

Southern Seven Head Start



PARENT HANDBOOK

2026 – 2027

"A Parent and Child Education Program"

**Serving the Counties of:
Alexander; Hardin; Johnson;
Massac; Pope; Pulaski; & Union**

Dear Families:

We welcome you to the 2026 - 2027 School Year! Whether you are new to our program or returning from a previous year, I am sure you will find that we strive to make the transition as smooth as possible. Our staff has endless amounts of experience in helping children feel comfortable in their new surroundings. We realize that children and parents may feel uncomfortable separating from each other during the first few days of school. We encourage you to come to the center and spend some time getting to know your child's teacher and experience some of the activities your child will be doing. Throughout the year, you will be provided with information on the progress your child is making and opportunities you have to be involved. Our classrooms are full of fun equipment and toys to give your child meaningful play experiences, because young children learn through their play.

We encourage parents and families to be involved as much as possible. In the coming weeks you will hear about Family Fun Nights, field trips and community activities that will be happening in your center. Please take the time to attend these events. I feel that you will find them enjoyable. Teachers rely on you to provide them with information about your child. We realize that parents are a child's first teacher so we strive to maintain the school – home connection.

The Parent Handbook will provide you with many answers to questions you may have, but if you can't find what you are looking for, please call the center. Our goal is making you and your child's experience with our program fun and exciting. We look forward to a great year with you and your family.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Parks
Executive Director



OUR MISSION

“To promote a safe and healthy environment by providing preventative health care, family services, and child development programs.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Important Center Information	5
Southern Seven Addresses and Telephone Numbers	6
Southern Seven Program Options.....	7
Head Start.....	7
Dual Enrollment with Head Start & School District Pre-K	7
Early Head Start	7
Prevention Initiative Services.....	7
Early Head Start & Prevention Initiative Home-Based Option	7
Early Head Start & Prevention Initiative Expectant Parents	8
Migrant & Seasonal Head Start	8
Full Day Child Care	8
Prevention Initiative with Day Care Option	8
Subsidy for Child Care.....	8
Staff Qualifications.....	9
Key Rules and Policies	9
Certified Birth Certificate Requirement	9
Release Policy	9
Afternoon Pick-Up Policy	10
Attendance.....	10
Absences	10
Illness.....	11
Bad Weather – Emergency Closings and Cancellations	11
Safety	12
Lead in Water Testing.....	12
Radon Testing	12
No Smoking Policy	12
Confidentiality	12
Child Abuse and Neglect - Mandated Reporter Status.....	12
Complaint Process	13
Your Child’s Day.....	14
Learning	15
Education.....	15
The Classroom	15
Special Events	16
Family/Staff Conferences and Home Visits.....	17
School Readiness.....	17
Staying Healthy	18
Health Services.....	18
Medical Emergencies.....	18
Screenings.....	19
Developmental Screenings	19
Hearing and Vision Screenings.....	19
Dental Screenings and Exams.....	19

Growth Assessments.....	20
Eating Well.....	20
Nutrition Services	20
Food Program	21
Infant Formula/Breast Milk	21
Children with Disabilities.....	21
Services for Children with Disabilities	21
Feeling Good about Ourselves.....	22
Mental Health Services.....	22
Positive Guidance	23
Families Getting Involved	25
Getting to Know Your Parent Coordinator.....	25
Team Up with Us to Meet In-Kind	25
Volunteering.....	25
Policy Council	25
Parent Groups	26
Information and Trainings for Parents	27
Newsletter.....	27
Trainings.....	27





IMPORTANT CENTER INFORMATION



southern7.org

Southern Seven Website & Social Media Sites:

Facebook; Instagram; X; YouTube; LinkedIn; the Southern 7 Podcast; and
at <http://southern7.org>

My Child's Center is located at:

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

The center is open from _____ in the morning, until _____ in the afternoon.

The Lead Teacher Supervisor/Site Supervisor for the center is: _____

The Assistant Site Supervisor is: _____

The Parent Coordinator is: _____

My Child's Teacher is: _____

My Child's Teacher Aide is: _____

My Child's Program Assistant is: _____

The Home-Based Teacher is: _____

The Office Associate is: _____

The Cook(s) is/are: _____

The Custodian is: _____

The Bus Driver (if applicable) is: _____

The Parent Group Meeting Dates are: _____

Please call the center when your child will be absent. If you do not call within the first hour staff will contact you. Consistent attendance is very important for your child's learning and skill building.



Southern Seven ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Unless otherwise stated, the area code is (618) for all numbers listed below.

Administration

37 Rustic Campus Drive
Ullin, IL 62992

Phone: 634-9340; 634-2297

Fax: 634-9394

HR Fax: 634-2539

Alexander County

Egyptian Early Learning Center
(Located in Egyptian Elem. School)

20023 Diswood Road
Tamms, IL 62988

Phone: 776-5756

Fax: 776-5758

Program Options: EHS & HS

Hardin County

Hardin County Early Learning Center
(located in Hardin Co. Elem. School)

4 School Road, P.O. Box 313
Elizabethtown, IL 62931

Phone: 287-9098

Fax: 287-9099

Program Options: HS

Johnson County

Vienna Early Learning Center

513 East Vine Street
Vienna, IL 62995

Phone: 658-9229

Fax: 658-6064

Program Options: EHS; HS/PK; & PI HB

Massac County

Building Blocks Day Care

1106 E. 7th Street
Metropolis, IL 62960

Phone: 524-7400

Fax: 524-7402

Program Options: DC; HS; & PI

Metropolis Head Start

416 East Ninth Street
Metropolis, IL 62960

Phone: 524-5222

Fax: 524-5322

Program Options: EHS; EHS HB; & HS

Pope County

Pope County Early Head Start

(Located on the grounds of Pope Co. Elem. School)

125 State Highway 146 West
Golconda, IL 62938

Phone: 683-2142

Fax: 683-2148

Program Options: EHS

Pulaski County

Mounds Head Start

327 N. Reader Street
Mounds, IL 62964

Phone: 745-6703

Fax: 745-9418

Program Options: EHS & HS

Union County

Cobden Head Start/

Migrant & Seasonal Head Start

8125 Old Hwy 51 N.
Cobden, IL 62920

Phone: 893-1000

Fax: 893-1001

Program Options: DC; EHS; HS; MHS & PI

Jonesboro Early Learning Center

(Located in Jonesboro Elem. School)

