

## Appropriate and Safe Release of Children

**Policy:** Arrowhead Head Start releases children only to those persons who have submitted proper written and/or legal permission; and insures the safety of staff and all children if release of a child is challenged by an adult.

**Procedure:**

- At the time of enrollment, an emergency card must be completed with the names of those persons authorized to pick up the child as well as any individual who is not allowed to have access to the child due to a court order. Head Start staff cannot attempt to restrict either parent's access to their child without a court order. A copy of the **Court Order** must accompany the emergency card.
- When a custodial parent wants to restrict the other parent from having access to their child but has no court order, the Family Services Staff person will make appropriate referrals to legal aid or other legal counsel.
- In cases where potential kidnapping or violence is an issue, parents will be asked to provide photographs or descriptions to assist staff in identifying threatening individuals.

**If an adult shows up at a site who legally cannot have access to a child:**

1. Staff will inform this person that there is documentation on file prohibiting access to that child.
2. If staff decides their safety is not at risk, they will ask the adult to leave. If staff decides their safety is at risk, they will call 911 as soon as safely possible.
3. Staff will contact custodial parent and Program Manager/Head Start Office to inform them of such incidents.
4. If an authorized person (parent or designated adult) appears to be incapacitated or displays potential physical, mental or emotional danger to the child, staff will discourage this person from taking the child (but only when the staff person feels that her safety is not at risk). If the person insists on taking the child the staff will call 911 to report this potential child endangerment activity.
5. If a person is suspected of abuse attempts to pick up a child, staff will discourage this person from taking the child (but only when the staff person feels his/her safety is not at risk). If the person insists on taking the child, staff will call 911 to report potential child endangerment.
6. Only individuals listed on the emergency card may sign a child out of the center – unless verbal or written permission has been received from the parent. (Do not assume that the person dropping the child off has permission to pick the child up from the center). If verbal or written permission is given, a photo ID will be required of any person who the staff does not recognize. Individuals from law enforcement, social services or shelters may take children from the center but must also show valid ID. The individual picking up the child must be at least 11 years of age.
7. If a child is at a Head Start site later than the official end of the day and the parent has not contacted staff, staff will first attempt to contact the parent, then emergency contacts. When this happens the policy will be reviewed, which could include staff calling Social Services if further violations occur.

**In Center Sites:**

- Parents/guardians transporting children to and from the center will sign children in upon arrival and will sign the children out when leaving. Staff will keep copies of the "sign in and out" sheets on file.

- Once the child is signed IN, they are Head Start staff's responsibility until they are signed OUT. Once signed in, children cannot be transported by their parents/guardians to and from a Head Start sponsored field trip.
- Anyone who is not employed by Arrowhead Head Start but is authorized to take the child out of the classroom will sign the child out and back in again upon return.
- The Attendance Board will be located on or near the classroom door and adjusted to reflect the current number of children in the room each time a child enters or leaves the classroom.

**For AEOA transportation to home or assigned drop-off:**

- The Head Start Bus Monitor will fill out the *Bus Attendance and Report Tracking Form* during pick up and drop off routes.
- All parents/guardians receiving transportation through Head Start will complete an Arrowhead Head Start Busing Information Form to identify who is allowed to receive the child from the bus.
- If a child has been released to a person who has not been approved by the parent, Head Start staff will follow these steps in order:
  1. Contact the parent/guardian, if they are not already aware.
  2. Contact the Arrowhead Head Start Office immediately upon learning of the error.
  3. Assist with necessary steps to ensure the child is or has been reunited with the parent/guardian or an approved person.
  4. Document exactly what happened and why the error occurred.
  5. Arrowhead Head Start Management team will notify the Region V Office.
  6. Arrowhead Head Start Management team will review the policy and procedure for releasing children with staff.

This policy complies with Head Start Performance Standards in section 1302.47  
Revised and Approved by Policy Council on 6-14-17.  
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