

Review of Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS) Program Wellness Services



Requirements

The Office of Head Start requires programs to support a program-wide culture that promotes children's mental health, social and emotional well-being and provide overall high-quality health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services. Services must be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and will support each child's growth and school readiness.

OHS requires programs to collaborate with parents/guardians as partners in the health and well-being of their children in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner and communicate with parents/guardians about their child's health needs and development concerns in a timely and effective manner.

In addition, OHS also requires programs to make mental health and wellness information available to staff regarding health issues that may affect their job performance and must provide regularly scheduled opportunities to learn about mental health, wellness and health.

Wellness Services

The City of San Antonio Department of Human Services Head Start Program uses a tiered approach to provide wellness education and services to children, families, and staff at the following levels:

| Tier | Description | Focus |
|-------------|--|---|
| Foundation | Effective Workforce | Training and supports to staff to promote staff wellness so they are better equipped to interact with children and families in healthier and more positive ways |
| Tier I | Promotion – Nurturing Responsive Relationships and High-Quality Support Environments | Focus on positive and nurturing relationships between staff, children and parents |
| Tier II | Prevention – Targeted Social Emotional Supports | Parent and Teacher education to promote positive social-emotional development of identified children |
| Tier III | Intensive Intervention | Responding to children, family members and staff in need of intensive interventions by providing consultation and referrals for direct services |

The Head Start Program provides wellness services by offering family support services to all Head Start families. As more specific and intensive needs are identified, Head Start utilizes trained and licensed social workers and graduate level social workers/mental health workers. As needs are identified by staff with specialized training in social work, mental health and trauma informed care, families are provided targeted case management support, psychoeducation, and linkages to community resources to support and address those needs. In addition, wellness resources offered by the ISD partners, such as case management and therapy are also utilized to support family wellness issues.

The Early Head Start Program provides wellness services in collaboration with our wellness contractor, Family Services Association (FSA). Referrals will be submitted to FSA for families, children, and staff in need of intervention. Wellness support and consultation services will be provided by a qualified licensed mental health professional who has experience in working with infants and toddlers and their caregivers.

All Head Start staff receive the benefit of extensive ongoing training in wellness support such as trauma informed care, stress management, mental health first aid, compassion fatigue and other relevant topics to assist them in establishing better work/life balance and in supporting and assisting Head Start families.