

Active Supervision in the Head Start Program

Welcome to the ESC-20 Head Start Active Supervision training. Implementing effective health and safety practices to ensure children are safe at all times is a top priority of the Head Start Program. Active supervision is used by Head Start staff to create a safe, positive learning environment for children, and is a preventative measure taken to help reduce the risk of injuries.

In this course you will learn strategies for effectively implementing active supervision in the classroom, cafeteria, outdoors, and on the bus. In addition, you will learn the procedures for reporting a critical incident if an injury occurs.

What is Active Supervision?

The Head Start Performance Standards requires programs to ensure that no child is left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under their care. Active supervision is a systematic approach used in the Head Start program to intentionally observe children and respond when needed.

Active supervision requires staff to have focused attention on the children within the care and involves staff visually observing, listening, and engaging with the students. As opposed to passive supervision, active supervision requires staff to use their knowledge of each child's development and abilities to anticipate what

the child will do. When needed, the staff will get involved and redirect the child to prevent the risk of injury. The constant, attentive supervision helps create a safe environment for children to learn and play.

Active vs. Passive Supervision

Let's consider some examples of active vs. passive supervision.

Classroom:

- Passive Supervision: Teacher sitting at the desk, observing children as they work on their art projects.
- Active Supervision: Teacher walking around the classroom, answering questions, assisting students as needed, and providing positive feedback on the work being done.

Cafeteria:

- Passive Supervision: Staff member sitting at the table visiting with other adults.
- Active Supervision: Staff member walking around the table, assisting with opening milk cartons and food packages when needed, asking children questions about the food they are eating.

Playground:

- Passive Supervision: Staff members sitting together on a bench visiting, shouting instruction and feedback to the children when needed.
- Active Supervision: Staff walking around their assigned area, closely watching and listening to children as they play. Providing redirection to children as needed to reduce the risk of injury.

It is important to remember that as a Head Start staff member providing active supervision is a critical aspect of your job. Active supervision can help ensure safe learning and play environments for all children in the program.

Six Strategies to Keep Children Safe Using Active Supervision


Active supervision involves six strategies that are systemically applied to keep children safe. The strategies include:

1. Set Up the Environment
2. Position Staff
3. Scan and Count
4. Listen
5. Anticipate Children's Behavior
6. Engage and Redirect

Let's explore each of the six strategies so you are equipped with the knowledge needed to effectively implement active supervision.

1. Set Up the Environment

The first step in active supervision is to set-up the environment so staff can supervise and have access to respond to a child's needs at all times. This includes ensuring spaces are free of clutter and there are clear areas for children to learn and play while being supervised by the staff. In addition, classroom furniture as well as playground equipment should be of a height and arrangement that allows for effective supervision of children at all times.

The ESC-20 Head Start Program uses the  **Daily Classroom Checklist** and the **Daily Playground Checklist** to ensure both the indoor and outdoor areas are set up to ensure the safety of the children.

The checklists include tasks such as:

- Ensuring cleaning supplies and dangerous materials are stored in locked cabinets
- No loose or hanging cords are exposed in the classroom

- Carpet areas are cleaned and vacuumed.
- The outdoor play area is free from litter, ant hills, weeds, large rocks, over grown grass or tree branches
- There is no standing water in or around playground equipment.

Staff should use diligence when completing the daily checklists, to ensure each area is free of debris, in good repair, and safe for Head Start children.

Coordinating Schedules with Other Classrooms

In order to ensure a safe environment for Head Start children throughout the school day, it is important for staff to pre-plan their daily schedule in coordination with other Head Start and non-Head Start classrooms.

For example, schedules should be arranged so that classrooms are on the playground at staggered times during the day. This prevents the playground from getting overly crowded and allows for staff to see and respond to all children in their supervision.

Head Start staff should also be mindful of maintaining the required 10:1 student:staff ratio at all times. It is important to remember that all children in a given location count towards this ratio.

Thus, when additional classrooms join a Head Start class on the playground or in an activity, these children are included in the student count. To maintain the required student to staff ratio, additional adult supervision may be needed.

