

GATEWAY COMMUNITY ACTION
EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START
SCHOOL READINESS PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024



“At the end of the day, the most overwhelming
Key to a child’s success is the positive Involvement of parents.”

-Jane D. Hull

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SCHOOL READINESS IN KENTUCKY	3
SCHOOL READINESS GUIDING PRINCIPLES	4
SCHOOL CLOSINGS/DELAYS	5
ATTENDANCE/FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	6
BACK PACK, CLOTHING, SHOES, & JEWELRY	7
DAILY SCHEDULE	8
DISCIPLINE	8
BIRTHDAYS	8
OUTDOOR TIME	8
HEALTH/SAFETY	9-12
LICE POLICY	12
NUTRITION	13
USDA PARTICIPATION	14
TRANSPORTATION	15-16
CONFIDENTIALITY	16
CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT	16-17
PERSONAL CONDUCT	17
SOCIAL MEDIA	17
VOLUNTEER	18
VISITOR	19
CHILDREN AND PARENT RIGHTS	20-21

School Readiness in Kentucky

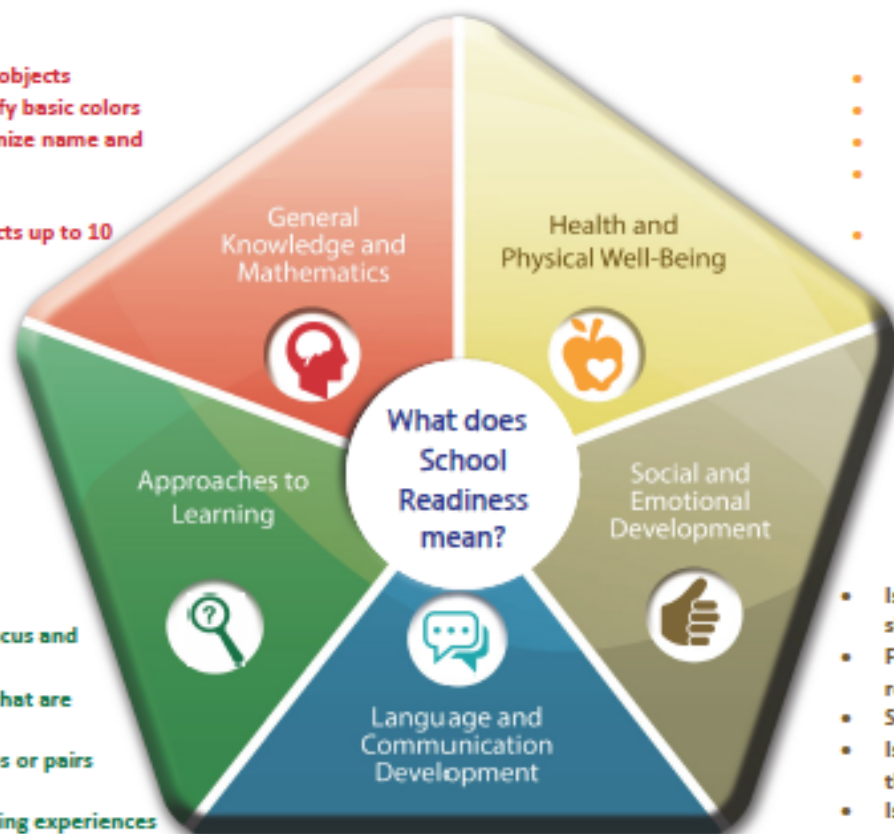
School readiness means that each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child's success and ability to be **Ready to Grow, Ready to Learn & Ready to Succeed.**



- Sorts and classifies objects
- Is learning to identify basic colors
- Is learning to recognize name and general shapes
- Counts up to 30
- Counts sets of objects up to 10



- Eats a balanced diet
- Gets plenty of rest
- Receives immunizations
- Receives regular medical and dental care
- Runs, jumps and does other activities



- Child is curious
- Has the ability to focus and listen
- Continues in tasks that are challenging
- Child plays in groups or pairs based on interest
- Child initiates learning experiences



- Is learning to play and share with others
- Follows simple rules and routines
- Shows curiosity
- Is learning to explore new things
- Is learning to work alone



- Knows full name
- Is learning to write own name
- Uses pictures to tell stories
- Is learning home address
- Speaks in five or six word sentences

The skills listed in the diagram above are helpful for children to know before entering Kindergarten. The indicators included represent the hopes and aspirations for incoming students, not the expectations. Kentucky recognizes that children develop and learn at different rates and times. Not every child will master all of the skills and behaviors listed above prior to Kindergarten. These skills and behaviors are NOT USED to determine school eligibility. In Kentucky, all children who meet the legal age requirement are entitled to enter public school.

