



Educate Enrich Empower Motivate

FAMILIES FIRST

Parent Handbook



OUR SITES:

GLOUCESTER

29 EMERSON AVENUE
GLOUCESTER, MA 01930
PHONE: (978) 281-2400
FAX: (978) 281-7053

BEVERLY

292 CABOT STREET
BEVERLY, MA 01915
PHONE: (978) 236-4101
FAX: (978) 236-4198

SALEM

79 WILLSON STREET
SALEM, MA 01970
PHONE: (978) 515-5400
FAX: (978) 922-7893

www.pw4c.org



♥ Empowering Families Since 1967 ♥



Dear Pathways Families,

Welcome to a new school year! I'm excited to meet some of you for the first time and happy to welcome others of you back to Pathways for Children, where we strive to provide affordable, quality education and holistic, wrap-around services for your whole family.

As you will see, we are upgrading many parts of Pathways. Some are more obvious physical changes, such as new windows, paint, and refreshed classroom and office space. The new look and feel however isn't limited to these physical improvements alone. Noticeable too, are the fresh faces and the tangible energy new (and returning!) families and staff bring to our programs and services.



One thing that has not changed is our commitment to helping you, your family and your child grow and thrive. Please be sure to reach out to our competent and caring staff of teachers, social workers, bus drivers, receptionists, and more with any needs, questions, or concerns you might have throughout the year.

Creative problem-solving is a big part of what we do here at Pathways and you - our families - remain our number one priority. While this updated parent handbook is designed to be a tool for your success, it is you who make our programs truly great, through your participation, feedback, and the unique strengths and challenges you share with us.

We're grateful for the opportunity to serve you and glad you've joined our Pathways family. And we look forward to supporting you in making this a fantastic school year!

Warmly,

Eric Mitchell, President and CEO

Table of Contents

<u>Mission Statement</u>	4
<u>What We Do</u>	
<u>General Program Information</u>	5
<u>How We Do It</u>	
• Early Head Start	
• Head Start	
• School Age Care	
<u>Other Supporting Programs</u>	
• Family Enrichment Program – Nurturing Program, Parent and Teen Mentors, Parent Connection	
• Coordinated Family & Community Engagement (CFCE) – Positive Solutions, Happiest Baby, Play to Learn	
<u>Parent Rights and Responsibilities</u>	7
<u>How You Can Help - Partnering with Pathways Staff</u>	
• Code of Conduct for Families	
• Family Grievance	
• Interpreting and Translating Services	
• Non-Discrimination Statement	
<u>Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and Parental Rights</u>	
• Helpful Definitions	
• Required Uses and Disclosures	
• Other Permitted Uses and Disclosures	
• Complaints and Questions	
<u>Child Care Health and Safety</u>	12
<u>Keeping Children Healthy – Help Us Help You!</u>	
• Child Health Exclusion	
• Injury	
• Illness	
• Safe Sleep for Your Baby	
<u>Keeping Children Safe – Our Top Priority</u>	
• Safety and Security Measures	
• ALICE	
<u>General Program Guidelines and Policies</u>	15
<u>Other Important Things to Know</u>	
• Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect	
• Absences	
• Transportation Services	
• Parent Drop-off, Pick-up	
• Late Pick-up and Returned Children	
• Child Guidance	
• Extreme Behaviors	
• Termination	
• Field Trips	

Program-Specific Information.....19

Head Start and Early Head Start Families – Partner with Us!

- [Volunteering](#)
- [Program Governance](#)
- [Home Visits](#)
- [Parent-Teacher Conferences](#)
- [Transition Plans](#)
- [Termination](#)

Site-Specific Information21

Gloucester Families Only – Early Head Start, Head Start, School Age Care

EEC Full Day Subsidies Explained

- [Waitlist](#)
- [Eligibility](#)
- [Attendance](#)
- [Subsidized Transportation Services](#)
- [Determining Fees](#)
- [Voluntary Termination](#)
- [EEC Notice of Termination](#)



Our Mission

What We Do

Pathways for Children nurtures children and supports families impacted by economic and social inequity through programs that educate, enrich, empower and motivate.

