



## Health Services Newsletter

### How Do Health Services Support School Readiness?

Children in Head Start have important access to comprehensive health services that help them get ready for school. Outside of simply meeting the performance standards, programs know that a focus on health can lay the foundation for positive child outcomes because children are better able to learn when they are healthy and safe.

Head Start health managers and staff keep children healthy and safe by:

- Helping families access medical and dental homes for screening, assessment, treatment, and ongoing care.
- Identifying health and developmental red flags early to improve child outcomes.
- Referring children for treatment and follow-up to health professionals (including medical, dental, mental health, and nutrition), when necessary.
- Developing individualized plans for children with special health care needs and disabilities.
- Helping families improve their health literacy so they are better equipped to care for their child's health.
- Guiding families in becoming advocates for their children's health.
- Collaborating with partners to support community health.

Together, these activities are a huge investment in children's health and school readiness.



*"Investing in early learning programs that offer health components can boost education, health, and economic outcomes." - James Heckman*

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## SUPPORTING STAFF

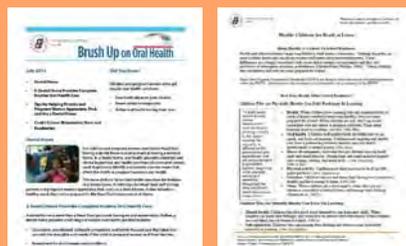
The staff who spend every day with children and families know them very well. They are often the first to notice a child who is sleepy, hungry, or sick and not able to focus on learning. Most importantly, they know that children learn by participating in educational activities.

When working with staff, health managers may consider the following strategies:

- **Recognize how well staff know the children in their class or caseload.**
- **Document what staff know about the health of the children they serve and help them use this information.** *For example, health managers help staff collect, aggregate, and analyze data using the daily health check, child screening and assessment, and health records.*
- **Plan for each child's needs.** *For example, health managers support staff by creating individual health plans when necessary. In addition, they develop program-wide policies and procedures that support child growth and development including nutrition plans, child supervision, playground and transportation safety, first aid, and emergency preparedness.*
- **Provide staff training on common health issues.** *For example, staff may benefit from a stronger understanding of childhood illnesses, how to educate parents on common health conditions, or how to respond to medical emergencies.*
- **Help staff connect health and attendance to school readiness.** *For example, health managers support staff in identifying patterns of child illness and absenteeism. Once they have information about why a child is experiencing chronic absenteeism, staff can offer families appropriate support.*
- **Collaborate on creating safe environments for children.** *For example, health managers help staff use safety checklists effectively. Together, health managers and staff make sure repairs are made promptly when needed. Health managers can also use a hazard map to highlight where injuries occur and minimize hazards. (Resource coming soon!)*
- **Guide staff in talking with family members about health and safety.** *For example, motivational interviewing and health literacy strategies engage families in thinking about health and safety issues. (Resources coming soon!)*

### Find more information with these resources

- **Healthy Children Are Ready to Learn**
- **Brush Up on Oral Health newsletter**
- **Well-Visit Planner**



<sup>1</sup> Chronic absenteeism is defined as “missing 10% or more of the school year due to excused and unexcused absences”. Attendance Works (2014) *Attendance in the Early Grades: Why It Matters for Reading*. Bethesda, MD: AttendanceWorks.org. Available at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Attendance-in-the-Early-Grades.pdf>

## ENGAGING FAMILIES



A positive relationship between children and their families builds a strong foundation that can last a lifetime. Ultimately, families want the best for their children and work hard to provide it for them. When programs partner with families they help create healthy, safe, and nurturing environments for children to grow.

When working with families, health managers may consider the following strategies:

- **Build on families' strengths, values, cultural health beliefs, and relationships.**
- **Offer families health literacy experiences that focus on health and its impact on school readiness.** For example, health managers plan activities that help families know what to do when children are sick and what the program's related health policies are, such as when children can return to class or socializations.
- **Support families in becoming advocates for their children.** For example, offering families tools like the [\*Well-Visit Planner\*](#) to help them ask questions and access resources.
- **Provide families with resources to create healthy and safe environments.** Resources might include home safety checklists, strategies for simple healthy behaviors (including covering your cough), and safety equipment (including car seats and safety gates).

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Review your program's [school readiness plan](#) to make sure it clearly explains how health services help children get ready for school. If the plan does not define the connection between health and school readiness, health managers can work with the program school readiness team to integrate health services into the plan.

[Making the Link Between Health and School Readiness](#) is a useful tool to build these connections.



## RESOURCES

### ECLKC RESOURCES:

#### *Healthy Children are Ready to Learn*

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/physical-health/individual-wellness-plans/HealthyChildren.htm>

#### *Making the Link Between Health and School Readiness*

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/link-between>

#### *When Health Affects Assessment*

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/physical-health/satf/WhenHealthAffec.htm>

#### *Your Role in School Readiness: Health, Mental Health, & Disabilities*

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/roles/health>

#### *Health Services to Promote Attendance - Coming Soon!*

#### *Brush Up on Oral Health, September 2012*

[http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/BrushUp\\_Newsletter\\_9\\_2012.pdf](http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/BrushUp_Newsletter_9_2012.pdf)

*Fostering a culture of health and wellness for Head Start children, families, and staff.*

### NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH

#### Our Goal:

To help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement best practices and effective approaches within medical and dental care access, health awareness, healthy active living, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety to support healthy outcomes and school readiness for young children and their families.

### CONTACT US!

The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to [nchinfo@aap.org](mailto:nchinfo@aap.org) or call (888) 227-5125.

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<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center>

***School readiness begins with health!***

