Planning Holiday and Party Activities
Policy/Procedure

Holiday and party activities will be reflective of the needs of the population served. The activities will meet the individual differences and needs of the particular children and the priorities of the population and community, while carried out in a manner to avoid stereotypes. Children should develop an appreciation for celebration while responding to cultural and religious difference of families. Parents must be included in dialogue and discussion.

Policy/Procedure:
1. Use the Anti-Bias and Roots and Wings curriculum goals as a guide.
2. In planning any activity or special event, be sensitive to the make up of your families. (Examples: single dad raising child – site is making mother day gift?)
3. Use holiday activities as part of many other kinds of activities about a cultural group. Ask yourself, “What is the purpose of teaching about this holiday? Is it developmentally suitable to my group of children? Is it related to their lives? If not, why am I introducing it?”
4. Set holiday activities in the context of people's daily life and beliefs by connecting them to specific children and families.
5. Establish the distinction between learning about another person's holiday rituals and celebrating one's own holiday. Invite children to participate as "guests" in a holiday activity that's not part of their culture. Encourage the children whose holiday it is to share feelings as well as information.
6. Honor every group that is represented in your classroom (children and staff). Do not treat some holidays as "exotic." Everyone is "ethnic," and everyone's traditions come from specific ethnic or national groups (including national holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas).
7. Do not assume that everyone from the same ethnic group celebrates holidays the same way. Make sure that any differences in how each family celebrates are evident and respected. (see Developmentally Appropriate Materials, Equipment, Activities Policy/Procedure)
8. Demonstrate respect for everyone's traditions throughout the curriculum.
9. Plan strategies for working with the children whose family beliefs do not permit participation in holiday celebrations. Include the child's parents in creating satisfactory alternatives for the child within the classroom.
10. Be sensitive to the possibility that families with very low incomes may find certain holidays stressful because of the enormous amount of commercialization and media pressure to buy, buy, buy. Stores advertising of Halloween costumes, media and store emphasis on eating special foods at Thanksgiving, and the commercial equation of love with expensive and numerous gifts at Christmas are prominent examples. Focus on meaningful ways to celebrate holidays without spending money. Emphasize that homemade costumes and gifts are very special because they are unique and made with each person's wonderful ideas and with love. Talk about the underlying meaning of holidays as times when your family and other people you care about, come together and enjoy each other.
11. There is the false assumption that all Americans celebrate holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter. In an anti-bias curriculum, activities about national holidays should challenge this inaccurate assumption. Furthermore, because some holiday costumes incorporate stereotypes about other cultures, activities must also help children identify and think critically about such stereotypes.

This policy complies with Head Start Performance Standard 45 CFR Section 1304.21, 1304.40