

Releasing Children from Head Start Classes and Buses

Head Start Performance Standards

Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care

§ 1303.73

§ 414-300 0350, § 414-300-0050

Policy

Head Start staff will release a child to authorized people who are listed on the **Emergency Contact form** that is completed and signed by the parent/guardian. If a Head Start staff member cannot identify a person who attempts to pick up a child, they must ask to see a photo ID and confirm individual is listed as an authorized person before releasing the child. For guidance on releasing children to custodial/non-custodial parents please refer to the **Custody Issues Q&A document**.

If no authorized person is available, Head Start staff will assume responsibility for the child and will take steps to ensure that this does not become a recurring event. Staff will ensure children are never left unattended or unsupervised while in their care.

Procedure

During the registration process, parents complete the **Emergency Contact form to include** the names of those authorized to pick up their child/ren. Parents are encouraged and it is recommended there are at least three authorized adults with reliable transportation that can pick up children in case of emergency.

In extenuating circumstances, if a family does not have other adults who can be authorized to pick up their child, teachers will work with the family to build the family's support network that could help the parent(s)/guardian(s) in case of emergency. The **Emergency Contact form** will be accepted if it has contact information for the parent(s)/guardian(s) in these cases.

Parents will notify classroom staff of any changes and keep the **Emergency Contact form** up to date. All changes to an **Emergency Contact form** must be completed in writing by the parent(s)/guardian(s). The form is fillable and can be filled out with verbal consent. Changes are in effect once they are received by teaching staff. Staff will review the **Emergency Contact form** information with parents at conferences and home visits and fill out a new form if there are changes.

The Transportation Supervisor and Transportation staff will complete the **Bus Stop Notice form** for the child/ren receiving transportation from Community Action (CAHS). The site transportation team will share this information with the family at the meet and greet at the beginning of the year. For late enrolled children the transportation team will call the family with the information and at the first pick up they will give the family the Transportation packet. For the safety of the children who are transported by Community Action Head Start school buses, the teacher will review the transportation services information and guidance for releasing children from school buses with parents during the Enrollment visit. Teachers will assist parents to complete the **Transportation Agreement Form**.

Our COVID-19 Mitigation Strategy will be followed to keep children healthy in the classroom and on the bus.

**Community Action Head Start
Washington County, Oregon**

Staff roles & responsibilities when Releasing from classrooms

Transportation Sites

Teacher will:

- Have children ready and waiting to meet the bus.
- Count and announce the number of children going home to the bus driver and monitor.
- Ensure that a second staff member is available to assist in the transition of children and oversee children that are waiting for parents.
- Document on the class attendance list the name of each child that is going with bus staff.
- When all children have been accounted for, confirm the number of children with the bus driver/ and or monitor.

Bus Driver will:

- Stand at the base of the doorway to assist each child as they board the bus.
- Conduct a head count of each child after they are seated on the bus.
- Take attendance using the **Monitor Daily Passenger List**.
- Confirm count with monitor.

Bus Monitors will:

- Ensure that each child is securely buckled in their assigned seat.
- Assist the driver with taking attendance using the **Monitor Daily Passenger List**.
- Assist the driver with checking the **Transportation Agreement Form** if it is complete and in transportation's file.
- Count all the children and confirm with the driver.

If the child is returned to the Head Start classroom due to not having an authorized person to pick-up, the teacher will take the following actions:

- The child's teacher will contact the parent/guardian to come to the school to pick up the child after the bus monitor returns the child to school. If the parent cannot be reached, the staff will continue to attempt to contact the parent and/or other authorized persons listed on the **Emergency Contact form**.
- At the Head Start sites, the staff members designated to close the center are responsible for any children remaining after the center closure. One staff member will remain with the children while the other attempts to contact the parent and other contacts listed on the **Emergency Contact form** while remaining mindful of required teacher-child ratio requirements.
- If no one listed on the **Emergency Contact form** can be reached, staff will contact the Program Area Supervisor and the Early Childhood Program Manager immediately. The Program Manager will decide how to support the child and family in accordance with the situation.

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Self-Transported Sites

Children are released only to people listed on the child's **Emergency Contact form**.

- A parent/guardian or authorized person needs to sign the child out from the sign in /out sheet and the teacher needs to sign a child out from the attendance sheet.
- If an unauthorized person comes to pick up the child- see procedure below under Emergency Pick up of children from classrooms.

Emergency Pick up of Children from classrooms

Children are released only to people listed on the child's **Emergency Contact form**. However, there may be an emergency when someone who is not listed on the form needs to pick up the child. The teacher needs to follow the procedure as instructed below:

- Classroom staff will speak with the Program Area Supervisor (PAS) and make them aware of the situation. The PAS will then decide if there are any other options. If there are not, staff will call the parent or guardian at the phone number listed in our HS/EHS records. The parent/guardian will then verify their information, including their full name, birth date, and address as well as their child's full name and birth date. Once the parent/ guardian's information is verified, the parent can then authorize someone else to pick up the child at school.
- Classroom staff asks the person picking up the child to present a photo ID with information that matches the information provided by the parent/guardian. The teacher will make a copy of the person's ID and keep this copy in the child's file.