309 Cook Avenue
Jonesboro, IL 62952

Phone: 614-6499

Fax: 614-6803

Program Options: HS



Southern Seven PROGRAM OPTIONS



Southern Seven offers a variety of program options for families. The page above lists the locations and what program options are offered. The program options are as follows:

Head Start (HS)

This is a federally funded program for children ages 3-5. Children attend Head Start for a full day session from August through May. Children enrolled in this program will be in a classroom setting and learn through play, hands-on experiences, and interaction with a primary Teacher. Classrooms are setup in "learning centers" such as reading, dramatic play (dress-up, puppets, playing house), hands-on-math, science, and others. Your child has an opportunity each day to spend time in activities of their choice. Some of the concepts your child will learn will include pre-reading skills, social skills, sharing, getting along with others, and kindergarten readiness. Children will attend five days per week except for weeks when the center will be closed for Staff In-Service Training. Dates will be announced prior to closure. In Head Start, the ratio of children to staff is 1 Care Giver/Teacher to 10 children. We hope your child's first experience in a center based program is fun, exciting, and positive.

Dual Enrollment with Head Start & School District Pre-K (HS/PK)

Families can have full-day care for their child during the school year by enrolling in both Head Start and the School District Pre-K Program/Early Childhood Programs. Head Start will work with families and Pre-K/Early Childhood Programs to coordinate a.m./p.m. session placement, and meals for children in both programs.

Early Head Start (EHS)

Early Head Start is specially designed to meet the unique developmental needs of children ages 0-3 years. The Center Based Program is available Monday through Friday all year. At each center offering Early Head Start, there are classrooms specially designed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. The size of the class is small with no more than 8 children in each classroom at a time. In Early Head Start, the ratio of children to staff is also small at 4 children to 1 teacher.



Prevention Initiative (PI) Services

The Prevention Initiative (PI) Program provides intensive, research based and comprehensive child development and family support services for expectant parents and families with children from birth to age 3 to help them build a strong foundation for learning and to prepare children for later school success.

Early Head Start & Prevention Initiative Home-Based Option (EHS/PI HB)

Through weekly home visits, children and families receive all the services of Early Head Start or Prevention Initiative Services, but in their homes. Home-Based is offered in most of the southern seven counties for expectant parents and families with children from birth to age 3. Each home visit is approximately 1½ hours in length and includes special activities for the child and parent.

together. Once each month, your child will have an opportunity to participate in a cooking activity. Socialization Days are held twice each month, so children also have an opportunity to play with others their age, and parents can get together for fun activities and parent education. Transportation is available for these activities upon request. There are temporary circumstances where center children are best served with the Home-Based Option.

Early Head Start & Prevention Initiative Expectant Parents

Both our Prevention Initiative and Early Head Start programs provide services to expectant parents. This program offers comprehensive services to pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers. Services are delivered through weekly home visits and group socialization, utilizing a research-based curriculum from the March of Dimes called "Becoming a Mom" and "Growing Great Kids", from prenatal to 36 months. These programs aim to enhance the development of your children and support families in their primary caregiving role. This program offers education and support to pregnant women through group sessions, covering topics such as prenatal care, nutrition, and newborn care. Once the child is born, they become enrolled in the program, which offers either home-based or center-based services.

Migrant & Seasonal Head Start (MHS)

Migrant & Seasonal Head Start provides childcare and a comprehensive program of health, parent involvement, and social services for preschool children of low-income agricultural workers. We serve children younger than 6 years old.

Full Day Child Care (DC)

Families can have full day child care for their child(ren) all year. Southern Seven is committed to providing needed child care services to the community. We are able to provide part-day and full-day services to parents who need a place for their child to go but do not qualify for one of our grant funded programs. Our child care rates are based on the current state rates and are subject to change according to the state reimbursement rates. The following rates were established and have been effective since January 1, 2024. Currently, our child care rates are as follows:

Under Age 2		Age 2		Age 3 and Older	
Full-Day	Part-Day	Full-Day	Part-Day	Full-Day	Part-Day
\$45.00	\$22.50	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$35.00	\$17.50

Prevention Initiative with Day Care Option

Prevention Initiative is funded part day (5 hours) through the Early Childhood Prevention Initiative Grant. Southern Seven is able to offer partial day funding for children enrolled in the Prevention Initiative Program. Children present for more than the five hours of the Prevention Initiative Funding will be billed according to the Child Care Rates listed in the chart above.

Subsidy for Child Care

Southern Seven Head Start works with the Department of Human Services, which provides subsidy for child care. If you think you qualify for funding or you are currently receiving subsidy care from another provider, please talk with the Site Supervisor. Parents will be charged the private pay rate until the subsidy application is approved. It is important to apply for subsidy as soon as possible through Child Care Resource and Referral (John A. Logan College).

Staff Qualifications

Southern Seven Head Start employs Teachers and Teacher Aides who meet the qualifications required for the position. They are committed to formal education, on-going professional development, and have a deep commitment to young children and to the profession. They are the “key” element in providing high quality learning experiences for young children. Center Based Site Supervisors oversee the day to day operations of the program, guide and support staff, and ensure implementation of high quality services for children and their families. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Head Start Team, talk with the Site Supervisor or Parent Coordinator at your child’s center. Our staff would be happy to help you explore the training, support, and experience you would need to begin a career in Early Childhood Education or any of the other fields employed by Head Start.

KEY RULES AND POLICIES

Certified Birth Certificate Requirement

Due to the Missing Children’s Records Act, effective April 1, 2010, DCFS requires that within 30 days of enrollment the parent or guardian must provide a certified copy of the child’s birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of the child. If a certified birth certificate is not available, the parent or guardian must submit a passport, visa, or other governmental documentation as proof of the child’s identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate. We are required to notify the Illinois State Police if the parent or guardian fails to submit proof of the child’s identity within the 30 day time frame.

