FAMILY HANDBOOK

2026/2027

SKAGIT/ISLAND
HEAD START
SERVING SKAGIT & ISLAND COUNTIES



Family Centered

Lifelong Learning

Strong Partnerships

Community Focused

2.

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My center's contact information

Center Name & Manager:_____

Center Phone Number:_____

Teacher's Name: _____

Family Service Coordinator's Name: _____

Transportation Phone Number: _____

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

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
Email: Program.Intake@usda.gov

Welcome to Head Start!



We are proud you have chosen Skagit/Island Head Start (SIHS) to share the early learning journey with you and your family.

We know that our time together will be positive and meaningful for you and for your child, and we are here to work with you to help make that happen.

This Family Handbook gives you essential information about our program and explains the special role you play in your child's learning. You are your child's first and most important teacher, and you play the biggest part in helping them grow and learn.

By working as a team, we can give your child the support they need to do well in school and in life.

Please read this handbook so you can learn more about our program and keep it in a safe place so you can look at it whenever you need to. Of course, you are always welcome to reach out to us with questions as well.

With gratitude,

Mary Ellen Lykins

Director

WELCOME TO HEAD START!



OUR MISSION

Building strong foundations for lifelong learning through family-centered, child-focused partnerships.

OUR VISION

We support children, families and each other to build resilience, strength and a sense of belonging to grow into their true potential and flourish. We join with families to make a positive difference in all of our lives and in the communities where we live, work, and learn.

OUR VALUES

In our work together, Skagit/Island Head Start embraces a shared commitment to these values in an integrated and measurable way:

STRONG, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS: Creating a culture of belonging. Connecting staff, children, families, and communities where all voices matter; honored through open, honest, clear communication, and taking time to understand and build mutual regard.

OPEN, ENGAGING COLLABORATION: Cooperation, open-minded give and take, flexibility, shared decision-making, engaging diverse talents and resources with a focus on common goals and passions.

PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY: Consistency, honesty, sharing thoughts, personal responsibility, confidentiality, and professionalism.

RESPECT AND ACCEPTANCE FOR ALL: Recognizing, valuing, encouraging, and supporting community with compassion for individual differences and perspectives, while demonstrating cultural competence.

HIGH STANDARDS OF QUALITY: Best practice at the core of decisions, professional development and personal growth, accountability and high expectations that are clearly understood.

About The Program!



PROGRAM INFORMATION

SIHS is a federally funded program that gives young children a strong start so they can grow and be prepared for school and beyond. The program has two parts:

- **Early Head Start** is for the youngest children, from twenty months to three years old. It focuses on helping them learn and develop during these important early years.
- **Head Start** is for children three to five years old. It helps them build the skills they need to be ready for kindergarten (school readiness) and future learning.

Both programs **support your family by offering help** with parenting, health, nutrition, emotional wellness, and other services.

SERVICES

Services are offered at centers located in Sedro Woolley, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Oak Harbor.

For more information about locations and program options please visit:
www.sihs.skagit.edu

or call the central office at:
(360) 416-2580.

GOVERNANCE/PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Head Start is a national program, operating in every state in the country. All Head Start programs have a governing body (like a board) and parent-led governance as well.

SIHS is passionate about parents. **We are committed to having parents take part in guiding the direction of the program.** Governance of SIHS includes Skagit Valley College's Board of Trustees and College President, the Policy Council and the parents at each center who form Parent Committees, (see page 25 for more information about our Policy Council).

ENROLLMENT

Children are accepted into the program based on their age and family situation. Eligibility is determined by the Federal Poverty Guidelines. **Families automatically qualify if they receive public assistance**, such as SNAP or TANF.

Children who are in foster care or experiencing homelessness also qualify and are given priority. This system helps make sure that families with the greatest need receive the support and services Head Start provides.

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Program Policies & Information

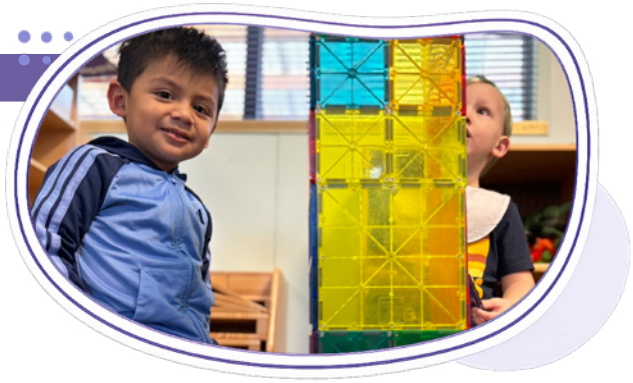


Clear information helps families feel confident and connected. This section shares important program guidelines, procedures, and resources to support a successful year together.

