

RURAL UTAH CHILD DEVELOPMENT



PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to RUCD! We hope that your time with Head Start and 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 communicate policies and procedures and act as a reference for parents. 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.”

- Author Unknown

What’s Early Education?

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

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” (Chirico, 2014).

Children also learn from early childhood programs designed to develop their skills and abilities.

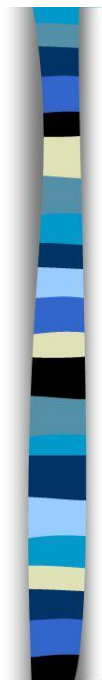
That’s where we come in!



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”(Garcia et al, 2016).

For more specific information, visit 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

Ideas to Support a Successful Year

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. Use a visual morning routine; break down tasks into small steps.

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, and clean clothes. Listening to the weather forecast will ensure 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 eyes, 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 an infectious, contagious, or transmittable disease, please notify your child's teacher. Common highly infectious diseases include the common cold, influenza, strep throat, hand-foot-and-mouth disease, and pink eye.

A child who has been diagnosed with an infectious disease may return to school after he/she has been symptom-free for at least 24 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. 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 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, a quick check with the parent and child's teacher may be required. 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 Manager.

Keeping your child healthy is a big job! Get helpful tips for you and your family at HealthyChildren.org.

Parents as Partners

Personal hygiene for kids | 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.

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 the menus, contact the Health Manager at (800) 841-2867 ext 129.

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. To prepare enough food and provide space for you at the table, please give the cook at least two hours advance notice.

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 positively about your child. 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 a current phone number and email address updated for any communication between school and home. 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

When you're pregnant, quality prenatal care is of the utmost importance. Prenatal care ensures both you and your baby are being taken care of and staying healthy. Within two weeks of delivery, staff will visit with you in your home to offer support and identify family needs. This 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

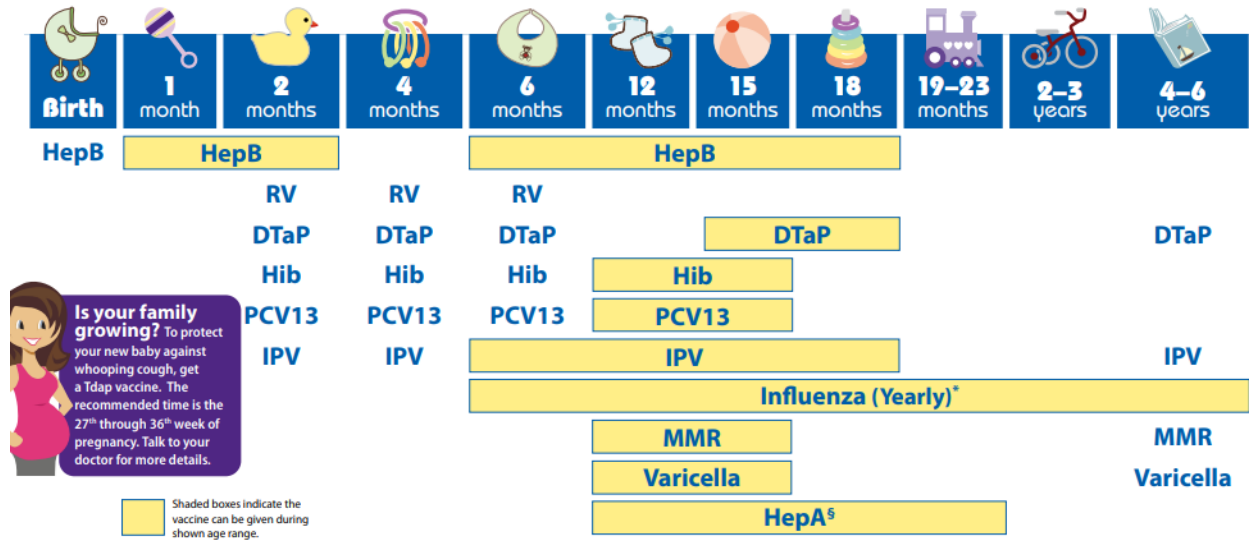
Well-child exams are scheduled from the time of your child's birth. Typically, visits are scheduled at two weeks, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18 months, then yearly starting at 24 months of age. During well-child visits, your child's doctor will give any vaccines that are due, check your child's growth and 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 or scheduled before your child participates in Head Start. If you do not have a regular medical or dental provider, or if other issues 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/her against certain diseases. Many of these vaccines protect your child for life. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends specific immunizations for ages birth to 18 years. 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 before participating in Head Start or attending group socializations.

