

PORTAGE LEARNING CENTERS

**HEAD START
EARLY HEAD START
Parent
Handbook**



School Year 2013-2014

Portage Learning Centers
145 N. Chestnut St., Lower Level
Ravenna, OH 44266

Portage Learning Centers is a private not-for-profit corporation.
Our Tax Identification Number is available upon request.
Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Revised 02/25/2013

**Head Start/Early Head Start
Holiday Schedule/Important Dates**

July 4, 2013	No School—4th of July Holiday PLC Office/Centers Closed
September 2, 2013	No School - Labor Day PLC Office/Centers Closed
September 9, 2013	First Day of School for Head Start
September 26, 2013	Open House - Head Start/Early Head Start
November 28 - 29, 2013	No School - Thanksgiving PLC Office/Centers Closed
December 23, 2013 - January 5, 2014	Winter Break for Head Start/Early Head Start Classes
December 24 - 25, 2013	PLC Office and All PLC Centers Closed
December 31, 2013 - January 1, 2014	PLC Office and All PLC Centers Closed
January 6, 2014	Return from Winter Break Head Start/Early Head Start Classes
January 20, 2014	PLC Office Closed - MLK Day No School - Head Start/Early Head Start Classes
February 17, 2014	PLC Office Closed - President's Day No School - Head Start/Early Head Start Classes
To Be Announced	Spring Break Head Start/Early Head Start Classes
May 14, 2014	Last Day of School - Head Start
May 26, 2014	No School - Memorial Day PLC Office/Centers Closed
July 4, 2014	No School - 4th of July Holiday PLC Office/Centers Closed
September 1, 2014	No School - Labor Day PLC Office/Centers Closed

General Information

Head Start: Portage Learning Centers (PLC) Head Start Program is a no cost preschool program that provides a fun learning experience which prepares children socially, emotionally, and academically for their future educational success. It is designed for children ages three to five years old (not kindergarten eligible). Families must meet income guidelines to be eligible.

We at Head Start recognize the changing needs of families today. We work with families to provide as many services as possible, whether it be wrap-around child care services or transportation to your existing child care (if available). Our mission at Head Start is to provide families and children with the best possible preschool experience.

During the 2013-2014 academic school year, we will serve 290 children throughout Portage County in the Federal Head Start Program.

Early Head Start: The Early Head Start Program is designed for infants, toddlers, pregnant women and their families. The program enhances children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development; assists pregnant women in accessing comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; supports parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles; and helps them move toward self-sufficiency. Families must meet income guidelines to be eligible.

During the 2013-2014 school year, we will serve 84 families; 24 children in center-based programs and 60 children and pregnant women in the home-based program. The program operates year-round.

Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms are licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. See page 23 for additional information.

Locations

Portage Learning Centers' main office is located at 145 North Chestnut St., (Key Bank Building) in Ravenna. The phone number is (330) 297-7795. Our mailing address is:

Portage Learning Centers
145 North Chestnut Street, Lower Level
Ravenna, Ohio 44266

We offer Head Start Center-Based Programs at four locations:

Atwater Portage Learning Centers
1464 Industry Road
Atwater, Ohio 44201
(330) 947-2845

Ravenna Child Development Center
4833 Harding Avenue
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 297-1662

Kent Portage Learning Centers
200 North Mantua Street
Kent, Ohio 44240
(330) 676-9531

Streetsboro Portage Learning Centers
1880 State Route 303
Streetsboro, Ohio 44241
(330) 626-1819

We offer Early Head Start Center-Based Classrooms at the following location:

Happy Day School
2600 Brady Lake Road
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
(330) 673-7075

Goals

Our goal is to provide you and your family with a quality preschool/childcare program. We strive to achieve this goal by planning activities for the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of your child.

We provide a classroom environment that helps children develop self-control, independence and an understanding of group social interaction.

We facilitate the development of a good self-image, respect and caring for other children, adults and property by:

- providing safe, creative and challenging equipment and educational materials for intellectual and motor (physical) development,
- promoting the needs, interests and abilities of each child through quiet and active play,
- providing healthy and nutritious food using USDA Guidelines and MyPlate, and providing children with the appropriate recommended daily dietary allowance per meal served,
- being aware of the children's emotional needs and providing support of those needs.

Philosophy

We believe each child is a unique individual – an individual of worth. We provide support and experiences that help children strive toward their potential. We expect children to explore and test their environment. Children develop and progress at their own pace. Children with special needs are integrated into the program at their own level.

A child's unique ideas of thought, creativity and problem solving are encouraged. Children's age-level characteristics and developmental abilities are included in all activities.

Ages

Portage Learning Centers' Head Start Program serves children ages 3 through 5 (not kindergarten eligible). Early Head Start classrooms serve children 18 month through 36 months. The Early Head Start Home-Based Program serves children 6 weeks through 36 months of age and pregnant women.

PLEASE REMEMBER

Children learn best through play. Make sure you dress your child appropriately for play and be sure to send a change of clothes.

The best way to reinforce your child's behavior is to praise often. Use words like awesome, fantastic, great, super, wow, way to go, neat, amazing, terrific, and outstanding.

Head Start/Early Head Start fosters the role of parents as the primary educators, nurturers, and advocates for their children. Therefore, we work in close partnership with you to assist in developing and utilizing individual and family strengths in order to successfully meet personal and family objectives. You are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of the program, from participation in your child's activities to direct involvement in policy and program decisions.

