

Passaic Family Head Start, Inc.



68-72 Third Street, Passaic, NJ 07055

91 Highland Ave, Passaic, NJ 07055

(973) 365-5808 FAX (973) 458-9380

PFHS Behavior Support and Safety Policy

At Passaic Family Head Start, we want every child to feel safe, welcome, and ready to learn. We work closely with families to help children who have big feelings or challenging behaviors. We never punish children for behavior. Instead, we teach them how to handle their feelings in safe and appropriate ways.

If your child is having a difficult time in school, we will begin by talking with you and learning about what your child is experiencing. With your permission, our Mental Health Coordinator (MHC) will observe your child and help us understand what support may be needed. The MHC will create or update a Behavior Intervention Plan and make changes to classroom routines, seating, and materials to help your child be successful. Your child may receive sensory tools, calm spaces, and extra practice with routines. Teachers will be given strategies and support so they can respond in positive and kind ways while helping your child learn safe choices.

Sometimes a child may need support from outside professionals. When behaviors require additional expertise, we may ask for help from the Passaic School District, CarePlus, PerformCare, Ida Gurtman Therapeutic Children's Program (TCP), or other community partners. We will only reach out to outside agencies with your permission. This aligns with the Head Start requirement that programs must use all possible steps to support a child's safe participation in the program, as described in 45 CFR §1302.17(b)(2).

As the parent, you have the right to decline additional services or referrals. We respect your choices; however, if the team determines that PFHS needs outside expertise to keep your child and others safe, we will meet with you again to review the Behavior Intervention Plan, explain why the additional support is needed, and continue working together. If you continue to decline support and the behaviors remain unsafe, PFHS must re-evaluate whether our program is the most appropriate placement for your child. This is allowed under Head Start standard §1302.17(b)(3), which explains that when a child's continued enrollment presents a serious safety threat, and the program cannot meet their needs, the program must work with the parent and community agencies to explore a transition to a placement that can provide the appropriate support. This does not mean your child is expelled. Head Start does not allow expulsion. It simply means PFHS must work with you and outside agencies to find a setting where your child can safely and successfully participate.

Most challenging behaviors can be supported within the classroom environment. However, a child may occasionally display behaviors that pose a serious safety threat, such as throwing furniture, trying to run away, destroying materials in dangerous ways, becoming too upset to calm down, putting unsafe objects in their mouth, or hurting themselves or others. If this occurs, PFHS is responsible for protecting all children. Head Start calls this an “extraordinary circumstance” under §1302.17(a)(2). If your child enters an acute health and safety crisis and cannot be safely maintained in the classroom, PFHS may move your child to a calm, supervised space with a trained staff member while ensuring continuous safety. PFHS will contact you immediately to inform you of the emergency and may request that you come to the program for an urgent, same-day meeting. This is considered an emergency health and safety response, not a suspension or disciplinary removal, and aligns with the Department of Education (DOE). PFHS will meet with you and the Mental Health Coordinator, update the Behavior Intervention Plan, and put additional supports in place so your child can safely return to full participation as soon as possible.

To ensure progress is being made, PFHS follows a structured process that is responsive to your child’s individual needs and may be adjusted as appropriate. When a significant concern is identified, the Mental Health Coordinator (MHC) will complete observations, a Behavior Intervention Plan will be created or updated, and classroom strategies will be implemented while teachers document progress. If unsafe behaviors continue despite these supports, PFHS will request a parent meeting, seek consent for additional services such as CarePlus, TCP, or PerformCare, and review available data to better understand behavior patterns and determine next steps. If the behavior continues to present a serious safety concern despite ongoing supports, if a parent does not agree to or participate in recommended services, or if safety cannot be maintained, PFHS must review whether the program remains the most appropriate placement for the child. While our goal is to keep every child that comes into our program, we recognize we are not always the best placement if a child’s needs are greater than what we can provide. In those cases, we will help the parent transition their child to a placement that is suited specifically to meet the needs of the child. This process is aligned with §1302.17(b)(3), which requires PFHS to meet with families and community partners and support a coordinated transition to a setting that better meets the child’s support needs when necessary.

PFHS will never expel your child, punish your child, use restraint unless it is for one moment to stop immediate injury, yell, shame, or isolate a child, or withhold food, rest, or bathroom access. Head Start rule §1302.17(b)(1) does not allow expulsion, and the Office of Licensing prohibits physical punishment, seclusion, and other inappropriate discipline practices.

You are your child’s first teacher, and we value your partnership. We want to support you and help your child succeed. The best outcomes happen when families and staff work together. If your child is struggling, please talk with us so we can build a plan that keeps your child and everyone else safe.