

**Interagency Agreement Between**  
**OHIO HEARTLAND COMMUNITY ACTION COMMISSION**  
**HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START**  
**And**  
**MORROW COUNTY SCHOOLS AND AGENCIES**

**1. Rationale**

This joint agreement provides a framework and outlines roles, responsibilities, and guidance for local collaboration between Ohio Heartland CAC Head Start/Early Head Start and all Morrow County Schools and agencies to develop a specific collaborative and cooperative agreement to serve preschool children who are eligible for special education services under IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act), in compliance with Federal and State laws and regulations. This agreement will be effective from July 1, 2022 until June 30, 2023.

**2. Parties Involved**

An interagency agreement is established between Ohio Heartland CAC Head Start/Early Head Start, Morrow County School Districts and agencies. These schools and agencies include the Morrow County Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD), Mt. Gilead, Highland, Northmor, Cardington, Mid-Ohio ESC, North Central Ohio Educational Service Center (NCOESC), Gilead Christian and Help Me Grow/Early Intervention, including Part C. This agreement will be updated annually to assure that local needs are being met with regard to prompt and appropriate services to pre-school children with disabilities.

**School Districts**

Ohio School districts are required by the child identification process provisions of the IDEA to locate, identify and evaluate all children residing within their boundaries who may be eligible for special education services. Ohio school districts are required to provide preschool services to children ages three through five years with disabilities who are determined eligible for special education services.

**Head Start/Early Head Start**

Head Start/Early Head Start grantees and delegates are required to make available a minimum of 10% of their funded enrollment for children with disabilities. This will be accomplished through placement of children with disabilities and dual programming between Head Start/Early Head Start, Help Me Grow/Early Intervention, and Preschool services through the local school districts on a case by case basis

**Morrow County Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD)**

The Morrow County Board of Developmental Disabilities offers services to eligible individuals from birth throughout their lifespan. MCBDD provides home-based Early Intervention and Family Directed Resources to children birth through age 2, as well as the services of a Service & Support Administrator (SSA) when requested, and Family Directed Resources for children ages 3 through 5.

## **Help Me Grow/Early Intervention Program**

Help Me Grow is Ohio's evidenced-based parent support program that encourages early prenatal and well-baby care, as well as parenting education to promote the comprehensive health and development of children (birth through age 2). The Help Me Grow System includes Central Intake, Help Me Grow Home Visiting (provided by the Morrow County Health District) and Help Me Grow Early Intervention (provided by the Morrow County Board of Developmental Disabilities).

## **Mid-Ohio ESC**

Mid-Ohio ESC believes that each child is a unique individual with an unlimited capacity for learning and offers a variety of services for children with special needs ages 3-5. Mid-Ohio ESC has itinerant services, as well as, therapy services.

## **North Central Ohio Educational Service Center**

North Central Ohio Educational Service Center (NCOESC) preschool programs are early childhood educational programs for young children. NCOESC believes that children learn best when play is the cornerstone of the curriculum. Each classroom is staffed with a licensed teacher and paraprofessional who plan the environment and provide individualized activities for each child to develop socially, emotionally, physically and mentally in a child-friendly environment. NCOESC programs are also a support system for the child and their family. Services are provided within an integrated program, where children with special needs learn alongside their peers who are typically developing. NCOESC programs provide therapy services for children whose Individual Education Plans include those services.

## **Gilead Christian**

Gilead Christian provides a faith-based program for children six weeks to pre-kindergarten age.

### **3. Joint Responsibilities**

When serving children in accordance with Federal Regulations, Head Start/Early Head Start grantees and delegate agencies in partnership with the above-named school districts are required:

- a.** To ensure that parents are equal partners in the process and those parental rights, with regard to identification, evaluation, provision of services, and exchange of information, are observed.
- b.** To provide screening services.
- c.** To work in collaboration to conduct an assessment for eligibility for services.

