

GULF COAST COMMUNITY
SERVICES ASSOCIATION, INC.



HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START

Parent Handbook

TOGETHER WE GROW, LEARN & SHINE!

2026-2027

Aloha!

Building Strong Foundations
→ for Lifelong Success ←



FAMILIES
FIRST



CHILDREN
READY FOR SCHOOL



COMMUNITIES
TOGETHER



BUILDING
BRIGHT FUTURES

Table of Contents

- 1 Welcome Letter from the Interim Chief Executive Officer
- 2 Welcome Letter from the Head Start/Early Head Start Director
- 3 Our GCCSA Inc. Mission Statement
- 4 USDA Food and Nutrition Service Nondiscrimination Statement
- 5 GCCSA Services to the Community
- 6 Parents' Rights and Responsibilities
- 7 GCCSA Head Start Collaborative Site Requirements
- 8 Education and Child Development Services
- 9 School Attendance Laws
- 10 Transportation
- 11 2026–2027 School Readiness Goals
- 12 Curriculum and Assessment
- 12 Your Child's Daily Educational Experience
- 13 Attendance
- 14 Health Services
- 15 Medication Administration
- 16 When to Keep your Child at Home
- 17 Nutrition Services
- 18 Special Services
- 19 Parent, Family and Community Engagement
- 20 Program Governance
- 21 Communication & Collaboration with Parents
- 22 Positive Discipline and Guidance
- 23 Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
- 23 Gang-Free Zones
- 26 Head Start/ Early Head Start Center Locations
- 27 2026–2027 Master School Calendars
- 28 Parent Handbook Acknowledgment Form



Welcome from the Interim Chief Executive Officer



Dear Head Start and Early Head Start Families,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 school year! We are excited to begin another wonderful year of learning, growth, and family partnership with you and your child.

At GCCSA, we believe that families are a child's first and most important teachers. We are honored that you have entrusted us with the opportunity to support your child's educational journey. Our dedicated staff is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where children can learn, explore, and develop the skills they need to succeed.

This year, we look forward to helping our children build strong foundations in learning, social-emotional development, health, and school readiness. Together, we will celebrate milestones, encourage curiosity, and create meaningful experiences that support every child's growth.

We encourage families to stay involved, communicate regularly with teachers and staff, and participate in program activities throughout the year. Your partnership is essential to your child's success, and we value the unique strengths and experiences each family brings to our program.

As we begin this exciting new school year, we wish all our families a year filled with learning, laughter, and success. We are thrilled to have you as part of our Head Start and Early Head Start family and look forward to creating wonderful memories together.

Thank you for being a part of our community. Here's to a fantastic 2026–2027 school year!

Warm regards,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debra Fisher'.

Debra Fisher, Chief Executive Officer



Aloha!

WELCOME

from the

Head Start/Early Head Start Director

Dear Head Start/Early Head Start Families,

Welcome to the Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. (GCCSA) Head Start and Early Head Start family! We are honored that you have chosen us to be part of your child's early learning journey. We look forward to building a strong partnership with your family and creating a positive, nurturing, and engaging educational experience for your child.

At GCCSA, we believe that parents are the first and most important teachers. Your involvement plays a vital role in your child's growth, development, and school readiness. Together, we can build a strong foundation that will support your child's success in school and beyond. We encourage you to become an active participant in our program by, volunteering in your child's classroom, attending parent meetings and family engagement events, serving on a center's parent committee, participating in our Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council, where parents have the opportunity to partner in program planning and shared decision-making. Your Center Administrator and Family Advocate will be available to share the many ways you can become involved and help you find opportunities that best fit your family's interests and schedule.

At GCCSA, we embrace the **"Whole Child, Whole Family"** approach because we know that children thrive when families are supported. We are committed to partnering with you every step of the way to ensure your child reaches their fullest potential.

Please take time to review this Parent Handbook. It contains important information about our policies, procedures, services, and the many resources available to support your family's success throughout the program year. We encourage you to keep it as a reference and reach out whenever you have questions.

Thank you for entrusting GCCSA with your child's early education. We are excited to welcome your family and look forward to a wonderful year filled with learning, growth, and meaningful partnerships.

With aloha,
Yamaika K. Lee

Head Start/Early Head Start Director



*Together,
we learn,
we grow,
we succeed!*





TOGETHER WE GROW, LEARN & SHINE!



Our Mission

The Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. engages partners and forges strategic alliances to educate, equip and empower individuals and families in their pursuit of economic independence.



GCCSA, Inc. is an agency that receives federal funds, therefore:

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, or political beliefs.



USDA Food and Nutrition Service Nondiscrimination Statement

Last Published: 05/05/2022

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity.

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/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.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:

- (1) **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture | Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights | 1400 Independence Avenue, SW | Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) **email:** program.intake@usda.gov.



**This institution is an
equal opportunity provider.**





GCCSA Services to the Community



Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. administers diverse services and programs to meet the needs of thousands of individuals and families regaining their financial and educational capability. Our purpose is two-fold: to assist in situations of hardship and to empower those on the road to economic independence. The services provided address personal and professional development goals.

The following GCCSA Services to the Community include, but are not limited to:



Case Management: Includes the assessment of needs, development and implementation of a Service Plan, and monitoring of goal achievement for customers. Families may qualify for financial assistance. Other services include financial coaching, budgeting, transportation vouchers, and access to other community partners. Specialists work closely with families as they strive to reach economic independence.



Adult Education & Scholarships: GCCSA offers a variety of adult educational opportunities - General Educational Development program (GED®), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Career, Vocational & Technology Development tracks. GCCSA provides scholarships to qualified candidates who are interested in pursuing continuing education or vocational training certifications for career advancement.



Food Pantry: The GCCSA Food Pantry distributes fresh food items through its Crisis Food Assistance and Client Select programs. The GCCSA Food Pantry is open Monday, Wednesday – Friday, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM.



GCCSA Programs and Services



• Educational/Tuition Assistance

Financial assistance is available for accredited short-term certification programs to help individuals gain valuable skills and enhance employment opportunities.



• Employment Services

We offer soft skills training, career interest assessments, and partner with local agencies for on-the-job training. Services include resume writing, interview preparation, job search support, and employment resources.



• Utility Assistance

Support with utility bill payments to help prevent service interruptions.



• Food Assistance

Access to a grocery-style food pantry and emergency food bags to combat food insecurity in our community.



