

Parent Committee & Policy Council

Policy/Approach:

Southern Oregon Head Start (SOHS) is committed to fostering meaningful partnerships with families and elevating parent voice across all areas of the program. Each center will offer regular opportunities for families to connect with one another, engage in shared planning and feedback, and contribute to the overall culture and success of the center community. These gatherings are designed to build relationships, strengthen social connections, and create space for families to share their perspectives, needs, and ideas.

Head Start Performance Standards:

1301.3 Policy Council & Policy Committee

1301.4 Parent Committees

Parent Committee

Definition & Structure:

A Parent Committee is established at each center and includes all families of enrolled children. Parent Committee participation is flexible and may look different for each family. Opportunities for participation include:

- Attending Parent Committee meetings or family engagement events
- Sharing ideas, questions, or feedback
- Participating in Policy Council elections
- Participating in surveys or other input opportunities
- Helping plan Family Days or center activities
- Volunteering or sharing skills/interests
- Communicating with the center's Policy Council Representative

Families are encouraged to participate at the level that works best for them based on their interests, availability, and needs.

Policy Council Representative:

Definition & Structure:

Policy Council is an agency-wide parent leadership group made up of elected parent/legal guardian representatives from each center. Policy Council provides families the opportunity to participate in program decision-making, planning, and oversight.

Each center **must** elect a parent/legal guardian of an enrolled child to serve as their Policy Council Representative in accordance with Policy Council bylaws.

The Policy Council Representative serves as the liaison between families at their center and program leaders.

Policy Council Representatives:

- Attend monthly Policy Council meetings
- Participate in shared decision-making and voting responsibilities
- Represent family ideas, questions, and feedback
- Share Policy Council updates with center families
- Partner with the Family Advocate to support Parent Committee opportunities

Family Advocate & Policy Council Representative Partnership

Family Advocates will maintain ongoing communication with their center's Policy Council Representative and support the representative in sharing updates, questions, and feedback with the Parent Committee/enrolled families at the center.

Family Advocates will support Policy Council Representatives by:

- Helping them understand their role
- Preparing them to share updates with families
- Supporting planning, scheduling, and communication for Parent Committee meetings
- Identifying opportunities to collect family input
- Encouraging family participation and leadership

Procedure:

Initial Family Advocate Responsibilities:

At the beginning of the program year, Family Advocates will establish center-based Parent Committees by introducing families to available engagement opportunities,

gathering family interests and input, and supporting ongoing family participation throughout the year.

Family Interest Forms

- Family Interest Forms are used as a family engagement tool to learn about family interests, strengths, availability, and desired level of involvement.
- Family Advocates will document individualized follow-up, support, or engagement opportunities resulting from the Family Interest Form as appropriate.
- Family Advocates will review Family Interest Forms and use information provided to support individualized invitations, Family Day planning, Policy Council recruitment, and general family engagement strategies at their center.

Ongoing (Monthly) FA Responsibilities:

Family Advocates will partner with Policy Council Representatives to provide families with opportunities to share feedback, receive center and program information, and build their center community.

Monthly responsibilities include:

- **Coordinate and co-facilitate monthly Parent Committee meetings**
 - The first Parent Committee meeting will include:
 - Introducing Policy Council and the importance of parent leadership
 - Coordinating Policy Council Representative elections
 - Subsequent Parent Committee meetings should be family-led and reflect the interests, needs, and feedback of families at the center. Each meeting should include an opportunity for families to:
 - Connect with each other
 - Receive center and program updates
 - Hear information from Policy Council meetings
 - Share feedback, ideas, questions, experiences, and concerns
 - Participate in planning Family Days, events, or center activities
 - Encouraging completion of Family Interest Forms

Note: During months when a Family Day is scheduled, Parent Committee meetings may be held in connection with Family Day or scheduled separately based on what best supports family participation and center needs.

- **Provide monthly communication through center newsletters** to ensure all families have access to center updates, resources, family engagement

opportunities, and Policy Council information. [Refer to Newsletter Guide for specific requirements.](#)

Successful Parent Committee Practices:

- Build a center-wide culture of family engagement where all staff understand the value of parent voice, encourage participation, and recognize Parent Committee as a shared opportunity to strengthen the center community.
- Create a welcoming environment where families understand Parent Committee is their opportunity to share ideas, influence decisions, and support their center community.
- Use a consistent meeting structure that includes connection, updates, family input, and opportunities for parent leadership.
- Encourage Policy Council Representatives and families to lead discussions and planning whenever possible.
- Use family ideas and feedback to guide planning and communicate back how family input influenced center activities or decisions.

Documentation:

- Families participating in Parent Committee meetings or activities will sign in using the designated attendance roster.
- Parent Committee participation will be documented according to family engagement documentation procedures.
- Documentation should include:
 - Date of meeting/activity
 - Length of meeting/activity
 - Families who participated
 - Type of family engagement opportunity provided

Detailed guidance can be found on the Family Services Resources and Training Page:

[Family Services Resources & Training - Home](#)