2. Position Staff


The next step in Active Supervision is to ensure that staff are positioned so they can see, hear, and reach all children at all times. When determining staff positions, there should be a clear path between staff members and the location where children are learning, playing, and eating. The location of staff should enable staff to quickly react to protect children from harm.

Zoning is the term commonly used for organizing staff to support children's active participation, engagement, and safety in the classroom and on the

playground. Zoning can increase staff efficiency and help improve communication between staff members.

In traditional zoning, each staff member is responsible for supervision a separate area or “zone” of the classroom. For zoning to be effective, it is important for each staff member to understand their roles and zones they are assigned to. When working within your zone, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Position** your body so you can see the whole zone
- **Scan** the zone and the classroom or playground area often
- **Talk** to the other staff members as children move between areas

 Example Classroom Zoning Diagram:

CLASSROOM MAP WITH ZONING AREAS



3. Scan and Count

Staff should continuously scan the environment to ensure all children are safe. In addition, staff should frequently count the children in their care. It is important for staff to be aware of where children are, the activities they are engaged in, as well as the safety of the environment.

As staff scan and count they should be in communication with other staff members, especially in outdoor play areas where children are continuously moving from one area to another. This helps ensure all staff are aware of where children are and the activities that they are involved in.

Scanning and counting is essential when children are transitioning from one area to another. Staff should scan and count the children before leaving an area and again when arriving at the destination.

4. Listen

Listening to both children and the environment is a key aspect of active supervision. Staff should be listening for potential signs of concerns or danger so they can quickly respond and help resolve the situation before it becomes an issue.

Staff should be aware of specific sounds, or the absence of sounds, that may signify a cause for concern.

Examples include:

- Children arguing, getting upset, or crying
- Bells on the door that signify someone has entered or left the classroom
- Sudden quiet when children are playing
- Listening to fellow staff members, particularly when a child or staff member needs to leave the area

5. Anticipate Children's Behavior

Staff should use their understanding of each child's development, interest, and skills to anticipate the child's next actions and behaviors. For example, by knowing which children tend to move slowly or wander off, the staff member can use extra diligence to ensure these children stay with the group during transitions. Staff members should also pay attention to changes in a child's mood or temperament to anticipate when a child may need additional support.

6. Engage and Redirect

Finally, active supervision involves staff members physically and verbally engaging with the children and providing support based on each individual child's needs. Staff should encourage children to solve problems on their own, but also be available to provide assistance with coming up with solutions as needed. The level of support and redirection the staff provides should be individualized based on each child's needs and level of development.

Reporting Critical Incidents

Even when children are being actively supervised, accidents can still occur. It is important that all accidents resulting in an injury be documented and immediately reported. Let's take a look at the proper Head Start procedures for reporting both minor injuries as well as more severe injuries that occur.

Head Start Accident-Ouch Report

The ESC-20 Head Start program uses an **Accident-Ouch Report** to document injuries that occur. The classroom staff are responsible for completing the Ouch Report for every level of injury that occurs. The report includes how the injury occurred, what treatment the classroom staff provided, and if the child was taken to the school nurse. A copy of the Ouch Report is sent home to the child's parents or guardians to inform them of the accident that occurred.

Head Start Critical Incident Report

If a severe or potentially critical injury occurs to a Head Start student, the classroom teacher is required to document the injury on the **Critical Incident Report**. This report must be completed within 24 hours of the incident and submitted to the designated Head Start staff. Information from this report is entered into Child Plus and used as documentation for the Head Start Program of the incident that occurred.

School Nurse Documentation

If a child is sent to the district's school nurse, the nurse will also provide documentation of the accident. The nurse's documentation will inform the parent or guardian of the treatment the child received from the nurse as well as any recommendations for further assessment by the child's physician.

Handling of Mild Injuries

If a Head Start student sustains a minor injury, such as a small cut, scrape, or a bite from another child that does not break the skin, the classroom staff should provide First Aid and comfort the child. Once the situation is resolved, the classroom staff must complete the **Accident-Ouch Report**. A copy of the **Accident-Ouch Report** is sent home to the child's parent or guardian to notify them of the injury.