It is our belief that collaboration between public schools, agencies, and Head Start/Early Head Start programs will improve services to young children with disabilities and their families while making the best use of available resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

**The purpose of this agreement is to outline roles, responsibilities and guidance for local collaboration between Head Start/Early Head Start, various agencies, and the schools of Morrow County. This agreement shall address the following components:**

- I. Participation in Child Find**
- II. Joint Training of Staff and Parents**
- III. Procedures for Referrals, Evaluations, IEP Development, and Placement.**
- IV. Transition**
- V. Resource Sharing**
- VI. Update of Local Agreements Annually**

**I. Child Find/Identification of Children with Disabilities**

**A. Participation in Child Find**

- 1.** The School Districts will follow Operating Standards for Ohio Schools Serving Children with Disabilities (See 3301-51).
- 2.** The Early Intervention Program links children to appropriate services and notifies the Local Education Agencies according to the rules regarding transition of children in the Early Intervention Program, Part C.
- 3.** Head Start/Early Head Start collaborates with Early Intervention, MOESC, NCOESC and the Local Education Agencies in locating and identifying children birth to compulsory school age.
- 4.** Gilead Christian will allow children to be screened in their center, with parent permission.
- 5.** The Morrow County Board of DD will refer a parent who may have a child eligible for preschool services to the appropriate LEA or agency.

**B. Eligibility**

Children in Head Start/Early Head Start will be identified in accordance with the same criteria used for children with disabilities ages zero through five years, served through a school district or Early Intervention.

In this manner, all children identified with disabilities and their families are afforded:

- A free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment
- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) Due Process
- An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Notification of Procedural Safeguards
- Confidentiality

## **II Joint Training for Staff and Parents**

- A.** A representative from each agency may notify each of the other agencies in the agreement of any training opportunities, changes, or cancellations. Experts from each agency can be requested depending on availability to provide in-service for staff and parents. Preparation time, costs associated with in-service training and time spent for presentation will be donated or negotiated for shared costs.
- B.** Informal training and consultation by Early Childhood Special Education staff will be provided to Head Start/Early Head Start staff to meet the needs of the children.

## **III Referral Procedures for Referral, Evaluation, IEP Development and Placement**

### **A. Referral Procedures**

All agencies involved in this agreement shall follow established time lines in regard to children's identification and program referrals. The process of identification, referral, and evaluation, protected under procedural safeguards, begins as soon as a child is referred for a suspected disability. This may occur after the initial screening.

Head Start must refer a child for evaluation to the appropriate district as soon as the need is evident. Each district will process evaluations for children residing in their district.

Early Head Start children suspected of having a disability are promptly referred to the local Early Intervention Agency designated by the State Part C plan to coordinate any needed evaluations, determine eligibility for Part C services, and coordinate the development of an IFSP for children determined to be eligible under the guidelines of the State.

Should concerns be noted and the parent refuses to initiate a referral for evaluation, consent will be sought so that the LEA/Parent Mentor can contact the parent to discuss parental or Head Start staff concerns and to explain the process.

Early Intervention, Part C., must refer a child (based upon agency discretion) for evaluation to

the local school district before the child's third birthday (Refer to Section IV Part A Transition of this agreement). Early Intervention personnel and the LEA will share the responsibility for the evaluation and Part C personnel will contact the LEA if a child is referred to them for an evaluation if it is 46-90 days before the 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Any child referred to Early Intervention 45 days or less before his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, will be referred directly to the LEA. In these instances, transition timelines do not apply.

All districts will utilize the differentiated referral procedures, reviewing all the information to determine whether a referred child needs non-special educational intervention or an Evaluation Team Report (ETR) to determine the existence of a disability. The local screening may be a part of the differentiated referral process to determine if there is a need for further evaluation. If during the differentiated referral process, a child is suspected of having a disability or a parent requests an assessment, a referral for an Evaluation Team Report (ETR) is made.

Head Start is mandated to provide a screening within 45 days after services begin. If a child scores in the re-screen range twice or the refer range, parent permission to refer the child to the Local Education Agencies is obtained by the Head Start Intervention Manager.

Early Head Start will complete the developmental screening, Ages and Stages (ASQ) on all children enrolled in the program according to the required periodic schedules of observation and recordings.

Head Start/Early Head Start will provide, but not be limited to, the following items for purposes of referral to the Local Education Agencies:

- Copies of the current Screening Tools and Parent & Child Information.
- Copies of the Health history, hearing screening, vision screening, physical, and birth certificate.
- Copies of observations and assessments by the teacher.
- Signed parental permission forms to release information from Head Start/Early Head Start to Local Education Agencies and from Local Education Agencies to Head Start/Early Head Start.