IN THIS SECTION

- CONFIDENTIALITY & CODE OF CONDUCT
- PHOTO POLICY
- CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT
- SCENT FREE
- ATTENDANCE
- COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Program Policies & Information



CONFIDENTIALITY & CODE-OF-CONDUCT

SIHS is dedicated to keeping the information of families, children, and staff safe and private. **To protect confidentiality, we follow these important rules:**

- Paper and computer files are kept in secure places.
- Only staff who have permission can look at child and family files.
- Staff only share information about a child when it is necessary.
- Staff must have your written permission to share records outside the program.
- All staff and volunteers are trained on how to keep information private. They go through training when they start and review the rules every year. They also sign a confidentiality agreement and a code of conduct each year.

The Code of Conduct includes these important expectations of staff, consultants and volunteers:

- Create a safe, caring, and supportive place for children to learn.
- Must use kind, positive, and respectful methods to guide children and address behaviors.
- Do not allow any inappropriate or harmful actions, physical punishment, neglect or using threats or hurtful words.
- Always keep children safe. Never leave a child alone or without supervision.
- Do not ask for or accept gifts, favors, or anything valuable from families or people we work with (applies to staff).
- Complete their jobs with kindness, respect, and teamwork.

If you would like to read the full confidentiality and code of conduct agreements, please ask your center staff.

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT REPORTING

All SIHS staff, contractors, and volunteers are **mandated reporters.** This means they are required by law to report anything that could be an indication of child abuse or neglect to the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), Child Protective Services (CPS). This includes things that may happen at home or outside of school. For example, a report may be made if a child says they were hurt or saw adults in their home physically fighting.

Staff do not investigate or decide if something really happened. They just have to report concerns if they believe a child may be unsafe.

Reports must follow state rules, including what information is shared and keeping it private. If a report is made, your child will still get all SIHS services.

A report to CPS or being involved with CPS or the police will not affect your child's enrollment in the program.

Program Policies & Information



ATTENDANCE

Coming to class every day is very important for your child's success in the program. When children attend regularly, arrive on time, and stay until the end of class, they can build on what they have already learned. This helps them grow their skills and knowledge. Regular attendance also helps children make strong friendships and build trusting relationships with their teachers.

If your child will be absent, please contact the center before class starts and let us know the reason and when you expect them to return. If staff do not hear from you, they will try to reach you by phone or text to check in. If we are unable to make contact, we will also reach out to your emergency contacts to help ensure your child's safety and well-being. If your child is absent for two days in a row and we haven't heard from you, a staff member will complete a home visit to check in and offer support.

If attendance continues to be a problem and your child misses more than **10% of class days**, which can add up to just 1 or 2 days every few weeks—we will work with you to create an Attendance Improvement Plan. This plan is designed to support your family and help your child attend more regularly so they can get the most out of the program.

DID YOU KNOW?

Missing just 2 days of preschool each month adds up to nearly a full month of learning lost during the school year. Regular attendance helps children build routines, confidence, and the skills they need for kindergarten success.

Coming to school every day helps your child stay connected, feel safe, and learn important skills. **You can support good attendance at home by:**

- Setting regular bedtime and morning routines.
- Keeping your child home only when they are truly sick.
- Making a backup plan for transportation - ask a family member, neighbor, or friend for help if needed.
- Scheduling medical appointments and trips outside of school time wherever possible.

Program Policies & Information



PHOTO POLICY

SIHS cares deeply about the safety and privacy of your child and family. To help protect your child's image from being shared on social media or with people who should not have it, **we have clear rules about taking pictures:**

- Photos may only be taken during class time or on field trips using a program-approved device. (Field trips are considered part of the classroom, so the same rules apply).
- No pictures may be taken using personal cell phones, cameras, or other devices.
- Only staff can take and manage photos.

These rules help ensure that staff can share pictures with parents and guardians in a safe, approved and respectful way.

SCENT FREE

Please **do not** wear or use scented products or apply them to your child.

There are staff and other children who have allergies and sensitivities to these products.

If you are worried about missing special moments, please remember that staff can give you copies of pictures taken of your child at the end of the year. Thank you for helping us keep all children in our program safe.

Program Policies & Information



COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Parents and community members have the right to share complaints about how the program is run. **If you have a complaint, please follow these steps:**

1. Talk to the staff member involved (such as the teacher or center manager) to try to solve the problem.

2. If the issue is not resolved, speak with the staff member's supervisor.

3. If you are still not satisfied, contact the Program Director. An informal meeting will be scheduled within five (5) working days.

4. If the complaint still cannot be resolved, you may bring it to the Policy Council. If you do not want to wait for the next regular meeting, the Director can arrange an emergency meeting with the Executive Committee within ten (10) working days of your request.

5. If the issue is still not resolved, you may ask the Director to arrange a meeting with the Vice President of Business and Administrative Services at Skagit Valley College. The Vice President's decision is final.

At any step in this process, you may bring another person or people with you to support you during the meetings.