At Pathways, we have the desire and commitment to do more, reach more, nurture more, and serve more. With an eye toward our future, we are investing in strengths-based programming for children and families and refining our business model and expectations to meet emerging community needs. We seek out collaborations and partnerships that strengthen not only Pathways, but our sector, too. We are fortunate to live in a community with such depth and diversity of talent, skill, and compassion. By working together, we create new opportunity.

General Program Information

How We Do It

Pathways has been providing educational, enrichment and skill building programs to children and families since 1967. For more than 50 years, Pathways has been dedicated to meeting the educational, social, and emotional needs of children and their families on the North Shore through the following programs:

Early Head Start (EHS) – Gloucester Only

- Comprehensive, federally-funded program serving children ages 15 months to 2.9 years.
- Center-based program focused on attaining toddler school readiness goals and helping families.
- Based on family eligibility (income and categorical qualifiers).

Head Start (HS) – Gloucester, Beverly, Salem

- Comprehensive, federally-funded education program serving children 2.9 to 5 years of age.
- Center-based program focused on attaining formal school readiness goals and helping families.
- Based on family eligibility (income and categorical qualifiers).



School Age Care (SAC) – Gloucester Only

- Provides after school and summer care to children from kindergarten through age 12.
- Programming focuses strongly on promoting children's understanding and competence in the areas of the 5 C's of our School Age Program (Connection, Confidence, Competence, Contribution, and Character) all of which nurture healthy, productive adolescence and adulthood.

Other Supporting Programs

Family Enrichment Program (FEP) – Gloucester, Beverly, Salem

Contact: familyenrichment@pw4c.org or (978) 515-5381.

High quality, evidence-based parenting curriculum designed to help support and strengthen the family unit. These include:

- The Nurturing Program® – a group-based parenting curriculum.
- Parent Mentor Program – volunteers assist parents in accomplishing goals.
- Teen Mentor Program – linking high school students with children needing a positive role model.
- Parent Connection – a weekly drop-in or virtual support group for parents.

Coordinated Family & Community Engagement (CFCE)* – Gloucester, Rockport

Contact: cfce@pw4c.org or (978) 515-5320.

Funded through the Department of Early Education and Care. Provides services and resources to support and engage parents as their child's first teacher for children birth through age 8. Offerings include:

- Play to Learn Weekly Playgroups for families with children ages birth to 5 years.
- Happiest Baby on the Block™ – supports you in charting your child's growth and development.
- Family literacy and school readiness activities.
- Positive Solutions parenting curriculum course.
- Referrals to local resources, programs, and community events.
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren – resources and support.
- Kindergarten transitional support and activities.

***For information about CFCE programming on the North Shore, please contact our Parent & Community Outreach Manager.**



Parent Rights and Responsibilities

How You Can Help - Partnering with Pathways Staff

Pathways for Children has an open-door policy for families. You are welcome to visit your child's classroom and participate in all aspects of our programming. Please note that while our classrooms and centers are open to families at all times, we ask that you respect the learning environment and follow directions of teaching teams and administrative staff.

Code of Conduct for Families

To achieve our mission of supporting and promoting a safe and healthy environment for our children, families, and staff, courteous and respectful behavior is expected of all program participants. Inappropriate behaviors violate our code of conduct and negatively impact staff, children, and overall program operations. These behaviors include:

- Threats or harassment of staff, parents, or children.
- Physical or verbal violence towards a child, parent, or staff person.
- Intentional destruction or damage to program property.
- Swearing or cursing on school premises.
- Verbal fighting, loud shouting, or angry outbursts on school premises.
- Bringing drugs, alcohol, or weapons to program sites or events.
- Failure to respect posted signs throughout our buildings and grounds that enforce program rules and safety.

If a parent, guardian, or other family member violates our Code of Conduct for Families, Pathways reserves the right to take any of the following actions:

- Restrict access to our program centers.
- Contact the police.
- Contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Family Grievance

At times, parents may not agree with something a Pathways staff person says or does. If you are ever in this situation, please don't suffer in silence! In a calm voice, tell the person what you don't like. Let the person know what you would like him or her to do instead. Listen to their response. If you are unhappy with the answer, ask for the name of the staff person's supervisor and share your concerns with him or her. If that doesn't help, ask that person for their supervisor's name.



