

# ACTIVE SUPERVISION TOOLKIT

Together, everyone can contribute to children's safety in every Head Start and Early Head Start program. Each person has a responsibility to keep children safe. The Head Start National Centers offer many resources to help programs enhance child supervision. Program leaders and staff can use this toolkit to strengthen their program policies and practices.

**The toolkit includes three sections. Each section offers ways to improve child supervision:**

- 1) What is Active Supervision?  
*Provides a broad overview of and resources for active supervision*
- 2) How Do Programs Support Active Supervision?
  - a) In Early Head Start and Head Start Programs  
*Describes resources specific to the six strategies in each setting*
  - b) Agency-wide  
*Identifies governance, leadership, and management resources to support improved child supervision practices*
- 3) Active Supervision Quick Reference Guide  
*Shows how the resources support active supervision and connects resources to agency-wide efforts to support child supervision*



## What is Active Supervision?

[Active Supervision: A Referenced Fact Sheet from The Head Start National Center on Health](#) describes six strategies to help staff intentionally observe children in their care. Like the recommendations in [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education, 3rd Edition \(CFOC3\)](#), the six strategies of active supervision offer simple ways that staff can build nurturing relationships with children while creating a safe environment for learning. [CFOC3 Standard 2.2.0.1 Methods of Supervision of Children](#) states that

**Active and positive supervision involves:**

- a. Knowing each child's abilities;
- b. Establishing clear and simple safety rules;
- c. Being aware of and scanning for potential safety hazards;
- d. Standing in a strategic position;
- e. Scanning play activities and circulating around the area;
- f. Focusing on the positive rather than the negative to teach a child what is safe for the child and other children;
- g. Teaching children the appropriate and safe use of each piece of equipment (e.g., using a slide correctly—feet first only—and teaching why climbing up a slide can cause injury, possibly a head injury).



Active Supervision offers practical strategies that build on CFOC3’s description of effective child supervision. The six strategies are essential for creating safe environments for all children birth to age five. To the extent possible, staff position themselves close to children, especially in infant settings. Repetitive systems for scanning, counting, and listening, once young children become mobile, help staff engage in responsive caregiving and support children’s learning, while keeping track of where children are. Finally, staff’s nurturing relationships with children help staff anticipate when to engage and redirect children in their care.

The webinar [Active Supervision](#) offers a basic introduction to each of the strategies. Managers can include it as part of orientation activities for new or inexperienced staff or as a refresher for staff who want to practice these skills.

## How Do Programs Support Active Supervision?

Applying the active supervision strategies requires planning, leadership, ongoing monitoring, and staff professional development. Programs can use these resources to build an agency-wide approach to active supervision. The strategies are useful in all environments. This includes classrooms, family child care homes, playgrounds, socialization spaces, and buses. The strategies are particularly important to use when children arrive, leave, or transition between activities.

### In Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Children’s safety is everyone’s first priority! Program staff are responsible for supervising children at all times ([45 CFR 1304.52\[i\]\[1\]\[iii\]](#)). To keep children safe, staff pay close attention during transitions. This includes times when children are moving from one place to another or whenever there are changes in staffing patterns or children’s routines. In addition, staff recognize when children need additional support and help them solve problems as they arise.

Using active supervision and paying close attention to children’s activities and exploration help staff to support school readiness. There are many resources to help staff learn and use strategies that keep children safe and help them learn. [Tips for Keeping Children Safe: A Developmental Guide](#) describes the safety needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who attend center-based programs. Managers can use the information to refresh staff understanding of active supervision strategies. The training activities included in the resources, [A Day In The Life: A Child’s Perspective](#) and [A Day in the Life: An Adult’s Perspective](#), teaches participants the importance of ongoing supervision for young children.

#### Infant and Toddler Settings:

Children in Early Head Start and Child Care programs are served in a variety of settings. Some children receive care in center-based programs; others in family child care homes, and others through home-based (home visiting) services. Children in group care settings may be placed with children of similar ages, while others may be placed in mixed age groupings. It is important that staff working in each of these settings use the active supervision strategies in the context of their individual program design.