Health Information



Children learn best when they feel healthy, safe, supported, and cared for. We partner with families to support physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

IN THIS SECTION

- WELL-CHILD CARE
- DENTAL CARE
- NUTRITION
- MEALS PROVIDED/ MEALTIME PRACTICES
- HEALTH & SAFETY
- WELLNESS SUPPORT
- HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Health Information



Head Start supports your child's health as part of their overall development. We partner with families to make sure children receive regular check-ups, dental care, and other health services they need to grow and thrive.

WELL-CHILD CARE

Head Start requires that programs keep track of all health services each child receives. SIHS also makes sure that any health concerns found during your child's check-ups or well-child visits are followed up with the right care or referrals. Sometimes, we may need extra paperwork from your child's health care provider.

Staff will work with you to make sure the following health documents and information are complete and current for every child:

- A Health Information Form, including current health insurance and your child's main healthcare provider (medical home).
- A current immunization record.
- A well-child exam that matches your child's age.
- A dental exam and/or a referral for follow-up care like cleanings, fillings, or sealants.
- Hearing and vision screening within 45 days of your child starting the program (this may be done by staff).
- Developmental and social-emotional screening within 45 days of starting the program.
- A lead screening that is right for your child's age.

DENTAL CARE

Looking after your child's teeth is important because it helps stop them from getting cavities and other issues. These problems can sometimes lead to bigger health concerns like infections, trouble talking clearly, poor jaw growth, and gum disease.

Head Start requires staff to find out if each child has a **dental home** —a place where they get regular dental check-ups and treatment if needed.

Staff can help you find a dental home for your child and will work with you to make sure your child gets the dental care they need on time. Children learn these lifelong skills by watching and interacting with you.

Health Information



NUTRITION

Staff will check your child's height and weight to see how they are growing. They will also give you tips about healthy foods and good nutrition. **If your child has special dietary needs, we will follow them as long as we have written instructions from your child's doctor/ health provider.**

Staff will work with you to understand your child's nutrition needs. A registered dietitian or nutritionist is also available to help when needed. Please tell staff if your child has any food allergies, cultural food preferences, health problems related to nutrition, or special feeding needs. Monthly menus will be posted at the center, and you will receive a copy.

MEALS PROVIDED

Children will receive breakfast, lunch, and a snack. **We do not allow outside food or drinks,** so please do not send them with your child to the center. This helps keep all children safe, especially children with food allergies. If your child did not have time to eat before school, please let staff know. If your child arrives after mealtime, we will do our best to give them a small snack until the next meal.

HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS

Our program uses a simple nutrition program called Harvest for Healthy Kids (HHK). This program helps children learn about fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season and locally grown.

Your child will explore these foods in many ways. They will help with menu planning, taste new foods, and take part in fun activities. Staff will also share recipes and send information home so families can try these healthy foods together.

MEALTIME PRACTICES

Mealtimes are an important part of our day. Staff sit with children during meals to build a sense of community and encourage good social skills. We use a shared meal style, where food is served in bowls or dishes and children serve themselves. This helps children build independence, fine motor skills, and healthy eating habits.

Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat or taste food served during meals and snack time. **Food is never used as punishment or reward.**

SIHS follows the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Meals and snacks are healthy, with foods that are high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt. Due to health and allergy concerns, we are only allowed to serve store-bought food.

Health Information



HEALTH & SAFETY

Staff help children build healthy habits to stop the spread of germs and illness. Staff support children with regular handwashing, toothbrushing and also conduct daily health checks. Both indoor and outdoor areas are cleaned and checked daily to make sure they are safe and free from anything harmful. Playgrounds are designed for children's ages, and all equipment and safety rules meet high standards. Our staff follow strict health and safety rules. **If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your center manager.**

WELLNESS SUPPORT

Supporting our children and family's positive mental health is an important part of our program. In early childhood, children begin to form relationships, explore their world, and learn how to manage their feelings. As a parent or guardian, you are your child's most important role model. Children learn these lifelong skills by watching and interacting with you.

The stress of parenting can be overwhelming at times. **If you find yourself in need of someone to talk to** and are not sure where to begin, **we have staff who can support you.** If you would like to talk or meet with one of them, please talk with staff at your child's center and we will get you connected. Here is more information about Gisella Kestler, our Family Education Engagement Specialist and Bess Windecker-Nelson, our lead consultant in this area:

Gisella Kestler

has worked in early education for more than 20 years. As a Family Education Engagement Specialist with SIHS, she is excited to support families as they begin their Head Start journey.

Her own journey with Head Start began as a parent—just like many of you. She knows what it's like to feel hopeful, nervous, and joyful while raising a child because she's been there too.

At SIHS, she has worked as an assistant teacher, a toddler teacher, and a home visitor in the prenatal-to-three program. These roles, along with her education, helped her learn how to support both children and families. Being a teacher taught her the importance of building strong, honest relationships with families. These experiences are a big part of why she cares so much about the work she does today.

