

2026-
2027



SOUTHERN OREGON HEAD START FAMILY HANDBOOK

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www.socfc.org

Welcome to Southern Oregon Head Start!

We're excited to welcome all of our families and students as we embark on a year of learning, growth, and development. Our dedicated team is here to support and guide your children on their educational journey, ensuring that they have a positive and enriching experience. We look forward to partnering with our families to create a nurturing and engaging environment that fosters curiosity, creativity, and a love for learning. Here's to a fantastic year ahead!

-Katherine Clayton, Executive Director



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FINANCE DIRECTOR



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KATHERINE CLAYTON
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2026/27 Executive Leadership Team

INCLUSION & BELONGING

It's important for children to feel a sense of belonging in their classroom. When a child feels accepted, they feel safe enough to take small risks, try new things, and explore, which are foundational building blocks for their growth and development.

SOHS believes in the research and commitment to inclusive classrooms where children may be different from their peers - as differences can lead to new learning opportunities and help children develop tolerance and empathy.



We invite you to share with us what makes your family unique and special, and welcome your ideas to incorporate your traditions and culture into our classrooms. This is your program, and we strive to create a space and offer services that make you and your child feel welcomed and safe.

To read more about our commitment, visit our webpage.





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FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Welcome to our program!

We are thrilled to partner with you to achieve Southern Oregon
Head Start's mission:

**To prepare children and their families for
success in school and throughout life.**

At Southern Oregon Head Start, we believe that you are your child's first and most important teacher. You know your child best — their strengths, interests, and what helps them learn and grow. Family Partnership is about building a strong connection between home and school. Throughout the program, you'll have opportunities to connect with staff, share your ideas, and work together toward goals that matter to your family.

We value your voice and your role in your child's learning.

Together, we can create meaningful experiences that support your child's success — both now and in the future.

We're looking forward to a positive and engaging partnership with you this year.

SCHOOL READINESS

As partners in your child's education, we will focus on:

- ◆ Social-Emotional Wellbeing
- ◆ Thinking/Problem Solving Skills
- ◆ Physical Development
- ◆ Language Development
- ◆ Early Reading Skills
- ◆ Early Math Skills



Southern Oregon Head Start strives to deliver high quality education to children in our care. We use the following teaching methods and materials:

- ◆ Creative Curriculum
- ◆ Second Step
- ◆ Conscious Discipline
- ◆ Child Protection Unit

OUR CLASS RULES ARE:

WE TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES
WE TAKE CARE OF OTHERS
WE TAKE CARE OF OUR THINGS

You can use these rules at home, too!

Our goal is for children to learn the social skills needed to be successful in kindergarten.

HOME VISITS



Throughout the year, we'll have opportunities to connect with you in your home. It's truly a privilege to be invited into your space.

Home visits allow us to better understand your family's routines, strengths, and goals.

Together, we can support your child's learning in ways that fit your everyday life.

Each visit is personalized to your family, creating space to share ideas, resources, and strategies that reflect your values and build on what's already working.

Thank you for welcoming us in — we look forward to partnering with you.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING

Children learn by doing — and families play a powerful role in that learning every day.

Simple moments like talking, playing, and exploring together help build your child's confidence, skills, and sense of belonging. When children feel supported and encouraged, they are more likely to take risks, try new things, and grow.

You don't have to be an expert — just being present makes a difference.

- Listen to your child
- Follow their lead
- Celebrate their efforts

Your connection and encouragement are key to your child's success — both in school and beyond.



THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

When you engage your child in learning opportunities such as games, songs, and conversations, you're doing more than just playing together – you are setting your child up for success in school and throughout life! Research has shown that children whose parents are involved in their education have higher academic success, and this kind of family engagement is a powerful way to close the Opportunity Gap.

The Opportunity Gap is a gap that exists in the development and academic achievement between children with high exposure to learning opportunities and children who come from families facing barriers to learning opportunities, including but not limited to: income, transportation, health and wellness, and much more. This gap in achievement has nothing to do with how smart a child is, and is instead generated by a lack of knowledge or access to available resources and/or community events.

The good news is: every child can learn and succeed at the highest level when their parents/families are involved in their learning!

Activities that close the Opportunity Gap can be simple and free. We encourage you to engage with your child in the following ways:

- ◆ Establish family routines
- ◆ Bring your child to school on time and every day
- ◆ Read with your child daily
- ◆ Participate in a variety of parent-child activities
- ◆ Practice positive parenting
- ◆ Spend time in your child's Head Start/Early Head Start classroom



ATTENDANCE

Attendance Matters:

Congratulations, your child has been selected for a meaningful opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive! Each enrollment slot in our program represents a significant investment in early childhood education — designed to support your child and family at no cost to you. Spaces in the program are limited, and we're excited to partner with your family in making the most of this opportunity.

