

# **RURAL UTAH CHILD DEVELOPMENT**



## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

**Welcome to RUCD!** We hope that your time with Head Start and/or Early Head Start is filled with good things for you and your family. We look forward to working with you, sharing ideas, having fun, and learning a lot from each other. This handbook is designed to help you to know more about how our program operates on a daily basis, and what may be expected of you as a parent. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

“The more you know,  
the smarter you grow.  
The smarter you grow,  
the stronger your voice,  
when speaking your mind  
or making your choice.”

[http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/6429213.National\\_Library\\_Week](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/6429213.National_Library_Week)

### **What’s Early Education?**

When we think about education, we typically think of kids entering kindergarten. The truth is that education begins at birth. Studies consistently show that the development that happens in the earliest years of life (zero to five) is absolutely critical to a child’s future. Parents and families play a big role here!

That’s why our program is founded on the principle that a child’s parents are their first and most important teacher.

“Babies and toddlers develop and grow by the minute, and they learn the most and the best when adults around them engage with them, and actively guide and nurture them through their childhood.”  
(<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>)

Children also learn from early childhood education programs that are designed to develop their needs and abilities.

That’s where we come in!



## What do children gain from participating in RUCD?

“Children who participate in Head Start programs receive innumerable benefits. These advantages appear immediately, last a lifetime, and even have an effect on other generations.” For more specific information, visit [nhsa.org/facts-and-impacts](http://nhsa.org/facts-and-impacts).



## Benefits of Head Start

- Increases children’s cognitive skills, self-esteem, and motivation
- Improves social behavior, language development, and sense of self-empowerment
- Children develop behavior patterns that prepare them for future successes, for example learning to pay attention and how to engage in tasks
- Children show signs of less aggression

## The ‘early language gap’ and what it means for your child...

Children who enter school with a “word gap,” meaning they have heard and know fewer words than their peers, are at a disadvantage from the very beginning of their education.

One of the biggest indicators of success and benefits of participating in early education is that your child gets a big boost to their vocabulary!

### **Tips for Managing Mornings**

Mornings can be hectic when you leave for work and school, etc. Remember that children will seek attention if they feel ignored or rushed. Take time to say “good morning” and give a smile and a hug!

#### **Warm up the Morning**

Smile! Slow down! Rushing adds tension. Sing, hum or put on relaxing music.

#### **Use simple strategies**

Let children dress to a timer...can they get dressed before it goes off? Use it to teach time and counting skills.

#### **Set Realistic Goals**

You cannot expect children to get ready in 10 minutes. Plan for the unexpected and breathe!

### **Start Your School Day Right**

**Get adequate rest** | Ten to twelve hours of sleep is recommended for preschoolers, which can include a nap. The most important thing is to help kids develop good, consistent habits for getting to sleep.

**Feed your child nutritious meals** | Meals should be well-balanced and unhurried. Insist on wholesome, nutritious foods; avoid junk foods.

**Prepare for the weather** | Dress your child in simple, safe, comfortable, clean clothes. Listening to the weather forecast will assure choosing the appropriate outdoor clothing.

**If your child is sick, keep your child home** | Look for sore throats, colds, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, chills, fever (oral temperature over 101), rashes, inflamed eye, discharge from the ear, enlarged glands, earache, flushed face, and paleness. Call the school if your child is going to be absent. We appreciate your help in keeping open communication between home and school.

### **Contagious Diseases**

If your child has a contagious or transmittable disease, please notify your child’s teacher. Common highly contagious diseases include: the common cold, influenza, strep throat, hand-foot-and-mouth disease, and pink eye.

A child who has been diagnosed with a contagious disease may return to school after he/she has been symptom free for at least 48 hours or has a note from a medical provider stating that he/she is no longer contagious.

**If your child becomes sick at school** | Let the school know where you can be reached if your child gets sick at school - especially if it is a different number than the school already has. We will contact you to come and take him/her home.

### **Head Lice**

Head lice are common among preschoolers. Teachers will check for head lice among all the children once a month. If your child has live lice you will be contacted to come and pick him/her up and take them home. Children must be live lice free with a letter from the Health Department, clinic, or medical provider in order to return to school. Staff will provide a free lice kit to assist you in getting rid of lice and nits. If you have questions or need more information, please contact the Health and Nutrition Specialist.

Keeping your child healthy is a big job! Get helpful tips for you and your family at [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org).

### **Parents as Partners**

**Dress for success** | Good grooming helps your child look better, feel better, think better, be healthy and feel accepted. Daily baths keep busy little bodies clean and fresh smelling.