Frequently, a staff person's actions are governed by program policy and a quick fix or change may not be possible. We still want to hear how our policies and procedures impact you – please share your thoughts and ideas: reception@pw4c.org.

Interpreting and Translating Services

Whenever possible, Pathways will communicate with your family in your preferred language. If we cannot identify a staff member to work with your family in your preferred language, we will make every effort to enlist the help of one of our interpreters or translators to support your family's needs.

Nondiscrimination Statement

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

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#) from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA.

The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and Parental Rights

This notice describes how personally identifiable information about your child may be used and disclosed, and how you can access this information. Please review it carefully.

By law, Pathways for Children must protect information that could be used to identify your child, also known as “Personally Identifiable Information” or “PII” and includes your child’s name or name of a child’s family member. Pathways for Children retains PII because your child receives Early Head Start/Head Start or School Age Care services from us. We take our obligation to protect the privacy of your child’s records and PII data very seriously. This notice explains your rights and our legal duties and privacy practices.

We are required to give you a copy of your rights in writing every year, including definitions which cover descriptions of the types of PII that may be disclosed, to whom we can disclose, and list when we do not need to receive your consent to disclose PII from your child’s record.

Pathways for Children will abide by the terms of this notice. Should our data and child record practices materially change, Pathways for Children reserves the right to change the terms of this notice, and will follow the terms currently in effect. Any new provisions we add will affect all PII we maintain from the time the new provisions go into effect, as well as any PII that we may receive in the future. If we revise our practices substantially, we will provide a revised notice to you at pick up or send it home to you with bus personnel and post the updated notice on our website: www.pw4c.org.

Helpful Definitions

Child Records (1) are directly related to the child; (2) are maintained by the program, or by a Party acting for the program; and (3) include information recorded in any way, such as print, electronic, or digital means, including media, video, image, or audio format.

Confidential means to be kept private with certain specific protections.

Consent is written approval or authorization that is signed and dated. It may include a record and signature in electronic form that: (1) identifies and authenticates a particular person as the source of the electronic Consent; and (2) indicates the same person's approval of the information. Consent can be revoked going forward.

Disclosure means to permit access to or the release, transfer, or other communication of Personally Identifiable Information contained in your child’s records by any means, including oral, written, or electronic means, to any party except the party identified as the party that provided or created the record.

Party is an entity or individual.

Parent means person or agency legally authorized to act on behalf of the child, typically mother, father, or legal guardian authorized to act in place of the mother or father.

Personal Identifiable Information (PII) is any information that could identify a specific individual, including but not limited to a child’s name, name of a child’s family member, street address of the child, social security number, or other information that is linked or linkable to the child.

Required Uses and Disclosures

To carry out our responsibilities, we must use and disclose personal identifiable information contained in child records in a number of ways. The following list describes the types of uses and disclosures of PII that federal law requires Pathways for Children to make and allows us to do so without your consent:

- **Within this organization** for Early Head Start/Head Start or School Age Care purposes.
- **To other organizations** for Early Head Start/Head Start or School Age Care purposes, including but not limited to contractors or delegates/sub-recipients that help us provide services to your child.
- **In connection with an audit or evaluation** of education or child development programs or for enforcement or compliance with federal legal requirements, such as to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that funds our work.
- **For studies** to improve child or family outcomes or quality of services.
- **During disasters or health/safety emergencies** to appropriate parties, including but not limited to local health departments, police, fire, EMS, etc.
- **Pursuant to Court Orders or Subpoenas** as long as we try to notify you in advance unless (1) a court has ordered that neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information provided in response be disclosed; (2) the disclosure is in compliance with an ex parte court order obtained by the United States Attorney General or his/her delegate concerning investigations or prosecutions of an offense listed in 18 U.S.C. 2332b(g)(5)(B) or an act of domestic or international terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. 2331; (3) a parent is a party to a court proceeding directly involving child abuse and neglect or dependency matters, and the order is issued in the context of that proceeding; or (4) if there is legal action between Pathways for Children and a parent.
- **For Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Monitoring** if the results will be reported in an aggregate form that does not identify any individual.
- **To Foster Care caseworkers** who have the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement.
- **To appropriate parties** in cases of suspected or known child maltreatment such as Child Protective Services.

