

HEAD START PARENT HANDBOOK 2026-2027



South Central Community Action Program
insccap.org

Head Start Staff & Locations

South Central Community Action Program is a nonprofit organization serving low-income households in Brown, Monroe, Morgan and Owen counties. For more information about SCCAP programs, visit insccap.org.

Smith Pike Head Start & Early Head Start

2431 N. Smith Pike, Bloomington, IN 47404

Building Hours: Monday - Friday, 7:00 AM - 5:30 PM

Head Start Class Hours: 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Extended Day Hours: 7:00 AM - 5:30 PM (Head Start Only)

Early Head Start Class Hours: 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Lindbergh Head Start & Early Head Start

1502 W. 15th, Bloomington, IN 47403

Building Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

Class Hours: 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

First United Methodist Church Head Start

219 E. 4th Street, Bloomington, IN 47408

Building Hours: Tuesday- Friday, 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Class Hours: 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Key Program Contacts

Head Start Director: Stacey Edwards

Family & Community Services Coordinator: Alissa Weiss, aweiss@insccap.org

Enrollment and Eligibility Coordinator: Kim Yaussy Albright, kalbright@insccap.org

Health Coordinator: LaShanna Wooten, lwooten@insccap.org

Education Coordinator: Ashley Hayworth, ashley@insccap.org

Behavior Support Specialist and Disabilities Coordinator: Alex Ballard, alex@insccap.org

Phone Number: 812-399-3447, Press 1 for Head Start

Program Overview

SCCAP Head Start and Early Head Start are family-centered child development programs that provide education, health, nutrition, mental health, and social services to help families and children in Monroe County grow and succeed in school and in life.

What is Head Start?

Head Start is a federally funded program that promotes school readiness for children ages 3-5. The program supports the mental, social, and emotional development of children through a variety of services. Head Start programs engage parents in their children's learning and help caregivers make progress toward their own educational and employment goals.

What is Early Head Start?

Early Head Start serves children from 6 weeks to age 3. The program provides early, continuous, and comprehensive child development and family support services. Early Head Start aims to promote healthy child outcomes, enhance the development of infants and toddlers, and promote healthy family functioning.

Our Approach

SCCAP Head Start believes that every child is unique and learns best through play-based experiences. We provide a safe, nurturing environment where children can explore, discover, and grow at their own pace. Our program values diversity and works to create an inclusive community where all families feel welcome and supported.

We partner with families to support their goals and connect them with community resources. Together, we work to build strong foundations for children's success in school and in life.



Play-Based Early Education

At SCCAP Head Start, we use a play-based approach to early education. Research shows that young children learn best through hands-on exploration, creative expression, and meaningful interactions with peers and adults.

The Creative Curriculum

Our classrooms use The Creative Curriculum, a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that features exploration and discovery as a way of learning. The curriculum is built on a foundation of child development theory and promotes learning through play in interest areas such as:

- Blocks and building
 - Dramatic play
 - Art and creativity
 - Library and literacy
 - Science and discovery
 - Sand and water exploration
 - Music and movement
 - Cooking and nutrition
 - Outdoor play
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Lesson Plans & Learning Goals

Teachers develop weekly lesson plans based on children's interests, developmental needs, and curriculum goals. Lesson plans are posted in each classroom so families can see what their children are learning. Teachers use observations and assessments to individualize instruction and ensure each child is making progress toward school readiness goals.

Learning Through Play

Play is the primary vehicle for learning in our classrooms. Through play, children develop:

- Language and communication skills
- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Social skills and emotional regulation
- Fine and gross motor development
- Creativity and imagination
- Early math and literacy concepts

Home Visits & Family Support

Home visits are an important part of the Head Start experience. They provide an opportunity for teachers and families to build strong relationships and work together to support children's learning and development.