2021 Recommended Immunizations for Children from Birth Through 6 Years Old



“2021 Recommended Vaccinations for Infants and Children (birth through 6 years)”. Centers for Disease Control (updated Feb 2021). <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/easy-to-read/child-easyread.html>. Accessed Aug 2021.

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 the 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 12 and 24 months. 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

RUCD recommends that follow-up treatment for any medical or dental concerns is completed as soon as possible. It is the parent's responsibility to make and keep follow-up appointments. Please let us know if there are barriers such as lack of transportation, no insurance, etc., that may prevent you from getting proper treatment. We will identify resources to assist you.

Behavioral Health

RUCD aims to help children increase their protective factors. Protective factors increase children's resiliency, problem-solving skills, and improve behavior.

RUCD believes that managing emotions and behavior is simply another type of education. This education gives your child significant opportunities and prepares them for learning when they reach kindergarten. RUCD utilizes a variety of social-emotional techniques to help support the behavioral and mental health of the children in our program.



Additional at-home support is also available to parents through our Behavior Specialist and Mental Health Consultant.

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 individualized 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.

Allergies and Ongoing Health Conditions

If your child has an allergy (food, insect stings, etc.) or an ongoing health condition such as asthma, diabetes, seizures, or any other health concerns, please be sure to inform the 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...

The infographic illustrates the long-term benefits of good school attendance through five stages, each represented by a cartoon character and a text box:

- ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**: read well by the end of third grade
- MIDDLE SCHOOLERS**: pass important courses
- HIGH SCHOOLERS**: stay on track for graduation
- COLLEGE STUDENTS**: earn their degrees
- WORKERS**: 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

Center-Based Absences

Please contact the school for each day of absence.

If we do not hear from you within the first hour of the 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. Sign-in when your child arrives for the day, and sign-out before departure.
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.

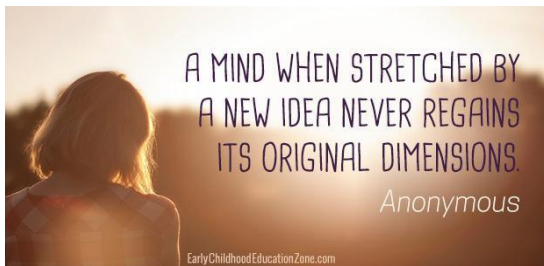


Together we can help your child be an attendance HERO...

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

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 boundaries and to develop social skills that will help them be successful.

Teachers help guide behavior by:

- Redirecting them to appropriate activities
- Using encouragement
- Problem-solving with the child
- Establishing routines
- Developing behavior plans
- Giving choices within limits
- Teaching children how to calm themselves
- Following the social-emotional curriculum

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

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, we encourage you to discover ways to share information and involve them in the education process. 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 a home visit appointment or miss a socialization activity, for example, because of illness or a family emergency, please contact your family educator. If the staff person cancels a home visit or socialization, they will make every attempt to reschedule within two weeks of the home visit.

Sugar Policy, Birthdays, and Holidays

RUCD has adopted a low sugar policy. We offer birthday treats once a month to celebrate all childrens' birthdays that occur within 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, play dough, sidewalk chalk, etc.
- Some acceptable food suggestions are individual packed fresh fruit or vegetables, raisins, individual cheese, crackers, etc.
- Do not send homemade food items. They must be store-bought.
- 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 activity. We cannot serve any sugar treats from home or purchased from the store.

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 the 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 vital 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/Meet, Zoom, 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 grants.

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

Policy Council meetings may be conducted in-person or through technology such as text messaging, Zoom meetings, Google Meet or social media to communicate and conduct monthly meetings.

Conflict of Interest

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

Policy Council members do 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. Please feel free to join in and provide your input at 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 planned using the Child Observation Record (COR). COR Advantage is an observation-based child assessment that measures a child's developmental progress.

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

Father Engagement results in positive outcomes for children. Fathers are encouraged to be involved in their child's education through parent meetings, parent-child activities, and activities designed specifically for fathers and father figures. Participate in father engagement and grow as an advocate, lifelong educator, and as your child's first teacher.

Celebrity Chef allows parents to plan, prepare, and enjoy a favorite family recipe or to help create a food experience during your child's class, home visit, or socialization activity. Talk with the cook or your Family Educator to sign up for a time that works best for you.