Pathways for Children also uses and shares your child's PII when requested by you or when otherwise required by law.

Other Permitted Uses and Disclosures

1) Pathways for Children may use and share PII in certain limited instances, without your Consent as long as we notify you first. We can do this if the personal identifiable information relates to a child's enrollment or transfer to officials at a program, school, or school district in which the child seeks or intends to enroll or where the child is already enrolled.

- To do so, Pathways for Children will notify a parent about the intended disclosure.
- The parent will have the opportunity to request a copy of the PII from child records to be disclosed and have an opportunity to challenge and refuse disclosure of the information in the records, before we forward the records to the other party.
- If an entity or a parent requests that PII be disclosed for enrollment or transfer purposes, you will receive a **Notice of PII Disclosure for Enrollment or Transfer Form**.

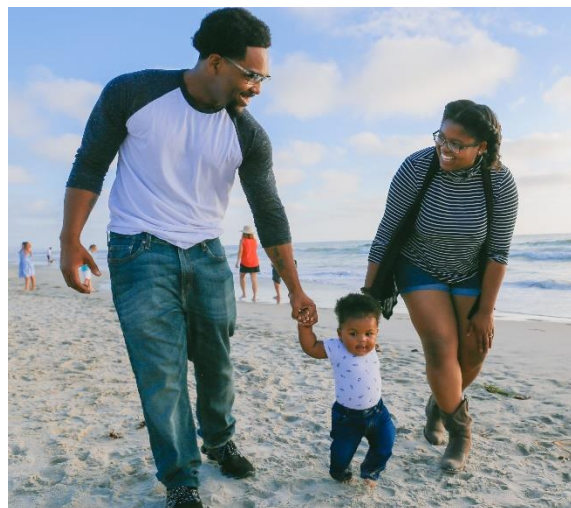
- The **Notice of PII Disclosure for Enrollment or Transfer Form** allows the Parent to challenge and refuse the disclosure by following the steps on the form.
- If you do nothing or do not follow the steps within the timeframe set forth in the **Notice of PII Disclosure for Enrollment or Transfer Form** to challenge or refuse to disclose, Pathways for Children will proceed as planned and send copies of the requested PII to the requesting program, school, or school district to further the child's program and ensure continuity through data sharing.

2) Except as described above, Pathways for Children will not use or disclose your PII without your written consent. You may give us written consent to use or disclose your PII to anyone for any purpose that you choose. You may revoke your authorized consent as long as you do so in writing. However, Pathways for Children will not be able to retrieve any personal identifiable information we have already used or shared based on your prior permission.

Parental Rights

As a parent or guardian, you have the right to:

- **Ask to inspect your child's record on-site** containing PII that Pathways for Children maintains. Pathways for Children will create an opportunity for you to inspect your child's record on-site within two (2) business days. You do not have the right to remove the original record from on-site nor to take any parts of the original record with you.
- **Ask for a copy of your child's record** disclosed to third parties with parental consent, free of charge.
- **Ask Pathways for Children to amend your child's record** if you believe that it is inaccurate, misleading, or violates your child's privacy. You must ask for this by in writing, along with a reason for your request. Pathways for Children will review your request and decide on it within seven (7) days. If Pathways for Children denies your request to amend your PII, we will issue you a written statement explaining why and explain your right to a hearing. It will take fourteen (14) days to set up a hearing.
- **Ask for a hearing** if your request to amend your child's record is denied. If the issue is not decided in your favor at the hearing, you have the right to place a statement in your child's record that comments on the contested information or states why you disagree with the program's decision, or both.
- **Ask to inspect written agreements involving Disclosure of PII.** At your request, you can come on-site and review a redacted written agreement with a third party that involves disclosure of your child's PII. This right does not allow you to take any photos, make or have copies made of the agreement.