The parent/guardian will be asked to come to the site within two business days to review the **Emergency Contact form** and make sure that it is complete. The parent/guardian can add contacts if needed, including person(s) authorized to pick up the child in an emergency. A new form will be completed when parents need to make changes to the **Emergency Contact form**.

Incidents of children being picked up late at self-transport sites.

When a child is not picked up by the end of class time (10 minutes allowed for late arrivals due to unforeseen circumstances) the teacher will call the family, or a person listed on the emergency contact to determine what time the person will be arriving for the child. The teacher will document this conversation into ChildPlus under the Family Services tab.

If a child is picked up late more than two times within a month or consecutively, the teacher will initiate a *Coordinated Care Meeting* to determine barriers preventing a timely pick up and document this in ChildPlus.

Releasing from buses

- Transportation staff will keep updated **Emergency Contact form**, the Bus Stop Notice, and **Transportation Agreement Form** in an organized binder on the bus for each student who is transported on Head Start buses. Transportation staff will not transport any students who do not have a current **Emergency Contact form** and the **Transportation Agreement form** on file and/or a proper ID. Transportation staff will not accept **Emergency Contact form** changes directly from parents or authorized person at bus stops.
- The child will not be allowed to leave the bus until the authorized person who is listed on the **Emergency Contact form** receives the child.
- Siblings receiving children must be named on the child's **Emergency Contact form**. The sibling must be at least 13 years of age and have photo identification to receive a child from the bus.
- If Child Welfare is the child's guardian, the caseworker will complete the **Emergency Contact form** and provide the names of persons authorized to pick up or receive the child. In most cases the Child

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Welfare case worker will give permission to the foster parents to complete paperwork. The DHS Placement Letter must be uploaded into ChildPlus under the Application tab.

- Families that use Transportation Services must complete the **Transportation Agreement Form** during the Enrollment visit, prior to the first day of school. Families will be informed at the Enrollment visit that the child will not be allowed to be released from the bus unless an authorized person who is listed on the **Emergency Contact form** receives the child. If no one is available, please refer to the no authorized person section below.

No parent at bus stop

If no authorized person is available to assume responsibility for the child at the designated drop-off/Pick-up location, the bus monitor will notify the classroom teacher and Transportation Supervisor, then return the child to the Head Start classroom. The bus monitor will also document on their **Monitor Daily Passenger List** and in the Transportation tab in ChildPlus each time a child is brought back to school. The teacher will take actions as instructed in the procedures of **Releasing from Classrooms – Transportation Sites**. If no one listed on the **Emergency Contact form** can be reached within one hour, the teachers will contact the PAS and the Early Childhood Program Manager. The Program Manager will decide how to support the child and family in accordance with the situation.

If a child has two or more incidents, the bus team or Transportation Supervisor will give the **No Parent at Bus Stop letter** to the teacher and parents. The teacher will discuss the issue with the Program Area Supervisor and Transportation Supervisor to decide if there is a need for a *Coordinated Care Meeting* to support the family. If there is a *Coordinated Care Meeting*, the teacher will inform the Family Service Assistant to support the family, and Transportation Supervisor. The teacher documents all actions in ChildPlus under the Transportation tab.

If an unauthorized person attempts to pick up a child from buses

If a person who is not on the **Emergency Contact form** shows up at a designated drop-off location and attempts to pick up a child, bus staff will inform them that only people named on the **Emergency Contact form** are allowed to pick up children. **The bus monitor will notify the classroom teacher and Transportation Supervisor, then return the child to the classroom at the end of the route. The teacher refers to “No authorized person at pick up location” section for instruction.**

Loading children from Bus Stops

Transportation staff will:

- If the child is boarding the bus, then the bus monitor will sign the child in on the **Daily Sign In & Out for Children form**. The Bus Monitor will announce the number of children on the bus after loading children at each bus stop.
- The Bus Monitor will count the number of children on the bus to ensure that it matches the number of children that are checked in on the **Daily Sign In & Out for Children form**.

Releasing children from the bus to the classroom

Transportation staff will:

- Conduct a headcount when arriving at the destination.
- The Bus Driver will announce the number of children on the bus to the teacher.

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- The bus monitor will unbuckle one child at a time.
- The Bus Driver will wait at the base of the bus and assist the child to exit the bus.
- Once all children are unloaded from the bus, the bus monitor and bus driver will go through the bus to make sure that there are no children left on the bus.

Teacher will:

- Sign in each child as they exit the bus onto the **Daily Sign In & Out for Children** form and the ChildPlus attendance app.
- Use the classroom **Daily Sign In & Out for Children** form and the ChildPlus attendance app to confirm the total number of children arriving on the bus.
- Verbally count and confirm the number of children coming to the classroom with another classroom staff member.

Loading children from classroom

Transportation staff will:

- The Teacher will confirm with the Bus Driver of how many Children will be transported.
- The Bus Driver will count, greet the child, and assist the child onto the bus.
- The Bus Monitor will help the child buckle and make sure that they are secured in their seat.
- The Bus Monitor will count the child/ren after getting them in their assigned seat.
- The Bus Driver and Bus Monitor will confirm the number of children on the bus with the Teacher.