In children, teeth should be cleaned as soon as they emerge. A soft washcloth wrapped around your finger can substitute for a brush when teeth first appear. The best way to teach children how to brush is to lead by example. Allowing your child to watch you brush your teeth teaches the importance of good oral hygiene. In the classroom, children are provided with their own toothbrush and are reminded how important it is to care for one's teeth.

**Stay active and involved in your child's school life** | When possible, attend school meetings and activities, parent-teacher conferences and group socializations. When you meet the Teacher or your child's Family Educator, talk about your child in a positive way. This helps build language and positive self-esteem.

**Read all materials from school** | Often changes in routine, home visits, dates and times of activities and events, notes on your child's progress and health alerts are provided in school notes. Keep informed - Keep in touch.

**Read to your child at least for a few minutes each day** | Make reading a part of your home life.

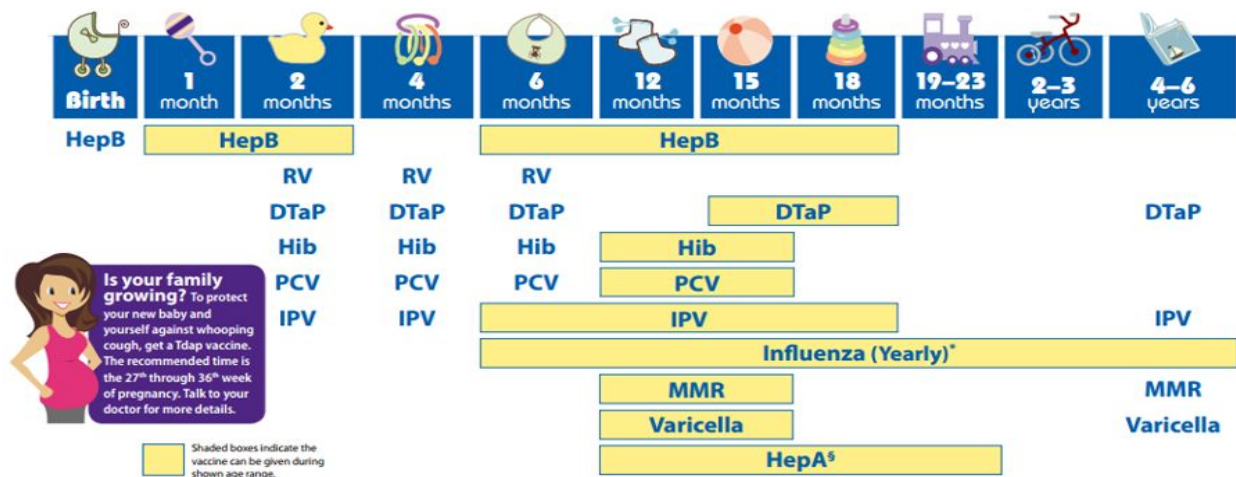
**Health Screenings and Exams - Healthy kids learn better**

**Prenatal and newborn visits.** Prenatal checkups are encouraged to ensure both you and your baby are progressing as you should. After the baby is born, you will receive a newborn visit (within two-weeks). The visit focuses on the well-being of both the mother and the child and does not take the place of the well-baby check.

**Well-child exams.** Well-child exams are scheduled from the time of your child's birth. Typically, visits are scheduled at 2 weeks, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18 months. Then yearly starting at 24 months of age. During these well-child visits your child's doctor will give any vaccines that are due, check your child's growth and development, and test vision and hearing. These visits give your child's doctor a chance to find and treat any concerns early. It's also a good time for you to ask any questions you have about your child's health.

**A physical and dental examination must be completed prior to your child's participation in Head Start.** If you do not have a regular medical or dental provider, or if there are other issues that may prevent you from accessing care, please let us know so we can connect you to local resources.

**Immunizations.** Vaccines protect your child by immunizing him or her against certain diseases. Many of these vaccines protect your child for life. For your child to be completely immunized against a disease, he or she must get all the recommended doses. **Your child must be up-to-date on the state immunization schedule prior to participating in Head Start or attending group socializations.**



**Vision & hearing screening.** Screenings are required and are conducted within 45 calendar days of each child's entry into the program. Screenings are brief and are only used to identify children that may need further evaluation by a healthcare provider.

**Lead testing.** Lead can harm a child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Most lead poisoning occurs when children lick, swallow, or breathe dust from old lead paint. Homes built before 1978 most likely have old lead paint, often under newer paint. If paint peels, cracks, or is worn down, the chips and dust can then get onto children's hands and toys, and into their mouths.