One of her favorite parts of the job is working closely with parents and caregivers. She believes that when families and staff work together as a team, they help children learn and grow. She is here to support families with the educational and emotional aspects of parenting, partnering with you to strengthen your involvement in your child's learning and well-being. Head Start is special because of the wide variety of families it serves. People come from many different traditions and backgrounds. She loves how everyone learns from one another, celebrates what makes each person unique, and discovers what they have in common.

Health Information



BESS WINDECKER-NELSON, PH.D. has supported children and families for over 20 years. She feels honored to work with families from many different backgrounds. She has a doctorate in Human Development and Family Relations and uses science-based practices in her work.

Bess has worked as a Child and Family Therapist, a mental health consultant for Head Start, and a teacher for people of all ages—from infants to adults. She also teaches STARS courses for early childhood educators through the Washington Department of Early Learning.

Bess helped create and lead a group of community organizations that support children and families. She also understands the joys and challenges of raising a family from her own personal experience.

Bess loves working with children and the adults (parents, caregivers and teachers) who care for them. She believes in the value of good in people and how sometimes that gets covered up by the world around us. In her work with adults and children, she enjoys sharing what she's learned from her work and education to help uncover ways of being our best selves.

When she is not working, Bess enjoys spending time with her family, friends, and dogs. She also loves being outdoors and working in her garden.

Wellness Wheel

We support the whole child and family by focusing on all areas of wellness.



We believe that when children and families are supported in all areas of wellness they can thrive and reach their full potential.

Health Information



HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Health & Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HMHSAC) brings together staff, parents, community organizations, and local health and mental health workers. This group helps plan, look at, and improve the health services in our Head Start program.

Each HMHSAC focuses on the needs of children and families in each of our communities.

As a Head Start parent, you are welcome to join and share your ideas on important topics like:

- Nutrition
- Safety
- Medical
- Mental health
- Dental care



Education Information



The early years are full of discovery and growth. We partner with families to support learning through play, relationships, creativity, and hands-on experiences.

IN THIS SECTION

- PHILOSOPHY
- PROGRAM MODELS
- CURRICULUM
- CELEBRATIONS IN THE CLASSOOM
- POSITIVE BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE
- CLOTHING

Education Information



PHILOSOPHY
Working together to help your child grow

At Head Start, we believe every child can learn and grow. Each child is unique, and we respect all abilities, cultures, and ways of learning. We create classrooms where all children belong and learn together.

We build strong relationships because children learn best when they feel safe and cared for. **Families are a child's first and most important teachers, and we value working with you.** We also partner with schools, specialists, and community members to support each child's needs.

We use teaching practices that are right for young children and based on research. We support social and emotional growth and help children build positive relationships. We understand that behavior is a way children communicate, so **we use kind and supportive guidance.**

We do not use suspension or expulsion. Instead, we create a caring and inclusive space where every child can succeed. Our staff continue to learn and grow, and we hold high hopes for all children as they build skills for lifelong learning.

PROGRAM MODELS

Early Head Start (EHS Year-Round, School Day): Age 20 months - 3 years

Early Learning and Family Partnership

The first three years of life are very important for brain growth. During this time, the brain builds connections that help children learn and get ready for school.

To support your child, we offer fun and age-appropriate activities like singing, dancing, reading, painting, and building. Children learn best through play and by exploring the world around them.

School Schedule and Family Visits

Children attend year-round, Monday through Thursday, for 7½ hours each day, with an additional half day on the first Friday of each month. A daily rest period is scheduled for all children after lunch.

During the year, **teachers will meet with your family four times**, two home visits and two school conferences. These meetings give us time to talk about your child's growth.

We will contact you to schedule visits, and you can request a meeting anytime.

Education Information



PROGRAM MODELS
Preschool Head Start (PHS September - June): Ages 3 -5

Learning and Growth from Ages 3 to 5
Between ages 3 and 5, children's brains grow quickly. Early experiences help shape how they learn and understand the world. During this time, children build on what they already know. They begin to communicate, explore, and solve problems in new ways.

To support this growth, we provide a caring and engaging classroom. Children build early reading and writing skills, explore math and science, and practice problem-solving. We also support social growth by teaching kindness, sharing, and teamwork.

Children take part in music, movement, art, and learning about families and communities.

School Schedule and Family Visits
Children attend a 7-hour school day, Monday through Thursday, from September through June

Teachers meet with families four times a year: two home visits and two school conferences. These meetings are a time to talk about your child's growth.

We will contact you to schedule visits, and you can request a meeting anytime.

CURRICULUM
Our Curriculum and Approach to Learning
We use two main curricula:

- The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos; Baby Doll Circle Time by Conscious Discipline.
- The Creative Curriculum for Preschool; including Al's Pals Social Emotional Curriculum.