All school districts will review referral information to determine if a disability is suspected. If a disability is suspected, the local school districts will be responsible for coordinating the evaluation process.

## **B. Evaluations**

1. The school district will be responsible for coordinating The Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team Report (ETR) must be completed within 90 days of the referral and 60 days from the date of parental permission. Procedural safeguard information must be provided to the parent at these times.
2. The school district will coordinate teams to conduct the assessments. Head Start/Early

Head Start and Help Me Grow/Early Intervention staff may be asked to assist with the evaluation in the following ways: release results of previously conducted screening and observations of the child.

3. Teams will conduct the evaluations through Cardington, Northmor and Highland at least once per month from September through May. More evaluations may be scheduled as the need arises.

The school district will schedule evaluations as needed, to comply with mandated timelines for children residing in their district.

4. The Local Education Agency, will be responsible for scheduling the Evaluation Team Report (ETR) and IEP meeting, if necessary, and distributing written notification to all parties who may provide services (as defined by the Ohio Administrative Code Chapter (3301-51).
5. If the child was referred by Head Start or is currently enrolled in Head Start, then the file will be sent by Head Start to the LEA. Head Start will be invited to the Evaluation Team Report and IEP meeting, if necessary, through a written invitation, phone call or email.
6. It is understood that some children exhibit developmental delays, but do not qualify for special education services as defined by the Ohio Administrative Code Chapter (3301-51). These children may require additional support for successful participation in the early childhood program and may meet the criteria of “at risk” children as defined by Head Start/Early Head Start. Head Start/Early Head Start may utilize the Individual Intensive Intervention Plan for these children.

### **C. Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

1. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed by the IEP team in cooperation with the school district. Any IEP team member may make suggestions for additions, deletions, and/or revisions of the IEP goals. The IEP must address all areas outlined in the Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3301-51.
2. Programs developed through a Head Start/Early Head Start Child Individual Intensive Intervention Plan for children with delays (not meeting ODE eligibility for special education services) are supervised by Head Start/Early Head Start personnel and/or a Mental Health Specialist contracted by Head Start/Early Head Start to develop the Individual Intensive Intervention Plan and provide services. The school district or Early Intervention may be invited to be a part of the team to develop the Individual Intensive Intervention Plan.

4. If the IEP team is to consider Head Start as the least restrictive environment for placement, then the Head Start Intervention Specialist or Manager will receive a written invitation, email or a phone call to attend the IEP meeting.
5. The IEP must be reviewed at least annually.
6. The IFSP will be coordinated by Early Intervention for children determined to be eligible for Part C services.

#### **D. Placement**

The school district is responsible for assuring a free and appropriate public education. If placed in Head Start/Early Head Start, the family has access to all the comprehensive services offered by Head Start/Early Head Start.

- a. Head Start may be utilized as a placement by public schools for preschool children determined eligible for special education services. Children referred by community agencies (i.e. Help Me Grow/Early Intervention, Physicians, Health Consultants, etc.) and/or parents may be placed in Head Start. Local school districts will monitor the IEP with support of the Head Start classroom. All children identified with a disability will be placed with the approval of the Intervention Specialist/Manager and Family Engagement Manager from Head Start. The Head Start Intervention Specialist/Manager must be invited to the IEP meeting if Head Start is considered as a placement. Head Start/Early Head Start resources cannot be committed unless Head Start/Early Head Start is involved in the IEP/IFSP process and with the approval of the Intervention Specialist/Manager. The children with special needs in any Head Start center who have an IEP will receive special education services through certified/licensed special education staff provided by the LEA. Services shall address parental involvement.
- b. Based on a team decision and the needs of the child, children may be enrolled in Morrow County Head Start.
- c. In addition to designated Special Education Staff, Head Start/Early Head Start staff may be listed as a responsible party for addressing and monitoring the child's IEP/IFSP goals and objectives.
- d. If a child enters Head Start with an existing IEP, the Head Start Intervention Specialist/Manager will release the information to the Special Education Coordinator of the Local Education Agency with a signed release from the parent. The team will meet to discuss and review the IEP and will make any necessary changes to meet the needs of the child.

