



The Head Start National Center on Health (NCH), one of six Office of Head Start National Centers, will help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement effective approaches to medical and dental care access, health awareness, obesity prevention in young children, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety. The Center will also assist the Head Start community to ensure healthy outcomes for children and families.

Partner Organizations of the National Center on Health (NCH)

NCH is comprised of the following organizations:

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Education Development Center, Inc.
- Center for Child and Human Development and the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center at Georgetown University
- UCLA Health Care Institute at the UCLA Anderson School of Management
- National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Priority Health Issues of NCH

NCH focuses on providing resources, training, and technical assistance to help Head Start and Early Head Start health managers and other staff improve the following health priority areas:

- Healthy nutrition, physical activity, and overweight and obesity prevention Developmental and behavioral services
- Injury prevention
- Health literacy Oral health and dental homes
- Asthma prevention with special emphasis on tobacco exposure prevention

Goals of NCH

NCH operates with three overarching goals:

- NCH provides evidence- and practice-based information, materials, and training and technical assistance (T/TA) to the Head Start and Early Head Start community to help them meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards specific to priority health topics and issues
- NCH works collaboratively and cooperatively with federal entities to improve the health of Head Start and Early Head Start Children and their families.
- Federal partners include other Head Start National Centers; state and regional T/TA centers; the Office of Child Care (OCC); and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program.
- NCH works with national, state, and local organizations and agencies to enhance the health care infrastructure to improve the health of Head Start and Early Head Start children and their families.



Guiding Principles for Improving the Health of Head Start and Early Head Start Children

NCH has developed guiding principles to help achieve its objectives and activities. The following principles guide the work of the Center's outreach to Head Start staff, families, and children:

- Foster a continuum of services
- Promote children's ability to learn
- Consider an ecological perspective
- Include input from Head Start and Early Head Start families
- Recognize cultural and linguistic responsiveness and sensitivity
- Promote science-informed practices
- Strive for well-informed staff and families

Current Activities

NCH activities include the following:

- Building a framework that makes explicit the role of healthy development in school readiness for children from birth to five.
- Analyzing Head Start and Early Head Start health status data and developing project indicators.
- Developing an infrastructure to support health, nutrition, and mental health managers.
- Developing webinars and related materials (featuring strategies to mitigate children's risk of injury, mental health consultation, nutrition and physical activity, etc.)
- Developing or revising emergency preparation materials.
- Developing crosswalk between the [Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) and [Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs](#) to enhance understanding of health and safety best practices within programs.
- Supporting Head Start and Early Head Start programs use of early childhood mental health services and consultation.
- Convening a NCH oral health workgroup to refine the oral health work plan, including the transition of the Dental Home Initiative.
- Developing or revising health and safety materials to enhance transportation safety, injury prevention, and other safety issues.
- Developing training resources on staff well-being.
- Developing resources for collaborating with and supporting MIECHV programs.
- Promoting health literacy to empower families to become health advocates for their children.

Send your questions and requests to:

nchinfo@aap.org

1-888-227-5125 (toll-free)

This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0005 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Health.