Because of the above regulation, you must provide your child’s original certified birth certificate (with the seal). A staff member will make a copy of this and give you back the original. This must occur within the first 30 days of your child attending school or we will have no choice but to notify the Illinois State Police as per the requirement. If you do not have your child’s original certified birth certificate (with the seal), we will be more than glad to assist you with obtaining it. However, this can take a little time so please do not wait until the end of the 30 days to begin working on this. If you have any questions regarding this, please do not hesitate to contact the Administrative Office.

Release Policy

1. All **children** will have on file a record of the individuals to whom **they** may be released to/from the center or bus (if applicable). Please remember to include all adults (spouse or significant other, grandparents, friends, uncles, aunts, etc.) that you may occasionally ask to pick up or receive your child.
2. Changes to the record must be made in person **by the parent or guardian who signed the application** at the center. It is very important to always have an updated method of contact such as a new phone number, a new address, etc. This is for safety reasons and in the event of an emergency.
3. A child must be accompanied by an authorized person into or out of the building. Also a signature is required to sign them in and out.

4. **Staff shall refuse to release a child to any person, whether related or unrelated to the child, who has not been authorized by the parent or guardian who signed the application to receive the child. The authorized person must be at least 14 years of age. Persons not known to the staff shall be required to provide a driver's license (with photo), a photo identification card issued by the Illinois Secretary of State or other photo identification to establish their identity before the child is released to them.**
5. **Court documents must be on file if a parent is restricted from picking up a child. If there is a custody problem, we are legally bound to honor the wishes of the parent who has legal custody. Law enforcement may be contacted to settle any dispute on Southern Seven Property.**
6. If a parent or other authorized person arrives to pick up the child and is acting in a manner that may place the child at immediate risk of harm, expect the staff to question the suitability of releasing the child. The staff may hold the child until more suitable transportation can be arranged. For example, staff will not release a child to someone who **shows signs of being** under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.



Afternoon Pick-Up Policy

A parent or authorized person will pick up their child(ren) at the end of each school day at the designated time. In the event that the child(ren) is/are not picked up at the end of the school day staff will try and contact all the persons on the child's contact list up to one hour after the designated time. If no one can be reached and/or arrangements have not been made the child will be taken to the local police station and left in their supervision. Understand potential does exist for a DCFS hotline call to be made depending on the situation. **Entrance/Exit Screening may be completed during high Public Health Emergency (PHE) transmission and positivity rates in your county.**

Attendance

In order for your child to get the most out of the Early Childhood Programs, it is important that they come to school on a regular basis. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves. Because of the need for Early Childhood Programs, we cannot hold a slot for a child who does not come to school unless there are special circumstances such as illness or significant family problems. It is important for both your child and the Early Childhood Programs that children attend regularly.

Absences

If your child is not at school and we don't hear from you by the first hour, staff from your child's center will get in touch with you on that first day to make sure your child is okay and to see if there is anything you need. If your child is not ill and there are no special problems, we will expect your child to return to school the next day. We cannot hold a slot. If you know your child will be missing school due to illness or other reasons, please contact the Parent Coordinator or Site Supervisor at your child's center to make special arrangements. The phone numbers for all our centers are listed in the front of this booklet. Staff will make a home visit by the 3rd day of

absence to complete an attendance agreement and establish goals to ensure regular attendance.

Illness

Even though children follow good hand washing practices, it is still really easy for them to spread germs to each other. In order to keep **all** of our children as healthy as possible, we cannot allow children who are sick to stay at the center. If we are not sure what illness your child has or how contagious they are, we may ask for a note from your child's doctor before they can return to the center. Remember, children must be fever free **without medication** for 24 hours before they can return to the center.



DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO SOUTHERN SEVEN IF:

- ✓ Complains of not feeling well;
- ✓ Has diarrhea and/or an upset stomach;
- ✓ Has had a fever of 100.4 degrees within the last 24 hours;
- ✓ Has a bad cold with coughing and a runny nose;
- ✓ Shows signs of a contagious disease such as pink eye, impetigo, or chicken pox;
- ✓ Has signs of live head lice;
- ✓ **Signs/symptoms of Public Health Emergency (PHE);**
- ✓ **Exposure to any person suspected or diagnosed with Public Health Emergency (PHE).**

YOUR CHILD WILL BE SENT HOME FROM SOUTHERN SEVEN IF:

- ✓ Complains of feeling ill;
- ✓ Has open, bleeding, or oozing(weeping) sores;
- ✓ Has flu like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, etc.);
- ✓ Shows signs of a contagious disease such as unexplained rash, pink eye, impetigo, or chicken pox;
- ✓ Has a fever of 100.4 degrees or greater;
- ✓ Has live head lice.

If your child becomes sick at the center, our staff will make sure your child is comfortable and well cared for, and that she/he has an opportunity to rest while we contact you to come and pick her/him up at the center. If we can't get in touch with you, we will contact the people you have listed on the pick-up list. By removing sick children from the classroom, we can reduce the chance that other children or staff may become sick. To make sure we can keep an extra close eye on your child, we will have them rest on a cot in a location outside of the classroom and be cared for by a designated staff person until you arrive. **Children with signs or symptoms of Public Health Emergency (PHE) will wear a mask if: 1) they are over two years old or 2) not medically exempt.**

Bad Weather – Emergency Closings and Cancellations

Sometimes our weather here in Southern Illinois can be unpredictable. As we all know snow, ice, and sleet can make our roads slippery all too quickly. In order to insure the safety of your child, it is likely that there will be times we have to close the center or dismiss early due to the weather. When we have to close the center, we will notify all three network TV stations (WSIL-3, WPSD-6, and KFVS-12) by 6:00 a.m. If we have to dismiss a center early during the day, we will also notify the three TV stations. When the weather becomes bad while your child is at the center,

we ask that you use your own discretion and pay attention to the television, Facebook, push notifications in our App, etc., so you will know if you need to pick up your child early. In most cases, we will close or dismiss early according to what the school districts do.

Safety

Your child's safety is our top priority; therefore, we have an Integrated Pest Management plan in place to ensure their well-being. For the safety of your child, the center will notify you through their newsletter or posting before the application of pesticides. This will always take place when children are not present.