• Housing Assistance

Rental assistance is provided to help prevent homelessness and promote housing stability.



• Financial Education

Financial literacy and budgeting workshops empower individuals to manage their finances more effectively.



• Disaster Relief

Immediate aid for individuals impacted by natural disasters or emergencies, including food, shelter, and essential supplies.

* Please note this is not an exhaustive list of services. Programs are implemented throughout a calendar year based on the availability of Federal funding. Please visit our website at www.gccsa.org and/or contact your Family Services Specialist for information on all current program offerings.



Parents' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

GCCSA HS/EHS parents have the right to collaborate with us and the responsibility to ensure the continuation of GCCSA's Head Start and Early Head Start "Program of Excellence."



Rights

- Help develop programs that will improve daily living for my family.
- Make informal visits to the classroom.
- Choose whether to participate without endangering my child's enrollment or progress in the Program.
- Remain active and stay informed about my child's progress.
- Always be treated with respect and dignity.
- Expect guidance for my child from staff and teachers, in order to ensure his/her growth and development.
- Learn about the operations of the Program and its requirements.
- Become a volunteer and/or an employee of Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc.
- Stay informed about all community resources related to health, education and family empowerment.



Responsibilities

- Submit all required documents or copies of documents as required and as needed; including, but not limited to income, immunizations, well-child exams, dental exams, etc.
- Learn as much as possible about Program offerings and participate in decision-making.
- Recognize Head Start/Early Head Start as an opportunity for improving my family's quality of life.
- Support and participate in classroom, Center and program activities, encouraging other parents to support the Program.
- Welcome teachers and other staff into my home during scheduled Home Visits to discuss my child's progress and family needs.
- Participate in programs designed to increase my knowledge of child development and skills in various areas of family living.
- Notify the Center immediately: (1) of changes involving the parent/guardian's address, phone number(s), emergency contact, or any other pertinent information; (2) if someone other than an authorized person will be picking up my child; (3) of my child's absences; (4) of my child's withdrawal from the Center.
- Always display appropriate and rational behavior(s) at the Centers – no profanity, physical or verbal threats, violence, etc. at any time.



Parents have the right to breastfeed their children or provide breast milk for children in care. If you need to breastfeed contact the Head Start Center Administrator and accommodations will be provided.

FAMILIES
FIRST

PARTNERS
IN LEARNING

STRONGER
TOGETHER

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GCCSA Head Start – Collaborative Site Requirements



Head Start
Early Head Start



GCCSA collaborates with local schools and education agencies that may have additional expectations, such as: program registration fees and school uniforms.

Enrollment and participation in Head Start requires no additional fees. GCCSA ensures that enrollment and participation in the GCCSA Head Start Program, including at collaborative sites, requires no fees.



Education and Child Development Services

GCCSA Head Start and Early Head Start Program recognizes that every child enters our classrooms with unique strengths, individual abilities, diverse experiences, and a rich cultural background. We believe that all children have the potential to achieve meaningful growth and success when provided with a safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environment supported by caring, responsive, and nurturing adults.

The Child Development Department is committed to ensuring that teaching staff deliver high-quality early childhood education and comprehensive child development services for all enrolled children, including children with disabilities. Through developmentally appropriate practices, intentional instruction, and meaningful learning experiences, educators promote each child's cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional development, establishing a strong foundation for lifelong learning and school success.



The primary goal of the Child Development Department is to equip teaching staff with the guidance, professional development, coaching, and ongoing support necessary to implement developmentally appropriate curricula and effective instructional practices. By fostering high-quality teaching and continuous professional growth, we ensure that classroom experiences meet the individual needs of every child while advancing GCCSA's School Readiness Goals and preparing children for future academic success.



School Attendance Laws



The Texas Education Code §25.095 requires the school district to notify a student's parents in writing at the beginning of the school year that if the student is absent from school on ten (10) or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year:

- 1 The student's parent (or legal guardian) is subject to prosecution under TEC §25.093; and
- 2 The student is subject to referral to a truancy court for truant conduct under TEC §65.003(a), Family Code.

It is the parent's duty to monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school; and the student is subject to truancy prevention measures under TEC §25.0915.



Transportation: Parents are responsible for transportation. The GCCSA staff will provide you with resources regarding transportation services. Our agency is not affiliated with any private transportation services. Staff are not responsible for any communication or scheduling between parents and transportation service providers.



Early Head Start

SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

(2026-2027)



APPROACHES TO LEARNING*

- Child manages feelings and emotions with support of familiar adults.
- Child maintains focus and sustains attention with support.
- Child demonstrates emerging initiatives in interactions, experiences, and explorations.
- Child shows imagination in play and interactions with others.
- Child follows classroom rules and routines with increasing independence.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

- Child uses expectations learned through repeated experiences in primary relationships to develop relationships with other adults.
- Child shows interest in, interacts with, and develops personal relationships with other children.
- Child recognizes and interprets emotions of others with the support of familiar adults.
- Child understands some characteristics of self and others.
- Child uses adults as a resource to meet needs.



LANGUAGE AND LITERACY*

- Child attends to, understands, and responds to communication and language from others.
- Child uses increasingly complex language in conversation with others.
- Child uses an increasing number of words in communication and conversation with others.
- Child makes marks and uses them to represent objects or actions.
- Child who is a Dual Language Learner will demonstrate increased competency in their home language and developing English proficiency.
- Child uses nonverbal communication and language to engage others in interactions.



COGNITION*

- Child actively explores people and objects to understand self, others, and objects.
- Child uses memories as a foundation for more complex actions and thoughts.
- Child uses reasoning and planning to solve problems.
- Child develops sense of number and quantity.
- Child observes and imitates sounds, words, gestures, actions, and behaviors.
- Child uses understanding of causal relationships to act on social and physical environments.



PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

- Child uses perceptual information to understand objects, experiences, and interactions.
- Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles to explore the environment.
- Child uses hands for exploration, play, and daily routines.
- Child demonstrates healthy behaviors with increasing independence as part of everyday routines.
- Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles for movement and position.

Head Start SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

— (2026-2027) —

The Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. (GCCSA) Head Start/Early Head Start Program will promote school readiness by enhancing the physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services. Parents will be engaged in their children's learning and encouraged to support their children's progress toward their school readiness goals.