Families, early care and education providers, schools and community partners must work together to provide developmental experiences that promote growth and learning, to ensure that all children enter school eager and excited to learn. The purpose of this definition is to give parents, child care and preschool, and communities an overview of the expectations of schools for incoming students and to help families and communities prepare children for school. In addition, a readiness profile provides teachers, child care providers, and parents a tool to better inform them on the specific strengths and needs of each individual child.



Partners involved in creating this document include the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, the Kentucky Department of Education, the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Kentucky Head Start Association. Special thanks to Jefferson County Public Schools for the development of the graphic.

Guiding Principles

- **Each child is unique and can succeed.** Children are individuals with different rates and paths of development. Each child is uniquely influenced by their prenatal environment, temperament, physiology, and life experiences. With the appropriate support, all children can be successful learners and achieve the skills, behaviors, and knowledge described in the Framework.
- **Learning occurs within the context of relationships.** Caring families, teachers, and other adults matter in a young child's life. Responsive and supportive interactions with adults are essential to children's learning.
- **Families are children's first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates.** Families must be respected and supported as the primary influence in their child's early learning and education. Their knowledge, skills, and cultural backgrounds contribute to children's school readiness.
- **Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure.** Nurturing, responsive, and consistent care helps create safe environments where children feel secure and valued. In these settings, children are able to engage fully in learning experiences.
- **Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time.** Any single skill, behavior, or ability may involve multiple areas of development. For example, as infants gain fine motor skills, they can manipulate objects in new ways and deepen their understanding of cause and effect. As preschoolers gain new verbal skills, they can better manage their emotions and form more complex friendships.
- **Teaching must be intentional and focused on how children learn and grow.** Children are active, engaged, and eager learners. Good teaching practices build on these intrinsic strengths by providing developmentally appropriate instruction and opportunities for exploration and meaningful play.
- **Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs.** Responsive and respectful learning environments welcome children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Effective teaching practices and learning experiences build on the unique backgrounds and prior experiences of each child.

To learn more about the guiding principles for School Readiness visit:

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five>

<https://kidsnow.ky.gov/families/readiness/Documents/early-childhood-standards.pdf>

Head Start

School Closings/Delays



Bath, Bracken, Lewis, Mason, Menifee, Morgan, and Montgomery Counties

- School District 1 hour delay
 - Head Start will operate on regular schedule
- School District 2 hour delay
 - Part Day Classes will begin at 10:00 (No morning transportation)
 - Extended Day Classes will begin at 9:45.
- School District Plan B
 - Head Start Plan B (Buses will only run on the main roads)
- Plan C
 - AM (morning session) classes will not be in session
 - PM (afternoon session) will operate on regular schedule
 - Extended Day classes will begin at 9:45
 - Part day classes will begin at 10:00 with no morning transportation. Afternoon transportation will be provided.

Fleming, Robertson, Rowan Counties

- Head Start will operate on district schedule

Early Head Start may close at the discretion of the program director.

(School closing/delays are announced through One Call Now and WKYT)



Attendance Matters

Every student. Every day.

- Our program is expected to maintain 85% attendance, therefore, your child should attend Early Head Start/Head Start every day, when not sick.
- If your child is going to be absent, please contact your family service advocate, or your child's teacher to let them know.
- If your child's monthly attendance falls below 85%, or has multiple unexplained absences (two consecutive unexplained absences), a staff member will schedule a home visit to discuss attendance, offer support, and develop solutions to ensure your child is fully benefiting from the services.
- If your child has habitual unexplained absenteeism and is not benefiting from the services, your child's slot may become vacant.