Lead in Water Testing

Day Care lead in water testing is a crucial safety measure designed to ensure the health and well-being of children. We will conduct testing of water sources in accordance with the established guidelines of DCFS, and we will adhere to state regulations regarding acceptable lead levels in drinking water.

Radon Testing

Regular Radon testing is essential for ensuring a safe environment for children and staff, as radon is a colorless, odorless gas that can pose serious health risks. Southern Seven has each of its centers Radon tested every 3 years as per DCFS licensing standards.

No Smoking Policy

Smoking, vaping, tobacco products, and marijuana are never allowed in the centers, playgrounds, buses, parking lots, or vehicles. In addition, smoking, vaping, tobacco products, and marijuana are not allowed in view of the children, this includes field trips to any location, even parks. All staff, parents, and visitors are expected to respect the health of the children by following the No Smoking Policy.

Confidentiality

At your child's school, we respect your privacy. The information that is in your child's file is kept in a locked file cabinet and is not shared with anyone outside of Southern Seven's Early Childhood Programs without your written permission. As a parent, you always have the right to read, review, and request a revision to the information in your child's files. If you would like to review any of our records concerning your child or family, you will need to submit a request in writing to the Early Childhood and/or Head Start Director. If you need any assistance in preparing your request, the Parent Coordinator at your child's center will be happy to help you. The Early Childhood and/or Head Start Director will respond to your request within 30 days.

Facebook has become one of the main ways that people communicate through social media. In order to respect the privacy of all the children you are asked not to post pictures on Facebook of center activities without the permission of the parents of children involved in the picture.

Child Abuse and Neglect - Mandated Reporter Status

In the State of Illinois, anyone who works with children such as teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses, and child care workers are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). Each year, Southern Seven Staff receive training from DCFS about signs of child abuse and neglect and the reporting laws.

If you have any questions about the mandated reporter law or what would be considered as child abuse or neglect, please feel free to speak with the Site Supervisor at your child's center or our Social Services Specialist at the Administrative Office.

Complaint Process

If you have a complaint about the personnel or policy practices of Southern Seven, we would like to hear from you. Please describe your complaint to the Site Supervisor at your child's center. If you are not able to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, please submit your complaint in writing to the Executive Director within 14 days at the following address:

Executive Director
Southern Seven Health Department/Head Start
37 Rustic Campus Drive
Ullin, IL 62992





YOUR CHILD'S DAY

Arrival

Staff Greet Children

Wash Hands

**Prepare for Breakfast/Lunch

Meal Time

Eat

Conversation

Clean-Up

Brush Teeth

Gathering Time

Stories

Music/Finger Plays/Songs

Learning Center Time

Reading & Writing

Science & Discovery

Math

Blocks

Dramatic Play

Table Toys

Small Group Time

Language

Health & Safety

Art

Special Concepts

Active Play (large motor)

Outdoor Play

Indoor Play (if weather is bad)

**Meal/Snack Time

Wash Hands

Eat

Conversation

Clean-Up

Children's Free Choice

Individual or Small Group Activities

Departure of Children (those attending 1/2 day)

*Nap Time

Learning Center Time

Individual Activities

Small Group Activities

Special Activities

Active Play

Outdoor Play

Indoor Play (if weather is bad)

*Children attending full day.

**Children attending morning only will eat breakfast and lunch; children attending afternoon only will eat lunch and snack; children attending full day will eat breakfast, lunch, and snack.

Group activities may be modified during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restriction.



LEARNING

Education

At Southern Seven, your child's first experience in a school setting includes a classroom environment and teaching staff that make learning fun and help your child feel good about herself/himself as a student and a person. When children enjoy learning and feel good about themselves, they are more likely to do well in school and be successful later on in life. Our Education Program is geared towards the unique way that young children learn.

Children learn and grow in many different ways, and therefore need a variety of experiences and opportunities within and outside of the classroom. The most important way young children learn is through active, hands-on play. In other words, they learn by doing. Sometimes, when we see our children in the center, we think they are just playing and couldn't possibly be learning anything. The amazing thing about young children is that everything is new to them and they learn from every new experience. When it comes to learning, young children need to have opportunities that promote their thinking and problem solving skills, their ability to get along with others, and learning skills to deal with different feelings in an acceptable way. Young children also need an opportunity to exercise their muscles and build new physical skills.

The Classroom

Learning Centers – For toddlers and 3-5 year olds, each classroom is divided up into learning centers or small areas that focus on particular skills. Children will find areas that promote math skills, pre-reading and writing skills, science, imagination, language, and a love of books, music, art and technology.



Infant classrooms are set up to promote learning and development through the interactions between caregivers and children during their daily activities. Classroom staff are trained in child development and they work with children on developmentally appropriate skills.

Teachers plan weekly lessons and the toys, games, and activities within the classrooms are changed regularly so children have a wide variety of learning experiences. Each day, time is set aside as "Center Time", where children are involved in the learning centers of their choice. During this time, teaching staff are able to work one-on-one or in small groups with the children on their Educational Goals. As children participate in planned activities they are learning science, math, language, pre-writing, and pre-reading skills.

Outdoor or Gross Motor Play - As a parent of a young child, you know how much energy they have. That's why it is so important that the children have an opportunity to run, jump, climb and use their large muscles (arms and legs) each day. When weather permits, the children have a chance to go outside on a daily basis. Our playgrounds include swings, slides, climbing equipment, riding toys, and balls, just to name a few. Outdoor time is a favorite time of day for many of the children. If the weather prohibits outdoor play, the children will have an opportunity for more active play indoors.

Small Group - During “Work Time”, one teacher will work with small groups of children on specific skills such as numbers, colors, shapes, or activities that use fine or small (hands and fingers) motor skills. Puzzles, sorting, counting, coloring, and working with shapes are all types of “play” that also help children build math skills. **This may be modified during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.**

Large Group - Learning how to listen to our friends, and take turns in a group is an important and sometimes challenging skill for young children to learn. During large group activities, children have an opportunity to read and discuss stories or make plans for the day. Other large group activities include songs, finger plays (songs or rhymes with hand motions), or exercising to music. **This may be modified during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.**



Videos/Screen Time - At Southern Seven, we rarely use videos or television in the classroom. Therefore, it is never necessary to send any videos or movies from home for your child. The only videos the children will watch at school will be those that are designed especially to go along with the lesson plan for your child’s class. Each uninterrupted, passive screen viewing session will be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per day. All screen time will be related to educational program planning.

