and staff are secure.
- If relocation occurs, families will be informed of the designated reunification location and pick-up procedures.
- Written follow-up communication will be provided when appropriate to explain the incident and actions taken.

Reporting to Regulatory Agencies

Certain accidents, injuries, incidents, illnesses, or emergency situations may be required to be reported to Child Care Licensing and/or the Office of Head Start, as applicable. Reports will be made in accordance with state licensing rules and federal Head Start Performance Standards. This may include serious injuries, emergency medical transport, outbreaks of communicable disease, licensing rule violations, or other reportable events. Families will be informed when such reports are made when appropriate and in accordance with confidentiality requirements.

All accidents, injuries, incidents, and emergencies are documented by staff using required reporting forms and reviewed by program leadership to ensure proper follow-up and continuous safety improvement.

PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION

EightCAP, Inc. utilizes an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to control pests. IPM is a pest management system that uses a combination of strategies to prevent pests from reaching unacceptable levels or to reduce existing pest populations to acceptable levels. Pest management techniques emphasize sanitation, pest exclusion, and biological controls. One of the goals of IPM is to reduce or eliminate the need for chemical pesticide applications.

However, in some situations, pesticide use may be necessary. As required by the State of Michigan law, families will receive advance notice regarding any non-emergency application of pesticides (such as insecticides, fungicides, or herbicides) applied to EightCAP, Inc. buildings or grounds during the school year. This does not include bait or gel formulations.

Please note that notification is not required for the use of sanitizers, germicides, disinfectants, or antimicrobial cleaners. In emergency situations, such as stinging insect infestation, pesticides may be applied without prior notice to protect children's health and safety; however, families will be notified following any such application.

Advance notice of applicable pesticide applications will be provided at least 48 hours prior to treatment in the following ways:

1. Posting a notice in a common area of the child care center.

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2. Providing each child's parent or guardian with written notification via the Advance Notice of Pesticide Treatment form, electronically or via hard copy.

PRE-EXISTING HEALTH CONDITION

If a child has a pre-existing health condition that may require medical attention and/or the administration of medication, parents/guardians will complete a Medical Information Questionnaire at enrollment or at the time the condition is identified to gather information and initiate necessary processes to obtain documentation.

Health Staff will contact the child's physician to complete a Physician Follow-Up/Emergency Health Care Plan Form to provide further instructions for care. For the child's health and safety, Head Start verifies this information directly with the child's medical provider before the child may attend school. Failure to provide required documentation in a timely manner may result in a delay in the child's start date.

Families may be asked to assist in obtaining necessary documentation, and their cooperation is greatly appreciated.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

In situations where a child may be transported by public transportation, including services provided by community transportation agencies, written permission from the child's parent or legal guardian is required before the child may be released to a public transportation provider.

Children may be released to an authorized public transportation provider only with prior written permission from a parent or legal guardian. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that transportation arrangements are appropriate for their child and for keeping authorization information current.

EightCAP Head Start's responsibility for a child begins when the child arrives at the program and is received by program staff. EightCAP Head Start is not responsible for a child's supervision, care, or safety while the child is traveling to or from the program on public transportation. Program responsibility ends when the child is released to an authorized transportation provider or parent/guardian.

PURPOSE

The purpose of EightCAP, Inc. 0-5 Head Start Programs is to enhance the growth, development, and school readiness skills of eligible children living in Clinton, Gratiot, Isabella, Ionia, and Montcalm counties who qualify for services.

This is accomplished through:

- Research-based instruction
- Active parent involvement
- Supportive family services
- Effective transitions into future learning environments

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The shared responsibility of home, school, and community is achieved through partnerships and the maximization of resources in collaboration with families.

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

EightCAP, Inc. is fundamentally committed to helping children gain the skills and confidence necessary to succeed in their present environments, future school experiences, and life. We believe that all children can and will learn new skills at their own individual rates in all areas of development.

Children learn best when adults (parents/guardians and staff):

- Provide nurturing and organized environments
- Spend time with children and build trusting relationships
- Provide activities that are meaningful, fun, and purposeful
- Integrate health, nutrition, and mental health services into learning
- Work together to assess and plan for individual skill development and family needs
- Practice current, research-supported early childhood education techniques

QUIET TIME

EightCAP, Inc. quiet time procedures comply with all requirements set forth by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Child Care Licensing regulations.

Infant/Toddler Centers

Infant and Toddler classrooms will follow a scheduled quiet time each day for children over 12 months of age. Children under 12 months will be allowed to sleep on demand based on individual needs. The center provides cribs or cots for children as appropriate.