One thing all programs serving infants and toddlers have in common is that children are cared for in small groups. Low teacher/child ratios and practices like the use of a primary caregiver system encourage responsive interactions between children and their caregivers. Responsive care fosters strong connections between teachers and children, which help staff build awareness of each child’s development. When staff connect more with the children they care for, they are more in tune to their needs and whereabouts. [Early Head Start TA Paper No. 6: Individualizing for Infants and Toddlers Part I](#) and [Part II](#) offers resources for managers and staff to practice responsive caregiving in their settings.



Nurturing, safe, engaging environments are central to the quality care that supports active supervision. [News You Can Use: Environment as Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers](#) and [Early Head Start Tip Sheet No. 9: How Do Programs Plan and Implement Developmentally Appropriate Environments that Meet the Intent of the Head Start Program Performance Standards for Infants and Toddlers?](#) are two resources that describe how to create and maintain safe, interesting, and welcoming learning environments for infants and toddlers. [EHS TA Paper No. 14: Supporting Outdoor Play and Exploration for Infants and Toddlers](#) outlines issues to consider when taking infants and toddlers outdoors. It focuses on planning and creating outdoor play spaces and learning opportunities as well as program policies and procedures. Planned transitions are another important part of effective child supervision. The resource [News You Can Use: Transitions](#) offers ways to support children through the many transitions in Early Head Start.

Ultimately, carefully planned environments; staffing that supports nurturing and engaged caregiving; and well-planned, responsive care routines support active supervision in infant and toddler environments.

### Preschool Settings:

Staff create safe environments by arranging the classroom or family child care area so that they can see and hear children at all times. A brief video from the [Designing Environments 15-minute In-service Suite](#) offers tips for setting up a preschool classroom to support children's learning and staff supervision.

Staff can best supervise children by positioning themselves strategically so they can easily see and reach each child. Three planning tools help staff think intentionally about positioning: a [Staff Zoning Chart](#), a [Classroom Zoning Map](#), and a [Transition Planning Chart](#). The [Zoning to Maximize Learning Suite](#) shows staff how to use zoning to encourage children's learning and keep children safe. Staff can post [Zoning Tips for Teachers](#) in a visible spot to remind themselves to continually scan the environment. It also may remind them to use other effective zoning practices.



Two critical active supervision skills for staff are anticipating children's behaviors and knowing when to engage and redirect children. The [Being Aware of Children's Needs Suite](#) offers techniques for focusing on children's needs. The [Anticipating Problem Situations Tool](#) offers scenarios to help staff anticipate problems. Supervisors can use this [Problem-Solving Observation Form](#) to help teaching staff think about ways to anticipate children's behavior. The presentation from the [Redirecting Behavior Suite](#) helps staff use strategies to address problems before they occur. For example, staff can observe children's activities to know when to offer support and redirection.

Communicating about children's needs and schedule changes helps staff work together to keep children safe and the classroom running smoothly. The [Teacher-to-Teacher Talk Tip Sheet](#) reminds teachers of the importance of communicating well for effective teamwork.

## Agency-wide

Program leaders set the stage for developing a culture of safety. When everyone understands effective practices and their responsibility for child safety, the result is lower rates of injury and fewer incidents.

Effective governing bodies (Policy Council and governing body) work with the Head Start director and management team to ensure the safety of all children. The [Governance, Leadership, and Oversight Capacity Screener](#) helps programs identify areas for quality improvement. It defines the governing body's important program oversight responsibilities. Some of the key responsibilities include:



- Ensuring representation by individuals with expertise in early childhood education and development.
- Providing oversight of program design and operation.
- Planning program goals and objectives.
- Reviewing program information summaries and strategic plans.

Through each of these responsibilities, the governing body is aware of and supports the program in improving child supervision.

Managers ensure that staff meet all child safety and supervision regulations. Within the resource [What Head Start Leaders Need to Know: Laws and Regulations](#), there is a link to [Compliance with Care: A Crosswalk Between the Head Start Program Performance Standards and Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition](#). This tool enables readers to align Head Start health and safety requirements with evidence-based recommendations from [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, 3rd Edition \(CFOC3\)](#).

Leaders can use [Foundation II: Leadership, Systems, and Service](#) to build and sustain a culture of safety that includes active supervision. This session in the Learning for New Leaders: Head Start A to Z series helps Head Start directors and other leaders examine their leadership style, reflect on organizational change, and link systems and services to improve programming for children and families.