Special Events

Field Trips – Centers are allowed to have three field trips per school year. Field trips are designed to give your child an opportunity to learn more about the community and the people within it. A field trip in the Fall may include a visit to an apple orchard, pumpkin patch, or farm. This way, children have an opportunity to touch, smell, and experience the same types of things they are learning about in their classroom. The opportunities children learn from their field trips are included in classroom activities and in discussions before and after the trip itself.

Field trips are also a crucial time for parent volunteers. As you know, we pay a lot of attention to the safety of the children. The number of adults needed for safety on a field trip is certainly greater than the number needed within the classroom. We strongly encourage you to volunteer at least once during the year to go on a field trip. You will have a great time and your child will feel very special on the day you come along. Whenever we go on a field trip, you will receive notice of the outing in advance.

Parties and Other Special Days – At Southern Seven, celebrations may include having a party that celebrates all the birthdays in a given month, the end of the school year, or various cultural traditions. We are committed to having celebrations that include all families and children. Many centers plan Fall or harvest celebrations, holidays around the world, winter festivals, and spring celebrations. We strongly encourage you to join us in the various celebrations and parties. By getting involved, parents can join us in sharing the rich and joyous traditions we all have in our families. **Because of the regulations we must follow, we ask that treats brought into the center for parties be store bought and in original packaging. We have a nut-free environment and ask that**



you do not bring any nuts or products containing nuts into the center. Please check with your center for other allergies. We also request that you select items that are healthy and not too high in sugar content such as fruit, vegetables, yogurt, graham crackers, oatmeal cookies, Jell-O Cups, Fruit Roll-Ups, granola bars, animal crackers, cheese crackers or muffins. A sign-up sheet will be used to plan for the appropriate number of snacks. ***Activities may be limited during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.***

End-of-Year Program – During the last week of your child's school year, the center may plan a program or event celebrating the time spent together. This provides a transition for the upcoming summer or new school year. The program is informal, relatively short in length to accommodate the short attention span of young children, and allows children to demonstrate some of the skills they have learned during the year. ***This may be modified due to Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.***

Family/Staff Conferences and Home Visits

Each year, your child's teacher will contact you to arrange for two (2) Family/Staff Conferences and two (2) Home Visits. Our teaching staff always looks forward to having an opportunity to give you one-on-one time to discuss how everything is going with your child. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's experience, this is an excellent time to let your child's teacher know. Family/Staff Conferences are held at the center, and you will have an opportunity to see your child's classroom, review examples of his/her work, learn more about the daily activities, and ask questions of your child's teacher. If your child will be going to kindergarten, Home Visits are a great time to learn more about the public school and find out about activities you can do with your child over the Summer. Do not worry that your schedule will make it impossible to meet with your child's teacher; our staff will be happy to meet with you at a time of day that works for you.



School Readiness (Head Start Program)

Going to kindergarten is an important milestone in the lives of our children. Moving from the Head Start Program of your child's school to an elementary school setting can be quite a change (and even a little scary) for both children and parents. One way Head Start is helping is by developing a set of School Readiness Goals that each teacher follows and works with the children to make the transition into Kindergarten successful. For example, one of the goals is for children to demonstrate emergent literacy skills and this includes writing their name. Teachers work with the children in various ways and activities to achieve this goal. In preparing for kindergarten teachers will also send home activities that you and your child can do together that support our school readiness goals. For instance, the teacher may ask you and your child to look for a picture in a magazine that begins with a certain letter or color and cut those out and glue them on a piece of paper. After you complete the activity it is sent back to school with the child. Many of the children call it their "homework" and enjoy doing it like their older siblings do. Near the end of each school year for Kindergarten children, we will ask for your permission to transfer your child's records from Southern Seven to your child's public school. We will also provide you with information about kindergarten registration and will invite teachers from the public school to parent



meetings and/or take children to the public school for a tour in the spring of each year. Remember, you are your child's first and most important teacher.

STAYING HEALTHY

Health Services

Because Southern Seven has licensed child care facilities, we require that all children have a **complete school physical** before they begin attending the center. The information from the physical will need to be written on an official Illinois School Physical Form. The health history portion of the physical **MUST** be filled out, signed, and dated by a parent/guardian. It is important that you make sure your child's physician signs and dates the form and that his/her address is listed. The physical must have been completed **within the last 6 months, and include results of a hemoglobin (finger stick), TB skin test, and blood lead**. The **diabetic portion** of the physical must be filled out by the physician as well. Children 12 months or older must have a physical, TB skin test results or test exemption by a healthcare provider, hemoglobin and blood lead on file before your child can attend. Hemoglobin should be done at 12 months. Blood lead should be done at 12 and 24 months. TB test exemptions by a healthcare provider must be updated yearly on the physical form. We will also need a copy of your child's immunization records. At a minimum, your child must have recently had at least one round of all of their childhood immunizations. Children under the age of one need to provide current immunization record and hemoglobin for 12 months or older. **If your child needs to take medicine at the center**, our staff can give your child prescription medication only. The medicine you bring for your child **MUST BE IN THE PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE**, with the label from the pharmacy clearly visible. You will also need to fill out a form that gives our staff permission to give medicine to your child. These forms are available at your child's center. **We are not able to give your child any over the counter medication such as cold medicine or Tylenol**. Any major health concerns, staff will assist you to complete a form which will require a doctor's signature. If you would like staff to apply sunscreen to your child, you must complete the Sunscreen Application Form.



Medical Emergencies

It is always possible that an accident can happen. In the application for your child's center, we asked that you sign a release that will allow us to get the medical care for your child in the case of an emergency. If a medical emergency were to occur, we will first make sure that your child gets treatment right away and we will then make sure we contact you as soon as possible. Please ensure we have updated contact information at all times. All classroom staff are trained in CPR & First Aid. If your child receives a minor injury or tick bite, our staff will let you know what occurred and where the injury or tick bite was located on your child. It is especially important to keep a close eye on the site of any tick bites to watch for swelling or a rash.