Family Engagement

- September- Grand pal's Day
- October- Explore Pumpkins
- November- Pizza with Pops
- December- Ornament Making
- February- Valentines Boxes
- March- Career Day
- April- Planting Seeds
- May- Summer Safety (water and sun safety)
- June- Follow my Footsteps (Special friend day)



Back Pack

- Head Start children are permitted to bring backpacks to school. The backpack is used for written communications to and from home, children's work and to send an extra set of clothing when necessary. Please check your child's backpack daily.

Clothing, Shoes, and Jewelry

- Children should be dressed in comfortable play clothes and shoes appropriate for the weather.
- Tennis shoes or rubber soled shoes are recommended for safety. Sandals should have a strap across the heel to fit firmly on the foot, and flip flops are NOT encouraged.
- At Head Start children are encouraged to use self-help skills in dressing and hygiene needs. Children should not be dressed in snap type bodysuits which are difficult for them to open and close. Shorts should be worn under dresses, skirts, nightgowns, or any dress-like clothing.
- At the beginning of the year, you will be asked to send an extra set of clothing (including underwear and socks) to the center for your child. Please put your child's name on the inside tags of the extra clothing as well as jackets or coats that your child wears.
- It is recommended that children do not wear clothing with drawstrings.
- We strongly recommend that children do not bring or wear jewelry to school. Small stud earrings are permitted, but staff will not be responsible for them if they are lost.



Behavior Interventions

Behavior concerns will be addressed by using appropriate communication skills, redirection, and positive reinforcement. Every effort will be made to change the behavior and keep the child in the group setting. To prevent a child, who exhibits non-typical inappropriate behaviors, from hurting himself or others he/she may be moved to an area where the problem situation can be addressed. If removal is necessary, it will be handled by Head Start staff only. Should non-typical inappropriate behavior continue, a parent/guardian will be notified and a meeting will be scheduled. A behavior plan will be discussed and written, as determined necessary.

Birthdays

If a child's birthday occurs in a given month, it may be acknowledged. However, cards, gifts, treats, or invitations should not be brought to the center.

Outdoor Time

Outdoor time will be scheduled each day, to provide appropriate gross motor activities and increase opportunities for the development of gross motor skills. Please dress your child for the existing weather conditions.

Schedule

Your child's daily schedule will include: meal times, washing hands, brushing teeth, large group and small group activities, rest time, and outside time.



Health/Safety

- Early Head Start/Head Start staff are certified in CPR and First aid.
- Age-appropriate materials are provided for infants, toddlers, and preschooler's.
- Facilities meet and/or exceed all applicable regulations.
- Appropriate child/staff ratios are maintained.
- Emergency drills are practiced regularly, and internal procedures outline the steps to be taken when/if an emergency arises.
- Staff implement practices that concentrate on preventative measures to ensure the safety of all children, staff, visitors, and volunteers.
- Staff incorporate safety awareness into their daily lesson plans.

COMMUNICABLE ILLNESSES

- Early Head Start/Head Start uses the Exclusion Guidelines that have been adapted to fit our program by the Health Advisory Committee, overseen by medical professionals. This document may be provided to you upon request via your family service advocate. Information about common communicable illnesses will be sent home to the parents/guardians during the school year.

ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

- If your child becomes sick at school and/or has a fever of 100.4 degrees fahrenheit or above, you may be contacted to pick up your child. If you are unavailable, the adults listed on your child's pick up/release form will be contacted to pick up your child. It is important that you keep the pickup/release form updated with the most current names and phone numbers.

IMMUNIZATIONS

- Your child's immunizations must be kept up-to-date throughout the school year. If immunizations become due during the school year, you will be reminded by the family service advocate. If after the notice is given the immunization is not updated, your child will not be able to return to school until we receive an updated immunization certificate. If you need assistance or have questions contact your family service advocate.

DENTAL/VISION EXAM AND TREATMENT

- Your child is required to have a dental exam. If your child is under the age of 12 months, a dental screening is acceptable. If your child has not had a dental exam within the past twelve months, please schedule an appointment with your family dentist. The family service advocate can assist you in scheduling the appointment, as well as transportation for Head Start students to and from the dental provider.
- If your child is enrolled in Head Start he/she is required to have an eye exam by December 31st of the first year they are enrolled, and annually thereafter.
- Dental/Vision services will be paid if you go to a provider who accepts the medical card/KCHIP. Your family service advocate can provide you with a list of local dentists, or you can find them in your Community Resource Guide that was provided to you.
- If your child needs dental/vision treatment, and you do not have insurance, contact the family service advocate to locate resources within the community to assist with payment.