These are research-based and meet all Head Start requirements. They help teachers plan lessons that support each child's learning and growth.

Teachers use a variety of tools and materials to make learning fun and meaningful. **A key focus is helping children get ready for school, also called school readiness.**

OUR SCHOOL READINESS GOALS ALIGN WITH:

- Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework
- Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)
- Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines

LEARNING TOGETHER

Learning Under Construction!

Building social-emotional skills takes time, practice and partnership.

We are in the process of building strong pathways through the world of feelings. We are teaching and learning how to manage our feelings to work and play together.

Possible Detours

Please be prepared for things looking differently. Sometimes we must change where we are to keep everything safe.



Wear Safety Gear

Emotional and social safety is our top priority!



Go Slow in the Construction Zone

Learning is sometimes difficult and takes time - *we are going slowly and have patience for things not being smooth during this time.*

Your Tax Dollars At Work

We want to provide a good social and emotional foundation for all children. All learning grows from here. Building empathy is part of this work; we are all in this together. Please ask us any questions.



Please Excuse Our Mess

Sometimes social-emotional learning comes with loud voices.



Education Information



ASSESSMENTS AND PLANNING FOR YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS

Throughout the year, we check each child's growth and development. We gather information by:

- Completing assessments.
- Observing children during activities.
- Focus on child interest.
- Listening to family input.
- This helps us plan learning activities that support your child's success.

You are always welcome to visit, observe, or join classroom activities. **We value your involvement.**

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

We use positive strategies to help children manage their behavior and solve problems. We set clear and fair expectations, so children feel safe.

Staff model social skills and help children express their feelings in healthy ways.

We do not use harsh discipline, suspension, or expulsion. Specialists may visit classrooms to support teachers and children (see page 21).

Support for Early Interventions

We work with local school district special education staff to provide early support and special education services in our classrooms for children with developmental or behavior needs, including children with an IFSP or IEP.

CELEBRATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

To create an inclusive learning environment for all children and families, our program does not hold classroom celebrations or parties centered on specific holidays, including but not limited to birthdays, Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, or similar holidays.

Instead, classrooms may focus on seasonal learning, family traditions, kindness, community, nature, and other developmentally appropriate themes that can be shared by all children.

- We keep celebrations simple and focused on learning.
- For safety and fairness, **we do not allow outside food or toys.**
- To help everyone feel included, please do not hand out party invitations at school.

Thank you for helping us create a welcoming environment. If you have any questions about this, please talk to your child's teacher.

Education Information



CLOTHING

Active learning can get messy! To make sure your child is ready for all kinds of fun, **please dress your child in:**

- Comfortable play clothes that can get dirty and are easy to change.
- Tennis shoes or shoes that stay on while climbing, jumping, riding, and running.
- A sweater or sweatshirt for chilly weather.
- A warm jacket with a hood or a hat for colder days (we go outside, even if it's cold or rainy).
- Gloves or mittens, hats, and boots during the winter.

We also encourage you to send a change of clothes for your child. Please label all clothing, coats, backpacks, and other items with your child's first name.

If you need help getting any of these items, please let your teacher or family service coordinator know.

Thank you for helping us to keep children comfortable, prepared, and ready to learn and play every day.

Family Engagement



Families are at the heart of our program. We celebrate family strengths, cultures, and traditions while offering opportunities for leadership, volunteering, family activities, parent training, and community connection.

IN THIS SECTION

- FAMILY & COMMUNITY SUPPORT
- RESPECTING FAMILY VALUES & TRADITIONS
- POLICY COUNCIL
- CENTER PARENT COMMITTEE
- MALE INVOLVEMENT
- PARENT TRAINING & FAMILY ACTIVITIES
- PARENTPOWERED
- PARENT VOLUNTEERS
- FAMILY LIFE CREDIT
- IN-KIND

Family Engagement



FAMILY & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Raising young children can be both rewarding and challenging. At SIHS, we're here to support you and help your family grow and thrive.

Each center has a **family service coordinator (FSC)** who works with families to give support, share helpful resources, and help you reach your goals. Your FSC will take time to get to know you and build a trusting relationship with your family. Together, you can talk about your strengths, needs, and any goals you want to work on—such as health, education, housing, employment, or overall well-being.

If needed, **your FSC can also connect you with community services**. These might include:

- Food or clothing assistance.
- Help with housing or utilities.
- Job training or adult education.
- Mental health services.
- Support for domestic violence or substance use.

We believe that strong, respectful partnerships with families help children succeed—in school and in life.

RESPECTING VALUES & TRADITIONS

At SIHS, we honor and respect all children and families in our program. We are proud to serve families from many different backgrounds, cultures, and belief systems. To celebrate this, **we invite you to share important events, traditions, and customs** from your family with us. This helps create a welcoming environment for everyone.