SCREENINGS

Developmental Screenings

The DIAL-4 and Ages & Stages are tools used to identify developmental strengths and to identify areas in which a child may need more in depth or individualized instruction.

Hearing & Vision Screenings

Like you, we want to see your child succeed, which is why every child has a hearing and vision screening during the first 45 days of each school year. Our Early Head Start and Home-Based Staff have been trained to screen the birth to three-year-old children. The staff that completes the screenings for the three to five year olds are trained and certified by the Illinois Department of Public Health. If the screening shows any cause for concern, our staff will let you know and provide any assistance you might need in scheduling an appointment with an eye doctor or audiologist (hearing specialist). We can also provide transportation for any appointments parents have, when needed and assist parents with the follow-up process. When hearing and vision problems are caught and treated early, children do not have to miss out on any of the wonderful and exciting things in the world around them.

Dental Screenings and Exams

Dental care is an easy thing to overlook because many of us feel that since children will eventually lose their baby teeth, going to the dentist just isn't that important. However, baby teeth do an important job. Baby teeth hold the place for permanent teeth to come in, usually between the ages of 4½ - 7. Baby teeth also play an important role in good nutrition, because they are needed to bite and chew foods. When baby teeth become decayed, they can look bad and ultimately have an impact on how your child feels about herself/himself. Another important factor that many of us aren't aware of is that the molars your child has in the back of their mouth will have to last a lifetime. These teeth tend to get cavities the easiest due to the fact that they are hard to reach when brushing and do a lot of the work while chewing. For these reasons, all children are required to have an exam or screening within their first 90 days of enrollment in the program. If you prefer to take your child to the dentist yourself but do not have a family dentist, we can provide you with a list of dentist in the area. For convenience, we will be setting up a day (within the first 90 days of school) for a dentist to come in to the center to do dental examinations or we will transport children to a local dental provider for exams. A dental screen is done on children under the age of 12 months and a dental exam is required for children one and older. In our Early Head Start Program, our Teachers/Home-Based Teachers will be completing the dental screenings. They look for early signs of tooth decay.

This does not take the place of a dental exam and we strongly encourage parents to begin visiting the dentist as soon as the first tooth erupts. If you need assistance finding a dentist, please contact the Parent Coordinator at your local center. If a child's dental exam or screening shows that he/she needs further dental care, our staff will let the parents know. We are available to help you schedule an appointment with a dentist and can provide transportation if needed. Our staff will contact parents monthly until any recommended follow-up is completed.



Growth Assessments

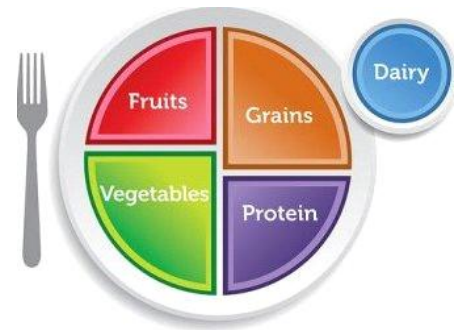
Growing bigger is another important part of a child's life. At school each child is weighed and has their height measured two times during each school year. Monitoring a child's growth is an important part of making sure they stay healthy. Information is shared and discussed with the parents.

EATING WELL

Nutrition Services

Eating good food is not only a pleasurable experience, but probably has a greater impact on our health than anything else we do. At your child's center our goal is to provide delicious food that is good for your child in an atmosphere that is relaxed and enjoyable. We hope to promote healthy eating habits that nourish your child's body, preserve her/his teeth while at the same time develop an enjoyment of family mealtime. **We have a nut-free environment and ask that you do not bring any peanuts or products containing nuts into the centers. Please ask the Site Supervisor/Teacher of your center about other allergies in the classroom.** Meals are prepared on site by the Food Service Staff and served family style by the teaching staff.

Meals at Southern Seven include more than just eating. Children learn about taking good care of their bodies by washing their hands before each meal and brushing their teeth afterwards. Teaching staff join the children for meals and snacks. They lead conversation, help children learn how to use silverware, serve themselves, pour drinks, and clear their plates. Mealtime also includes learning good table manners and never missing a good opportunity to teach your child new things. Shapes, colors, textures, and even science are all concepts that can be taught at mealtime. Whenever you come in to volunteer at the center, we would love to have you as our guest for breakfast, lunch, or snacks. ***Volunteers may not be allowed in the center during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.***



Our menus offer children a variety of foods including various ethnic foods such as Mexican, Chinese, or Italian. If you have any special family recipes that you would like to share, be sure and let the Site Supervisor know. Head Start Programs are required to provide children with at least 1/3 of the recommended daily nutrients while they are at the center. At Southern Seven, we usually provide 2/3 of your child's daily needs. Our meals demonstrate that healthy eating which is low in fat and sugar can also include delicious food that your child will enjoy. During mealtime, we never force children to eat more than what they want or to eat foods they do not like. We do, however, encourage children to taste the different foods served each day. At the pre-school age it is not unusual for a child's tastes to change. Children who will not eat meat one day will decide they like it the very next week. To help encourage the children, our staff also eat the variety of foods served and do not discuss personal dislikes of particular foods. We never bribe children to eat, make them clean their plate, or withhold foods as a form of discipline. Our goal is for children to view food for its most important purpose - to nourish our bodies and help us grow.