Lead testing is conducted at age 1, and again at age 2. If your child has already had lead testing, they do not need to be tested again unless they have had contact with lead. The test requires a finger poke which tells you how much lead is in your child's blood.

**Follow-up Treatment.** Follow-up treatment for any medical or dental concerns must be completed as soon as possible.

It is the parent's responsibility to make and keep follow-up appointments. If there are barriers such as lack of transportation, no insurance, etc; that may prevent you from getting proper treatment, please let us know so we can identify resources to assist you.

### **Behavioral Health**

One goal of RUCD is to help children cope with little problems and emotional concerns before they become bigger issues. We recognize that behavioral and emotional problems can interfere with your child's learning and development and believe that extra help in learning to manage emotions and behavior is simply another type of education. This education gives your child greater opportunities and



prepares him/her for learning when they reach kindergarten.

Our Mental Health Specialist routinely visits program sites to assist staff, families, and children. Upon request he/she will provide information on child behavior, parenting classes, parent support, resources for improved relationships, and will help identify resources for any number of other family concerns. You may contact the Mental Health Specialist through your local staff or directly through the Main Office.

### **Special Needs**

RUCD serves children with disabilities, special health care needs, and children who are at high risk for developmental delays. Staff support children with special health care needs or disabilities by:

- Identifying health and developmental issues through screening and ongoing child observation.
- Working with the child's family and health care professionals to make referrals for further evaluation or more intensive support when necessary.
- Implementing individualization plans, in collaboration with early intervention programs and local school districts, which include specific instructions for adaptations to ensure that each child can participate in program activities.

If your child has an allergy (food, insect stings, etc) or an ongoing health condition such as asthma, diabetes, seizures, or any other health problems, please be sure to inform staff. Specific information regarding your child's health concern will help plan any care that may be needed.

**Classroom Attendance**      Just like you, we want your child *to excel!*

Regular, on- time participation in school makes a difference!

**ATTEND TODAY, ACHIEVE TOMORROW**

GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEANS...

|  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <br><b>ELEMENTARY STUDENTS</b><br>read well by the end of third grade | <br><b>MIDDLE SCHOOLERS</b><br>pass important courses | <br><b>HIGH SCHOOLERS</b><br>stay on track for graduation | <br><b>COLLEGE STUDENTS</b><br>earn their degrees | <br><b>WORKERS</b><br>succeed in their jobs |
|--|--|--|---|--|

Too many absences—excused or unexcused—can keep students from succeeding in school and in life. How many are too many? 10% of the school year—that's 18 missed days or 2 days a month—can knock students off track.

  
Attendance Works  
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence  
[www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)



## Absences

**You must contact the school for each day of absence.**

If we do not hear from you within the first hour of class start time, federal regulation requires us to contact you to identify the reason for your child's absence.

1. Please **state the reason for the absence** so we are able to identify and support you with any barriers that may be keeping your child from attending.
2. If your child will be gone for an extended period of time, **specify a return date**.
3. Parents may be required to **sign children in and out for tardies or early pick-up**.
4. Keeping the students safe is our number one priority! Be sure to **notify your child's teacher when your child is late or leaving during school hours**.



If you have concerns about your child's attendance, please let us know so we can assist you in developing an attendance plan.

Together we can help your child be an attendance HERO...

Here in School, Everyday, Ready to Learn, and On Time.

## Home Visits and Socializations in the Home-Based Option

- There's no place like your home for learning. Together, you and your Family Educator will decide on a regular day and time for home visits that works for you. If the time you select is a time when your spouse or partner is not available, then you and your Family educator will need to think about ways to share what goes on during home visits with them. Visits are scheduled once a week for 1 ½ hours.

Socializations are a time when you, your child, and other parents and their children come together. Your Family Educator will let you know when and where socializations will take place. There are 22 socializations planned throughout the year.. If you do not have access to transportation, please let us know so we can support you in finding available resources.

If you need to change an appointment or miss socialization, for example, because of illness or a family emergency, please contact your Family Educator. You can expect that he or she will do the same.

## **Child Guidance in the Classroom**

Classroom environments, schedules, and activities are designed to capture the interest and stimulate the enthusiasm of young children. Teachers instruct children on how to use materials, classroom equipment, and what rules need to be followed.



Occasionally, young children forget the rules and test limits. This is developmentally appropriate and helps them learn to respect limits and to develop social skills that will help them be successful.