Complaints or Questions

If you believe that your child's privacy rights may have been violated or if you have questions, please let us know as soon as possible. Questions should be directed to: reception@pw4c.org. Filing a complaint or exercising your rights will not affect the care or services your child receives from Pathways for Children.

Child Care Health and Safety

Keeping Children Healthy – Help Us Help You!

Pathways for Children strives to provide a safe environment for all. Please let the program know if your child has any health concerns that may require special accommodations, such as allergies, asthma, or other medical concerns. We want to be sure that we are prepared to both prevent and treat accordingly.

Early Head Start, Head Start, and the state of Massachusetts require that each child has an annual physical examination and be up-to-date on all immunizations and lead testing. It is also required that we track dental visits. Records from your child's medical and dental appointments must be submitted to Pathways in a timely manner, following your child's appointments. School age children follow the Department of Education and Special Education (DESE) requirements.

Child Health Exclusion

Our policy for serious illnesses, contagious disease, and reportable diseases are based on the "Criteria for Excluding Children from Child Care" in conformance with regulations and recommendations as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control. If your child is excluded for a health reason you will be provided with guidance as to when they can return.

Injury

Our staff are trained in First Aid and will administer minor treatment such as Band-Aids, ice packs, etc. as needed. They are also trained in Infant/Child CPR. If an injury occurs while your child is at the program, you will be notified by either telephone or a written note.

Illness

If your child becomes ill while at the program, we will call to notify you. If symptoms meet the criteria for Child Health Exclusion, you will be asked to come pick up your child from care. If you are not able to pick up your child in a timely manner, you must arrange for someone to pick them up. You will be given specific information about when and under what conditions your child is able to return to our care.

For children who are ill with mild symptoms but do not meet the criteria for Child Health Exclusion, a quiet area will be provided. Food, drink, rest, play materials, comfort, supervision, indoor and outdoor care will be adapted as necessary to meet the needs of your child.

If your child becomes ill outside of program hours, please report symptoms to the program. You must let the program know if a medical professional has diagnosed your child with a communicable disease, so that we can notify other families about possible exposure.



Safe Sleep for Your Baby

To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):

- Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, for naps and at night.
- Place your baby on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet.
- Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area.
- Do not allow smoking around your baby.
- Keep your baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep.
- Think about using a clean, dry pacifier when placing your infant down to sleep.
- Do not let your baby overheat during sleep.
- Avoid products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS, and do not use home monitors to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Reduce the chance that flat spots will develop on your baby's head – provide "Tummy Time" when your baby is awake and someone is watching and avoid too much time in car seats, carriers, and bouncers.



Keeping Children Safe at Pathways – Our Top Priority

Our primary concern for children in our care is maintaining safety and security at all times. Our highly trained staff need the understanding and cooperation of families, volunteers and guests in order to accomplish this.

Safety and Security Measures – What You Need to Know:

- Outer doors are always locked.
- There is one entrance into the building for families and visitors, visibly monitored by the receptionist.
- A picture ID is required if the staff person releasing a child does not know the person picking up, even if a parent.
- Children will only be released to a person authorized by a parent or guardian.
- Designated managers work with local police and fire departments to plan for various types of emergencies.
- Direct staff receive training in First Aid and CPR, as well as emergency preparedness from local police and fire departments.
- Emergency drills are conducted monthly.
- All staff and regular volunteers are required to pass a Criminal Records Background Investigation (CORI) and are screened through the Sex Offender Registry before starting employment. All new employees are also fingerprinted and screened through national FBI records for any criminal history.



ALICE

Since 2016, Pathways for Children has adopted and trained staff on ALICE, a method of emergency response training differing from a strict lock down or shelter in place. ALICE allows for options when responding to emergency situations. As in all out-of-the-ordinary situations, an Incident Commander will be identified and communication will be via walkie-talkie or PA system. Once on site, public safety personnel control the situation until all children are reunified with parents.

An overview of safety terms:

ALERT: Your first notification of danger.

LOCKDOWN: Prepare to EVACUATE or COUNTER if needed. Barricade the room.