Food Program

Southern Seven participates in and follow the regulations the United States Department of Agriculture establish for childcare centers operating Child and Adult Care Food Programs. Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP) reimburse participating sites which serve nutritious meals by following meal patterns established by USDA. CACFP is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. The State Board of Education administers CACFP in Illinois. The State Board of Education approves sponsoring organizations, monitors the program, and provides guidance and assistance to assure that sponsors are meeting the requirements. Parents will be asked to complete a CACFP form at Parent Orientation. In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, Southern Seven is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Infant Formula/Breast Milk

We provide formula for all infants enrolled at Southern Seven. We will purchase the formula you are providing at home to ensure the best health of your child. If you change formula brands please verify and let your child's center know so that we can accommodate this change. If the formula requested is not USDA approved, then we will require a doctor's note stating that it is medically required in order to provide the formula to the child. Breast milk may be brought in either frozen or "fresh". Frozen breast milk should not be more than two (2) weeks old while fresh refrigerated milk cannot be more than 48 hours old. Breast milk must be brought in either bottles or other breast milk storage container. Containers should be labeled with your child's name and the date it was brought to the center. Breastfeeding mothers will be provided a private, comfortable space in the center to nurse their baby. Because we participate in the CACFP Program, we are required to follow the Infant Meal Pattern for infants ages birth through 11 months. The Child Care Provider must provide at least one type of iron-fortified infant formula, iron-fortified infant cereal, and the other food items for infants. If you do not want your child to receive the formula, you must sign the "Child and Adult Care Food Program Infant Formula Waiver Notification" form which you can obtain from the center.



CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Services for Children with Disabilities

At Southern Seven, some of our children have delays or disabilities. To get an idea of where your child's development is, we will do a developmental screening within the first 45 days of school. These screenings let us know how each child's skills compare to other children of the same age. Sometimes the information from the screenings lets us know that a child could benefit from a little extra help in certain areas. There are also times when a screening shows more significant concerns. In such cases our staff will meet with you to explain the results of the screening and ask your permission to arrange for your child to have a more in depth evaluation. If your child is under three years of age, Child and Family Connections will do the evaluation. If your child is

over three, a Special Education Cooperative or school district will conduct the evaluation. Through evaluation, the appropriate program can determine if a child is eligible for their services and which services the child could benefit from. A meeting will be held to discuss results of evaluations and decide if your child is eligible for services. If your child is under three, the meeting is called an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Meeting. If your child is over three, the meeting is called an Individual Education Program (IEP) Meeting. During this meeting, parents are given information about the results of their child's evaluation and what services (such as speech, physical, occupational, or other therapies) are recommended for the child. The goals for the child and the services the child will receive are written in the Individual Education Program or Individualized Family Service Plan. For many children with disabilities, the services they receive before the age of 5 make a very positive difference throughout their entire lives.



We are committed to full inclusion. What this means is that children with disabilities are in the same classrooms as their friends and have access to all the same areas and activities. Inclusion is the philosophy or belief that **ALL** children have the same needs for acceptance, friendships, and connectedness. Southern Seven is committed to this vision. As a parent of a child with disabilities, you are an important part of your child's education. Throughout the year, we will provide you with information about the activities and goals that are part of your child's educational program. As your family participates in this process, our staff will be there every step of the way. We will be available to attend all meetings with you to answer any questions you may have. We will be there to give you more information about your child's right to a free and appropriate education. We can also help you get any other services your child may need, such as specialized equipment or medical care. All of our services for children with disabilities are available for children who enter the program with an eligibility for services as well as those who are identified while in the program.

FEELING GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES

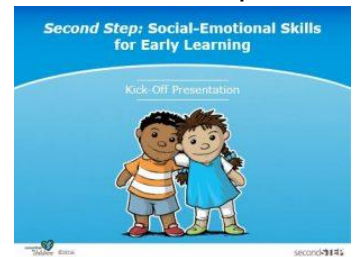
Mental Health Services

The words Mental Health can be scary for parents to hear. Mental Health at Southern Seven most often relates to the comprehensive programming we offer to help children feel good about themselves, get along with others, and how to solve conflicts using words. Simply put, Mental Health means thinking positively about ourselves and having healthy relationships with others.

At the beginning of the school year, we will complete a social-emotional screening with you. The screening is a series of questions that look at how your child is able to recognize and respond to their own emotions and how they are able to get along with others. At least three to four times each year, a Mental Health Consultant observes the children in each classroom. The Mental Health Consultant is available to answer questions you might have about your child's social and emotional development or behavior. More observations or meetings can be done if needed. The Mental Health Consultant sometimes recommends strategies or additional services for children who may

benefit from some extra help in this area such as if a child often hits or bites other children instead of solving a conflict with words. Children will only be provided extra services with written permission from you and all services and referrals are confidential. We do not share information with others without your permission. In addition to the observation days, our Mental Health Consultant has office hours at each center. The Mental Health Consultant is available to meet with you regarding your child or any other concerns you have about your own personal wellness. A calendar of office hours is available at your child's center. Additional times available upon request. Dealing with angry feelings without lashing out at others can be a big challenge for some young children but Head Start is fully committed to helping all children in our program struggling with emotions or behavior challenges to have a positive early childhood experience with us and be ready to enter kindergarten.

At Southern Seven, in our 3-5 year old classrooms, we offer a program called Second Step. It has a Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum and a Child Protection Unit. Second Step teaches children how to deal with their emotions, get along with others, how to recognize and avoid unsafe situations, and how to get help when they can't solve a situation on their own. The program has activities we will send home with your child so that you can see what we are learning and ideas on how you can practice some of these skills with your child at home. With the Child Protection Unit we are meeting the requirements by "Erin's Law" to offer children ways to recognize unsafe touching and what to do if this situation arises. A parent/guardian can refuse this training by signing the appropriate consent during the application process.



Another very important part of our Mental Health area is our focus on positive guidance of children. How children are treated when their behavior is not what we would like it to be has a huge impact on how they feel about themselves. When we yell at or put down children who are behaving poorly, we slowly "chip away" at the good feelings they have about themselves. Children who don't feel good about themselves often are not confident in their abilities, are afraid to try new things, can be angry and sad and lash out at others. Our positive approach helps children learn self-control, have acceptable behavior, and ask for help when they need it, which helps them feel good about themselves.



Positive Guidance

Head Start provides an environment that is accepting and which encourages appropriate behavior in children. Our main goal is to teach children how to get along in a group situation. Here are a few ways children learn appropriate behavior at Head Start.