POLICY COUNCIL

The SIHS Policy Council is a governing body made up of Head Start parents and community members. This group helps make important decisions about how the program is run. These decisions include things like choosing program policies, approving new employees, planning the budget, and deciding how money is used. Parents in the program vote to choose representatives from their center.

These elected members are responsible for:

- Attending monthly meetings.
- Speaking up for what is best for all children and families in the program.

The Policy Council meets once a month, and all families are welcome to attend.

Family Engagement



CENTER PARENT COMMITTEE

Parents and guardians play an important role in Head Start. **Every parent or guardian is automatically a member of the Center Parent Committee** at their child's center. These committees meet once a month to plan activities, training, and family events. It's a wonderful way to stay informed, get involved, and connect with other families.

Parents also receive updates about the **Policy Council** during these meetings. All Head Start **families are welcome and encouraged to attend.**

PARENT TRAINING & FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Workshops, trainings, and family activities are offered throughout the year at your child's center and other locations. These events are planned based on the interests and needs of parents. Staff and parents work together to create learning opportunities that support families and help children grow.

PARENTPOWERED

ParentPowered is a parent education program that sends helpful tips by text message. Each week, you will receive three short messages with fun facts and easy activities you can do at home with your child. These messages are based on research and are proven to support your child's learning and development.

FAMILY LIFE CREDIT

As a parent in the SIHS program, you will receive **three free Family Life elective credits each quarter** from Skagit Valley College (SVC), our partner organization. Once you are enrolled, you can get a student ID card. This ID lets you:

- Use the college library and computer lab.
- You can also use the gym for just $20 per quarter.
- You will be automatically re-enrolled each quarter while your child is in the program.

Want to know more about SVC offerings like English as a Second Language (ESL), GED/HS Diploma, job training, academic programs and more? Talk with your family service coordinator or contact an SVC outreach coordinator directly at:

(360) 416-7700 | (360) 416-7740 (Spanish)
Email: outreach@skagit.edu

Even if you don't plan to use the credits, enrolling still helps our program. SIHS receives extra funding for each enrolled parent, which supports a high-quality learning environment for all children.

Family Engagement



MALE INVOLVEMENT

We value the significant role that fathers and male role models play in a child's life. Throughout the year, centers host special parent-child events just for them. Dads, grandfathers, uncles, and other male caregivers are also invited to volunteer in classrooms or share a special skill.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Head Start is a family-focused program, and we encourage you to volunteer at your child's center. **Volunteering** gives you a chance to use your current skills and learn new ones.

It's also a great way to support your child's learning and help build a strong base for their education and future success. If you are interested in volunteering, please talk with your child's teacher or the center manager.

IN-KIND

All Head Start programs are required to raise 20% of their total funding in what is called "In-Kind."

In-kind can be donations of services, goods or money. SIHS receives in-kind from a variety of sources, and parents play a very important role in helping us meet our requirement.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Your center will provide you with **"homework" sheets** that track time you spend with your child working on specific school readiness goals.

Completing and returning these forms is a simple but important way to support our family program partnership and help SIHS document the valuable time families spend supporting children's learning at home.

Volunteering in the center also provides us with in-kind. For the 2026-2027 year, one hour of parent volunteer time is worth $26.95 to our program.

Safety Information



Safety is a shared responsibility. This section includes important information about emergency procedures, school closures, supervision, safe drop-off and pick-up, injury reporting, and creating safe environments for children and families.

IN THIS SECTION

- SCHOOL CLOSURE INFORMATION
- INCIDENT & INJURY REPORTING
- DELAY INFORMATION
- DROP OFF & PICK UP
- ALCOHOL, DRUG, WEAPON, SMOKE & VAPE FREE ENVIRONMENTS
- EMERGENCY PLANS
- ACTIVE SUPERVISION PLANS
- PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Safety Information



SCHOOL CLOSURE INFORMATION

In most cases, SIHS follows the school closure and delay policies of the school district where the center is located. **During bad weather, check for updates early in the morning.** Look for announcements from your center, on local TV stations, radio, school district websites, or hotlines.

There may be rare times when an SIHS center remains open even if the local school is closed.

DELAY INFORMATION

In most cases If the school district announces a 2-hour delay:

- School-day classes will begin 2 hours later than usual and will still end at the regular time.

You can find closure and delay information through your school district's website, hotline, or local news stations.

Write your school district hotline number here:

_____

ALCOHOL, DRUG, WEAPON, SMOKE & VAPE FREE ENVIRONMENTS

All of our centers including parking lots and areas visible to children, are free of alcohol, drugs, weapons, smoking, e-cigarettes and vaping/vaping devices.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION PLANS

To keep children and centers safe, SIHS uses active supervision at all times. This means that **no child is ever left alone or unsupervised**. Staff and parents work together to create a safe environment for all children.

As part of active supervision:

- Parents must stay with their child during drop-off and pick-up.
- Each classroom has an Active Supervision Plan that shows how this works throughout your child's day in class and at the center.