When children attend consistently, they build routines, relationships, and skills that support long-term success. Studies show that children who attend school regularly — about 90% of the time — are more likely to experience strong educational outcomes.

The benefits of consistent attendance include:

- Creates positive habits for future success (Inconsistent attendance habits are hard to break!)
- Creates opportunities for developmental skill building to help children get ready for kindergarten and first grade
- Ensures development of early reading skills
- Reduces classroom disruptions
- Enhances your child's ability to self-soothe and learn the skills of concentration & focus
- Helps children make and keep friends
- Gives children a sense of belonging and builds self-esteem
- Creates a positive start to the day



ATTENDANCE

Reporting Absences

We understand that life happens, and we are here to support you. If challenges come up that make attendance difficult, please let us know — we are here to partner with you in finding solutions. Our goal is to work together so your child can make the most of this opportunity.

Our program maintains the practice of following up on absences as part of our performance standards in order to ensure child safety and support families as needed. If your child is absent from class and we do not have notice ahead of time, **we will contact you via call/text, or potentially visit your home to follow up on the absence.**

If your child will be absent, please call your center and let staff know. Leaving a voicemail after hours works great, too!



A young girl with dark hair, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, is seated at a light-colored wooden table. She is focused on serving a large white bowl filled with green leafy salad using wooden tongs. In the background, two other children are seated at the same table, eating. The setting appears to be a classroom or a playroom, with various educational materials and toys visible on shelves and tables.

A cluster of apples, including red and green varieties, with one apple cut open to show the core. The apples are arranged on a dark blue background.

FAMILY STYLE MEALS

At Head Start, meals are served family style, with each component placed on the table allowing everyone to serve themselves. Cooking and eating together teaches children life skills such as hand washing, kitchen safety, preparing food, and how to use utensils and cups. Children are also more likely to eat what they have participated in preparing and seeing those around them modeling healthy eating.

Eating meals together also provides a time to connect with one another. This is a great opportunity to expand your child's vocabulary and communication skills. We encourage you to try family style eating at home and take this opportunity to talk to your child about their day, and point out the colors, flavors, textures, and names of the foods you're eating.

CHECK OUT THESE FOOD RELATED RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU!



**Oregon Food Bank
Food Pantries**



Josephine County Food Pantries



Jackson County Food Pantries



**WIC:
Special Supplemental nutrition program
for women, infants, and children**



**Food Hero Recipes, Tips,
Activities, & Culture**

HEALTH

Injuries & Surgeries

If your child is injured and requires medical attention such as stitches, glue, staples, casts, slings, etc., or has had any surgical procedure in which they have been given anesthesia, we require a note from the doctor that outlines any needed accommodations or restrictions in order for them to return to class. If your doctor does not provide you with a note, we will ask you to sign a release of information form that allows us to get this information from the provider in order to ensure your child is safe at school. While any injuries or surgeries are likely to cause your child to miss some days at school, getting a note from a doctor for any visit that is outside of a Well Child Exam is encouraged, to help ensure your child can return to school as quickly and safely as possible.

Illness

While our staff are capable of handling a minor case of the sniffles, there are some instances where we ask that you keep your child home. Please do not bring your child to school if:

- ◆ You've been advised by a medical provider
- ◆ Your child has a fever of 100.4 degrees or above without medication
- ◆ Your child has a low fever with difficulty breathing, rash, or other symptoms
- ◆ Your child is experiencing vomiting or diarrhea
- ◆ Your child is experiencing abdominal pain for at least two hours
- ◆ Your child has exposed spots or blisters
- ◆ Your child tests positive for COVID-19



Dental screenings are completed in class by a dental hygienist to promote oral health and a positive dental experience for children.

If a child needs medication to be given on site, instructions are received from a medical provider, & staff are trained by the Health team and/or Nurse before the medication can be administered.

Immunizations or exemptions are required to participate in center services. We follow immunization laws established by the Oregon Health Authority.

Sunscreen and lotion are applied by staff at school if your permission is on file. Sunscreen is applied everyday (unless it is raining) April 1 - October 31. Lotion is applied as needed.

If you or your child are in need of establishing medical/dental insurance and/or providers, we have staff and resources available to help!

