

**Community Action Council
Howard County Head Start
Attendance Policy**

Performance Standard 1305.8 states that: “Head Start programs must analyze the causes of absenteeism when their monthly average daily attendance falls below 85%. This analysis must include a study of the pattern of absences for each child, including the reasons for absences as well as the number of absences that occur on consecutive days.”

If the absences are the result of illness or if they are well-documented absences for other reasons, no special action is required. If, however, the absences result from other factors, including temporary family problems that affect a child’s regular attendance, the program must initiate appropriate family support procedures for all children with four or more consecutive unexcused absences. These procedures must include home visits or other direct contact with the child’s parents. Contacts with the family must emphasize the benefits of regular attendance, while at the same time remaining sensitive to any special family circumstances influencing attendance patterns. All contacts with the child’s family as well as special family support service activities provided by program staff must be documented.

In circumstances where chronic absenteeism persists and it does not seem feasible to include the child in either the same or a different program option, the child’s slot must be considered an enrollment vacancy.

CAC Head Start Attendance Policy

Prompt regular attendance is an integral part of the learning experience that enhances academic performance and achievement. Students who are absent or chronically tardy are not able to participate fully in class discussions, small group activities, or class experiments. These students miss explanations of new concepts and ideas that create strong foundations for future social and academic growth.

Staff realizes that some absences are unavoidable: illness, a death in the family, transportation problems, and family crisis can all impact a child’s attendance. So that families are not penalized for these temporary situations, exceptions will be made for a child’s extended absence when a parent and/or physician note is received. Communication between staff and the family is paramount.

Staff and Family will observe the following policy to both insure that each child attends school regularly and to adhere to Performance Standard 1305.8:

- 1.** Families will be advised of the Community Action Council Howard County Head Start Attendance Policy both in writing and verbally.
- 2.** A child who is absent for 4 or more consecutive days without an excuse may be dropped if the child’s family has failed to respond to written or home visit inquiries as to the cause of the child’s absences.
- 3.** A child who is chronically absent (15% or 3 unexcused absences in a 20-day period) may be dropped from the program if the child’s family has failed to respond to written or home visit inquiries as to the cause of the child’s absences.
- 4.** Families who **do** respond to verbal inquiries or in-person visits from staff may be required to sign an Attendance Agreement; families must agree to a plan of action to strengthen their child’s regular attendance.
- 5.** A family whose child who is chronically tardy (more than 20 minutes late, 2 days a week or more) may need to sign an Attendance Agreement and agree to a plan of action to strengthen their child’s timely attendance.