Regulations do not permit food or drink of any type to be brought into our Child Development Centers/classrooms.

Please notify your Family Advocate or Teacher if you change your address or telephone number.

If your child will be absent from school, please call your center or the PLC main office to report the absence.

Employment Opportunities

Parents will receive written notification of job openings within the Head Start Program. Parents are encouraged to apply, or refer qualified applicants. Please contact Portage Learning Centers at (330) 297-7795 for further information.

E.E.O. Statement

Equal Employment Opportunity

Portage Learning Centers is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, genetic information, religion, age, disability, military status, political affiliation or beliefs in employment or the provision of services.

ODJFS Parent Information

The facility is licensed to operate legally by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. This license is posted in a conspicuous place for review.

A toll-free telephone number is listed on the facility's license and may be used to report a suspected violation of the licensing law or administrative rules. The licensing law and rules governing child care are available for review at the facility upon request.

The administrator and each employee of the facility is required, under Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) to report their suspicions of child abuse or child neglect to the local public children's services agency.

Any parent, custodian, or guardian of a child enrolled in the facility shall be permitted unlimited access to the facility during all hours of operation for the purpose of contacting their children, evaluating the care provided by the facility or evaluating the premises. Upon entering the premises, the parent, or guardian shall notify the Administrator of his/her presence.

Contact information for parents/guardians of the children attending the facility are available upon request. This information will not include the name, telephone number or email of any parent/guardian who requests that his/her name, telephone number or email not be included.

Recent licensing inspection reports and any substantiated complaint investigation reports for the past two years are posted in a conspicuous place in the facility for review.

The licensing record, including licensing inspection reports, complaint investigation reports, and evaluation forms from the building and fire departments is available for review upon written request from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The center's licensing inspection reports for the past two years are also available for review on the Child Care in Ohio website. The website is: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/childcare.stm>.

It is unlawful for the facility to discriminate in the enrollment of children upon the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or disability in violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 104 Stat. 32, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.

This information must be given in writing to all parents, guardians and employees as required in 5101: 2-12-30 of the Ohio Administrative Code.

Hours/Days of Operation

Head Start academic classes are in session Monday through Thursday. Each class operates for three and one half (3 1/2) hours per day. Centers operating academic classes only are open 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m.- 12 p.m. on Friday. Centers which offer full day child care are in operation Monday through Friday, 12 months per year. The Atwater Center is open from 7 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Ravenna and Streetsboro Centers are open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Early Head Start classes are in session Monday through Friday, year round. Each class operates for 6 hours per day.

The main office is open from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. See page 25 for a list of the days Centers will be closed.

Registration and Enrollment

Information on registration and eligibility can be obtained by calling the PLC Main Office at (330) 297-7795 or by calling your local Center. PLC is located at 145 N. Chestnut St. (Lower Level) in Ravenna. Registrations are done by appointment. Walk-in registration may be available at the Center in your area. *For children with health conditions, a Health Plan of Action detailing information on the child's conditions and/or a completed medication form must be on file prior to a child starting class.

Enrollment of Special Needs Children

Special needs children often can integrate into the classroom setting. The Site Administrator will review the child's needs and, if able to be reasonably accommodated, will enroll the child. This will be decided on an individual basis.

Nondiscrimination

It is the policy of Portage Learning Centers to accept children without regard to race, creed, color, religion, national origin, gender, genetic information, beliefs or the presence of a medical condition or handicap. PLC reserves the right to expel or refuse to accept for further enrollment a child who we believe to pose a threat to the well-being of other children and/or is abusive to staff.

Policy on Fees

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs do not require a fee for participation. If the family volunteers to pay part or all of the cost of the child's participation, the Head Start/Early Head Start Program may accept the voluntary payments and record the payments as program income. Under no circumstances shall a Head Start/Early Head Start Program solicit, encourage, or in any other way condition a child's enrollment or participation in the program upon the payment of a fee.

For children enrolled in Head Start and child care, the weekly full-time fee for child care is \$133.89 and the weekly part-time fee (3 days or less) is \$94.80. There is a discount of 10% per family enrolling more than one child. Fees are paid on an enrollment basis; therefore, fees are paid whether or not your child attends.

Fees are due by Friday of each week, for the upcoming week's services. Failure to maintain a current account is cause for termination of services.

If you are paying by check, please make checks payable to **Portage Private Industry Council, Inc.** If you are paying by cash, please have exact change.

There is a \$25.00 fee for all checks returned for non-sufficient funds. Our full day centers close at 6:00 p.m. If you do not pick up your child by 6:00 p.m., you will be charged a late fee. The charge is \$20.00 for every 15 minutes you are late.

Child Data Privacy Provisions

All information about PLC Head Start/Early Head Start children and their families is strictly confidential. All staff, as well as regular classroom volunteers, sign a Confidentiality Statement. If you have questions or concerns about something you have seen, please contact the PLC main office at (330) 297-7795. All information provided about a child will remain confidential unless the parent signs a Release of Information form.

Release of Information

In order for parents/guardians to obtain information from their child's main file, an Information Release form must be completed. This Release shall include the parent/guardian name, name and date of birth of child, specific information being requested, and signature of the parent. The request for information will be reviewed by the Family Support Manager and families will be notified if the request can be accommodated.

Access to Center Staff

Any custodial parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program has unlimited access to the center during its hours of operation for the purpose of contacting their children, evaluating the care provided by the center or evaluating the premises. Upon entering the premises, the custodial parent or guardian shall notify the Teacher.