If you would like to learn more about active supervision at your center, please speak with your center manager.

INCIDENT & INJURY REPORTING

If your child gets hurt at school, staff will care for your child using first aid guidelines and complete an **incident & injury form**. Parents or guardians will review and sign the form at pick-up. Depending on the injury, staff may also call you to let you know your child was hurt.

Safety Information



DROP OFF & PICK UP

For your child's safety:

- You or another approved adult must sign your child in at drop-off and out at pick-up.
- Other than parents or guardians, only people who are 18 years or older may drop off or pick up children.
- Your child will only be released to you or to people listed on the Emergency Contact form.
- If someone else needs to pick up your child, please call or text the center ahead of time to give permission and let staff know. Anyone not known to staff must show a photo ID.

Once your child is signed out and leaves the classroom, you or the person picking them up is responsible for their care.

If you or someone else who is picking up your child seems impaired (for example, under the influence of alcohol or drugs), the staff will ask you to call someone else or to use a taxi or ride-sharing service. If you or the other person leaves with your child and staff are worried about your child's safety, they will call the police and Child Protective Services (CPS).

If your child is not picked up within 60 minutes after class ends and we cannot reach you or your emergency contacts, the center manager or another staff member will take steps to keep your child safe. This may include calling CPS or the police.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

A parent listed on the birth certificate but not on the emergency contact list can legally pick up their child. In such cases, staff will verify their ID, release the child, and then contact you.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

- **To bring your child to school on time** each day. Coming on time helps your child join the classroom more easily and helps the class stay on schedule. Being on time also helps staff safely welcome children without taking attention away from other children and activities.
- Do not leave a child alone in your car while checking in or out another child.
- Never leave your child alone in the classroom or on the playground.
- Do not leave your vehicle running during drop off or pick up.
- Always make sure a staff member sees you and your child when you arrive and before you leave. This helps keep all children safe and supervised at all times.
- Avoid using your cell phone during drop-off and pick-up.
- Let staff know right away if there are any changes to the names or phone numbers on your Emergency Contact form.

Safety Information



EMERGENCY PLANS

If there is an emergency, staff will follow their center's Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Plan. It's very important that you give us the correct contact information for your child. **Please let us know right away if your phone number or address changes.** Each classroom has a copy of the Emergency Plan posted. This plan explains:

- What staff will do during an emergency.
- Where to exit the building.
- Important emergency phone numbers.
- Where children will go if the center needs to be evacuated.

Your center manager will review this plan with you.

Each month, children and staff practice monthly fire drills. Four times a year, they also practice other safety drills (e.g., earthquakes, lockdowns, shelter-in-place, or floods). If there is a real emergency at the center, children will stay there until a parent, guardian, or someone on the approved pick-up list comes to get them.

In the event of a major disaster, please follow the Do's and Don'ts listed below:

DOS	DON'TS
Trust the staff. The center has an emergency plan in place. Staff will stay with the children and do everything they can to keep them safe until you are reunited with your child.	**Panic.** We understand it may be hard to wait for news about your child, but staying calm helps avoid mistakes and keeps everyone safer.
Stay where you are. You need to keep yourself safe so staff can reunite you with your child. All parents will be required to pick up their child at a designated location, which may be offsite.	**Try to get to the center to pick up your child.** Your child is safer at the center than on the road. There may be roadblocks or unsafe conditions that prevent you from getting there. Please wait until a staff member contacts you with instructions.
Keep your phone line open. If phone service is working, please do not use your phone unless you need medical help. We will contact you as soon as we can.	**Call the center.** Phone lines must stay open for emergency use. Staff will contact you as soon as it is safe to do so. During an emergency, staff need to focus on keeping children safe and calm.
	**Send a stranger or someone who is not listed on your child's emergency form to pick up your child.** Once it is safe, we can only release them to people listed on the Consent and Emergency Release Form.

Safety Information



The Head Start program provides safety education information to all Head Start parents/guardians.

PLEASE REVIEW THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

- Never leave children alone in a vehicle.
- Always park in the designated parking area and walk your child to and from the center.
- Remind children to hold your hand while walking.
- Use sidewalks whenever possible. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic.
- Wear bright or reflective clothing, especially when it is dark or visibility is low.
- Always stop at the curb before crossing the street. Use crosswalks when available.
- Teach children to look left, right, then left again before crossing.
- Make eye contact with drivers before walking in front of their vehicles.
- Walk—do not run—when crossing the street.
- Teach children the meaning of red, yellow, and green traffic lights.
- Make sure drivers see you by using clear body language or speaking before crossing.
- Avoid loose clothing, such as long drawstrings, that could cause tripping or get caught.
- Always stay alert and cautious near schools or child care centers. Avoid rushing, and watch for other drivers who may be distracted or in a hurry.