The classroom staff also places a copy of the **Accident-Ouch Report** in the Head Start folder in the classroom filing cabinet for the Head Start Safety staff. The Head Start Safety staff is responsible for reviewing all of the **Accident-Ouch Reports** and ensuring the reports are filed in the health section of the child's file.

If a child has an injury, such as a nosebleed unrelated to an injury or a fall or injury that does not have outward evidence, but the child continues to complain of pain;

the classroom staff will obtain classroom coverage to maintain the student:teacher ratio and then escort the child to the school nurse's office.

The school nurse will follow the district's reporting protocol and contact the parent or guardian if necessary. The Head Start classroom staff completes the **Accident-Ouch Report**, sending a copy home to the parents/guardians and filing a copy for the Head Start Safety staff.

Moderate Injuries

If a child has an injury that is more severe than the mild injuries discussed previously, Head Start staff must complete both the **Accident-Ouch Report** as well as a **Critical Incident Report**. This would include injuries such as prominent bumps and bruises, a nosebleed resulting from an injury, a hard fall or head injury, or if a child is bit by another student and the bite breaks the skin.

When these types of injuries occur, Head Start staff will ensure there is coverage of students in the classroom to maintain the correct staff to student ratio and then take the child to the school nurse's office. The nurse will provide care and follow district protocols for contacting the child's parent or guardian as needed.

The Head Start Staff must complete the **Accident-Ouch Report** to send home with the child and provide to the Head Start Safety staff. In addition, the staff

completes the **Critical Incident Report**, which is given to the Head Start Safety staff for entering into Child Plus. Once documented in Child Plus, the Head Start Safety staff files both reports in the health section of the child's file.

Critical Injuries

If a child sustains a potentially major or critical injury while participating in the Head Start program, immediate reporting of the injury to program staff is critical.

Critical injuries may include the following:

- Broken bone or dislocation
- Deep cut or laceration requiring stitches
- Head trauma
- Loss of consciousness
- Chipped or cracked teeth
- Animal bite
- Any injury requiring emergency room treatment or hospitalization

If a child sustains a severe injury, Head Start staff should immediately call the front office for help from the campus nurse and/or 911. Head Start staff should provide First Aid and CPR as needed until the campus nurse or EMS arrives to take over.

The Head Start staff must call the designated program point of contact on the same day of the incident to report the injury. In addition, the **Critical Incident Report** must be completed by the classroom teacher within 24 hours of the injury. The report must be completed in ink and every field on the report must be completed to provide full documentation of the incident.

The classroom teacher completes the **Critical Incident Report** based on what the teacher witnessed or what was reported to them. If there were additional witnesses to the accident, they will provide a description of what they witnessed on page 2 of the form.

If another adult was present, but did not witness the accident. The adult will provide a statement saying they were present, but did not witness the accident.

The classroom teacher will email the completed **Critical Incident Report** to the designated Head Start staff.

The Head Start safety staff may visit the campus by the next business day to observe the site of the accident and request any available documentation from the school nurse to add to the **Critical Incident Report**.

The classroom staff must also complete the **Accident-Ouch Report** to send home to the child's parent or guardian and provide to the Head Start Safety staff.

The Head Start Safety staff will log the **Critical Incident Report** into Child Plus, and file this report along with the **Accident-OUCH Report** in the health section of the child's file.

Reporting to Head Start Regional Office

Injuries that require medical care **MUST** be reported by Head Start management staff to the Head Start Regional Office within seven calendar days of the incident. The program uses information from the Critical Incident Report form to complete the self-reporting form. Classroom staff may be contacted for additional information so the report is complete.

Active Supervision in the Classroom and Cafeteria

In the classroom, active supervision begins with setting up the environment so that staff can see, hear, and have access to the children at all times. The classroom furniture should be arranged to allow staff a clear view and path throughout the room. For example, tall shelving should be positioned against the wall so children will not be blocked from the staff's view.