Clothing

Because your child will be involved in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities, it is recommended he/she be dressed in washable, comfortable clothing (i.e., jeans, t-shirts, shorts, sweats, tennis shoes (no sandals), and/or other play wear). Play clothes are suggested as the children engage in many activities such as painting, gluing, etc.

The children will be going outdoors to play unless it is raining steadily, lightning, or the temperature is 25 degrees or below. Make sure your child has appropriate clothing such as hats, mittens, boots, etc. Please bring a complete change of clothing (including socks and undergarments) for your child to keep at the center.

Field Trips

Classes take field trips to visit and participate in various activities in the community. Parents will be notified in advance and permission slips will be sent home for your signature. Children without permission slips will not be permitted to attend field trips and will not be permitted to attend class that day. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend field trips if they notify the child's Teacher in advance so that proper arrangements can be made.

* Also see Pupil Transportation Policies, located on page 19

Parent Conferences

Head Start/Early Head Start families receive two parent-teacher conferences per year. At each conference, parents/guardians have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with staff members.

3. The Dispute Resolution Procedure has a maximum of three steps, but complaints may be resolved at any step in the process. Complaints are to be fully processed until the parent is satisfied, does not file a timely appeal, or exhausts the right of appeal. A decision becomes binding on all parties whenever a parent does not file a timely appeal or when a decision is made in the final step and the right of appeal no longer exists.
4. Parents who feel they have appropriate complaints should proceed as follows:
 - a) Step One – Promptly bring the complaint in writing to the attention of the Site Administrator. If the complaint involves the Site Administrator, then it is permissible to proceed directly to step two. The Site Administrator investigates the grievance, attempts to resolve it, and gives a decision to the parent within a reasonable time. The Site Administrator should prepare a written and dated summary of the complaint and proposed resolution for file purposes.
 - b) Step Two – Appeal the decision in writing to the Head Start Director if dissatisfied with the Site Administrator's decision, or initiate the procedure with the Head Start Director if Step One has been bypassed. Such an appeal or initial complaint must be made in a timely fashion, and must be in a written format. The Site Administrator's version of the complaint and decision will then be submitted using a similar written form. The Head Start Director will, in a timely fashion, confer with the parent, the Site Administrator, and any other management personnel considered appropriate; investigate the issue and communicate a decision in writing to all parties involved.
 - c) Step Three – Appeal an unsatisfactory decision in writing to the Executive Director. The timeliness requirement and procedures to be followed are similar to those in Step Two. The Executive Director will take necessary steps to review and investigate the grievance and will then issue a written decision.
5. Final decisions on complaints will not be precedent-setting or binding on future grievances, unless they are officially stated as PLC policy.
6. Information concerning a parent's complaint is to be held in strict confidence. Supervisors, department heads, and other management personnel who investigate a grievance are to discuss it only with those individuals who have a need to know about it or who are needed to supply necessary background.

Center Closing Policy

PLC Head Start/Early Head Start will not have busing for children if the school district in which the center is located has canceled school because of weather conditions. Parents may choose to drop off and pick up their children at the PLC Child Development Center; classes will be in session. If weather conditions are severe enough to cancel all activity at the Center, this information will be reported through radio and television announcements. These announcements usually begin at 5:30 a.m.

Transitioning

For Preschool Childcare Programs, a child will be enrolled into a specific age group and will remain in the same age group for the duration of the program.

For Infant/Toddler Programs, a child will be enrolled into a group and will remain there for the duration of the program. When a child turns 36 months old, the child will be transitioned into a preschool classroom.

Recording and Reporting Child Abuse

Any Portage Learning Center employee who is acting in his or her official or professional capacity and knows or suspects that a child under age 18 has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability or condition of the nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the child MUST personally report such knowledge or suspicion to the Public Children's Services Agency. The reporting agency in our community is the Portage County Department of Job and Family Services - (330) 296-2273.

Dispute Resolution Procedure

It is the policy of the Portage Learning Centers that parents should have an opportunity to present their related complaints through a dispute resolution or grievance procedure. PLC will attempt to resolve promptly all grievances that are appropriate for handling under this policy.

APPROPRIATE GRIEVANCES

- A. Violations of existing policies or practices (Changes to existing policies or practices are not subject to the grievance procedure.)
 - B. Alleged discrimination because of race, creed, color, national origin sex (including pregnancy), age, sexual orientation, genetic information, religion, disability, military status, political affiliation or beliefs..
1. Parents must notify the Portage Learning Centers in writing within ten (10) working days from the date the parent knew or should have known of any grievances handled under this policy. The Dispute Resolution Procedure is the exclusive remedy for parents with appropriate complaints. As used in this policy, the terms "timely fashion," "reasonable time," "promptly," will mean within ten working days.
 2. Parents are not to be penalized for proper use of the Dispute Resolution Procedure. However, it is not considered proper if a parent abuses the procedure by raising complaints in bad faith or solely for the purpose of delay or harassment, or by repeatedly raising grievances that a reasonable person would judge of no merit.

Home Visits

Home visits are an important part of our program. They give parents the opportunity to meet their child's Teacher and Family Advocate to discuss goals they have for their child and family, in the comfort of their own home.

Child Custody

It is the intention of the Portage Learning Centers to meet the needs of children, especially during divorce, separation and remarriage.

