



Rocky Head Start Quick Start-up Guide

Classroom Rocky Head Start Staff - Every Rocky Head Start staff member has had background checks and training through Montana State Licensing. Rocky Head Start Classrooms are scored at a level 5 (highest rating) through the state Stars to Quality assurance division also known as STARS.

- **Teacher** – You! We acknowledge and value that you are your child’s first and most important teacher! We look forward to partnering with you! We welcome and value your input and participation!
- **Classroom Teaching Staff** – Classrooms have one Teacher and two Assistant Teachers to support the individual development of each child. Classrooms can have up to 16 children in them.
- **Family Advocates** - Each classroom and family has a Family Advocate that works to support needs and identify and celebrate strengths of each family.
- **Coaches** – Teaching staff have coaches that work with them to support learning in the classrooms.
- **Supervisors** – You may see a supervisor in your child’s classroom from time-to-time. They may be playing alongside the children, observing staff to provide feedback, checking health and safety postings and practices, subbing for a staff member, etc.

Rocky Head Start “Big Rules” – We have 3 “Big Rules” that everyone in the program and classrooms use.

- Be Safe
 - Be Kind
 - Be Responsible
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- Teachers will be sharing these “Big Rules” with the children and then develop their own set of “Little Rules” to follow in their classroom. An example of a “Little Rule” is “We use walking feet inside” – this falls under the “Big Rule” of Being Safe. An example of its use would be, if a child started to run in the classroom, a teacher would say, “Sally, I need you to be safe and use your walking feet inside.”
 - We will share the “Little Rules” your child’s classroom developed in our November Program Newsletter, “Rocky Rumbblings”.

During Drop-off and Pick-up please remember:

- **Do not leave children alone in private vehicles in parking areas.**

Drop off – Your child must be walked to the classroom and signed in.

Pick up – The person picking your child up must be on the “Release to” list and have a picture identification.

- We do ask that children are picked up by the time class is finished, due to the other duties the teaching staff have at the end of class. To help with this, please know that if your child’s classroom gets finished at 2:30, you can plan on picking your child up anytime between 2:15 and 2:30.
- If your child isn’t picked up by the end of class, teaching staff will begin calling the primary and secondary numbers on the “Release to” list. If they can’t get a hold of you or them, the teaching staff will begin calling other numbers you have listed on the “Release to” list. After 15 minutes of no contact, the Program Director will be notified to support with contact of the family. By 30 minutes if no contact is made, a report to Child and Family Services Division will be made.
- Please be sure to let the teaching staff or your Family Advocate know if you have a new phone number, change of address, change of person for your child’s “Release to” list etc.

Absence – If your child is not going to be in class, please contact the Attendance Line at (406) 457-7307 or at headstartattendance@rmdc.net.

- If you don’t call the Attendance Line within an hour of class start time, Head Start staff will send a text and/or email asking you to contact the Attendance Line.
- Please contact the Attendance Line FIRST! You may also contact your teaching team.

Illness – If your child is sick, please keep them home so they can be comfortable, and we can attempt to limit the spread to others.

- If your child develops symptoms such as a fever of 100.4°, vomiting, diarrhea, or is just tired and not able to participate in the classroom activities, teaching staff will call and request your child be picked up and taken home until they can return, ready to comfortably play and learn. This would require they have been fever-free without medication for 24 hours. The same applies to vomiting and diarrhea due to illness. For full policy refer to parent handbook.
- Head Start staff will not administer over the counter oral medications without a doctor’s note.
- Please talk with your child’s teacher about any medications your child needs that have been prescribed by their doctor.

Emergencies – Rocky Head Start conducts regular fire, earthquake, and “safe place” drills.

- In case of an emergency, there is a specific plan to relocate the classroom.
- Families must keep their contact information current to be used in case of an emergency by informing Rocky Head Start staff of name, phone, and address changes. Staff are First Aid/CPR certified.

Volunteering – You are always welcome in the classroom!

- Please visit with your child’s teacher on ways you can be directly involved in your child’s classroom.
- If you aren’t able to help during classroom hours, your child’s teacher or family advocate can offer/suggest other ways you could volunteer your time.
 - Becoming a member of Policy Council is another great way to be involved with Rocky Head Start! This council is made of Head Start parents that meet monthly and help make program decisions.

Meals – Rocky Head Start provides your child a breakfast, lunch, and snack.