INJURY AT SCHOOL

- If your child has a minor injury at Early Head Start/Head Start, an incident report form will be available to you upon request. If your child suffers a serious injury at the center the family service advocate or teaching staff will contact you, or the adults listed on your child's pick up/release form, and emergency personnel will be contacted if necessary.

MEDICINE-PRESCRIPTION

- Please notify your family service advocate and your child's teacher if your child is taking medication of any kind at home. If a doctor requires that a prescribed medicine be given during school hours, the following steps must be taken:
 1. A medication packet may be obtained from the family service advocate. It will indicate the type of medication prescribed for your child; dosage, time to be given, reason, side effects, and length of time prescribed. You and your child's physician must complete the medication form, giving the staff permission to administer the medication. The name, prescription number, dosage time, and date the medication is to be discontinued must be listed. The medication packet must be completed and returned to the center each time a prescribed medication must be given during school hours.
 2. The medication packet must be updated annually.
 3. Arrangements must be made by you with your child's teacher for medicine to be available at the center. The arrangements must be documented and a special health care plan may be required. Do not send medication of any kind, (including cough drops) in your child's backpack.
 4. The medication must be in the original, appropriately labeled container.
 5. If medication dosage or the time to be administered is changed, you and the doctor must send a written note indicating the changes. The container label must reflect the changes.

PHYSICAL EXAM/TREATMENT

- Your child is required to have a physical exam. When your child has a physical exam, the doctor may indicate that your child needs further medical follow-up. You should schedule an appointment with your child's doctor. If you need assistance scheduling a medical appointment, the family service advocate will assist you
- A physical exam will be paid if you go to a provider who accepts the medical card/KCHIP. Your family service advocate can provide you with a list of local medical providers, or you can find them in your Community Resource Guide that was provided to you.
- If your child needs follow-up treatment, and you do not have insurance, contact your family service advocate to locate resources within the community to assist with payment.

TICKS ATTACHED TO CHILD'S SKIN

If a tick is found attached to your child's skin, a parent/guardian will be contacted. The staff are not permitted to remove the tick.

LICE POLICY

Nit Free/ Lice Free
Bracken & Morgan

Lice Free
Bath, Fleming, Lewis, Mason, Menifee, Montgomery, Robertson, Rowan



MEAL TIMES

- Meal times will be posted in each classroom. During meal times, staff will eat with the children and assist them with serving and eating skills.
- Infants and toddlers will be fed according to their individual development readiness. Feeding skills will be put into practice as recommended by the USDA guidelines.
- Infants and toddlers are fed on demand to the extent possible.

MENUS

- Our program promotes proper nutrition and healthy eating habits. Menus will include foods which are high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt. Menus will be posted in each classroom and sent home for reference.

MENU CHANGES

- If your child has a food allergy or cannot eat certain foods due to health concerns, reach out to your family service advocate. A medical provider must complete the required forms which includes foods your child cannot eat and a list of recommended substitutions.
- Any child who cannot eat foods due to cultural beliefs, must have the appropriate form completed by the parent/guardian stating what food the child cannot eat.

MENU SUBSTITUTIONS

When substitutions must be made, foods of the same group must be selected.

- Substitutions will be made when food items are not in stock, special events or circumstances occur which require schedule changes. This includes utilizing food in stock near the end of the program year.

USDA Participation

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter 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: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.



Transportation

CHILDREN'S ARRIVAL WHEN TRANSPORTED BY PARENT OR OTHER ADULT

- If you or any other adult brings your child to school or picks up your child, the Sign-In/Sign-Out form must be signed.
- Parents who transport their children will need to arrive by the time class is scheduled to begin and **not earlier than that time**. If children arrive earlier than the scheduled time, parents are required to stay with their child until class begins.
- When picking up children at the classroom/center, the child becomes the full responsibility of the parent once the child has been signed out.