Home Visits

Teachers conduct two home visits per year for each enrolled child. Home visits are a time for teachers and families to:

- Get to know each other in a comfortable setting
- Discuss the child's strengths, interests, and needs
- Share information about the classroom and curriculum
- Set goals for the child's learning and development
- Provide activities families can do at home
- Connect families with community resources

Home visits typically last about 60-90 minutes and are scheduled at a time convenient for the family.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year (Fall and Spring). During conferences, teachers share information about the child's progress, discuss assessment results, and collaborate with families on learning goals. Conferences are a two-way conversation where families can share observations about their child and ask questions about the program.

Screening & Assessment

Within 45 days of enrollment, all children receive developmental screenings using the Brigance tool. Ongoing assessments are conducted using Teaching Strategies GOLD, which tracks children's development across multiple domains. Teachers use assessment data to individualize instruction and share progress with families during conferences and home visits.

If screenings indicate a concern, staff will work with families to arrange further evaluation and connect them with appropriate services.

Family Services

SCCAP Head Start is committed to supporting the whole family. Our Family Services team works with families to identify strengths, set goals, and connect with resources that support family well-being.

What are Family Advocates?

Family Advocates are dedicated staff members who serve as liaisons between families and the Head Start program. They support families by:

- Building trusting relationships
- Helping families identify their strengths and needs
- Connecting families with community resources
- Supporting families in setting and achieving goals
- Assisting with enrollment and program paperwork
- Providing crisis support and referrals

Each family is assigned a Family Advocate who will be their primary point of contact throughout the program year.

Family Outcomes Meetings

Family Outcomes Meetings are held twice a year (Fall and Spring). During these meetings, Family Advocates work with families to:

- Identify family strengths and areas for growth
- Set meaningful goals (examples: reading daily with your child, pursuing education or job training, finding stable housing, improving family health)
- Review progress on previously set goals
- Celebrate achievements and successes
- Adjust goals as needed

Goal-setting is a collaborative process. Families choose goals that are meaningful to them, and Family Advocates provide support and encouragement along the way.

Attendance Policies

Regular attendance is essential for your child's success in Head Start. Children who attend regularly make greater gains in learning and development. We understand that absences happen, and we are here to support your family in maintaining good attendance.

Reporting Absences

If your child will be absent, please notify the center as soon as possible using one of the following methods:

- Child Plus Family App (preferred method)
- Call the center at 812-339-3447, 1 for Head Start, 1 for Attendance Line

Please report absences before the start of the school day. If we do not hear from you, your Family Advocate will attempt to contact you to check on your family's well-being.

Why Regular Attendance Is Important

Research shows that children who attend school regularly are more likely to:

- Develop strong social skills and friendships
- Build consistent routines and habits
- Make progress on learning goals
- Be better prepared for kindergarten

Regular attendance also helps teachers plan effectively and build meaningful relationships with your child.

Chronic Absence

A child is considered chronically absent when they miss 10% or more of school days. For Head Start, this means missing about 2 days per month. Chronic absence can significantly impact your child's learning and development.

If your child's attendance becomes a concern, your Family Advocate will work with you to develop an Attendance Success Plan. This plan identifies barriers to attendance and creates strategies to improve it. Our goal is to work together to ensure your child benefits fully from the program.

Family Involvement

SCCAP Head Start values family engagement as essential to your child's success. There are many ways to be involved in your child's education, both at home and at school. Your participation makes a real difference!

Ways to Get Involved

At Home:

- Read with your child daily
- Wash blankets
- Complete home learning activities to reinforce what your child is learning at school

At School:

- Volunteer in the classroom
 - Attend family events and field trips
 - Share your skills and talents
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Leadership Opportunities

- Policy Council: Help make decisions about program operations
 - Parent Committees: stay up to date on program operations, provide input, and promote health and home learning
 - Parent Community Alliance: Connect with other Head Start families
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In-Kind Contributions

In-Kind contributions are non-cash donations of time, materials, or services that help meet our federal funding match. Examples include volunteering in the classroom, donating supplies, attending parent meetings, and reading with your child at home. Every contribution counts and helps sustain our program!