INFORM: Communicate the violent intruder's location and direction in real time.

COUNTER: Create Noise, Movement, Distance and Distraction with the intent of reducing the shooter's ability to shoot accurately. Counter is NOT fighting.

EVACUATE: When safe to do so, remove yourself from the danger zone.



General Program Guidelines and Policies

Other Important Things to Know:

Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

Pathways for Children staff are required by Massachusetts state law to report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) any suspicion of child abuse or neglect. It is Pathways policy to notify parents of any concerns or any report made to the agency, unless extraordinary circumstances dictate otherwise. Pathways social workers are dedicated to ensuring families have access to area resources that can assist with parenting, support and education.

Absences

It is very important to call us if your child is going to be absent. If we do not hear from you, a staff member will contact you. If we do not reach you, we will call your emergency list until we reach a person.

If your child will be absent, please contact Reception:

- Gloucester (978) 515-5310
- Beverly (978) 515-5450
- Salem (978) 515-5290

Transportation Services

At Pathways it is essential that we monitor the whereabouts and safety of your child at all times while in our care. Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations require that within 30 minutes of drop off, Pathways will contact families of children who do not get on our bus as scheduled. If you have not notified us of your child's absence, we will first call you, and then begin contacting your emergency contacts.



Please help us keep your child safe. If you receive transportation services and your child will be absent, be sure to contact Reception AND our Transportation Department (leave a voicemail any time-24 hours a day, 7 days a week):

- Gloucester (978) 515-5330
- Beverly and Salem (978) 515-5409

If your child receives Pathways transportation, you will receive additional information about our policies and procedures upon enrollment.

Parent Drop-off, Pick-up

If you are a parent or guardian providing your own transportation, please remember to bring your child into the classroom. Be sure that a staff person is present before leaving.

Late Pick-up and Returned Children

- **Late Pick-up from the Center:** If children are not picked up within 15 minutes of our scheduled closing time, Pathways will contact the family and emergency contacts. If we cannot reach the family or emergency contacts, we will use discretion in contacting the Department of Children and Families for further guidance.
- **Failed Pick-up from the Bus Stop:** If an approved caregiver is not present at the bus stop, Pathways will return the child to the center. We will contact the family and emergency contacts. If we cannot reach the family or emergency contacts, the above procedure is activated.
- **Follow-up after Late or Failed Pick-up:** Pathways does not charge fees for picking up past our scheduled closing time. Families will be allowed a grace period of three (3) late pickups per school year. When families pick up after our scheduled closing time or fail to pick up at the bus stop, reception or transportation staff will have the family sign the late pickup form and deliver this form to our Admissions Department. Staff will work with the family to resolve late pick-ups. If unable to resolve the issue, your family may be at risk of losing Pathways services and/or transportation.

Child Guidance

Our Child Guidance Policy is non-punitive and designed with growth and developmental stages of children in mind.

For preschoolers and school age children our goals for behavior management are:

- Safety and respect in regards to self, others, and the environment.
- Guidance in the development of skills for self-control, self-management, including problem solving and nonviolent conflict resolution.
- Development of effective communication and the ability to recognize and acknowledge feelings.



For infants and toddlers, teaching staff use consistent, reasonable, and appropriate principles in guiding behavior based on an understanding of the child's individual needs. Teachers use a safe and secure center environment and set up appropriate activities and routines. Teachers will adapt activities and transitions to be responsive and realistic to the children in their care.

Steps for child guidance with all age groups include:

- Modeling appropriate behaviors.
- Being clear and consistent about behavior expectations.
- Recognizing a child's feelings and discussing the behavior with the child.
- Addressing the behavior, not the child.
- Offering choices and redirecting the child.
- Positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors.

Extreme Behaviors

In extreme cases, and only in the rare event that there is a serious threat to a child or adult, a staff person may need to supportively hold a child. The staff person may only hold the child long enough to protect the child from a dangerous situation and return the child to safety. "Safe holds" are used only as a last resort and may not be used as a discipline technique. A safe hold is offered as an assist and can only be sustained long enough to keep the child from hurting him/herself or others.