DISABILITIES & MENTAL HEALTH

Disabilities

Southern Oregon Head Start is an inclusive preschool program that serves children with and without disabilities in the same classroom. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) protects children's rights to attend school alongside their peers without disabilities.

This is known as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private school settings, are educated with children who are not disabled. (2004).

Inclusion works, and research has shown benefits for those with and without special needs including: learned life skills such as empathy and compassion, increased language development and increased social skills. Research also suggests that inclusive classrooms score higher on measures of quality.

All disabilities are unique and will look different. Your child may come home asking questions, which is a normal part of the socialization process. It is important to teach children that everyone learns differently and to remind them that school is a safe, friendly environment, where all are welcome.



With inclusion, everyone benefits! Get excited for a great school year with your child!

[The Power of Inclusion: What to Expect When Your Preschooler Attends an Inclusive Preschool Program | NAEYC](#)

DISABILITIES & MENTAL HEALTH

Here at Head Start, we work with Jackson County Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Services and Early Childhood Services in Josephine County to provide services for children with special education needs.

Upon parent permission, when a child is suspected of a disability, we will submit a referral to the appropriate county agency. Children who qualify for special education services will have those services written on an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). The child's services and goals will be determined by an IFSP team and for children ages 3-5 the team will determine the child's most appropriate placement. The placement of a child with a disability is determined by a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options.



Mental Health

We understand that social-emotional development is critical to learning and is a fundamental aspect of child development and mental health.

Head Start partners with Mental Health Consultants and has an Education Department to support children and staff in the classroom.

We are happy to serve as a link to community mental health and social service agencies, and your Family Advocate can assist in obtaining information on mental health services.



CHILD GUIDANCE

Southern Oregon Head Start is committed to using positive, age-appropriate strategies to help children learn social skills and how to follow the class expectations to prepare for kindergarten.

We focus on:

Managing feelings and behavior

Following class rules

Making friends & positive peer interactions



- ◆ When children need extra support to learn these skills, our teachers provide nurturing and responsive relationships, with high-quality supportive environments that target social-emotional supports, in accordance with our Child Guidance Procedure. We teach children replacement skills and give them opportunities to practice those skills in a safe place.
- ◆ If a child has on-going difficulty, we will include you, the family, in planning.
- ◆ We have Child Development Specialists who visit classrooms and share specific individualized suggestions with teachers on how to improve activities and interactions in the class. They also make suggestions to help individual children, make referrals for other services, and are available for parent questions.
- ◆ We have classroom plans and procedures in place to ensure the safety of all children. Situations can occur in the classroom where we are only able to share information as it pertains to your child. This is to protect the privacy of all children and families. If you should have any questions, regarding the Child Guidance Policy, please talk to your child's teacher.



CONCERNS & ASSESSMENTS

If you are worried about how your child sees, hears, talks, walks, plays, learns, behaves, or responds to others, please talk to your teacher. Our program helps families decide if their child should be referred to an early childhood special education program professional or a mental health professional for further screening and evaluation.

Screenings are used to show each child's level of development and identify any concerns early on. Assessments occur quarterly and include:



- ◆ Checkpoints on child developmental strengths and needs
- ◆ Family Conferences
- ◆ Child observations (shared with families)

TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN



You are your child's first and best teacher. You and your teacher will be working together to help your child enter kindergarten successfully!

You can get a head start on preparing for kindergarten by:

Attending kindergarten launch

Attending a transition meeting with your classroom staff

Attending kindergarten orientation/roundup

Signing up for more information about your school's PTO/PTA

Visiting your child's future school and participating in school events

Having fun with your child as you work together on Summer goals



PARENT LEADERSHIP



Southern Oregon Head Start offers all parents and caregivers many different opportunities to be engaged in their child's potential. Connecting with your center means you are a key part of an action plan that is focused on strengthening your child's education and the family-school partnership. If you are looking for an opportunity to advocate for the needs of your child, travel and attend state and national conferences, and be a representative voice for your center, Policy Council is the place for you.

"Head Start changed the way I viewed society. Our team demonstrates the mission of diversity, inclusion, and belonging. I feel more confident to go out of my comfort zone and go back to the community—Looking for how I can contribute." - Head Start Parent, 2023

Head Start believes that parents and caregivers must have a voice in the decision-making and direction of the agency. Our policy council consists of peer-elected parents and caregivers who work closely with the Board of Directors and key management staff to make decisions about our agency spending, classroom curriculums, facilities, hiring, and more.



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Parent Concerns

The Head Start and Early Head Start programs encourage open communication to resolve disagreements or problems positively and effectively. Parents are encouraged to speak directly with center staff, including the Site Manager, Family Advocate, or Teacher, for program-related issues.

