

Animals and Pets

Approach:

Southern Oregon Head Start is committed to ensuring the health and safety of each child and family served. For this reason, and in compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards and state licensing regulations, this Policy clearly defines procedures for children's interactions with animals in the classrooms.

Head Start Program Performance Standards:

1302.47(6) – Hygiene Practices

Oregon State Office of Child Care:

OAR 414-300-0240 – Animals in the Center

Our procedures are subject to adjustment based on Public Health needs or advisory from either our local, state or federal governing bodies. Any temporary modifications to procedures in this event will be documented and shared with staff.

Procedure:

The following are procedures for pets in the classroom:

A. Classroom Animals & Pets:

1. **Approval:** Classroom pets must be approved by the Site Manager, Education Manager or Supervisor, and Health Manager. "Animals, including pets, are a source of illness for people, and people may be a source of illness for animals. Reptiles may carry salmonella and pose a risk to children who are likely to put unwashed hands in their mouths." Source: [National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care](#).

a. Allowed pets:

i. Allowed to live in Early Head Start classrooms.

- Fish in appropriately covered tanks
- Butterflies stored in butterfly houses
- Stick bug

ii. **Allowed to live in Head Start classrooms with approval through Education Manager, Health Manager and Office of Childcare Licensing:**

- Non-aggressive dogs that are up-to-date on rabies and other required vaccinations
- Non-aggressive cats that are up to date on required vaccinations
- Fish
- Guinea Pigs
- Gerbils
- Hamsters
- Dead animals preserved in formaldehyde contained in a viewing container.

iii. **Allowed to live in Head Start classrooms without Education and Health Department approval (all of which are not to be handled by children):**

- Ant farms
- Stick bugs
- Butterfly houses
- Sea/salt water tanks
- Pond life hermit crabs

b. **Prohibited Pets:** Potentially aggressive animals shall not be in the same physical space with children.

i. **The school shall not keep or bring in:**

- Ferrets
- Turtles
- Lizards
- Frogs or other reptiles
- Psittacine birds (birds of the parrot family)
- Any wild or dangerous animals

ii. **Exceptions *may* be made for reptiles if:**

- The animals are kept behind a glass wall in a tank, or container, where a child cannot touch the animals or the inside

of the tank/container.

- Contact Health Manager who will obtain Office of Childcare approval.

2. **Communication with Families:** Each child's parent/guardian will be notified in writing of a pet in the classroom. Furry animals are not allowed in classrooms where a child with asthma is allergic to them.

3. **Animal Contact with Children:**

- a. "Any pet or animal present at the facility, indoors or outdoors, shall be in good health, show no evidence of carrying any disease, be fully immunized, and be maintained on a flea, tick, and worm control program. A current certificate from a veterinarian shall be on file in the facility, stating that the specific pet meets these conditions." Source: [National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care](#).
- b. All contact between animals and children shall be supervised by a caregiver who is close enough to remove the child immediately if the animal shows signs of distress or the child shows signs of treating the animal inappropriately. The caregiver shall instruct children on safe procedures to follow when in close proximity to these animals (for example: not to provoke, startle animals or touch them when they are near their food).

4. **Animal Care:**

- a. The school shall care for all pets as recommended by the Health Services Department. When pets are kept at school, the school shall write and adhere to a plan for their care and maintenance. Proof of current compliance with required pet immunizations shall be signed by a veterinarian and shall be kept on file at the school.
- b. When animals are kept at school, the following conditions shall be met:
 - i. The living quarters of animals shall be enclosed and kept clean of waste, to reduce the risk of human contact with this waste;
 - ii. Animal cages shall be of an approved type with removable bottoms and shall be kept clean and sanitary;
 - iii. Animal litter boxes shall not be located in areas accessible to children;
 - iv. All animal litter shall be removed immediately from children's areas and discarded as required by local health authorities;
 - v. Animal containers shall be cleaned during times when children are not present, and they shall not be cleaned in areas used

for food storage or preparation;

- vi. Animal food supplies shall be kept out of reach of children; and animals shall be fed by the caregiver, not by the children;
- vii. Chemicals related to the care of animals shall be kept locked up;
- viii. Live animals and fowl shall be prohibited from food preparation, food storage, and eating areas;
- ix. Caregivers and children shall wash their hands after handling animals, animal food, and animal waste.

B. Visiting Animals & Pets

Other animals can visit the classroom under certain circumstances:

1. **Educational programs:** Educational Programs that include prohibited animals and are run by zoos, museums and other professional animal handlers are permitted.
2. **Sharing (under 24 hours):** Other animals, such as farm animals, with the exception of reptiles, can be brought in for sharing for a limited time (under 24 hours) if they do not bite.

The following are procedures for visiting animals and pets:

1. **Request:** Staff will complete an [Animal and Pets at the Center form](#) and supply all needed information for Managers to make informed decision.
2. **Approval:** Any animal or pet that will visit the program/center/classroom must be approved by the Site Manager, Education Manager, and Health Manager.
3. **Communication with Families:** Each child's parent/guardian will be notified in writing of a pet visiting the classroom prior to the visit. Furry animals will not be allowed in a classroom where a child with Asthma is allergic to them.
4. **Animal Contact with Children:** Same as above – See: A) Classroom Animals & Pets

C. Class Trips Involving Animals and Pets

The following are procedures for trips involving animals and pets:

1. **Approval:** Approval for the trip following the Animal and Pets at the Center form Procedures:
Field Trip – Head Start or Field Trips for Infants & Toddlers – EHS.
2. **Communication with Families:** Each child's parent/guardian will be notified in writing of any field trips involving animals.
3. **Animal Contact with Children:** Same as above – See: A) Classroom Animals & Pet