PLC cannot legally restrict non-custodial parents from visiting their child, reviewing their child's records or picking up their child unless the program has been furnished with legal custody documents. Copies of all documents must be submitted to your child's center, and information provided will remain confidential. In the case of custody conflicts, the proper authorities will be notified.

Arrival

All children enrolled in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program should arrive at the designated classroom time. You are responsible for bringing your child to the correct room and signing them in. You are not permitted to leave a child before class begins. You (the parent/caregiver) may wait in the classroom with your child until the designated classroom time.

Departure

Only an authorized person may pick up a child. Photo identification may be requested by staff to ensure the correct pick up person. If you want someone who is not listed on the registration form to pick up your child, we must have a written and dated note signed by the parent or guardian stating this.

The parent, guardian or authorized person must go to the child's group and notify the staff person of which child is being picked up. The sign out sheet must be signed with the pick up person's full name.

For parent transport families, if you do not pick up your child at the end of class, and after exhausting all attempts to reach an emergency contact, we will call Protective Services or the local police. Late pick-ups that occur on a regular basis may result in termination of enrollment.

Reporting Absences

In order for your child to receive the maximum benefits from participation in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program and for PLC to be able to provide a full range of services for your family, your child needs to participate in the program on a daily basis. As parents, you have the opportunity to instill positive educational values in your child at this early age. Through their participation in Head Start/Early Head Start, children are able to learn the importance of education and how to establish a disciplined pattern of getting ready for and going to school on a daily basis.

Children in Head Start/Early Head Start Center-Based Programs must maintain an 85% average daily attendance. This is a guideline from the Head Start Performance Standards. In other words, a child who is scheduled to attend four days a week should miss no more than two days a month.

PLC has developed the following Attendance Policy:

The parent must call the PLC Main Office at (330) 297-7795 or the center that your child attends to report an absence. The PLC staff member taking the call will then report this to the child's Teacher, Bus Driver (if applicable) and Family Advocate. If you do not have access to a telephone, a note needs to be sent to your child's Teacher on the day your child returns.

If the parent does not send a note or call the main office or center, the child's absence will be documented as an "unexcused absence."

At the time of reporting the absence, the parent should inform the PLC staff person of the reason for the absence. This will be documented as an "excused absence."

If a parent does not call to report their child's absence, a PLC staff member will call the child's home to confirm the absence.

Frequent Unexcused Absences

At the end of the week, each child's attendance is reviewed by his/her Family Advocate. If a child misses three consecutive days or has developed a pattern of absences, the Family Advocate will contact the parent/guardian.

The Family Advocate will contact the parent by phone and/or by a home visit to assess the attendance situation. At this time, the Family Advocate and parent can explore other program options, if necessary.

If the absences are a result of illness, or are well-documented absences for other reasons, no special action is required. The Head Start/Early Head Start Program strongly encourages regular attendance, while at the same time is sensitive to the special family issues that may result in missed school. All attempts to aid the family in regular attendance will be documented by staff members directly involved.

If a child has missed 10 consecutive days, there will be an in-house meeting scheduled with the appropriate staff to devise a plan of action in an effort to keep the child in the program. (Example: if the child is out due to head lice, the Health Coordinator, Family Advocate, and Teacher will meet.)

When a plan is in place to help the family, but the child still does not come back to school, an attendance letter will be sent and the parent/guardian will have one week to respond.

If the parent does not respond and all program options have been explored, a formal withdrawal letter will be sent, and the child's slot is considered an enrollment vacancy.

Note: As a general rule, no child will be accepted to class when arriving more than 1 1/2 hours late.

In Kind

Funding for the Head Start/Early Head Start Programs is provided by the Federal Government. The Federal Government requires that 25% of the Head Start/Early Head Start grant be matched with contributions from parents and community. These contributions are called "in-kind". Examples of in-kind include volunteering, cash donations used to purchase supplies, participating in Head Start/Early Head Start activities, donating materials, working on your child's educational goals at home, serving on Policy Council, etc. You will be asked to fill out "in-kind" forms when you give time or materials to the Head Start /Early Head Start Program.

Unloading the Bus

- Do NOT unbuckle until the bus comes to a complete stop and you are told to unbuckle. Very Important: Many hazardous things can happen before the bus comes to a complete stop. A child who is no longer buckled in their seat can be seriously injured.
- Wait of the bus landing until your parent/guardian is at the door.
- Once off the bus, stay with your parent/guardian.
- If you have left something on the bus, have your parent/guardian let the Bus Driver know so the bus does not move until the object has been retrieved.
- Never bend down near or under the bus. Have your parent retrieve the item once the bus has gone.

Safe Road Crossing

- It the policy of PLC that no child will cross the road in order to board or deboard the bus.

Railroad Crossings

- The Bus Driver must stop the bus at all railroad crossings and follow all highway -rail crossing procedures.
- The Bus Driver will ask children to be quiet while at the railroad crossing.

Danger Zones Around the Bus

- Danger zones are places around the bus where a child can be injured and are very difficult for a Bus Driver to see, normally a ten foot perimeter around the bus.

Bus Evacuation Drills

- The Bus Driver and Bus Monitor conduct bus evacuation drill once a month and prior to each field trip.
- Bus safety, riding practices and pedestrian safety are reviewed with children yearly.

