

 <b>Policy #:</b> A-1	<b>Effective Date:</b> 3/6/96	<b>Page #:</b> 1 of 3
<b>Ref #:</b> 1304.22 (a)(5)	<b>Policy Council Approval Date:</b> 8/28/07, 2/26/08, 9/22/09,10/27/09, 11/24/09	<b>Revision Date:</b> 4/12/07, 6/1/07, 2/12/08,8/28/09, 9/30/09,10/27/09,11/18/09

**COMPONENT: ADMINISTRATION**

**SUBJECT: PREVENTION, IDENTIFICATION, AND REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:** To establish a standard for Head Start staff to prevent, identify, and report child abuse, neglect, or corporal punishment.

**PREVENTION**

Head Start will provide annual orientation to parents concerning the prevention of child neglect, the need to provide protection for abused and neglected children and a personal safety curriculum to be taught to the children throughout the program year. Curricula currently in use include: “Keeping Kids Safe”. Trainer resources include personnel from the licensing unit of the State Department of Human Services, private consultants, and personnel from the Department of Corrections, and Highland Rim Head Start staff. Group and individual consultation for parents and staff will be provided by the program’s Mental Health Consultant. The Family Service Manager will be the primary staff member responsible for coordinating orientation and training efforts. Consultation services will be coordinated by the Family Service Manager.

The Enrollment Selection Criteria system approved by the Policy Council offers **TOP** priority for children who have been abused or neglected and every effort will be made to identify those families. Head Start will also make attempts to retain in the program children allegedly abused or neglected, recognizing the child’s participation in Head Start may be essential in assisting families with abuse or neglect problems.

**In an effort to maintain the safety and security of the children, staff will periodically conduct a head count before and after activities requiring the transfer of the children from one site/transition to another.**

**USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND ISOLATION AS DISCIPLINARY MEASURES**

Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force as a discipline measure. This includes, but is not limited to, spanking, slapping, pulling of hair, etc. Isolation refers to separating the child from the group, as a punishment measure. Isolation includes, but is not restricted to, confining the child to a small area, retaining the child in the classroom when other children go out to play or restricting the child from eating meals with his/her classmates.

The utilization of corporal punishment and total isolation of the child is not consistent with the Performance Standards and cannot be tolerated in Head Start programs. In the event of isolation, in which the child is left from a group, adult supervision will be maintained and the isolation period will be minimal. Performance Standards prohibit the use of meals as punishment, thus isolation at meal time is forbidden.

## **MANDATORY REPORTING**

Tennessee law requires any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused to report such knowledge or suspicion to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. Any person required to report known or suspected child abuse that knowingly and willfully fails to do so or prevents another person from doing so is guilty of a misdemeanor.

For the purpose of this policy, any unauthorized release of a child **or if a child is left unattended** by Head Start staff, will be treated as child neglect.

Head Start staff will work with the local child protective service agency who deals with abuse and neglect. Staff should only gather as much information as needed to report the incident. Staff must not investigate the incident according to Department of Children's Services, and must not provide mental health treatment to children.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURES**

If a staff member suspects a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect that has occurred on or off Head Start property, corporal punishment that has occurred on Head Start property, or if a child is released by Head Start staff to an unauthorized person, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The staff member will contact the Department of Children's Services immediately and request to talk to a case worker about suspected child abuse or neglect that has occurred on or off Head Start property or corporal punishment that has occurred on Head Start property. The staff member will also contact the Family Service Manager by phone and advise him or her of the incident. The use of corporal punishment or improper isolation, or unauthorized release of a Head Start Child is grounds for dismissal under Highland Rim Economic Corporation Personnel Policies, Section XI, Termination of Employment, paragraph A.4.i.
2. When there are allegations regarding staff, that person or persons will not be left alone in the classroom with children pending the outcome of the Department of Children's Services investigation.
3. The center staff member who reported the incident will immediately prepare a Tennessee Department of Human Services Accident/Injury Report (attachment #1) and forward the report in a sealed envelope marked "Confidential" to the Family Service Manager by the end of the next working day.
4. The Family Service Manager will ensure that a Tennessee Department of Human Services Accident/Injury Report is received from the appropriate center staff member.

5. All Tennessee Department of Human Services Accident/Injury Reports will be maintained in a locked file by the Family Service Manager. The sharing of information with the Department of Children's Services or other official investigative departments will be permitted through hand delivery of records, via mail or electronic FAX. The name of the investigative officer to whom information is directed will be included on a cover letter which identifies the information as "CONFIDENTIAL".
6. If the parent/guardian of the child concerned contacts the center staff concerning the incident, the staff member will not discuss the incident with the parent, but will refer them to the Family Service Manager at the central office.

**COMPLIANCE: Failure to comply with this policy and the severity of the incident will result in staff being counseled, suspended without pay, or immediately terminated.**



## HIGHLAND RIM HEAD START

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By signing below, I am stating I understand the following: Prevention, Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect or Corporal Punishment, Confidentiality/Volunteer and Use of Corporal Punishment and Isolation as Disciplinary Measures. **Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action up to termination.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date