Based on teacher's observations and ongoing student assessment with CLI Engage for all HS children as well as GOLD Teaching Strategies for our collaboration site will show individual growth in each of the following areas in the School Readiness Goals:



APPROACHES TO LEARNING*

- Child shows imagination in play and interactions with others.
- Child maintains focus and sustains attention with minimal adult support.
- Child demonstrates initiative and independence.
- Child expresses creativity in thinking and communication.
- Child uses digital learning applications to contribute to class made digital progress that express own ideas as appropriate.
- Child uses technology to assess appropriate information with adult assistance.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

- Child engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with adults.
- Child engages in and maintains positive interactions and relationships with other children.
- Child manages emotions with increasing independence.
- Child recognizes self as a unique individual having own abilities, characteristics, emotions, and interests.
- Child follows classroom rules and routines with occasional reminders from adults.
- Child regulates own behavior with occasional reminders or assistance from adults.
- Child sustains attention to personally chosen or routine (teacher – directed) tasks until completed.



LANGUAGE AND LITERACY*

- Child attends to communication and language from others.
- Child understands, follows, and uses appropriate social and conversational rules.
- Child understands and uses a wide variety of words for a variety of purposes.
- Child demonstrates awareness that spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound.
- Child identifies letters of the alphabet and produces correct sounds associated with letters.
- Child asks and answers questions about a book that was read aloud.
- Child writes for a variety of purposes using increasingly sophisticated marks.
- The child who is a Dual Language Learner will demonstrate increased competency in their home language and developing English proficiency.
- Child self-selects books and other written material to engage in pre-reading behaviors.
- Child produces at least 20 distinct letter-sounds correspondences.



COGNITION*

- Child associates a quantity with written numerals up to 5 and begins to write numbers.
- Child understands simple patterns.
- Child measures objects by their various attributes using standard and non-standard measurement. Uses differences in attributes to make comparisons.
- Child identifies, describes, compares, and composes shapes.
- Child compares and categorizes observable phenomena.
- Child asks a question, gathers information, and makes predictions.
- Child knows number names and the count sequence.
- Child recognizes numerals 0 – 10.



PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Child demonstrates control, strength, and coordination of large muscles.
- Preschoolers exhibit complex fine motor coordination when using tools to complete tasks.
- Child demonstrates knowledge of personal safety practices and routines.



Parents will ensure all health requirements will be provided and at least 85% up-to-date and on file at the Center, including Dental Exam, Physical Exam, Immunizations, and Health Statement.



The curriculum used in every classroom to support children's school readiness is aligned with the Texas Pre-K Guidelines and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

Curriculum and Assessment

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GCCSA Head Start/Early Head Start teaching staff use research-based curriculum and developmentally appropriate practice in every GCCSA HS/EHS classroom to support children's school readiness and individual learning needs. **Frog Street, Teaching Strategies** and **Savvas - Three Cheers for Pre-K** are the curriculums used in our classrooms and are aligned with the Texas Pre-K Guidelines and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.



GCCSA HS/EHS teaching staff regularly assess all children to determine children's strengths, needs and progress toward school readiness goals and guide individualized learning plans. Our education staff use formal assessments three times per year: at the beginning, middle and end. Head Start/Early Head Start teaching staff also use informal observations and information from parents and guardians to assess children's progress.



Screening

GCCSA HS/EHS teaching staff collaborate to complete developmental screenings for all newly enrolled children within **forty-five (45) calendar days** of a child's first day of attendance to identify concerns regarding developmental, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, and emotional skills. Screening results and recommendations will be shared with parents.



Every Early Head Start and Head Start teaching team member will:

- Greet and welcome children and parents daily.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Speak to children in a friendly, courteous manner.
- Show respect for individual differences and diversity.
- Communicate with individual children, encouraging language development.
- Encourage positive social behaviors in children such as cooperating, helping, taking turns, and talking to solve problems.
- Interact with children in a positive, responsive manner at their eye level.
- Model desired behavior, and always use positive and consistent guidance techniques with children.
- Provide a safe, comfortable environment that includes children in meaningful activities.
- For Early Head Start children (birth to 12 months), children will sleep on their back following the guidelines provided in the SIDS training. The program follows the infant safe sleep best practices.
- Consistently implement developmentally appropriate activities that focus on school readiness.
- Allow children to make choices with a balanced schedule of large-to-small group activities throughout the day.
- Conduct smooth transitions between activities while encouraging language development.
- Eat the same meal along with the children and encourage them to try new foods.





Your Child's DAILY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

TOGETHER WE GROW, LEARN & SHINE!

We believe that every day in a GCCSA Head Start/Early Head Start classroom should be filled with learning experiences for your child. To ensure that your child is ready for kindergarten and beyond, we provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, math, science and social studies.

This section will explain the day-to-day procedures we follow to support your child's learning and development.



ARRIVALS: Please ensure that your child attends regularly and arrives on time for learning. Your child's regular attendance is very important in order to make his/her educational experience in a GCCSA HS/EHS classroom a success.

- You must drop your child off according to the established Center/ School schedule and procedures each day.
- You are required to sign your child in each day per the expected procedures established at the Center/ School.
- No one under the age of 18, except a parent, is allowed to drop your child off.
- You must ensure that your child is under the supervision of a staff member before you leave.
- Upon arrival, a staff member will greet your child and conduct a morning inspection. This inspection is implemented daily.



DURING THE DAY: Your child will be engaged in many hands-on, indoor and outdoor activities, such as drawing, painting, running, and jumping. There will be a minimum of two daily opportunities for 90 minutes of outdoor play, weather permitting, in which a child makes use of both small and large muscles. Your child will also have time to eat nutritious meals and snacks and have time for rest.

When determining if extreme weather conditions pose a significant health risk to children and staff that would prohibit or limit outdoor play, our agency is committed to using the following criteria:

- a) The Weather Channel National and Local Weather Radar, Daily Forecast, Hurricane and information from The Weather Channel and weather.com
- b) The Child Care Weather Watch (<https://www.cuphd.org/documents/wellness/weatherwatch.pdf>)
- c) Summer Safety Tips for Early Care and Education Programs (<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/summer-safety-tips-early-care-and-education-programs>)



DRESS YOUR CHILD FOR SUCCESS: You should dress your child in comfortable clothes and closed-toe shoes. We encourage you to also send a sweater or light jacket because the Center/School temperatures vary throughout the day.