Safe Riding Practices for Children

Boarding the Bus

- Be at your pick-up point five (5) minutes before the bus is to arrive.
- Stay at the designated “point of safety” (at least 10 feet from the bus) and wait for the Bus Driver to motion/wave that it is OK to come to the door of the bus.
- Board the bus one person at a time
- Give the person in front of you time to put their book bag in the assigned place on the bus.
- Go to your assigned seat and begin to buckle up.
 - 1) Bus Monitors are on each bus to assist children buckle up
 - 2) Children will learn how to buckle up their own seat belts and should do as much as they can. Bus Monitors will help them and assure the child is secure.
 - 3) No child will sit in the last seats without the Bus Driver’s approval.

Safety of the Bus

- Bus Monitors will help children up and down the steps of the bus.
- Sit up straight in your seat and face the front of the bus.
- All children must be secured in a child restraint system (CRS).
- Leave seat belts buckled until told to unbuckle them.
- Keep hands to selves.
- No leaning into the aisle, keep arms and legs out of the aisle.
- Do not throw objects on, from, or into the bus.
- Use “inside voices” while on the bus, no profane language.
- Use “listening ears” while on the bus.
- Not eating on the bus (i.e. gum, candy, food, drink).
- Not toys should be sent to school with the child.
- No dangerous items are permitted on the bus.

Staff/Child Ratios

PLC Child Development Centers observe the staff/child ratio as required by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Child Care Licensing Requirements and Head Start Performance Standards. The adult to child ratio in Head Start classrooms is two paid staff to 17 children (2:17). The adult to child ratio for Early Head Start classrooms is one paid staff to 4 infants/toddler (1:4).

	<u>ODJFS Staff/Child Ratios</u>	<u>Group Size</u>
Infants (birth and under 12 months)	1 to 5 or 2 to 12 in same room	12
Infants (12 months and under 18 months)	1 to 6	12
Toddlers (18 months and under 2 1/2 years)	1 to 7	14
Toddlers (2 1/2 years and under 3 years)	1 to 8	16
Preschool—three years	1 to 12	24
Preschool—four and five years of age	1 to 14	28

Group size will not exceed twice the maximum number of children allowed per staff member. When age groups are combined, the group size for the youngest child shall apply.

Program Components

Education

PLC’s Child Development Programs are designed to meet each child’s individual needs. Every child receives a variety of learning experiences to foster intellectual, social and emotional growth. Children participate in a variety of activities designed to promote their educational development including pre-reading skills. Children participate in indoor and outdoor activities. Through his/her participation in a daily routine, your child will develop self-confidence and the ability to get along with others.

Health/Special Services

Head Start/Early Head Start emphasizes the importance of early identification of health and special needs. This is carried out through routine developmental, vision, speech, and hearing screenings. Dental hygiene is an important aspect of health and is practiced through daily tooth brushing. Each child’s pertinent health information is tracked and monitored. Staff are trained to provide referral services as well as assist families with locating and obtaining needed services within the community.

Head Start/Early Head Start welcomes children with disabilities and coordinates with community agencies and local school systems to provide appropriate quality services. If you have a concern about your child’s development, please contact your child’s Teacher or Family Advocate.

Nutrition

Center-Based Head Start children are served a breakfast and a lunch or a lunch and a snack. Children also take part in various cooking activities. Children enrolled in all day programs receive a breakfast, lunch and snack.

Center-Based Early Head Start children are served a breakfast, lunch and snack in compliance with the CACFP Infant/Toddler Meal Pattern.

Family Services

Family Advocates act in partnership with enrolled Head Start/Early Head Start families. They assist families in applying for the program, maintaining participation in the program, and in providing referrals to necessary resources. Each family is provided an opportunity to enter into a Family Partnership Agreement. At Portage Learning Centers, you will find support, individual attention, and a friendly and knowledgeable staff.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is the cornerstone of our program. Parents are invited to take an active role in shared decision making, program planning, and the education and socialization of their children. Any custodial parent or guardian of a child enrolled in a child care center shall be permitted unlimited access to the center during hours of operation for the purposes of contacting their child(ren), or evaluating the care or the premises. A parent of a child enrolled at the center who is not the child's residential parent shall be permitted unlimited access to the center and be afforded the same rights as the residential parent unless there is court documentation limiting access and conditions of the non-residential parent. Upon entering the center, the parent or guardian shall notify the administrator or designee of their presence.

Center-Based Program Option

PLC Head Start/Early Head Start offers stimulating classroom experiences for children through the Center-Based Program Option.

While all Head Start/Early Head Start Options share the same philosophies of parent involvement and a hands-on curriculum, the Center-Based Option has the following unique characteristics:

- Two Teachers for each classroom session A Family Advocate
- Nutritious meals Monthly cooking activities
- Two teacher home visits Field Trips
- Two parent-teacher conferences
- Screenings in the areas of speech, language, hearing, vision, motor skills, cognition, as well as social and emotional development

Curriculum

Both the Head Start and Early Head Start Center-Based and Home-Based Program Options have adopted the Creative Curriculum.

Daily Classroom Schedule - Head Start Academic Option

A.M.	P.M.
Greeting/Breakfast/Brush Teeth (30 min)	Greeting/Lunch/Brush Teeth (30 min)
Circle Time (15 min)	Circle Time (15 min)
Small Groups (20 min)	Small Groups (20 min)
Centers (60 min)	Centers (60 min)
Lunch/Rinse Mouth (45 min)	Snack/Rinse Mouth (30 min)
Gross Motor Activity/Outside* (40 min)	Gross Motor Activity/Outside (40 min)
Departure	Departure

Rider Absenteeism/Parent Not At Pick-Up Point

If your child repeatedly does not get on the bus for his/her scheduled pick-up, or you fail to be at your designated stop for drop-off, the Bus Driver will notify the Family Advocate. The Family Advocate will contact you to discuss the situation. If the situation continues, your child's riding privileges may be suspended or revoked.