CHILD RELEASE/EMERGENCY CONTACT FORM

- This form lets the Early Head Start/Head Start staff know who has permission to pick up your child and who should be contacted if your child becomes ill at school. It is your responsibility to update the form when needed. Let those adults whose names you have written on the form know that picture identification with a birth date will be required of them. Please let them know that they also may be contacted if your child becomes ill at school and you are not available. Children will not be released to people who are not listed on the form. **For your child's protection, additional names cannot be added to the form over the phone. You must come in person to update the form.**
- Any designated person picking your child up from school or receiving them off the bus must be **18 years old or older**.

CHILDREN RIDING THE BUS

- Head Start students riding the bus are required to be in an age appropriate restraint.
- Parents are responsible for escorting the child to and from the bus, including crossing the street (Monitors remain on the bus at all times).
- There must be a designated adult listed on the Emergency Pick-Up/Drop-Off form at the drop off location.
- Upon absence of a designated adult to receive your child at the drop off location the following procedures will be implemented:
 - First Occurrence: The teacher must communicate with families the importance of maintaining schedules
 - Second Occurrence: The QCM will be notified and a conference will be held with the Teacher, Family Advocate, and Parent. The conference will be documented and a plan of action will be developed to help resolve the issue.
 - Third Occurrence: PFCE Manager or designee will meet with the family to determine optional placements

- Fourth Occurrence: Teacher or Family Advocate will report to the QCM and Protection and Permanency.



Confidentiality

Gateway Early Head Start/Head Start keeps all information shared by families confidential. Files are kept in locked cabinets and all written information is kept strictly confidential unless parents authorize in writing that all, or portions of, information may be shared with other entities. Only authorized personnel may view records in order to perform their responsibilities. Parents/Guardians may view their child's records upon request. Advance notice must be provided and a designated staff member must be present during viewing. We recognize and celebrate the unique and important role that parents play in the lives of their children. Each parent will have access to their child's records unless we have a legal document on file that prohibits such activity.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Under the Kentucky mandatory reporting law as defined in 45 CFR 1304.2 all staff are responsible for reporting suspected or known child abuse or sexual abuse. If you have reason to suspect that your child has been neglected/abused in any manner, you are considered a mandatory reporter and must report to the child abuse hotline.

Abuse Hotline 1-877-KYSAFE1 (833-351-8901)

Personal Conduct

- No disruptive behavior (yelling, threatening another person, etc.) is permitted.
- Use of abusive/profane language is not allowed. No alcoholic beverages, drugs, firearms, or weapons are allowed.
- No one is to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on Early Head Start or Head Start property.
- Everyone must respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family.

- Comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members
- Ensure no child is left alone or unsupervised

Social Media

Gateway Early Head Start/Head Start protects the privacy of every student. Internet safety is a serious issue and we discourage taking photos of children in the classroom setting. Online images can be copied and shared and some children may be at risk and not permitted to have photos displayed within the community. Other families choose not to display photos due to religious reasons and some children have complex backgrounds which may cause unforeseen consequences. We strongly advise that images not be distributed or placed on social media due to the possibility that other children may be included in the image. Parents/Guardians may take photos of their own child but are expected to protect the privacy of other children enrolled in the program.



- Parents are encouraged to participate in activities offered through the Head Start program.
- Regular volunteers as defined by the program as those who participate on a regular basis of four (4) hours or more per week and must have a satisfactory TB Skin assessment on file.
- Criminal Record Checks will be required for regular volunteers in order to maintain consistent volunteer requirements throughout our program options and to ensure the safety of our children.

- Volunteers must participate in a 6 hour online orientation and Pediatric Abusive Head Trauma training prior to volunteering.
- Classroom staff are responsible for providing supervision and direction to any person volunteering in a direct service capacity.
- Program volunteers may not discipline children assigned to the classroom and should bring any concerns to the attention of Gateway staff. Parents are not permitted to use corporal punishment with their own children when volunteering for the Head Start program.
- The appropriate Head Start staff member will conduct a meeting with volunteers that violate rules and/or regulations of the program, to explain the concern and the corrective action to be taken. In the event the inappropriate behavior continues, the Director of Early Childhood will hold a meeting with the volunteer to resolve the concern. Volunteers that repeatedly violate program policy may be asked to refrain from volunteering.
- Any volunteer that threatens the staff or children, uses abusive or vulgar language, or acts in a lewd manner will be asked to immediately leave the premises. The volunteer will be contacted to schedule a meeting to address the issue and determine the appropriate steps to be taken.
- All volunteers will be provided a form to complete that outlines the date, number of hours of service, and the activities conducted, along with the volunteer's signature. Forms will remain in the classrooms until submitted to the central office at the end of each month.