- You must send a change of clothing in case of emergency.
- You must send a beach towel/blanket for rest period.
- You must dress your child according to the established Center/School dress code each day.

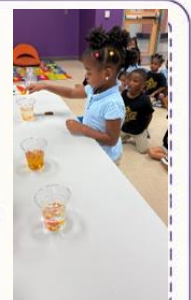
The following items are not permitted:

- Open-toe and/or open-back shoes and sandals
- Toys, electronics, jewelry, money, valuable or dangerous objects



DEPARTURES: You must make necessary arrangements for your child to be picked up by the established Center/School departure time each day.

- You must pick your child up according to the established Center/School schedule and procedures each day.
- You are required to sign your child out each day according to the procedures the Center/School has established.
- If an emergency occurs that prevents you from picking up your child by departure time, you must contact the Center/School staff to inform them.
- You must designate, in writing, who is allowed to pick your child up from the Center/School. Staff will not release your child to anyone without written notification from you.
- All individuals picking up a child who are not a parent or guardian must submit a copy of their valid government issued identification.
- No one under 18 years of age, except a parent, is allowed to pick up a child from the site.
- Upon departure, an afternoon inspection will be conducted. This inspection will be implemented daily. GCCSA is released from liability once your child has been signed out.



Attendance

Head Start and **Early Head Start** children are required to attend school regularly Monday through Friday at your site's scheduled time.

You must contact your child's Center/School to report any absences due to illness or family emergency.

- You must bring a handwritten note to school to document any absence. A doctor's statement is required following a serious illness.

If chronic tardiness or absenteeism persists, the Center Administrator will contact you to discuss dropping your child from the Program so her/his enrollment slot can be given to another child. This procedure will be implemented:

1. When a child is absent for 2 or more consecutive weeks due to unexcused absences.
2. When a child's attendance falls below 85% for one (1) month because of unexcused absences.
3. If your child is brought to school late or picked up late, more than ten (10) minutes for ten (10) days in one month.

We want your child to attend daily in order to be ready for kindergarten and beyond. If circumstances arise that keep you from being able to drop off or pick up your child on a regular basis, please speak with your Family Services Specialist, who can provide you with various resources that will assist you.



Health Services



Support Your Child's Growth and Development

Health is the foundation of school readiness. Your child's overall health and development is needed for a healthy and happy child who is ready to experience new things. We work with families to help children thrive, providing standardized health and developmental screenings which include, hearing and vision.

Head Start is required to follow the Texas Health (TH) Steps mandates. Within the first ninety (90) days of enrollment, a GCCSA Health Specialist will determine if a child is up-to-date on preventative and primary medical and dental healthcare. The goal is to assure each child has an ongoing source of continuous, accessible healthcare (a "dental and medical home").



Immunizations: Texas State law requires that all children in daycare and school settings have age appropriate, up-to-date immunization records.

- We maintain a copy of your child's immunization record at the Center your child attends.
- The Health Specialist assigned to your child's Center will assess each child's records to determine their current immunization status. If your child's immunization status is not current, you will receive written notice regarding your child's needed immunization.
- To ensure State Law compliance, a child may be excluded from school if they have not received the required immunization five (5) days after the notice was given and a current record has not been obtained.
- Parents of children with medical or religious exclusions, or conscientious objections must provide a Texas Department of Health affidavit from your child's doctor to the Center Administrator, Family Empowerment Specialist, Health Specialist, or School Nurse verifying exemption.
- During any recognized communicable disease outbreaks, children with these exemptions may be excluded from attending the Center per the local Health Authority.



Vision and Hearing Screenings: The Head Start Performance Standards require that all children be screened for vision and hearing within forty-five (45) days of entry into Head Start. If this exam is not on the current Child's Physical Exam, the child may be tested by the assigned Health Specialist or designated Community Agency.



Tuberculosis Testing: Head Start is required to follow the Texas Health (TH) Steps mandates. The Tuberculosis (TB) Questionnaire must be completed beginning at 12 months of age. If a risk is identified, a TB skin test will be required. Children identified as "at risk" will be referred to a local clinic or their doctor for follow-up. A copy of the results must be forwarded to your Center.



Lab Screening: Lead and anemia screening is required at the ages noted on the TH Steps Periodicity Schedule. A copy of the results must be submitted to your Center. Lead testing must be completed at 12 months and 24 months of age. If the child has not been tested at 24 months of age, they must be tested at age three (3).



Oral Health: Within the first ninety (90) days of enrollment, a health care specialist at GCCSA determines if a child is up-to-date on preventative and primary oral health care and has an ongoing source of continuous, accessible care (a "dental home"). An important part of a child's daily health routine is to brush twice, daily. Every participating center will provide each child with a new toothbrush that should be replaced every three months, as needed and/or after any illness.



Child Illness: We are dedicated to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for children and staff. Children with obvious signs of illness must not be brought to school. If your child exhibits signs of illness at school:

- You will be notified, and your child may be sent home and/or prohibited from attending school.
- If your child is out as the result of a serious illness or injury, a doctor's release to return to school must be provided. Please see *Exclusion Procedure for Sick Children*.

Medication Administration

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Prior to any medication being administered at the Center, the Consent/Authorization form must be completed and signed by both the physician and the parent.

- No over-the-counter or outdated medications will be given to the children.
- Staff does not provide or apply insect repellent or sunscreen to children without physician documentation.
- Medication must be labeled with the child's name, date, dosage, physician order and must be in the original container. A brochure of the medication's side effects must be provided to the Centerstaff to be placed in the child's folder as a reference.
- A separate Consent/Authorization form must be completed for each medication that your child will receive at the Center.
- Medication is administered by the School Nurse in HISD collaborations and in stand-alone centers by the Center Administrator or designee.
- Parents will inform the Center Administrator or designee when the administration of medication is changed by the physician and will bring the updated information to the Center to be placed in the child's folder as a reference.

When to Keep Your Child(ren) at Home



Exclusion Procedure for Sick Children



Because we want to protect the health and safety of all children who participate in our programs, we ask that you please observe your child(ren) for illness before bringing her/him to school. A child will not be permitted to stay if any of the listed symptoms are apparent when the child arrives at the Center.

If any of these symptoms occur, the Center Administrator or designee will immediately notify the parent to pick the child up at once.