Person Other Than Parent/Guardian Picking Up A Child

If anyone other than the child's parent, legal guardian, or authorized person listed on the Release To/Contact Information Report needs to pick up a child from the bus stop, they must have a signed note from the parent/guardian and picture identification (i.e., drivers license). Note: Ohio Administrative Code states that a child will only be released to persons sixteen years of age or older.

The note must have the following:

- Child's full name
- Adult's full name (person picking up the child)
- Date child is to be picked up or dropped off
- Signature of parent/legal guardian

This is for emergencies or a one-time situation only. If the person will be getting the child on or off the bus frequently, the parent or legal guardian must contact their Family Advocate and have the person added to the Release To/Contact Information Report.

Transportation Suspension Policy

Families receiving transportation privileges will adhere to the following policies.

When an incident occurs with a child/parent on the bus or during pick-up or drop-off, a Transportation Conduct Report will be completed. The Site Administrator will review the Report and a copy of the Report will be given to the parent/guardian to sign.

After three violations have been documented, the Site Administrator will contact the parent/guardian to decide what steps will be taken to alleviate the concern.

If violations continue, suspension of riding privileges may result.

Bus Pick-Up and Drop-Off Changes

Parents/guardians must give a one-week notice to the Family Advocate when requesting a change in the pick-up or drop-off location for their child. A written request must be submitted and approved in advance by the Transportation Coordinator.

If approved, the Bus Driver will contact you with the new pick-up and/or drop-off time. In the event that the change is not possible, you will have to make other arrangements for the transportation of your child.

Transportation Rules and Regulations

Parent Permission

Parent permission must be obtained before a child can be transported by bus by PLC. This includes routine trips by bus, to and from the school and home as well as for field trips. In cases of emergency, 911 will be called.

Safety

Portage Learning Centers will ensure the greatest margin of safety and protection of children. The following rules apply to assure the safety of children:

Routes are designed to load and unload your children on the right-hand side of the street nearest their homes and at cluster stops.

Within two weeks of the beginning of the school year, your child will be instructed in safe riding practices, boarding and unloading procedures, safe road crossing, recognition of the danger zones around the bus, emergency evacuation procedures and pedestrian safety.

When at your stop, the Bus Driver will not honk the bus horn to let you know they have arrived.

Unless authorized by the Board, potentially hazardous driveways should not be used. Parents/caregivers are required to bring their child out to the bus door for pick-up and will return to the bus door when their child is returned to them at time of drop-off.

Pick-Up Procedures

The Bus will arrive at the assigned bus stop at the time that was given to you (parent/guardian). Please have your child at his/her designated pick-up point five (5) minutes before the assigned pick-up time. The Bus Driver is not permitted to wait for a child that is not at his/her designated stop on time.

If you and your child are not at the stop, the Bus Driver will continue on their route. If your child misses the bus, it will be your responsibility to transport him/her to class.

We recommend you synchronize your clocks with the time on the Bus Driver's cell phone.

Drop-Off Procedures

The bus will arrive to drop off your child at the scheduled drop-off time. Parents should be ready to receive their child at the designated drop-off point five (5) minutes before their assigned drop-off time. If the bus arrives early, the Bus Driver will wait until the scheduled drop-off time.

Parents must be on time. The Bus Driver cannot wait for you come to the stop.

If you miss the bus when your child is being dropped off, call your child's center or the PLC's main office at (330) 297-7795 for assistance. The Bus Driver will complete their route and then return to your drop-off location (if we have made contact with you and this was decision made). If this happens a second time, your child will be returned to their center and you will need to pick them up.

If we are unable to contact an emergency contact person and have not heard from the parent/guardian, we must contact Protective Services one (1) hour after the child's scheduled drop-off time.

Daily Classroom Schedule - Early Head Start

Greeting/Breakfast/Brush Teeth (45 min)
 Child Initiated Play/Circle Time (60 min)
 Outdoor Play/Large Motor (30 min)
 Lunch - Rinse Teeth (45 min)
 Nap Time/Quiet Time (120 min)
 Snack/Rinse Mouth (30 min)
 Child Initiated Play/Gross Motor (30 min)
 Departure

Outdoor Activities

Teachers plan and implement large motor group activities with the children. If the weather is suitable for outdoor play, children will be allotted time each day to interact in planned large motor activities. If the weather does not permit children to play outside, the large motor activities will be implemented in the classroom.

Children will not play outside if the weather:

1. Shows signs of lightning
2. Is below 25 degrees (below 40 degrees for Early Head Start children)
3. Is steadily raining
4. Is extremely hot or heat advisory in effect.

Child Guidance

PLC uses Conscious Discipline, developed by Dr. Becky Bailey, as our child guidance program. It is a comprehensive social and emotional classroom management program that empowers both teachers and children. The components of this program include character development, conflict resolution, social skills, and self-control. These skills guide children to become more socially competent members of the classroom community.

All PLC classrooms have a "safe place" where children can choose to go if they are feeling sad, need time to calm down, or to enjoy a quiet moment. We also teach children breathing techniques to help calm themselves when they become upset, over stimulated, or stressed. We offer children choices and encourage them to solve problems in a positive way.

ODJFS Rule 5101:2-12-22 regarding child guidance and management apply to all PLC employees of the center.