Behavioral incidents are followed up by a process of communication with staff and the child's family. This may include meeting with the family, documentation of the incident, developing behavior support plans, and making appropriate referrals for the child if needed.

Pathways staff and any person working with children will use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. Staff will not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basic needs. Staff and any person working with children will accept and respect each child's family and identity, and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.

Termination

Termination of children from Pathways programs is difficult for parents and children. A child may be terminated from any of our programs if that child's needs cannot be met within our program design, or when a child's behavior is determined to be unsafe to him/herself or to other children or staff in the program. In the rare event a child must be terminated for safety or placement reasons, staff will facilitate the transition and assist the family in finding a more appropriate placement for the child.

Field Trips

- All children must have written permission on file, signed by parent or guardian, prior to any trip that requires transportation out of the neighborhood. This must include the date and destination of the trip. A signed general permission form may suffice for regularly scheduled trips.
- No volunteers can have total responsibility for children on field trips. Teachers are ultimately responsible for children on the trip and if volunteers are assisting, they need to remain within hearing or sight of teachers.
- A parent cannot be counted as a chaperone if they bring another child with them on a field trip. Sibling participation is discouraged, but not prohibited. Siblings accompanied and supervised by a parent must have a signed permission form.
- Parents cannot purchase food or other items for any child (including their own) while on field trips.
- Pathways for Children maintains a smoke free environment. Smoking is prohibited in view of program children during program operation.
- A child can only be denied participation in a field trip when his or her behavior poses a safety threat to him/herself or others, and after attempts to use supportive measures have failed. A decision to deny a child's participation in a field trip will be made after consultation between program supervisor/manager and the teacher, or if indicated in the child's behavior support plan.
- In the event of an emergency, 911 will be called and a designated staff member will accompany the child to the hospital if advised by emergency personnel. The parent or guardian will be called as soon as possible, and staff at Pathways will be informed.

Program-Specific Information

Early Head Start and Head Start Families

Partner with Us!

There are many ways you can be part of your child's learning experience at Pathways:

- **Volunteering** – Get involved in classroom or center activities and enhance relationships with your child, other families, and program staff. Volunteers, while unpaid, are well-trained to assist in implementing program activities on a regular or occasional basis, supervised by staff in areas such as health, education, transportation, nutrition, or administration*.

***Note: Anyone volunteering on a regular basis must have an up-to-date COVID 19 vaccination status, pass a Criminal Records Background Investigation (CORI) and be screened through the Sex Offender Registry.**

- **Program Governance** – Head Start Program Performance Standards require that we establish and maintain a formal structure of shared governance with parents. Policy Council and Parent Center Committee are ways parents can participate in policy review and help make decisions about the program.



- **Policy Council** is comprised of elected family and community members. Several members may serve as community members, including past Head Start parents. The Policy Council elects a Chair and Vice Chairperson and with approval of Pathways CEO and Board of Directors. A member of the Policy Council also serves as a liaison between the Council and the Board.
- **Parent Center Committees** are opportunities offered throughout the year for Pathways parents to learn and give input about our program through regular meetings hosted by our Parent & Community Outreach Department.

Families interested in participating in any of these, please contact our [Parent & Community Outreach Manager](#).

- **Home Visits** – Pathways teachers, behavior specialists, social service and management staff will meet with families throughout the year to review child activities and progress, provide support for child and family concerns, and encourage family engagement in the program. Social service and education staff will help families set goals to support both your child's school readiness and family needs. Staff will schedule time to meet with you at school and at your home to establish a solid partnership that promotes the wellness and growth of your child and family.

As part of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, home visits are an important step in linking Pathways staff, your child, and family. For teaching staff, the standards recommend two home visits per school year. Ideally, the first one will occur before the school year starts.

Social service staff are also encouraged to provide home visits to families, as they offer a critical home to school link that enhances your child's education and development. Home visits are a time to share information, plan and set goals for your child and family, and review your child's progress in a comfortable environment.