Children Cannot Attend with the Following Symptoms:

- Severe or persistent coughing
- Fever 100.4° or higher (must be fever free without medication 24 hours prior to returning)
- Vomiting (must be free of episodes for 24 hours prior to returning)
- Diarrhea – frequent, loose, watery stool (must be free of episode for 24 hours prior to returning)
- Sore throat with fever



Illnesses Requiring a Doctor's Release:

- Strep throat
- Scarlet fever
- Influenza
- Thrush
- Ringworm (scalp or head)
- Impetigo
- Open blisters on the skin
- Hepatitis A & B
- Scabies
- Mumps, Measles and Rubella
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Breathing problems (Severe Asthma)
- Infective or open/oozing sores or rashes
- Impetigo
- Chickenpox
- Ringworm (head, body must be covered)
- Evidence of head lice
- Meningitis
- Salmonella, Shigella and Yersinia
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Tuberculosis
- Pinworms
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Fractured, sprained or broken bones
- Chickenpox
- Any other communicable diseases



Safety and Health Practices:

It is our goal to protect the health and safety of all Head Start/Early Head Start children from having contact with animals at our centers and collaborative sites.



Emergency Plan:

In case of an emergency, we call 911 then evacuate to the sites' assigned location. (plan available upon request)



Our Response to COVID-19:

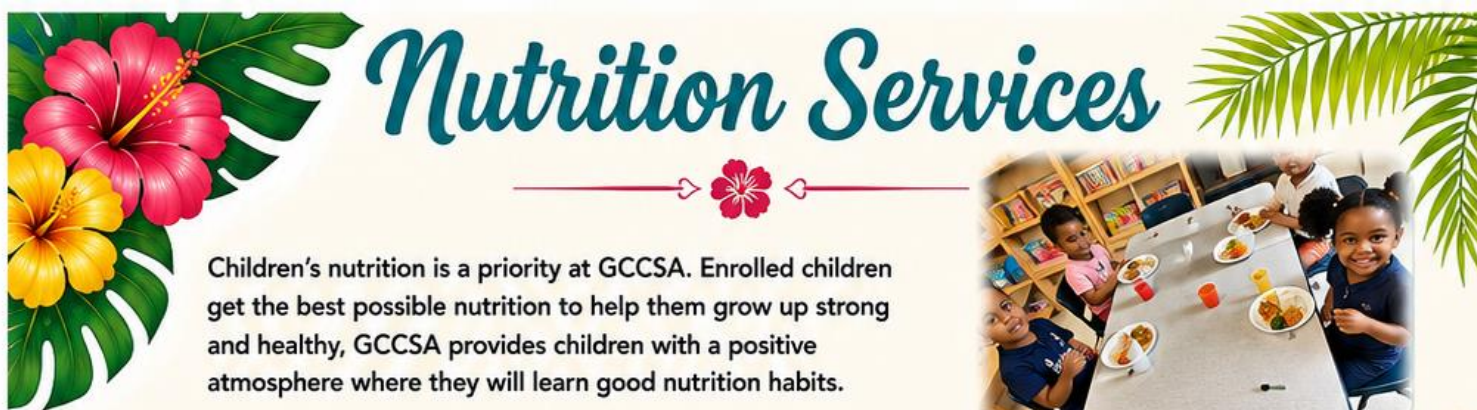
At GCCSA, our top priority is the health of our children and families. For this reason, we have implemented measures to keep our facilities safe for our children and staff. GCCSA, Inc. provide additional cleaning and sanitizing measures on a regular basis.



Please Note:

The Center and playground will be kept free of animals.

Nutrition Services



Children's nutrition is a priority at GCCSA. Enrolled children get the best possible nutrition to help them grow up strong and healthy, GCCSA provides children with a positive atmosphere where they will learn good nutrition habits.



Meals: GCCSA serves nutritious meals and snacks via participation in the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), in which parents/guardians complete a Child CACFP Enrollment Form. Meal schedules will vary at the GCCSA Centers and collaborative school sites. We establish good eating habits by:

- Providing nutritiously balanced meals: breakfast, lunch, and snacks.
- Serving meals and snacks to children and allowing them second servings from the vegetable, fruit, grain, and milk groups.
- Encouraging children to feed themselves, try new foods, and make decisions about what they will eat. No type of mental or physical coercion is allowed to get the child(ren) to eat any food or beverage they decline.
- Providing special dietary meals as prescribed by a physician.
- Serving meals in a modified family style.
- Providing resources/information for the whole family.



Heights and Weights: Children's heights and weights are measured by the nutrition staff within ninety (90) days of the child's first day of school and again in the spring. If a child's weight is over or under what is deemed a health risk according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) growth chart, then a referral and follow-up is done by the GCCSA Nutrition Specialist. The Nutrition Specialist will provide the parent with the proper information and resources for the family to eat healthier and encourage more physical activity.



Food Ordinance: In accordance with the City of Houston Ordinance, food prepared in the home will not be allowed at any Head Start or Early Head Start facility at any time, including after regular serving hours.



Food Allergies: Children with food allergies or medical restrictions to certain foods will be accommodated. However, parents must provide the Family Services Specialist or Nutrition Specialist with written orders from a physician or registered/licensed dietitian during enrollment, and if/when a change occurs during the school year.



Religious Meal Variations: Families desiring food restrictions for religious or cultural reasons must submit the request in writing at the time of enrollment. Restricted items must be named in the request.



Birthday Celebrations: The Head Start & Early Head Start Programs celebrate birthdays of children during each month. If parents choose to celebrate their child's birthday at the Center with all of the children and staff members, we encourage you to use non-food items and other creative activities (i.e. games, books, cultural heritage, etc.). Food or candy may not be brought in by parents for a classroom celebration.



Holiday Celebrations: Like many preschool programs, Head Start and Early Head Start celebrates seasonal festivities such as the Fall Harvest, Thanksgiving, Winter Holidays, Valentine's Day, and Spring. The Programs plan seasonal menus and order special food for these holiday celebrations. Parents and staff can plan holiday celebrations together. Food or candy from an outside source is not allowed.



Meal Preferences Outside Of Food Allergy and/or Religious Needs: Meals for each Head Start and Early Head Start site are provided by Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. in accordance with the USDA Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP). As a program that administers CACFP, all applicable regulations must be met, including meal composition and portions. Any parent requesting meal substitutions/changes that are outside of a documented food allergy and/or religious preference (i.e. parent choice, organic meals, etc.) will need to immediately contact your Center Administrator.