Teachers help guide behavior by:

- Redirecting them to appropriate activities
- Positive reinforcement
- Problem solving with the child
- Routines
- Developing behavior plans
- Giving choices within limits
- Teaching children how to calm themselves
- Removal from the activity or area in the classroom

If it becomes necessary to implement a behavior plan, staff will maintain open communication with parents/guardians.

## **Healthy Habits**

Healthy habits are established in the classroom with daily tooth brushing, an emphasis on handwashing, and other habits that help reduce the spread of illnesses. Balanced, nutritious meals are served family-style. This gives children an opportunity to learn about healthy eating habits with support from their peers. We use the classroom and playground for teaching children rules to help keep them safe and healthy.

## **Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks**

The monthly menu includes a variety of foods to broaden your child's experience while considering cultural and ethnic preferences. RUCD follows a cycle menu that is approved by a nutritionist. The menu may change on occasion.. If you would like to have input on our menus, contact the Health & Nutrition Specialist at [hodendahl@rucd.org](mailto:hodendahl@rucd.org).

## Eating with the Children



Parents are welcome to join us for mealtimes. Cooks plan carefully and prepare meals that meet the USDA serving size requirements. In order to prepare enough food and have space for you, please give the Cook at least two hours advance notice.

## Sugar Policy, Birthdays, and Holidays

RUCD has adopted a low sugar policy. We offer birthday treats once a month to celebrate all children's birthdays during that month. Recognizing and celebrating a child's birthday is encouraged as it is one of the many activities that help build a child's self-esteem. Head Start has established some basic guidelines on party favors:

- Because of the low-sugar policy, we recommend that you consider non-food items such as pencils/erasers, stickers, silly straws, flying discs, sidewalk chalk, etc.
- Some acceptable food suggestions are: fresh fruit or vegetables, raisins, individual cheese and crackers, etc.
- Do not send homemade food items. They must be packaged.
- Do not send sugar treats such as cupcakes, candy or gum.

Special treats are planned around holidays while others may be planned as a food activities. **We do not accept any sugar treats from home or purchased from the store. All sugar treats sent to the Center will be returned home.**

Parents may plan a party to celebrate holidays or other occasions with input and assistance from staff. Halloween and the "end of year closing" are planned by staff. Parents are always welcome to share ideas, help with planning, preparation, and cleanup, and may be asked to facilitate a small group activity or help in other ways. If there are not enough volunteers to carry out a parent-planned activity or celebration, staff may need to cancel or reschedule when there is more interest.

## Parents as Advocates and Leaders

### **Parent Committee**

Parents are a very important part of our program, so important that they have their own organization called the Parent Committee. The role of the parent committee is to:

- Advise staff in developing and implementing local program policies, activities, and services to ensure they meet the needs of children and families;

- Have a process for communication with the policy council; and,
- Within the guidelines established by the governing body or policy council, participate in the recruitment and screening of Early Head Start and Head Start employees.

Because we serve a rural population, Parent Committees may use technology such as Google Hangouts, WebEx, or social media to communicate ideas, interests, and concerns.

### **Policy Council**

The Policy Council (PC) is a group of elected parents from all program options and members of the community. The council meets monthly to provide input, including program design and operation, long- and short-term planning, goals and objectives. The Policy Council approves and submits to the Board of Directors, decisions about the activities listed above. The Board of Directors has legal and fiscal responsibility for administering and overseeing Head Start and Early Head Start grant.

The Policy Council also actively participates in the development of school readiness goals and helps to assess the program's progress in achieving those goals. The Policy Council also promotes the critical role that parents play in supporting their children's progress towards school readiness.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

RUCD employees or relatives of current employees may not serve on the Policy Council.

Policy Council members may not receive compensation for serving on the council or for providing services to the program.

If you are interested in leadership, the Policy Council is for you. Don't worry if you're not sure what to do. If you are elected as a PC Representative or Alternate, we will provide training and support.

### **Parent Engagement**

There are many opportunities for you to be an active participant in your child's education. Here are a few structured activities, but please feel free to join in and provide your input any time.

**Parent/child activities** are planned once a month throughout the year to provide opportunities for you to engage with your



child. Parents and staff plan activities that are an extension of the classroom. The activities are provided from the COR (Child Observation Record).

**Park-N-Play** is an opportunity for you to spend a few extra minutes with your child during pick-up and drop-off times. This is a fantastic way to engage with your child, while increasing their educational outcomes.

**ReadyRosie** is a research-based parenting curriculum that helps parents take advantage of everyday routines and turn them into teachable moments. ReadyRosie sends weekly tips using mobile technology to empower families and schools to work together to promote school readiness.