- Program Visitors as defined by the program as an individual who observes or presents a part of a planned activity, has supervised interaction with the children and has no supervisory/disciplinary control of a child enrolled (exception would be their own child) and has an infrequent primarily non-recurring presence in the center.
- Family members who come to the center for family engagement activities are considered visitors.

- Visitors may not be left alone with the children, supervise children, or discipline children.
- Classroom staff are responsible for providing supervision and direction to any person visiting the classroom.
- Only paid Gateway Head Start staff members may redirect children when inappropriate behaviors occur and will do so in a manner that encourages the long term goal of self-control. Corporal punishment is never permitted under any circumstances.
- Program visitors are not permitted to use corporal punishment with their own children when visiting the Head Start program.
- The appropriate Head Start staff member will conduct a meeting with visitors that violate rules and/or regulations of the program to explain the concern and the corrective action to be taken. In the event the inappropriate behavior continues, the Director of Early Childhood will hold a meeting with the visitor to address the concern. Visitors that violate program policy may be asked to refrain from visiting classrooms.
- Any visitor that threatens the staff or children, uses abusive or vulgar language, or acts in a lewd manner will be asked to immediately leave the premises. The visitor will be contacted to schedule a meeting to address the issue and determine the appropriate steps to be taken.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Children and Parent Rights Pursuant to KRS 199.898

All children receiving child-care services in a day-care center licensed pursuant to KRS 199.896, a family child-care home certified pursuant to KRS 199.8982, or from a provider or program receiving public funds shall have the following rights:

- (a) The right to be free from physical or mental abuse;
- (b) The right not to be subjected to abusive language or abusive punishment; and
- (c) The right to be in the care of adults who shall meet their health, safety, and developmental needs.

Parents, custodians, or guardians of children specified in subsection (1) of this section shall have the following rights:

- (a) The right to have access to their children at all times the child is in care and access to the provider caring for their children during normal hours of provider operation and whenever the children are in the care of the provider;
- (b) The right to be provided with information about child-care regulatory standards, if applicable; where to direct questions about regulatory standards; and how to file a complaint;
- (c) The right to file a complaint against a child-care provider without any retribution against the parent, custodian, guardian, or child;
- (d) The right to obtain information from the cabinet regarding any type of licensure denial, suspension, or revocation of an operator, and cabinet reports that have found abuse or neglect by any child-care provider or any employee of a child care provider. Identifying information regarding children and their families shall remain confidential;
- (e) The right to obtain information from the cabinet regarding the inspections and plans of correction of the day-care center, the family child-care home, or the provider or program receiving public funds within the past year; and
- (f) The right to review and discuss with the provider any state reports and deficiencies revealed by such reports.

The child-care provider who is licensed pursuant to KRS 199.896 or certified pursuant to KRS 199.8982 shall post these rights in a prominent place and shall provide a copy of these rights to the parent, custodian, or guardian of the child at the time of the child's enrollment in the program.

Parental Rights

Inspect Record

- (1) A parent has the right to inspect child records.
- (2) If the parent requests to inspect child records, the program must make the child records available within a reasonable time, but no more than 45 days after the receipt of request.
- (3) If a program maintains child records that contain information on more than one child, the program must ensure the parent only inspects information that pertains to the parent's child.
- (4) The program shall not destroy a child record with an outstanding request to inspect and review the record under the section.

Amend Record

- (1) A parent has the right to ask the program to amend information in the child record that the parent believes inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy.
- (2) The program must consider the parent's request and, if the request is denied, render a written decision to the parent within a reasonable time that informs the parent of the right to a hearing.

**Gateway Community Action
Early Head Start
Head Start**

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