Please note: Store-bought food or food from home is not allowed in the Center/School under any circumstances. (Circumstances include, but are not limited to snacks, lunch, holidays, birthdays, and other celebrations.) Should you have any questions, please contact your Center Administrator directly.



Special Services

The Special Services Department works with families and their children with disabilities and/or mental health concerns to ensure their children receive the full benefits of participation in the program. The department engages parents and staff in early identification and intervention services to help children meet their developmental milestones.

The Special Services Department consists of four (4) Specialists. The Specialists provide classroom support and promote advocacy skills with families as needed. They explain parent/guardian rights and responsibilities according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Head Start Performance Standards, assist families in obtaining services through Local Education Agencies (LEA) (Head Start – Part B), Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI) (Early Head Start – Part C), and private providers. Additionally, the Specialists supports teaching staff with classroom routines and activities that support the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and the Individualized Education Plans (IEP) of children with special needs.

The GCCSA Special Services Department will provide virtual services for children with disability and mental health needs along with family support groups upon request.



Disability Services

The Special Services Department is committed to working with families and their children that have a suspected or identified disability. This includes children with severe disabilities. The agency's goal is for every child to receive the comprehensive services needed to meet their developmental, health and social needs.

The department assist families in obtaining services through their Local Education Agency (education model) and additional support or therapy services with contract Disabilities Providers (DP) know as private providers (medical model). The department works collaboratively with Local Education Agencies, community agencies, GCCSA staff and private providers to ensure that all children receive services in a timely manner. In addition, we are committed to dedicating 10% of our funded enrollment to enroll children with disabilities.



Mental Health

The agency has contracts with Mental health Professionals (MHP) to assist parents and staff with mental health concerns. MHPs provide direct support to children, parents and staff. They also assist children in emotional, cognitive and social development.

The department works collaboratively with Local Education Agencies, community agencies, GCCSA staff and private providers to ensure that all children receive services in a timely manner and to enhance awareness and understanding of mental wellness.



A variety of services can be provided through the Special Services Department:



Disability and
Mental Health
Workshops



Advocating
Skills



Assessment and
Early Intervention



Assistance with
Services



Parent, Family and Community Engagement



The Family Empowerment (FE) Department is responsible for promoting **your family's well-being** through staff support, parent education opportunities, and access to community resources.

GOALS



- **Family Well-Being** – Staff will develop relationships with parents and families that are helpful in supporting the goals they have established for themselves and their children.



- **Positive Parent/Child Relationships** – Parents and families are the primary educators for their children and understand the importance of the home-school connection.



- **Families as Life-Long Educators** – Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school and in their communities.



- **Families as Learners** – Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers and life goals.



- **Family Engagement in Transitions** – Parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments.



- **Connections to Peers and Community** – Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.



- **Families as Advocates and Leaders** – Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development or community and state activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.



- **Families as Partners** – Every family is partnered with a Family Services Specialist (FSS) who has the responsibility to:
 - Meet with your family to identify your family's strengths, goals and needs and complete an Individualized Family Partnership Agreement (IFPA) with your family.
 - Identify and resolve barriers that might prevent you from achieving your goals.
 - Link your family to resources in the community for services.
 - Communicate with your family in a timely manner to assess the progress you have made towards achieving your goals.



- **Families as Volunteers** – Volunteers are essential to the success of our Program and this is one opportunity for you to become involved in your child's education.



IF INTERESTED, VOLUNTEERS MUST:

- Complete a Volunteer Application annually and submit to any center staff.
- Submit Government-issued photo Identification (Driver's License, State ID, Passport).

This must be done yearly. You may request a Volunteer Application from any staff person.

STAYING CONNECTED ♥

Teachers regularly communicate with parents, hold at least two parent conferences per year, and conduct at least two home visits per year.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

As a volunteer, you can donate your time in classrooms, the kitchen or in any of the administrative offices. You may also participate in sharing your expertise as a parent on one of our many advisory committees such as:



Health & Mental Health Services Advisory Committee



Nutrition Menu Planning Committee



Child Development Advisory Committee



IN-KIND: MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

"In-Kind" is just a fancy word for donations. Because our Program is federally funded, we are required to match 20% of our HSF/EHS grant money with in-kind every year. The annual in-kind amount is almost \$5 million.

HS/EHS families, community partners and local businesses generate in-kind annually by donating to and making your child's experiences great ones. As a volunteer, you can pledge your time as an in-kind donation. You may generously contribute as much of your time as you are able. It all helps the GCCSA Head Start/Early Head Start Program thrive.



Stronger Families
Stronger Communities
Brighter Futures



Program Governance



Parent Committees: At the beginning of the school year, each Center is required to establish a Parent Committee that is comprised of parents and legal guardians. The Committee's purpose is to provide an opportunity to take on leadership roles and assist the Center in the development of activities that address the interests and needs specific to each site. The Parent Committee will meet at least once a month. These meetings may be held at the center or virtually. This Committee is run by parents, for parents. Staff will serve as support to the parent/legal guardians to ensure that Program policies and procedures are being followed and needs of the Center's families are being met.



Policy Council: The Policy Council is an important parent-led governing body made up of volunteer parents and/or legal guardians of currently enrolled children in the Program, as well as representatives from various agencies in our community. Each Center is required to elect one parent representative and an alternate as early in the year as possible. Once elected, the representative will attend monthly Policy Council meetings at the Corporate Office and then report information back to the parents at the monthly Center Parent Committee meeting. The Policy Council Representatives are supported by the Governance Specialist and Head Start Management Team. Representatives will participate in sub-committees to help make decisions for the program. The work the Policy Council performs is vital to the life of the GCCSA Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.



The Responsibility of the Policy Council is to:

- Work in partnership with the GCCSA Board of Directors and HS/EHS Management Team to develop, review and approve program policies, and to oversee the quality of services that all HS/EHS children and families receive.



Parent Committee & Policy Council Election Process:

- At each Center at the first parent meeting of the Program year (and as needed), Center staff will facilitate the election process for Parent Committee Officers, including Policy Council Representative and Policy Council Representative Alternate.
- Parents may nominate themselves or may be nominated by another parent. If only one parent is interested, there is a vote by acclamation. If two or more parents express an interest in an elected position, all parents at the meeting must vote to determine who the Representative will be. The candidate receiving the most votes takes that seat. Voting is typically done by a show of hands.