- **School Readiness** – At Pathways for Children, setting educational goals for your child is a creative collaboration involving the public-school system, parents, and our education staff. These goals are aligned with Head Start Early Learning Standards, local school district expectations, and state early learning guidelines. Your child's teacher will share school readiness information and activities with you throughout the school year. Head Start and Early Head Start follow a curriculum that aligns with federal and state early learning requirements.
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences** and progress reports are completed three times a year (fall, winter, and spring) following each child's assessment period. Conferences can be combined with a family home visit or can be held at school. Written progress reports are prepared and shared with parents after each assessment period, and a copy of the report is given to parents. Parents are encouraged to share any developmental or school readiness goals they have for their child with teachers. All educators, specialists, and consultants working with a child in our program have an opportunity to contribute to a child's progress report.
- **Transition Plans** – To ensure that program transitions are well planned, all Pathways programs collaborate both within and outside of the agency. Staff will work with families and all relevant professionals to share information, assist with documentation, and prepare children for program transitions.
- **Termination** – Like other grant-based programs, a child may be terminated from Early Head Start/Head Start for excessive absences, or if program funding is reduced.



Site-Specific Information

Gloucester Families Only - Early Head Start, Head Start, School Age Care

EEC Regulations – Full Day Subsidies Explained:

- **Waitlist** – Families with a Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) approved service need requesting subsidized child care, may fill out an application with our Admissions Department. Eligible families will be added to the central waitlist “KINDERWAIT” managed by EEC and notified when funding becomes available.
- **Eligibility** – Families must meet income eligibility requirements and have an approved service need as defined by EEC. To maintain eligibility, families must report to the Admissions Department within 30 days, any temporary/non-temporary changes should they occur during the 12-month authorization period. Changes are defined as follows:
 - Any reduction in service need hours, an interruption in work for seasonal workers, or break in service that lasts more than 12 weeks.
 - Any change in residency.
 - Changes in household composition or custody changes.
- **Attendance** – All children who receive EEC child care subsidies are expected to attend the program in accordance with the terms of their child care authorization. If frequent absences occur, the Admissions Department will contact you to discuss your child’s placement.
- **Subsidized Transportation Services** – Depending on availability, EEC subsidized families may be approved for a transportation subsidy between home/public school and center should they meet the criteria listed below:
 - Live more than ½ mile from the program.
 - Lack access to a vehicle or public transportation.
 - Have a verified disability* that prevents the parent or guardian from transporting.
 - Work a schedule that prevents parent/guardian from transporting child/ren to care.
 - Indicate a safety issue walking to/from daycare



*The disability must be verified in writing by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, nurse practitioner or psychiatric nurse on the letterhead of your health care practitioner. If meeting this requirement, please see the Admissions Manager for the required form.

- **Determining Fees** – Families who are eligible for subsidized child care will be required to contribute to the cost of the services they receive. The amount a family contributes depends on the family’s income and size. The fee is determined using the Commonwealth of Massachusetts sliding fee scale.

- **Billing** – If assessed a parent fee, bills are sent out bi-weekly. Fees may be paid:
 - In person with cash, money order, check, or debit/credit card at 29 Emerson Avenue in Gloucester.
 - By mail to addressed to the Fiscal Department, Pathways for Children, 29 Emerson Avenue, Gloucester, MA 01930
- **Voluntary Termination** – A parent/guardian is expected to notify the program of a planned termination at least two weeks in advance.
- **EEC Notice of Termination** – Children may be terminated by EEC for the following reasons:
 - Lack of service need
 - Substantiated fraud
 - Residency outside of Massachusetts
 - Income exceeding 85% state median income
 - Excessive unexplained absences
 - Failure to comply with the policies of EEC and/or the subsidy administrator (applies to termination of placement only)



Other reasons for termination by EEC include non-payment/late payment of parent fees, intentional program violations, or failure to:

- Report a non-temporary change or income accurately
- Respond to EEC request for information

Early Head Start Enrolled Children:

- Families receiving an EEC notice of termination will be given a two-week notice and their full day subsidy and program enrollment will end.

Head Start Enrolled Children:

- When a Full Day Head Start child's subsidy is terminated due to non-payment/late payment of parent fees, the child will transition to part day programming and remain enrolled until the end of the Head Start school year.