Head Start leaders use the Head Start Management Systems to create an organizational culture that prioritizes safety.



Figure 1: Head Start Management Systems Constellation  
 Created by: National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations

[What Head Start Leaders Need to Know: Management Systems](#) is a comprehensive look at the 10 Head Start Management Systems. It includes regulations and resources regarding each of the systems that support active supervision, including:

- Facilities, materials and equipment (including on playgrounds)
- Communication
- Planning
- Recordkeeping and reporting
- Ongoing monitoring
- Human resources

Planning is critical in creating a culture of safety in programs. [Foundations in Excellence: Planning in Head Start](#) is a series of papers to help programs set goals, objectives, and outcomes and use data to measure their progress.

[Participation in the Management Process](#) is another resource that emphasizes the role of each staff member in supporting high quality programs for children and families.

## Active Supervision Quick Reference Guide

Resource Title	Set up the Environment	Position Staff	Scan and Count	Listen	Anticipate Children's Behavior	Engage and Redirect	Leadership	Systems	Program Governance
A Day in the Life: An Adult's Perspective <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/health_lea_11016_022706.html">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/health_lea_11016_022706.html</a>	X	X							
A Day In The Life: A Child's Perspective <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/health_lea_11017_022706.html">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/health_lea_11017_022706.html</a>	X	X							
Active Supervision <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/ActiveSupervisio.htm">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/ActiveSupervisio.htm</a>	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Anticipating Problem Situations Tool <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/problemsolving-l-anticipate.pdf">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/problemsolving-l-anticipate.pdf</a>			X	X	X				
Being Aware of Children's Needs Suite <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/childrens-needs.html">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/childrens-needs.html</a>			X	X	X				
Classroom Zoning Map <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/zoning-areas.pdf">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/zoning-areas.pdf</a>	X	X							
Compliance with Care: A Crosswalk Between the Head Start Program Performance Standards and Caring for Our Children, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/school-readiness/goals/crosswalk.html">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/school-readiness/goals/crosswalk.html</a>							X	X	
Designing Environments Suite <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/design.html">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/design.html</a>	X	X	X		X				
Early Head Start Tip Sheet No. 9: How Do Programs Plan and Implement Developmentally Appropriate Environments that Meet the Intent of the Head Start Program Performance Standards for Infants and Toddlers? <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/learning-environments/HowDoProgramsP.htm">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/learning-environments/HowDoProgramsP.htm</a>	X						X	X	X

Resource Title	Set up the Environment	Position Staff	Scan and Count	Listen	Anticipate Children's Behavior	Engage and Redirect	Leadership	Systems	Program Governance
Early Head Start Technical Assistance Paper No. 14: Supporting Outdoor Play and Exploration for Infants and Toddlers <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/learning-environments/ehsta14.htm">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/learning-environments/ehsta14.htm</a>	X	X							
Head Start Governing Body and Tribal Council Certification <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/certification">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/certification</a>									X
Learning for New Leaders: Head Start A to Z: Foundation II – Leadership Systems and Services <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/learning/learning.html">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/learning/learning.html</a>							X		
News You Can Use: Environment as Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/learning-environments/environment_nycu.htm">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/learning-environments/environment_nycu.htm</a>	X	X			X	X		X	
News You Can Use: Transitions <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/curriculum/NewsYouCanUse.htm">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/curriculum/NewsYouCanUse.htm</a>	X				X	X		X	
Participation in the Management Process <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/mang-sys/planning/manage_pub_00514_052006.html">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/mang-sys/planning/manage_pub_00514_052006.html</a>								X	
Problem-Solving Observation Form <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/problemsolving-supervisortools.pdf">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/problemsolving-supervisortools.pdf</a>	X	X		X	X	X			
Program Governance <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/mang-sys/program-gov">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/mang-sys/program-gov</a>									X
Redirecting Behavior Suite <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/redirecting.html">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/redirecting.html</a>					X	X			
Staff Zoning Chart <a href="http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/zoning-staff-chart.pdf">http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/zoning-staff-chart.pdf</a>	X	X							
Tips for Keeping Children Safe: A Developmental Guide <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/keep-children-safe.html">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/keep-children-safe.html</a>	X	X			X	X			