Family Literacy: Our Program has been given the opportunity to participate in Strengthening Partnerships and Resources in the Community (SPARC) through Sonoma State University & the National Head Start Literacy Center. Our Program provides ongoing literacy activities that give parents the opportunity to increase their literacy skills. The SPARC Team is committed to accomplishing the following five goals:

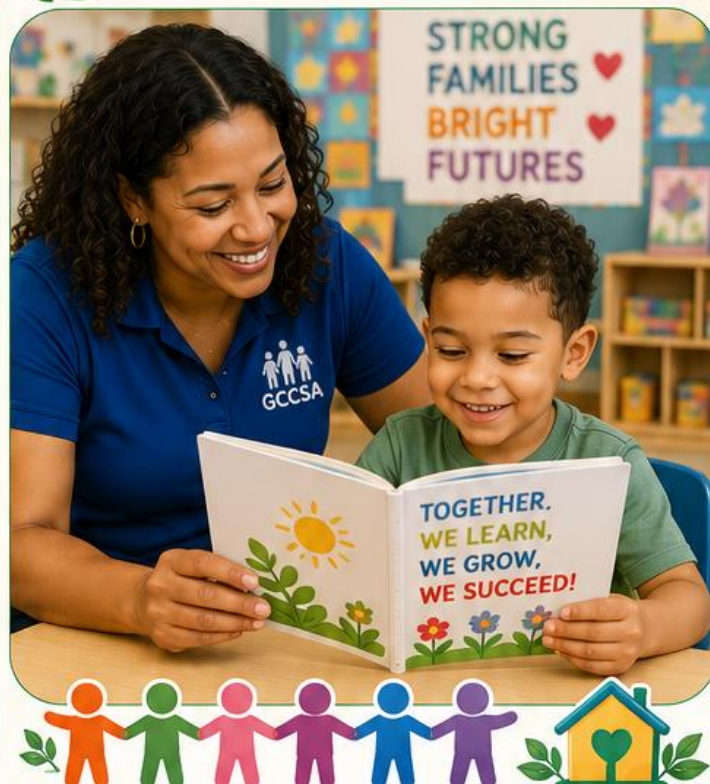
1. Family literacy program level system with an emphasis on sustaining changed family literacy practices.
2. Parents engaging in interactive literacy activities with their children.
3. Parents embracing their role as their children's first teacher and full partners in their child's education.
4. Partnering between HS/EHS, adult education and other community groups to support adult education efforts.
5. Teachers providing children with age-appropriate education that leads to school readiness.



Together, we support learning, growth and success for every child and every family. ♥

Communication & Collaboration with Parents

-  • Lesson Plans
-  • Menus
-  • Emergency Preparedness Plan (available upon request)
-  • Parent Meetings, Policy Council Meetings, and Current Events
-  • Job Postings, Career Trainings/Workshops
-  • List of Center Staff
-  • Copy of the Minimum Standards and Day Care Licensing Report
-  • USDA Nondiscrimination Statement
-  • Early Head Start - Safe Sleep Policy
-  • Texas Department of Family and Protective Services website - www.dfps.state.tx.us and phone number (713) 940-5200
-  • Recalls from the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) website www.cpsc.gov
-  • GCCSA web site www.gccsa.org and Head Start site location information



Notes and Flyers: Notes and flyers will be distributed during the Program year. These will be sent in your child(ren)'s backpack or Home Fun Folder.



Program Changes: Information affecting program operations or services to children and families will be sent as soon as available.



Resolution Process: We believe that the primary avenue to providing quality services is through effective communication between staff and the families we serve. Most questions and concerns are resolved through open communication with your Center Administrator. If you have a concern, please utilize the following communication process to reach resolution regarding the GCCSA HS/EHS Programs.

STEP 1



Address your concern with your Center Administrator. We encourage you to put serious concerns in writing.

STEP 2



Within ten (10) working days of receiving your concern, the Center Administrator will schedule a meeting with you to discuss them at a mutually agreeable time.

STEP 3



If your concern is still not resolved, then another meeting will be scheduled, within five (5) working days, with you, the Center Administrator, and the HS/EHS Assistant Director.

STEP 4



If your concern is still not resolved, proceed by sharing your concern with the following individuals, in the following order:

- Head Start/Early Head Start Director, **Tiamoiya Lee, (713) 393-4728.**
- Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO), **Debra Fisher, 713-393-4700 ext. 796**



Following the four-step process outlined above will assist you in the timeliest resolution of your concern.



Positive Discipline and Guidance



Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Minimum Standards Sec. 5100 | Discipline and Guidance

Staff members are trained to use positive discipline and guidance techniques when a child is exhibiting inappropriate behaviors. GCCSA will not expel and/or suspend any child from the Head Start/Early Head Start Program due to behavior.

We want all children to have a safe and nurturing learning environment. If a child exhibits frequent, inappropriate behavior towards other children, adults or Center property, Center staff will work with you to develop an intervention plan to encourage and support your child's appropriate behavior. If your child exhibits inappropriate behavior that endangers the child, other children or staff, the Center staff may contact the child's parent or guardian to have the child picked up immediately. Collaboration between the staff and parents in addressing the behavior of the child is the key in assisting him/her with gaining self-control and we want your support in helping your child succeed.



WE CARE
WE TEACH
WE INSPIRE



As we value and respect all parents, we expect our parents to display courtesy and respect to all parents and staff on Agency premises. We strongly encourage our parents to use positive guidance and discipline techniques with their children. Parents are prohibited from using negative discipline techniques on any GCCSA property, including:

- **SLAPPING, LOUD or PROFANE LANGUAGE, THREATENING, or SPANKING** children or GCCSA staff, volunteers and other parents. Further, in accordance with the "Minimum Standards" of the State of Texas, negative discipline techniques displayed in the presence of children are inappropriate and will place the Center out of regulatory compliance.
- If there is a need to conduct an internal investigation involving suspected child abuse or neglect, it may be necessary to interview children enrolled in the program. Parents will receive notification if or when this situation occurs.



REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

GCCSA is committed to increasing staff and parent awareness of issues regarding child abuse and neglect. GCCSA partners with community organizations to educate families and staff in recognizing and preventing child abuse and neglect. All staff receive annual training on preventing, recognizing and responding to abuse and neglect of children. The training includes methods for recognizing indicators of child abuse and neglect, and the procedures to follow. Families are informed and encouraged to obtain information, intervention of child abuse and neglect and to empower them in its prevention. Families who feel their child may have been a victim of child abuse or neglect should contact the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) by calling 1-800-252-5400. GCCSA staff members can provide assistance in obtaining resources for families in need of additional support.