If you are enrolled in the home-based option, please talk with your Family Educator about your important role in the home visits, group socializations, and parent-child activities. You can also refer to your copy of the “Parent Guide to the Home-Based Program Option”. Visit the homepage on our website at [www.rucd.org](http://www.rucd.org) for a digital copy.

### **Volunteers and In-Kind Contributions**

Your time and energy is always appreciated! We rely on your support to meet our in-kind goals. Each year, we must match a portion of the federal grant that we operate from as part of the grant funding. This match may be made through donations of time and services.

How can you help with in-kind?

- ◆ Volunteer time at the center.
- ◆ Volunteer time at parent activities.
- ◆ Read and do learning activities at home with your children.
- ◆ Donate center materials - anything Head Start would normally buy.
- ◆ Get materials ready to use for a project.
- ◆ Share a hobby or talent.
- ◆ Be a member of the Policy Council.

How to keep track of in-kind donations:

- ◆ Record all your donated time on forms available from staff.
- ◆ Fill out the form each day you are involved or donate goods.
- ◆ Complete and return the form to staff at the end of each month.

We rely on parent and community volunteers to participate in and have fun with activities that benefit the program and most importantly your child. We hope every parent becomes a volunteer!

Regular volunteers (donating time at least once per week) will be required to complete an orientation. Volunteers working directly with children will also be required to get a TB test. If you are helping in the kitchen, you may also be required to get a Food Handler's Permit. RUCD will take care of any costs associated with these requirements.

### **Transportation and Safety**

If you need help arranging transportation for your child for group socialization, or to meet program requirements for medical or dental exams, please talk with program staff. They will assist you with available resources.

We use a child protection curriculum developed by the Committee for Children to teach children personal safety skills. This curriculum extends support to your home through letters, online videos, and materials to help you talk with your child about personal safety. Pedestrian and safe transportation education is also included.

Nothing is more important than protecting children from abuse—and doing so takes vigilance on everyone's part. RUCD employees receive child protection training annually, and they are required by Utah law to report any suspected or identified child abuse to the Division of Human Services.

The Emergency Form is used to identify authorized individuals who may pick up your child from school. Children will only be released to individuals who have been authorized in writing by the parent/guardian.

Unattended children in a vehicle: Unattended is described in [UTAH CODE ANN. § 76-10-2202](#) (2014) as a child younger than 9 who is left without supervision of someone at least 9 years of age where the conditions present a risk of hyperthermia, hypothermia or dehydration.

If you have concerns about a child or individual, please call the Utah child abuse reporting hotline at 855-323-3237 or visit [pcautah.org](http://pcautah.org) (prevent child abuse Utah) for guidance.

### **Policies**

**Confidentiality** - It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents while ensuring they have access to high quality early education. Parents can share information with the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children.

**Access to Personal Records** – Participant files are considered confidential and are stored in a locked file or cabinet. Parents have access, in accordance with the Head Start Performance Standards to files and records of themselves or their own children.

- Records maintained on currently enrolled students are kept at the site. Past participant records are kept at the administrative office for a period of three years.
- If you wish to view your records or need copies, a staff person will assist you.

**Concerns** - Expressing concerns along with expressing satisfaction is part of the education process. We are committed to constant improvement and to maintaining a rewarding and supportive environment. If you have a concern about something significant to the experience you are having in our program, we want to hear about it.

Questions and concerns may be addressed to local staff and/or to the administrative office by calling 1-800-841-2867. Issues will be directed to the appropriate department or to the Executive Director, Keri Allred.

If parents have a complaint and/or grievance that cannot be resolved, they may file a formal grievance by mailing a written complaint to the Executive Director at the address below:

RUCD Head Start  
ATTN: Executive Director  
1375 S. 100 E.  
Price UT 84501

### **Professional Boundaries**

The interactions and relationships between RUCD staff, students, and parents are based upon mutual respect and trust. Maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in and outside of the educational setting helps to assure professional integrity and responsibility.

For this reason, employees are prohibited from participating in your private life. This includes but is not limited to:

- Providing transportation for personal needs.
- Providing childcare.
- Attending non-work social functions.
- Engaging in romantic relationships.
- Writing letters regarding custody issues and/or concerns.
- Giving or loaning parents money.
- Purchasing gifts or personal items for parents or children.
- Sharing personal information with families.
- Being ‘friends’ on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.

In accordance with federal law and USDA policy, RUCD does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, please write to:

USDA  
C/O Director  
Office of Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Ave  
S.W., Washington DC 20250-9410

Or call  
800-795-3272 (voice) or 202-720-6382 (TTY).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.