Classroom Celebrations/Food Brought Into Center

Classrooms will differ in how they recognize birthdays and holidays according to the Teacher's format. PLC does not permit food items of any type to be brought into our Centers. This includes cakes/cupcakes or any kind of food treats. Please notify your child's teacher if you DO NOT wish your child to receive birthday recognition or participate in holiday activities.

Pet Policy

To ensure the safety of children, parents and visitors are prohibited from bringing pets into PLC facilities.

Family Services

Head Start/Early Head Start offers parent opportunities and support for growth so they can identify their own strengths, needs, interests, and find their own solutions. The purpose is to support parents as they identify and meet their own goals, nurture the development of their children in the context of their family and culture, and advocate for communities that are supportive of children and families of all cultures. Family Advocates work with families to assess family goals and strengths, to obtain necessary services and support, and to assist families in achieving goals.

Services may include:

- help in identifying concerns, needs and goals your family or child may have assistance with the development of goals and strategies that you identify as areas for personal growth
- providing information about community resources
- a Resource Directory listing services available in the community
- emergency crisis intervention
- encouragement and support for you in order to obtain quality services
- Head Start/Early Head Start sponsored parenting classes and informative work shops
- support for child development and discipline issues
- home visits by the Family Advocate
- ongoing support services

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is an integral part of a successful program for you and your child. Studies have shown that children achieve much higher levels of learning when their parents are involved in their education.

Reporting Communicable Disease

A Portage Learning Center Childcare staff member with training in the recognition, prevention and management of communicable disease and other illnesses will be available whenever children are in attendance.

A trained staff member shall immediately notify the parent or guardian of the child's condition when the child demonstrates symptoms of a communicable disease (as classified by the Ohio Department of Health's Communicable Disease Chart). A child will be sent home and shall remain at home if he/she has or is suspected of having one of the following:

Chicken Pox	Lice or other infectious parasitic
Impetigo	infestation
Scabies	Ringworm
Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever	Hepatitis A
Infectious Conjunctivitis (pink eye)	
Temperature of 100° F when in combination with any other sign/symptom of illness.	
Diarrhea (three or more abnormally loose stools within 24 hour period)	
Untreated infected skin patches, unusual spots or rashes	
Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool	
Stiff neck with an elevated temperature	
Sore throat or difficulty in swallowing	
Vomiting more than one time or when accompanied by any other sign or symptom of illness	
Yellowish skin or eyes	
Redness of eye/eyelid, thick and purulent (pus) discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching or eye pain	
Difficult or rapid breathing	
Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in face or to make a whooping sound	

All classroom children who may have been exposed to a communicable disease will be notified with a Health Alert Notice.

Emergency & Accident Policy

When an accident or injury occurs, no matter how minor, the staff member in charge of the child will fill out an Incident Report. The report is given to the parent or guardian on the day of the incident, or within 24 hours. A copy is retained on file at the center. If an accident of a more serious nature occurs, first aid will be administered, parents will be notified immediately and the child will be transported to an emergency medical facility by an emergency transportation vehicle. A staff member will accompany the child to the medical facility along with all pertinent information contained in the child's file.

Emergency evacuation plans have been established with each center's local law enforcement officials. If an emergency evacuation is deemed necessary, parents will be notified and can contact the PLC main office to obtain information on where their child is located.

The Medical, Dental, and General Emergency Plan is posted in every classroom. First Aide Kits are located in the classroom, kitchen, Site Administrator's office, and in all vehicles used for transport.

For notification purposes, please keep emergency and other contact telephone numbers up-to-date. We are required to review all information at least annually.

Procedure for a Child with a Suspected Communicable Disease

A child who has been observed with signs or symptoms of illness will be isolated, either in or out of the classroom, while the parent/guardian is notified. Children shall be within sight and hearing of an adult at all times. No child shall ever be left alone or unsupervised. Children will be provided a cot and made comfortable. The parent/guardian will be asked to come and pick up their child immediately. If the parent/guardian or emergency contact person cannot be reached, the child will remain at the center, isolated and supervised until it is time for the child to leave the center. An explanatory note will be sent with the child if the parent cannot be contacted.

A child with a communicable disease shall not be permitted to return to class until the "period of communicability" has passed as indicated by the "Communicable Disease Chart" which is posted in the center. If you need to know how long your child should be out, call your center or ask your physician. Portage Learning Centers reserves the right to determine whether or not a child can return to class.

Head Lice

Lice is a communicable disease. It is not the result of poor health habits. Due to the nature of children playing together, head lice does occasionally occur. Our policy regarding head lice is:

When your child arrives at school, he/she will be checked for nits. IF ANY NITS/LICE ARE FOUND, your child will not be allowed to return to school until they are NIT/LICE FREE for 24 hours.

When the child returns to school, the parent **must** transport the child to school and wait to make sure the child is nit/lice free.

POLICY COUNCIL, HEALTH AND EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES, AND PARENT COMMITTEES

Portage Learning Centers has established and will maintain a formal structure of shared governance through which parents can participate in policy making and in other decisions about the program. This structure consists of the following groups:

Parent Committees are comprised of parents of children currently enrolled in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. Meetings are held four times per year and focus on topics suggested by parents. **Every parent is automatically a member of the Parent Committee.**

Policy Council consists of five parents and five parent alternates representing the Head Start Center-Based Option, one parent and one parent alternate from the Head Start Home-Based Option, one parent and parent alternate for the Early Head Start Center-Based Option, one parent and parent alternate from the Early Head Start Home-Based Option and five community representatives. Application to serve on Policy Council are sent or mailed home to each parent within the first few weeks of September. Shortly after the deadline for parents to submit their applications, parents receive a ballot listing the name(s) of each parent wishing to represent their child's center. Votes are then tallied and announcements of elected members and alternates will be made.