Program Expectations



I understand as a parent in the program I will:

SHOW RESPECT:

- Treat program staff, other parents, and children in the program with kindness and respect.
- Honor the professional boundaries set by my family service coordinator and teacher.

PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY:

- Keep private any personal information shared by other parents or anything I learn about children while in the classroom.
- Do not take photos of children using personal cell phones, cameras, or other devices.

SUPPORT REGULAR ATTENDANCE:

- Make sure my child attends school every day and arrives on time.
- If my child will be absent, contact staff as soon as possible to let them know the reason and their expected return date.

SUPPORT MY CHILD'S MEDICAL/DENTAL CARE:

- Make sure my child has a regular doctor and dentist. If needed, I will work with staff to find one.
- Keep my child's immunizations, well-child checkups, and dental exams up to date.
- Follow up on any medical, dental, or health concerns for my child.

COMMUNICATE WITH STAFF ABOUT OVERALL EXPECTATIONS:

- Talk with program staff if I am having trouble meeting any of the expectations listed above.

Community Resources



These local resources are available to support you and your family.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (Food, Housing, Resource Referral)

SKAGIT COUNTY

Community Action of Skagit County.....(360) 416-7585
Concrete Food Bank.....(360) 853-8505
Helping Hands:
Sedro-Woolley (Food Bank).....(360) 856-2211
Neighbors in Need:
Mount Vernon (Food Bank).....(360) 982-2089
WIC Mount Vernon.....(360) 416-7595
Help Me Grow Skagit.....(360) 630-8352
(360 230-9129 for Diapers & Wipes
www.helpmegrowskagit.com

ISLAND COUNTY

North Whidbey Help House.....(360) 675-0681
Opportunity Council of Island County....(360) 679-6577
WIC Oak Harbor.....(360) 240-5554
Garage of Blessings.....(360) 679-1239

STATEWIDE:

WA-211.....211/(877) 211-9274
988Lifeline.....988/988lifeline.org

ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT

Catholic Community Services.....(360) 757-0131
Consejo Counseling & Referral Services..(360) 763-5595
Didgwalic Wellness Center.....(360) 588-2800
Sea Mar Behavioral Health .....(360) 542-8920
Sea Mar Behavioral Health Oak Harbor..(360) 679-7676

CHILD CARE RESOURCES

Department of Children, Youth, and Families Child Care Subsidy Programs.....(844) 626-8687
Child Care Aware.....(800) 446-1114
www.childcareawarewa.org

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT

CADA (Citizens against Domestic and Sexual Abuse) Oak Harbor.....(360) 675-7168 or (800) 215-5669
Skagit Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services.....(888) 336-9591

Community Resources



JOB TRAINING/ADULT EDUCATION

Community Action of Skagit County .....(360) 416-7585
Goodwill Industries Mount Vernon.....(360) 848-0646
Work Source Skagit .....(360) 416-3600
Work Source Oak Harbor.....(360) 675-5966

ALGER

Alger Food Bank
18731 Parkview Lane, Alger
(360) 724-5131

BURLINGTON

Tri-Parish Food Bank
935 Peterson Road, Burlington
(360) 757-2563

Helping Hands Food Bank
Inspire Church of Burlington
1551 E Rio Vista Ave
(360) 856-2211

CONCRETE

Concrete Food Bank
45942 Main Street, Concrete
(360) 853-8505

LA CONNOR

La Conner Sunrise Food Bank
601 South 3rd Street, La Conner
(360) 488-3878

ANACORTES

Salvation Army Food Bank
3001 R Avenue, #100 Anacortes
(360) 293-6682

St. Vincent DePaul Food Bank
4001 St. Mary's Drive, Anacortes
(360) 293-9821

CLEAR LAKE

Community Covenant Food Bank
Clear Lake, WA
(360) 419-7061

HAMILTON

Hamilton Community Food Bank
951 Pettit Street, Hamilton
(360) 826-4090

Helping Hands Food Bank
Inspire Church La Conner
17444 Snee Oosh Road
(360) 856-2211

Community Resources



LANGLEY

Good Cheer Food Bank
2812 Grimm Road (in Bayview),
Langley
(360) 221-6454

MARBLEMOUNT

Helping Hands-Marblemount
59850 Highway 20,
Marblemount
(360) 856-2211

MOUNT VERNON

Neighbors In Need
1615 South 2nd Street,
Mount Vernon
(360) 982-2089

OAK HARBOR

Help House Food Bank
1091 SE Hathaway,
Oak Harbor
(360) 675-0681

SEDRO WOOLLEY

Helping Hands Food Bank
9386 Fruitdale Road,
Sedro-Woolley
(360) 856-2211

STANWOOD

Stanwood Camano Food Bank
27030 102nd Ave NW,
Stanwood
(360) 629-2789



FAMILY HANDBOOK 2026/2027

SKAGIT/ISLAND HEAD START

SKAGIT/ISLAND
HEAD START
Serving Skagit & Island Counties