#### **E. Personnel**

##### **1. Schools**

Personnel for monitoring the progress of special education services to children with disabilities must hold the appropriate certification and/or licensure as defined in Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3301-51.

## **2. Head Start/Early Head Start**

An Early Head Start Teacher serving children with disabilities will hold an Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate, an Associate degree or higher in Early Childhood Education. A Head Start teacher serving children with disabilities will hold an Associate degree or higher in Early Childhood Education. Itinerant services, if determined appropriate through the IEP, may be delivered in a Head Start classroom. Itinerant teachers and related service personnel servicing children in Head Start/Early Head Start are required to have on file the Documentation Form for Itinerant Special Education Teachers and Related Services Personnel for Criminal Background Check, Medical Statement and References and the form must be kept on file at the Head Start/Early Head Start center and be updated annually to comply with ODJFS staffing requirements.

### **F. Dispute Resolution**

Children with disabilities are afforded all rights in accordance with Chapter 3301-51 of the Ohio Administrative Code. Procedures outlined in Ohio Administrative Code will be followed regarding dispute with any agency providing services. The process may be initiated by Head Start, the school district of residence of the child, the parent, or the school district or other educational agency providing the special education or related services.

Complaints regarding services provided by Head Start/Early Head Start programs licensed by the State of Ohio Department of Job and Family Services should be directed to that state agency. Head Start/Early Head Start also has a parent grievance process identified under Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission and Community Complaint Procedure, Performance Standard 1304.50 (H).

## **IV Transition**

All parties will mutually determine a system to transition children in and out of the preschool program, as well as across program options, while ensuring placement of eligible children in the least restrictive environment.

### **A. Early Intervention, Part C. to Preschool**

The Service Coordinator is responsible for facilitating the transition of young children from Early Intervention programs to preschool which includes scheduling the appropriate meetings and explaining the transition process to the parents. The Early Intervention Contract Manager provides the Local Education Agency Quarterly Report to the Special Education Representative to every school district with parent permission. The Local Education Agency Quarterly Reports are due by the first day of February, May, August and November.



**1. Transition Planning Conference**

The Early Intervention Service Coordinator will schedule this conference no later than 90 days before the child's third birthday. With parent permission, the district representative will be invited to the meeting. At this meeting, the District Representative will complete the intake process, give parents a copy of procedural safeguards and may receive a copy of the child's birth certificate, social security card and proof of residency. The background information related to Early Intervention services will be included in the Referral for Evaluation (PR-04) which is completed at this time.

**2. Screening**

In the referral process, the local school district may complete a screening on a child who has already been receiving Early Intervention services.

**3. Assessment**

The local school district will schedule the assessment and will send written notice to the family and to the Service Coordinator. Parental consent will be obtained no later than 30 days from signed referral. (PR-05). The Service Coordinator may confer with the family during the assessment for support, questions, etc. At least one observation by the assessment team will be completed during the day of the assessment and summarized on an Evaluation Team Report, Part A form (PR-06).

**4. Post Assessment**

The local school district will notify the family and the Service Coordinator regarding the date of the ETR/IEP meeting, ensuring that it is held before the child turns three. The ETR will be reviewed with the parents at the meeting and eligibility will be determined and an IEP will be developed if the child is eligible. The district representative will complete the EMIS (Educational Management Information System) data collection form and provide a copy to NCOESC, if they are providing services. The Service Coordinator will obtain a copy of the ETR and IEP for Early Intervention.

**B. Preschool to Kindergarten**

**1. Local Education Agency**

The School District will be responsible for facilitating the transition of children with special needs from preschool to kindergarten.

- a.** After the first of the year, the parent of a child that is kindergarten eligible may receive a survey regarding their transitioning options. For any parent that has a child going onto kindergarten, a Transition Conference will be held in February or March. The Transition Planning Form will be completed at this time.
- b.** Head Start focuses primarily on 3 - 4-year-old students.

- c. If transitioning to kindergarten, a re-evaluation may be completed.
- d. Once the re-evaluation is complete, the LEA will send out invitations to all parties who may be expected to provide services. The re-evaluation and/or IEP meetings will take place before the end of the current preschool calendar school year.