If issues remain unresolved, parents will be referred to Department Staff, and beyond, in a structured, tiered approach to problem resolution. For the full version of the "Parent Concern Resolution" procedure, please talk to your Site Manager.



Parent & Visitor Code of Conduct

The Parents and Visitors Code of Conduct at SOHS prioritizes safety, respect, and inclusivity in all facilities. To maintain a positive environment, parents and visitors are expected to act respectfully, communicate kindly, ensure everyone's safety and inclusivity, and handle concerns appropriately. To help maintain a safe environment for all, cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, lighters, weapons and drug-paraphernalia are prohibited on site, and we kindly ask that they be kept secured in your vehicle at all times.

This includes following guiding principles such as:

- taking care of oneself, others, and our things
- keeping mobile devices silent
- encouraging children to have a positive attitude towards education and their school
- building good relationships with staff and other SOHS families
- respecting the tobacco-free policy

Any behavior that causes harm, disruption, intimidation, possession or use of prohibited substances or weapons, and any form of discrimination is strictly prohibited.

In case of disruptive behavior, immediate steps will be taken to ensure safety, which may include removal from the premises and law enforcement involvement if necessary. The process for addressing and resolving safety issues includes:

- discussions
- action plans
- behavioral contracts outlining expected conduct and consequences
- if needed, exclusion from Head Start premises for contract violations

For the full "Parent & Visitor Code of Conduct" policy, please reach out to your Site Manager.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Privacy and Confidentiality

Taking photos of children other than your own is prohibited at all of our centers in an effort to protect the privacy of all children and families. However, it's important to note that we cannot control the sharing of photos or videos through social media.

Southern Oregon Head Start uses databases to store and use your child's picture or videos for staff training, coaching, and classroom activities.

SOHS sites have cameras actively recorded and monitored for educational and safety purposes. Video monitoring and recording follow all confidential procedures.

To keep our classroom, hallways and playgrounds focused on children, please keep your cell phone off while at Head Start centers.

Any information that you share with staff will be kept confidential and will not be shared outside of the agency unless you give consent. Information sharing between staff members is on a need to know basis.

A copy of the sharing confidential information procedure may be made available upon your request.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Here at Southern Oregon Head Start, we are all mandated reporters. That means if we hear, see, or have any suspicion of any form of abuse or neglect, we are required by law to report that information to Child Welfare or Law enforcement.



Staff will be available to provide resources and support if you are involved in a Child Welfare investigation



If your child is not picked up during the agreed upon pick up time, and we cannot reach an emergency contact, we may call Child Welfare or Law Enforcement to assist.



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Student Education Records

A child's student education records will be forwarded to the school they will be enrolled in after Head Start.

OAR 518-021-0255 Student Records

OAR 166-400-0060 Student Education Records

The education Records include:

- Attendance Records
- Behavior Records:
- 1. Child Support Plan
- Screenings & Assessments:
- 1. ASQ/ASQSE
- 2. Family Conference Form
- 3. Individual Child Profile
- Student Health Records
- Student Health Screening Records
- Student Immunization Record



Early Childhood Special Education Records will be sent to your child's next school district by Early Childhood Services (Josephine County) or Jackson County Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education.

You have the right to:

- Inspect and review your child's education record and request a copy. To do this, please let your child's teacher know in writing. Your request will be honored as quickly as possible and not later than 45 days after the request.
- Ask for the record to be changed if it is inaccurate, according to OAR 581-021-0300.
- Give consent for disclosure of confidential information,
- Get a copy of the Student Education Records Policy from your center's Area Assistant.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at

http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

SOCFC is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



RESOURCES



National Responsible
Fatherhood Clearinghouse



Dads looking for tips, hints
and even deals for dads &
kids. Find them on the
DadTalk Blog & in the For
Dads section

Fatherhood.gov



The Family Connection
provides a regional parenting
hub where parents can come
together, learn effective
parenting skills, be introduced
to community resources and
find support from other
parents.

thefamilyconnect.org



Visit the SOHS Family
page for parenting tips &
tricks, how to get involved
in your child's school, and
MORE!

www.socfc.org/families/

If your family is in need of medical assistance, food and/or other basic needs, we
may be able to get you some support! Visit the SOHS Community Resource page at:



<https://www.socfc.org/community-resources/>



LISTO works with Spanish-speaking families with children from birth through
grade 8. LISTO is more than an afterschool program; it's a culturally rich
educational journey that has touched the lives of generations.

www.socfc.org/programs/listo