The ESC-20 Head Start Program utilizes a **Daily Classroom Checklist** to help staff ensure the classroom is a safe environment for children. Staff should use diligence

in completing the checklist each morning before the children enter the classroom, making sure there are no hazards or areas needing attention.

It is important for Head Start staff to teach children the classroom safety rules. It can be helpful to involve students in creating the rules and explain why the rules are important and how they can help keep everyone safe.

In the classroom and cafeteria, staff should be positioned in zones that allows for them to see, hear, and respond quickly to all children in their supervision. It is critical in the classroom and throughout the school day for staff to maintain the proper 10:1 student to staff ratio. If a staff member needs to leave the classroom, adequate coverage should first be obtained to maintain the required ratio.

Head Start staff should be continually scanning, counting, and listening to the children as they complete classwork and transition between activities. As a reminder, sometimes the absence of noise may be a potential cause for concern.

As children work on class activities, staff should engage with the children, talk with them about their interests, and help them develop problem-solving skills.

When needed, staff can redirect children and positively involve them in different activities in an effort to keep all children safe, engaged, and learning.

When supervising children in the classroom and cafeteria, staff can use what they know about each child's developmental level and interests to anticipate behavior and potential need for assistance. For example, staff can assist children as needed with opening milk cartons or food containers.

Active supervision is critical when students are transitioning from one location to another, as well as at the start and end of the school day. Staff should be positioned to ensure all children are closely supervised throughout the transition period. In addition, each staff member should know their roles and responsibilities during school drop-off and pick-up to ensure no students left without adult supervision.

Active Supervision Outdoors

Active supervision of children outdoors is essential. When children play freely outdoors, they are continually moving around, engaging with others, and exploring their surroundings. Thus, staff must be diligent in both supervising the children and communicating with other staff members throughout the outdoor play time.

Prior to going outdoors, Head Start staff members should discuss with the children the rules and expectations for playing safely outdoors. Staff can involve the children in creating clear and simple playground rules, such as:

- Take turns on the playground equipment.
- Always slide down the slide on your bottom, feet first. No climbing up the slide or jumping off the slide.
- Be kind and share with each other.
- Have fun.

Ensuring the outdoor environment is safe and clear of potential hazards is an important daily task for Head Start staff members. The ESC-20 Head Start Program utilizes a **Daily Playground Checklist** to ensure the area is a safe environment for the children to play.

The staff is required to complete the checklist daily prior to taking the class outdoors. Examples of items on the checklist include:

- Are the gates to the play area secure?
- Is there any standing water in or around the playground equipment?
- Are the sidewalks and paths free of debris?

- Is there any damage to playground equipment, such as sharp edges that could injure a child?

Positioning staff into zones to ensure supervision of all children at all times on the playground is essential. Staff should be positioned so they have a clear line of site of as many children as possible. Staff should identify areas on the playground where children tend to congregate, need additional assistance from adults, or at a higher risk of getting hurt, as additional focus needs to be placed on these areas.

Maintaining the correct student:staff ratio while children are playing outdoors is critical. If a staff member needs to leave the area, the remaining staff members should reposition to ensure all of the zones are adequately supervised. If the staff member leaving will result in inadequate coverage, the staff member either needs to take students with them or obtain additional staff to supervise on the playground.

On the playground staff should continually scan and count the children as they play. As well as listen to the children and the environment for any sounds of concern or potential danger. Staff can help prevent injuries by anticipating children's behaviors on playground equipment and redirecting children to engage in different activities when one area of the playground is overly crowded.

It is important for staff to remember that play time outdoors for the children is not a break time for the staff. Staff should not be standing or sitting together visiting, but rather should be closely monitoring their zone, ready to assist children as needed.

Conclusion

This concludes the ESC-20 Active Supervision training. As a reminder, as a Head Start staff member, providing active supervision in the classroom, cafeteria, outdoors, and on the bus is critical aspect of your job. Working together as a team, Head Start staff can create safe, positive environments in which children can learn, play, grow, and thrive.