Health & Nutrition Services

SCCAP Head Start is committed to supporting the health and well-being of every child. We work with families to ensure children receive required health screenings, dental care, and nutritious meals while in our program.

Health Requirements

- Physical exam: Required within **30 days** of enrollment
 - Dental exam: Required within **90 days** of enrollment
 - Immunizations: Must be current per Indiana schedule
 - Developmental screening: Completed within 45 days using Brigance by Head Start
 - Vision and hearing screenings: Conducted annually by Head Start
 - Lead and hemoglobin testing as required
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Meals & Nutrition

Meals and snacks are provided following CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) guidelines. All meals are prepared on-site and meet USDA nutritional standards.

- No outside food or beverages are allowed in the classroom
 - Our classrooms are nut-free due to allergy concerns
 - Special dietary needs will be accommodated with medical documentation
 - Menus are posted monthly for families to review
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Medication & Illness Policies

Medications can only be administered with a signed parent authorization and original prescription label. Children must be excluded from class if they have a fever of 101°F or higher, vomiting, diarrhea, or contagious conditions. Children may return 24 hours after symptoms resolve without medication or with a doctor's note. Minor injuries, such as scrapes or bumps, will be treated by staff, documented, and shared with the parent or guardian through a signed injury report. Staff will contact parents immediately for any injuries requiring more than basic first aid. In medical emergencies, staff will provide first aid, call 911, and notify the family. Emergency responders will determine necessary treatment, and children may be transported to IU Health Bloomington Hospital Emergency Room if needed.

Standards of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, and visitors are expected to maintain the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. The following expectations ensure the safety, well-being, and dignity of every child and family in our program.

** Full records of standards of conduct, policies, and procedures are available upon request.

Expectations for All Adults

- Supervise children at all times with appropriate ratios
 - Treat all children and families with respect and dignity
 - Maintain confidentiality of family information
 - Follow all safety protocols and emergency procedures
 - Model positive behavior and communication
 - Report any concerns about child safety immediately
 - Support equity and inclusion for all families
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Strictly Prohibited Practices

- Corporal punishment of any kind
 - Withholding or using food as punishment or reward
 - Humiliation, threats, or intimidation
 - Binding, restricting movement, or confining children
 - Yelling, shaming, or using derogatory language
 - Any form of emotional or physical abuse
 - Leaving children unsupervised at any time
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Mandated Reporting

All Head Start staff are mandated reporters under Indiana law. This means they are legally required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS). Staff receive annual training on recognizing signs of abuse and neglect and understanding their reporting obligations.

Policies & Procedures

The following policies and procedures help ensure a safe, supportive, and consistent environment for all children and families in our program.

Recordkeeping & Confidentiality

All family records are kept confidential and stored securely. Information is shared only with authorized staff on a need-to-know basis. Photo and video consent forms are required before any images of children are used for program purposes. Families may review their records at any time by contacting their Family Advocate.

Behavior Guidance

SCCAP Head Start uses positive behavior guidance strategies to support children's social-emotional development. We believe all behavior is communication and work collaboratively with families to understand and support each child. Our program does not expel children for behavioral reasons. In rare cases where a temporary suspension is necessary for safety, we follow a documented process that includes family collaboration and a plan for return.

Safety & Security

- All exterior doors remain locked during program hours
 - Video monitoring systems are in use at all locations
 - Visitors must sign in and show identification
 - Emergency drills are conducted monthly
 - All facilities are smoke-free, vape-free, and firearm-free
 - Background checks required for all staff
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Nondiscrimination

SCCAP Head Start does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, or political beliefs in admission, access, or operations of its programs and activities.

Complaint Procedure & Civil Rights

If you have a concern or complaint about any aspect of the Head Start program, we encourage you to bring it to our attention. The following steps outline our complaint resolution process.

Four-Step Complaint Process

Step 1: Discuss your concern with your child's teacher, Site Coordinator, or Family Advocate. Most issues can be resolved at this level through open communication.