## **2. Head Start**

Head Start is responsible for facilitating the transition of young children between Head Start and the public schools of Morrow County.

- a. During the Head Start registration period, the Head Start student's parents sign a Release of Information Form giving Head Start permission to forward information to the child's district of residence (as mandated by Head Start Policy or requested by the Local Education Agency) for transition to kindergarten.
- b. Head Start will develop and distribute information for parents regarding kindergarten registration dates and kindergarten screening dates.
- c. For the children who are eligible for kindergarten, Head Start may arrange a visit to a kindergarten classroom with the cooperation of the schools in Morrow County. Visits are arranged to assist Head Start children with their understanding of kindergarten and provide Head Start teachers with an idea of the structure of the kindergarten classroom.
- d. The kindergarten screening may include participation by Head Start staff. The Local Education Agency provides the training for participation in the screening.
- e. Head Start encourages Morrow County School teachers to visit Head Start centers to increase their awareness of the Head Start program.
- f. Head Start will develop and distribute information regarding the Head Start program to elementary school personnel. The information distributed provides an overview of the Head Start program.
- g. Parents/Guardians of Head Start children will have their child's transition file from Head Start to give to Morrow County Schools. The files may include; children's work samples, current Teaching Strategies Gold Assessments, and the Individual Transition Information. Intervention Plans may be released with parent permission. Evaluations, health reports and screening results are not included in the transition file.

## **V. Maximizing Services through the Joint Utilization of Resources**

### **A. Resource Sharing**

It is mutually beneficial for evaluations and the implementation of the IEP/IFSP to be a joint effort of shared resources between Head Start/Early Head Start and agencies/schools in Morrow County. Procedures for sharing information are encouraged for the following reasons:

1. To provide optimum benefit to the child
2. To avoid duplication of efforts

### **B. Other Collaborative Services:**

2. Collaboration of screening activities.
3. Collaboration of intervention meetings/observations with the school district, Help Me Grow/Early Intervention and Head Start/Early Head Start with parental permission.

### **C. DD Services**

4. Copies of initial IEP/ETR will be shared with Board of DD to determine eligibility to provide optimal services to the child unless consent is revoked by parent.
5. If eligible for DD service, the Board of DD will assist to procure funding for needed equipment. This may include utilization of Family Support Service funds or coordination of application or funding through FCFC.

## **VI Update of Local Agreement Annually**

- A.** The Interagency Agreement will be reviewed and updated annually by all parties involved, to assure that local needs are being met with regard to prompt and appropriate services to eligible preschool students with special needs. The implementation of the Interagency Agreement will be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness.

As representatives of the Schools in Morrow County and various agencies including, Morrow County Board of DD, Help Me Grow/Early Intervention. Part C, Mid-Ohio Educational Service Center, North Central Ohio Educational Service Center, and the Ohio Heartland CAC Head Start/Early Head Start, this agreement is entered into on this 1st day of July, in the year of 2022. In signing this document, the parties commit themselves to upholding the intent of this agreement and an effective delivery system.

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Kevin Kimmel, Superintendent, Mid-Ohio ESC

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Date

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Brenda Luhring, Superintendent, North Central Ohio ESC

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Date

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Chad Redmon, Superintendent, Northmor Local Schools

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Date

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Dr. Zack Howard, Superintendent, Mt. Gilead Exempted Village Schools

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Date

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Nate Huffman, Superintendent, Highland Local Schools

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Date

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Brian Petrie, Superintendent, Cardington-Lincoln Local Schools

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Date

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Kelly Worstell, Help Me Grow

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Date

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Nancy Foglesong, Superintendent, Morrow County Board of DD

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Date

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Yvonne Kinsella, Early Childhood Center Administrator, Gilead Christian

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Date

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Andrew J. Devany, Executive Director, Ohio Heartland CAC

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Date

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Debbie Schuster, OHCAC Head Start/Early Head Start Director,

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Date

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Paula Langenderfer, OHCAC Child Health & Education Director

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Date

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Diane Howard, OHCAC Family & Community Partnership Director

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Date