

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: EARLY HEAD START

Our philosophy of working with children and families is that healthy child development is best promoted within the context of a nurturing relationship with a primary care giver who is responsive to the child's needs. Our current parent/child program model has focused upon the facilitation of healthy relationships between parents and their children as the primary goal. Through a coaching approach, EHS Family Specialists/Teachers trained in strategies to promote healthy parent/child relationships utilize the center-based and home-based arenas to support the connections between parents and their children. In working with families, EHS staff provide a strengths-based approach which highlights positive interactions between parents and their children and explores concerns in a reflective inquiry-based approach to gather more information and provide guidance as needed.

Our program also supports the philosophy that parents, as the primary nurturers and educators of their children, must be included as full partners in all EHS service areas including health, nutrition, mental health, child development and family development. EHS staff are therefore not considered "experts" educating parents about their children, but rather "resources" to respond to parents' questions, concerns and needs. The more parents themselves can directly experience the "ahas" (identify the strengths and concerns in their relationship with their children), the more they see themselves as capable parents and not in a subordinate relationship to an expert.

Developing positive, nurturing care giving relationships between staff and infants and toddlers in child care settings is of paramount importance. Parents will partner with staff in establishing care routines for their children to be followed in child care and encouraged to volunteer in the care setting. EHS will ensure that parents are informed daily regarding their child's activities in child care and contacted regularly to update parents about their child's developmental progress

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