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. Talk with your Family Service Worker or Family Educator if you are interested in a specific topic. They can tailor messages to fit your needs.



If you are enrolled in the home-based option, please talk with your family educator about your important role in the home visits, group socialization, and parent-child activities. You can also refer to your copy of the "Parent Guide to the Home-Based Program Option" for more information. Visit the homepage on our website at www.rucd.org for a digital copy.

Facebook is a fun way to engage with your child's teachers and peers. Each classroom has a Facebook page designed to share information, lessons, photos/videos, etc. Be sure to check it out.

Volunteers and In-Kind Contributions

Your time and energy are always appreciated! We rely on your support to meet our in-kind goals. Each year, we must match 20 percent of the total costs of the Head Start and Early Head Start

programs as part of the grant funding. This match may be made through donations of time and services.

Here are some ways you can help:

- ◆ Volunteer time at the center.
- ◆ Volunteer time at parent activities.
- ◆ Read and do learning activities at home with your child(ren).
- ◆ Donate center materials - anything Head Start would typically 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 or the In-kind Pro app.
- ◆ Fill out the form or enter a transaction into the In-kind Pro app each day you are involved or donate goods.
- ◆ Complete and return the form to the 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 provided with an orientation to address expectations and any questions. Regular volunteers helping in the kitchen will be required to obtain a Food Handlers Permit. RUCD will take care of any costs associated with this requirement.

Transportation and Pedestrian Safety

If you need help to arrange 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.

During registration you will be asked to identify authorized individuals who may pick up your child from school. Children will only be released to individuals who have been authorized by the parent/guardian.

Pedestrian training is provided to parents during registration and reinforced with children throughout the school year. Some of the topics covered in this training are listed below.

Pedestrian Safety

- Teach your child to always walk with an adult
- Be sure to look all ways when crossing a street or parking lot
- Discuss how to be safe by staying on sidewalks
- Instruct your child that they must always hold an adult's hand when crossing the street or walking to a vehicle

Walking to and from the classroom

- Discuss the importance of using walking feet
- Require your child to walk with an adult
- Remember to hold your child's hand while in the parking lot

Danger Zone

- Explain to your child that children are small and hard to see
- Teach them the "10-foot rule" which is to stay at least 10 feet away from a vehicle

Encourage Safe Riding Practices

- Set an example by always wearing your seat belt
- Teach your child the proper use of his/her seat belt and how to fasten and unfasten it
- Stress the importance of staying seated in a vehicle

Teach Your Child to Be Prepared in an Emergency

- Teach your child to listen for directions
- Remind him/her to walk
- Instruct him/her to wait for an adult to assist
- Discuss the importance of staying calm and quiet - practice exiting your vehicle as you would in an emergency to help ease anxiety, should an emergency occur

How You Can Protect Your Child - Remember the acronym ACT

A: Avoid heat stroke-related injury and death by never leaving a child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Heat is especially dangerous for young children, whose body temperature rises up to five times faster than adults. In the state of Utah, children under nine years of age must be supervised by a person who is at least nine years old when there is risk of hyperthermia, hypothermia, or dehydration (Utah Code Annotated § 76-10-2202, 2014). Always lock your car when you're not in it so kids can't get in on their own, and keep your keys and remote entry fobs out of your kids' sight and reach.

C: Create reminders by putting something in the back of the car next to your child - such as a purse or cell phone - that you'll need when you arrive at your destination. These

reminders are especially important if you're not following your normal routine when transporting your child.

T: Take action. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911 and follow the dispatcher's instructions

(Murkoff, H. 2018)

Policies

Child Protection - RUCD uses 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. The goal of the curriculum is to help children learn to identify and follow safety rules, report, and refuse unsafe touches and situations.

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. If you are concerned about a child or an individual's safety, please call the Utah child abuse reporting hotline at 855-323-3237 or visit pcautah.org (prevent child abuse Utah) for guidance.

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. To maintain confidentiality when volunteering in the classroom, please do not share photos or videos of other children on personal social media platforms.

Access to Personal Records – Participant files are considered confidential and are stored in a locked file or cabinet. Electronic files are password-protected. 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.

Program procedures on confidentiality, parental rights, and child protection are included in the online registration. Parents may request a copy at any time.

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

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

If a resolution is not reached between the parties, parents may file a grievance in writing 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 or other legal issues
- 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.

References:

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