1. We use a social-emotional curriculum called "Second Step" which helps children understand their feelings, learn to slow down and think about possible solutions and helps them deal with angry feelings. This program encourages children to improve their social skills and reduces aggressive behavior.
2. Children learn that they are doing a good job and they are behaving appropriately when they hear positive comments. Some examples are: ***"Thank you for putting the blocks away."*** ***"I like the way you scraped your plate."*** We accompany words of praise

with physical contact such as hugging, patting, etc. Praising children is one way of teaching good behavior. Another way is to show enthusiasm for the child's accomplishments.

3. We let the children know what is expected of them by providing a few, simple rules. We express the rules in a positive way and children are reminded of rules consistently. Children are told what to do rather than what not to do. An example is: ***"Loud voices are for outside play, quiet voices are for inside."***
4. Children are redirected to other activities when appropriate. For instance, if a child is knocking blocks down while others are trying to build with blocks, the child may be asked to move to another learning area.
5. Sometimes actions have logical consequences. This means that when a child makes a mess, they are expected to clean it up. If a child runs inside the center, they will be asked to go back and practice walking. Children often remember the rules better when they get to practice them and the consequences are directly related to the behavior.
6. Children are given opportunities to resolve their own conflicts with teachers acting as appropriate role models. Teachers ask questions like ***"How would you feel if this happened to you?"*** or ***"What can we do to fix this problem?"*** Often children realize that they can take turns with a toy rather than fight over the toy.
7. Sometimes children need a quiet place to calm down. A teacher will stay with and talk privately to a child or children to help them calm down or solve their problem, before asking them if they are ready to rejoin the group. This process is called "Time In".
8. Children should not be shamed or humiliated and must be treated with respect at all times. Physical use of discipline such as slapping or spanking will **NOT** be permitted at Head Start, even by you, the child's parents.
9. Parents can share their expectations and insight regarding discipline, and staff may discuss their concerns with parents regarding challenging behaviors. Behavior intervention plans may be developed if determined to be in the best interest of the child. These plans ensure that all Southern Seven children are able to safely participate in the program and be ready for Kindergarten. Southern Seven will **NEVER** expel or un-enroll a child due to their behavior.

Please refer to the Guidance and Discipline Book for further details.



FAMILIES GETTING INVOLVED

Getting To Know Your Parent Coordinator

At your child's school, there is a Parent Coordinator whose primary job is to help family's access services in their communities. They can help you get utility assistance, a ride to the doctor, clothing, learn about adult education programs, and many other services in the community. Parent Coordinators will also work with each family in developing a family goal called the Family Partnership Agreement. This plan will identify your family's needs, interests, strengths, and goals. Feel free to contact your Parent Coordinator anytime. They will be in touch with you shortly after your child enrolls to explain all of the wonderful services Head Start has to offer.

Team Up with Us to Meet In-Kind (for Head Start/Early Head Start Programs only)

We keep track of how many hours parents volunteer in our program. This is important! We need over \$1 million worth of volunteer hours each year to count toward required non-federal match, or "In-Kind" requirements. Every hour you volunteer provides \$23.90 of In-Kind. **So Volunteer!** It gives a helping hand to the staff and children and provides much needed In-Kind.

Volunteering

Southern Seven offers many ways for parents to get involved in the program. One of the ways to get involved is by volunteering at your child's center. As a volunteer, here's an example of what you might do:

- ✓ Join children as they play and learn.
- ✓ Read to children.
- ✓ Complete Home Time Activities and return forms to your center so we can claim In-Kind.
- ✓ Go on field trips.
- ✓ Be an office helper (copying, assemble materials, restock supplies).
- ✓ Kitchen helper (if properly trained)(assist in food preparation and serving).
- ✓ Assist with Hearing & Vision Screenings.
- ✓ Help monitor on the playground.
- ✓ Share a hobby, story, or talent.



Another way of volunteering is by serving on the Health Services Advisory (for Head Start/Early Head Start Programs). This committee discusses, reviews, and approves our plans for health services each year; works with the Education Staff to review the learning activities in the classrooms and the educational goals of the program. Parents are reimbursed mileage and child care costs for attending this meeting. ***Volunteers may not be allowed in the center during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.***

Policy Council

The Head Start Policy Council is made up of one parent from each center, one parent from the Home-Based Option, and a Community Representative from each county. The Policy Council has the responsibility of reviewing and approving budgets, hiring and other personnel issues, program

options, program policy, and plans for funding applications. The Policy Council meets once each month. Parents are reimbursed for travel and child care expenses. If a parent on the Policy Council needs transportation to the meeting, they should call the Site Supervisor or Parent Coordinator at their child's center. ***Policy Council Meetings may be held in person or via ZOOM during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.***



Parent Groups

Parent Groups are held at your child's center. At your meeting you will be given information on topics of interest and trainings available to you and your family. Parents will also work with the staff to plan activities for the children and families. Activities may include celebrations, field trips and special activities. Each parent committee elects officers for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Policy Council Representative and Alternate, and Health Services Advisory Committee Representative.

Monthly trainings will be provided during Parent Group Meetings. The following topics will be included: Nutrition, Health, Safety, Literacy, Mental Health, Finance and others that parents may have an interest in. We will also be offering a Positive Parenting Curriculum. All parents are encouraged to come together to talk about and learn about parenting skills. ***Parent Group Meetings may be held in person or via ZOOM during Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.***



INFORMATION AND TRAININGS FOR PARENTS

Newsletter

Each month, you will receive a newsletter from Southern Seven. The newsletter will come from your child's center that lets you know about the activities your child is involved with each month. The newsletter will have a copy of the menu for the center, the monthly Parent Group Meeting minutes, and will also include any important dates that you need to know.

Trainings

Southern Seven currently offers a variety of training for our employees. Some of the training opportunities include Pre-Service Training, Infant Toddler "Best Practices", "Best Practices" for three to five year old children and CPR/First Aid. These classes are made possible in partnership with Shawnee Community College and Southern Seven Head Start. Participants who complete these classes receive college credit at no cost to our employees. **Parents are always WELCOME** to attend any training offered to our employees. If you are interested in attending training, please let the Site Supervisor or Parent Coordinator at your child's center know. ***Trainings may be held via ZOOM due to Public Health Emergency (PHE) restrictions.***