Effective September 1, 2009, GCCSA Head Start/Early Head Start State of Texas to Inform you about gang-free zones. (Consult Texas Penal Code sections 71.028 & 71.202)

"Gang-free zone" is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang-activity, or engaging in subversive activities organized under law. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of any child's assistance in should. Should you have any questions, please contact your center services about obtaining a copy of a map.



**** For further information or questions, please contact your Center Administrator.**

You can reach Child Care Regulation by calling (713) 940-3009 or accessing this web address <https://childcaresearch.tdfps.texas.gov>. A copy of Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards is available for review in the Head Start Office. The most recent licensing report for this Center is located on the Parent Board.

GCCSA Head Start/ Early Head Start Center Locations

The Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. is proud to serve the many children and families in the Southeast Sector of Harris County, including the cities of Houston and Pasadena. We operate a total of 1 Early Head Start Center, 1 Head Start & Early Head Start Center and 13 Head Start Centers, serving as either stand-alone centers or sites that operate in collaboration with school partnerships.

Early Head Start

2020 Solo Street, Building #1
Houston, Texas 77020
(713) 222-7284
7:45 am - 3:15 pm

Peck Elementary

5001 Martin Luther King Jr.
Houston, Texas 77021
(713) 393-4759
8:00 am – 3:00 pm

RYSS STEM Academy - Pasadena

1062 Fairmont Parkway
Pasadena, Texas 77504
(713) 393-4762
7:45 am - 3:45 pm

Bastian Elementary

5051 Belfort Avenue
Houston, Texas 77033
(713) 393-4755
7:30 am - 3:00 pm

Pasadena HS/EHS

902 S. Wafer Street
Pasadena, Texas 77506
(713) 472-9685
7:45 am - 3:15 pm

Richey

611-B South Richey Road
Pasadena, Texas 77506
(713) 477-1653
7:45 am - 3:15 pm

Codwell Elementary

5225 Tavenor Lane
Houston, Texas 77048
(713) 393-4756
7:30 am - 2:50 pm

Patterson Elementary

5302 Allendale Road
Houston, Texas 77017
(713) 393-4760
7:30 am - 3 pm

Rucker Elementary

5201 Vinett Avenue
Houston, Texas 77061
(713) 393-4763
8:00 am – 3:00 pm

DeAnda Elementary

7980 Almeda Genoa
Houston, Texas 77075
(713) 393-4757
7:30 AM - 3:00 PM

Raul Yzaguirre - Houston

2950 Broadway Street
Houston, Texas 77017
(713) 393-4761
7:45 am - 3:45 pm

Thompson Elementary

6121 Tierwester
Houston, Texas 77004
(713) 393-4764
8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Kelso Elementary

5800 Southmund Street
Houston, Texas 77033
(713) 393-4758
7:30 am - 2:50pm

Reynolds Elementary

9601 Rosehaven Dr
Houston, Texas 77051
(713) 393-4766
7:45 am - 3:15 pm

Woodson Elementary

10720 Southview
Houston, Texas 77041
(713) 393-4765
7:30 am – 3:00 pm

During Inclement
Weather GCCSA
follows HISD
Schedule/Guidance

Head Start/Early Head Start Academic Calendar 2026-2027

Gulf Coast Community Services Association Master Calendar

HISD/ All Standalones' (HS/EHS Pasadena, Richey)

"Waves of Change: Navigating Community Impact Together"

AUGUST* 2026						
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HISD – Stand Alone

August 10, 2026 First Day of School
 September 7, 2026 Labor Day Holiday
 September 21, 2026 Staff PD Day (no classes)
 October 9, 2026 Staff PD Day (no classes)
 Nov. 23-27, 2026 Thanksgiving Holiday
 Dec. 21-Jan. 1, 2027 Christmas Break
 January 4, 2027 Staff PD Day (no classes)
 January 18, 2027 MLK, Jr. Day Holiday
 February 15, 2027 Staff PD Day (no classes)
 March 8-12, 2027 Spring Break
 March 26, 2027 Staff PD Day (no classes)
 March 29, 2027 Chavez Huerta Day Holiday
 April 16, 2027 Staff PD Day (no classes)
 May 28, 2027 Last Day of School
 May 31, 2027 Memorial Day Holiday
 June 3, 2027 EHS Last Day of School

EHS: 184 days—1,380 Hours of Instruction (EHS Required 1,380)
 HISD: 181 days—X 7.5 hours— 1,357.50 Hours of Instruction (HS Required: 1,020 Hours)

BOY: 8/31-10/1 MOY: 1/6-2/5 EOY: 4/14-5/14

Key

- ▲ First & Last Day of School
- ▲ EHS Last Day of School
- HISD/ All Standalones No School
- HISD/ All Standalones Staff Development Days

During Inclement
Weather GCCSA
follows HISD
Schedule/Guidance

Head Start/Early Head Start Academic Calendar 2026-2027

Gulf Coast Community Services Association Master Calendar

HISD/ All Standalones' (HS/EHS Pasadena, Richey)

"Waves of Change: Navigating Community Impact Together"

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 May 31, 2027 Memorial Day Holiday
 June 3, 2027 EHS Last Day of School

EHS: 184 days—1,380 Hours of Instruction (EHS Required 1,380)
 HISD: 181 days—X 7.5 hours— 1,357.50 Hours of Instruction (HS Required: 1,020 Hours)

BOY: 8/31-10/1 MOY: 1/6-2/5 EOY: 4/14-5/14

Key

- ▲ First & Last Day of School
- ▲ EHS Last Day of School
- HISD/ All Standalones No School
- HISD/ All Standalones Staff Development Days



Head Start/Early Head Start Parent Handbook Acknowledgment 2026-2027

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Head Start/Early Head Start Parent Handbook.

As a Head Start/Early Head Start parent/guardian, I agree to adhere to all stated policies and procedures outlined in this handbook by the GCCSA Head Start/Early Head Start Program.

Center: _____

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian/s Signature: _____ Date: _____

To complete the Parent Handbook Acknowledgement online, please scan the QR code **OR** complete the digital form online by clicking on the link below:

[Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Link - Please click to complete](#)