Safe Sleep Practices

The following practices are followed to ensure a safe sleep environment for infants:

- Infants will be placed on their backs for sleep until 12 months of age. Side sleeping is not recommended. Wedges or infant positioners will not be used, as there is no evidence they reduce the risk of SIDS and they may increase the risk of suffocation.
- If a pacifier is provided, it must not have cords, clips, or attachments that could pose a strangulation risk.
- Infants will sleep on a firm sleep surface covered by a fitted sheet that meets current safety standards. For more information on crib safety standards, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission website at www.cpsc.gov.
- No soft objects, loose bedding (including blankets or sheets), bumper pads, or any items that could increase the risk of suffocation or strangulation will be placed in the infant's sleep area.
- Sleep clothing such as sleep sacks or wearable blankets may be used as safe alternatives to loose blankets.

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- The room temperature will be maintained at a level that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Smoking or vaping is not permitted on program premises. Exposure to smoke or vaping in sleeping areas increases the risk of SIDS.
- Supervised “tummy time” will be provided daily while infants are awake to support healthy physical development and muscle strength.

If an infant requires a sleep position other than on their back, a physician’s written note is required. The note must include the medical reason, approved sleep position, and duration of the exception. This documentation will be kept on file, and all staff, substitutes, and volunteers will be informed.

Preschool Centers

- As required by Child Care Licensing, quiet time must be provided when children under school age are in attendance for five or more continuous hours per day.
- Children who sleep will be provided with a cot or mat and a blanket.
- Children will be assigned designated resting spaces within the classroom and spaced according to licensing requirements.
- Children who do not sleep will be offered quiet activities to support a calm classroom environment.

SMOKING OR VAPING

Smoking and vaping are strictly prohibited in all EightCAP, Inc. facilities and on all program grounds, in accordance with state law and licensing requirements.

TOILETING / DIAPERING

For some children, learning to use the bathroom is a gradual process that occurs at different ages and may involve challenges along the way. Self-help skills are an important part of early childhood development, and children need time, practice, and support as they learn new skills. Children will not be excluded from the program due to toileting needs, including not being toilet trained.

Toileting

- Staff will work in partnership with families to determine each child’s current level of independence with toileting and will follow the family’s guidance on when to begin toilet training.
- Staff support children as needed and will never humiliate or isolate a child who requires assistance.
- Children’s efforts and progress will be encouraged and positively reinforced.
- Step stools will be provided as needed to support independence.
- Potty chairs are not used in program settings.
- Staff will ensure children’s privacy is respected while maintaining appropriate supervision for safety in bathroom areas.

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Diapering

- Staff will change diapers when wet or soiled. In Infant/Toddler classrooms, diaper changes will be documented as required.
- Disposable diapers and wipes are provided by the center.
- Cloth diapers may be provided by families and will be sent home daily for laundering.
- Diapering will take place only at designated diapering stations, which will be cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- Staff will wear non-latex gloves during diapering procedures.
- Diapering areas, supplies, and equipment will be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition at all times.
- Diaper pails will be cleaned and sanitized at the end of each day of use.
- Staff and children will wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water after each diaper change or toileting assistance.
- Disposable towels or wipes will be used as part of the sanitation process.

If a child has a medical condition that requires a diapering product different from those provided by the center, alternative arrangements may be made with written instructions from a licensed physician. These instructions must be provided in writing and updated annually.

During home visits, playgroups, and EightCAP, Inc. sponsored events, parents are responsible for diapering and toileting their child.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND SUPERVISION

While children are in care, at least one staff member will always be present to supervise volunteers. At no time will any volunteer, including Foster Grandparents, be left alone or unsupervised with children. Volunteers are also not permitted to escort children to the restroom.

Any individual present in a program site as a volunteer or visitor certifies that they are not prohibited by any court order from being in the presence of minor children.

All individuals who wish to volunteer in an EightCAP, Inc. preschool or infant/toddler center or at an EightCAP sponsored activity must complete the following requirements prior to participation, as required:

- **National Sex Offender Registry Clearance:** All volunteers, including parents and legal guardians, must receive clearance through the National Sex Offender Public Website (www.nsopw.org) before having contact with children. EightCAP staff will conduct the registry check. Individuals listed on the registry are prohibited from volunteering in the 0-5 Head Start program. Volunteers must also comply with the Michigan Sex Offender Registry Act (SORA), as applicable.

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- **Standards of Conduct:** All volunteers must sign the EightCAP, Inc. Standards of Conduct form prior to volunteering, in accordance with Child Care Licensing Rules and Office of Head Start Performance Standards. By signing, volunteers acknowledge their responsibility to report suspected child abuse or neglect to Children's Protective Services, confirm understanding of agency policies, and agree to follow all program standards. Violations may result in removal of volunteer privileges.
- **FBI Fingerprinting (Child Care Background Check – CCBC):** Volunteers who may have unsupervised contact with children must complete an FBI fingerprint background check and receive a letter of eligibility prior to any contact with children, as required by Child Care Licensing Regulations.

Photographs While Volunteering

Volunteers are not permitted to take photographs of children in the classroom or during field trips. However, parents/guardians who are volunteering may take photographs of their own child(ren).

WITHDRAWAL

Parents/guardians may withdraw their child from the program at any time during the program year.