Health Services Advisory Committee is comprised of Community Representatives from various health and mental health agencies and parents. The committee reviews health, mental health, and nutrition activities and policies and collaborates to provide related services to Head Start/Early Head Start families. Any parent who would like to participate should contact the Health Coordinator at (330) 297-7795.

Education Advisory Committee is comprised of parents and Community Representatives involved in education. This committee reviews and makes recommendations for changes to the curriculum and classroom activities. Any parent who would like to participate should contact the Education Coordinator at (330) 297-7795.

We encourage every parent to take an active role in these committees. They are great opportunities to discuss your questions, concerns, or make suggestions to better our program. Please contact your Family Advocate or Teacher for more information.

Volunteers/Opportunities for Parents/Guardians

Volunteers are always welcome and appreciated by the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. Parents, college students, senior citizens, and other community members offer their much needed help to Head Start/Early Head Start. Volunteers assist in many areas such as creative play, art activities, storytelling, and riding the bus. Children not participating in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program are not permitted to participate in classroom functions. You do not have to be in the classroom to volunteer your time; you may also assist by completing activities at home. Please request a Volunteer Brochure for more details. If you have questions about how you can volunteer, please ask any PLC staff member.

Nutrition

Each child is served a nutritious meal that conforms to the guidelines established through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The program meets 1/2 to 2/3 of the children's daily nutritional needs.

The weekly menu is posted in each classroom and is also sent home in the monthly newsletter. Parents/Guardians are not permitted to bring food into the Center/classroom for any reason although are encouraged to participate in menu planning. Please contact your Family Advocate for further information. Children are encouraged to try the food served at each meal. Children are never forced to eat, nor is any food withheld as punishment or offered as a reward.

Meals

All Head Start children participating in a morning class receive a nutritious breakfast and lunch, and all Head Start children participating in an afternoon class receive a nutritious lunch and snack. Early Head Start children receive a breakfast, lunch and snack.

Head Start/Early Head Start follows USDA Dietary Guidelines and MyPlate, which recommend that foods high in sugar, fat, and salt only be used in moderation. These guidelines encourage children to adopt healthy eating habits for a healthier lifestyle. Eating sweets and food high in fats contributes to many health problems including tooth decay, high cholesterol, and obesity.

Modified Diet

Before food supplements or a modified diet can occur, written instructions by a licensed physician or dentist must be submitted.

***If a child has allergies to any foods or food ingredients, please let the Site Administrator know. An allergy is a medically documented condition.**

"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, age, disability, religion, sex, and familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (866) 632-9992 (voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

Medications

To ensure the safety and well being of your child and to comply with state and federal regulations, the Head Start/Early Head Start Program requires specific documentation to be completed prior to any medication(s) being administered by PLC staff to children. Please contact your Family Advocate to determine what information you will need to obtain in order to complete this process. The information needed to complete this process MAY include, but is not limited to:

- A completed Medication Form (signed by the parent and physician)
- A copy of the pharmacy medication information sheet
- The medication(s) in a pharmacy labeled child-proof container(s)
- All supplies needed for administering the medication(s) and written instruction on how to use the supplies (and train staff, when necessary)
- Written instruction on how and when to administer the medication(s)
- A Health Plan of Action detailing information on the child's condition and any emergency actions staff may need to take.

When the necessary items are obtained, your Family Advocate will set up a time to meet with you and other pertinent PLC staff to discuss the necessary steps to ensure your child receives their medication(s) properly.

Parents are always welcome to come to class and administer medication(s) to their child or to temporarily administer medication(s) until all necessary items are obtained and completed for PLC staff to administer the medication(s).

Hand Washing Procedure

Hand washing is required:

- upon arrival at the center
- after every toilet use for children and adults
- after helping children in the bathroom
- before snack preparation or cooking activities
- before eating meals and snacks
- after cleaning or contact with blood, feces, vomit or other bodily fluids.

Safety Policy

Staff members in charge of a child or a group of children shall be responsible for their medical and dental safety.

No child shall ever be left alone or unsupervised.

A policy governs arrival and departure of children to ensure that staff members are aware of each child's presence at the center.

Two fire drills are conducted each month, at varying times. A record of fire drills shall be maintained at the center.

Tornado drills are conducted once per month per class in April and May. A record of tornado drills shall be maintained at the center.

A Fire Emergency and Weather Alert Plan is posted in each classroom which explains action to be taken and staff responsibilities in case of a fire emergency and/or weather alerts. The plan includes a diagram showing evacuation routes.

If an emergency evacuation becomes necessary, children will be moved to a secure location.

Use of spray aerosols shall be prohibited when children are in attendance.

Mildly Ill Children

A child with common cold symptoms and no signs of communicable disease can participate in the regular classroom schedule. Staff will monitor the child for worsening conditions. A child who does not feel well enough to participate in classroom activities, but who show no symptoms of communicable disease, will be able to rest on a cot and will be provided quiet activities. If the child's condition worsens throughout the day, or the child shows any symptoms of communicable disease, parents will be notified to pick up their child.