Step 2: If unresolved, contact the Program Director in writing. A meeting will be scheduled within 5 business days. Letters should be sent to:

SCCAP Head Start, Attention: Head Start Director
1502 W. 15th Street, Bloomington, IN 47404

****** If the concern is in reference to the Head Start Director, the letter should be sent to the SCCAP Executive Director

Step 3: If still unresolved, an appeal will be registered with the Policy Council President. The President will schedule a Policy Council meeting within 15 days of receiving the complaint. At the meeting, parties will present their perspectives of the situation. Then in a closed session, the Policy Council will evaluate the situation and, if possible, reach a consensus on action to be taken. The Council President will inform parties of the decision within five days of the hearing.

Step 4: If the matter remains unresolved, you may appeal to the SCCAP Executive Director at: SCCAP, 1500 W. 15th Street, Bloomington, IN 47404

A final written response will be provided within 5 business days.

Civil Rights / USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) online at <https://www.usda.gov/oascr> or write to:
USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Code of Conduct & Community Agreements

At SCCAP Head Start we strive to ensure everyone feels valued and respected. We want all parents, guardians, staff, visitors, and volunteers to feel comfortable, safe, and appreciated. Accordingly, we ask everyone to treat others with respect and kindness, showing courtesy, dignity and care in all interactions.

Our Shared Commitment

We are committed to providing and environment that is:

- Safe and inclusive
- Respectful of diversity and individuality

We expect everyone to uphold these commitments when at Head Start locations and events.

Respect & Dignity

We do not accept behavior that demeans, discriminates against or harasses others for any reason, whether through words or conduct.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Discriminatory or derogatory behavior based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, age, nationality or any other personal characteristic.
- Discriminatory remarks, slurs, mocking or intentional misgendering
- Sexual harassment, unwanted attention or intrusive behavior
- Threatening, intimidating or humiliating conduct

Safety & Wellbeing

We do not tolerate behavior that compromises the safety or comfort of others, including:

- Verbal abuse, shouting or aggressive behavior
- Physical intimidation, violence or damage to property
- Entering restricted or staff-only areas without authorization

How We May Respond

Our priority is always the wellbeing of our students, volunteers, and staff. We will take firm action to address inappropriate and unacceptable behavior or conduct, which can include:

- Verbal reminders or a verbal or written warning
- Requiring you to leave the premises immediately or imposing restrictions on future access
- Where such behavior or conduct could constitute a criminal offence, the matter may be reported to law enforcement or other relevant authorities

Parent/Guardian Agreement

By enrolling my child in SCCAP Head Start or Early Head Start, I understand and agree to the following responsibilities and expectations:

- I will follow the Head Start Code of Conduct and Community Agreements.
- I will provide all required documentation including proof of income, health insurance, immunization records, official age verification, and health exam records within required timeframes. **Documentation of a current physical exam is required within 30 days of your child's start date.**
- I will ensure my child attends regularly and on time except for illness and emergencies. I will communicate absences promptly using the Child Plus App or by calling the center at 812-339-3447.
- I will follow the attendance policy. **If I choose not to follow the attendance policy, then I understand that my child may be moved to another location or returned to the waitlist.**
- I will participate in at least two home visits and two parent-teacher conferences per year. I understand that my child cannot begin attending class until I meet with the teacher for the initial home visit.
- When I cannot keep a scheduled appointment with staff, I will notify Head Start in advance.
- I will keep my child's emergency contact and pick-up authorization information current at all times.
- I will support my child's learning at home and participate in family engagement opportunities when possible.
- I will maintain confidentiality regarding other children and families in the program.
- I understand that Head Start uses positive behavior guidance and does not use corporal punishment, and I agree to support this approach.
- I will participate in two Family Outcomes meetings and set goals with my Family Advocate.
- The information I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- I am the legal guardian of the child I am enrolling. I will provide Head Start with court documentation regarding visitation schedules and custody when necessary.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Staff Signature

Date