- You will receive a menu each month so you can see what will be provided for each meal and snack.
- We serve “Family Style” which means the food is all at the tables, the children learn to dish up their own food (with assistance as needed), pour their own milk, and pass food to the others at the table along with saying please and thank you. Children also get to help set and clear their own dishes from the tables.
- Children choose what they put on their plates. As children see others eating and trying new foods, they are more likely to be open to trying a new food when it is their choice. The teachers are also eating the same foods, and making comments such as, “Yum, this celery is so crunchy! Can you hear me crunching my celery?” Before you know it, children are eating celery and talking about the crunch and if you can hear their crunching. Staff talk about the colors, textures, tastes, etc. as they participate in the meal with the children.
- **If you would like to join your child for a meal, you are very welcome to! Please let the teacher know at least 24 hours ahead of time so they can let the kitchen know to send the extra food.**
- We can recognize your child on their birthday by singing to them. If you would like to bring something in you are welcome to, although you do not have to do this. If you do, only pre-packaged food can be brought into the classroom.

Toothbrushing – Rocky Head Start promotes dental health and wants to be a part of establishing this lifelong healthy habit. Children at Head Start get to brush their teeth each day!

- We provide the toothbrushes and toothpaste. Teaching staff provide guidance following health and safety guidelines.

Child Guidance – Rocky Head Start staff guide children’s behavior in positive, effective ways through:

- maintaining a positive, encouraging learning environment
- establishing positive classroom rules
- consistent schedules, routines, transitions, and activities
- teaching social skills
- attending to challenging behavior with a planned team approach

Daily Classroom Activities – Rocky Head Start provides a balance of teacher and child-directed activities.

- We know the value of play in early childhood – it’s proven this is how children learn best! The Creative Curriculum we use is based off that! The items that are put into the classroom are intentionally chosen because they provide interest, challenge, exploration, and learning through engaging play. Children have extended time to play in these classroom specific areas each day: Art, Blocks, Dramatic Play, Sand/Water Table, Library, Discovery, Toys & Games, Music & Movement, and Technology.
- Second Step is another Curriculum we use in the classroom. These lessons consist of social-emotional and safety lessons. You will receive information on what was taught each week so you can continue reinforcing the lessons at home.

Outdoor Activity – Classrooms offer time outside daily unless the weather is blow 0° or the air quality is unhealthy. Outdoor play is such an important part of a child’s day and provides them healthy opportunities to run, jump, climb, and play with others. Sending your child in closed toe shoes (i.e., tennis shoes) provides them with the safest, most comfortable shoe to participate in these activities. Being in Montana, we also want the children to be prepared for the variety of weather we experience so please keep that in mind as you prepare your child for the day.

- If you need help with providing winter weather gear for your child (coat, snow pants, winter boots, etc.) please visit with your child’s Teacher or Family Advocate.

Screenings – Rocky Head Start staff will conduct a variety of “screenings” to help identify children who may need some extra support in their development.

- Each child will have their vision, hearing and growth (height and weight) checked by the Rocky Head Start Health & Nutrition Manager.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) completed the Behavioral Social-Emotional screening at intake – the ASQ:SE2
- First year (new) children will have a developmental screening called the DIAL-4 completed by teaching staff – consisting of sections in small and large muscle skills (balancing, hopping, throwing, cutting, etc.) a section of concepts (counting, naming body parts, shapes, colors, etc.)
 - A speech pathologist will complete the language section of this screening.
- Results of screenings will be shared with families.

Assessments – Teaching staff assess your child’s developmental progress through observations of your child demonstrating a certain skill. There is a total of 53 developmental skills teaching staff are assessing on. The teacher will be sharing your child’s developmental levels/skills using the “Report Card” during Family/Teacher Conferences.

Home Visits –

- Your child’s teacher(s) will meet with you at your home two times during the school year.
 - For the first Home Visit, the teacher and an assistant teacher will come to your home before classes begin. This is a practice Head Start has proudly done for years! This allows the child to meet the teacher in their home where they feel are most comfortable. The teacher will meet with the family member(s) to share and learn about your child and the Head Start program.
 - The second home visit will happen towards the end of the school year (May). The teacher will share the developmental growth of your child since the fall.
- Your Family Advocate will meet you once in your home to visit about any needs or goals they can support you in. They will continue to have contact with you through a variety of ways throughout the year (phone calls, texts, in the classroom, etc.)

Family Conferences –

- Your child’s teacher will meet with you 2 times during the school year to share your child’s development assessment and screening results. These meetings will be held in your child’s classroom during the months of November and February. The teacher will share your child’s strengths in each area of development, as well as a recommended goal. The goals are part of your child’s individualized learning at Head Start. Teachers will also provide family friendly activities to help you support the recommended goals at home. The areas of development are: Social – Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math.

School to Home – Reading to/with your child is such a valuable activity that promotes success in school. Each month your child will bring home a School-to-Home bag that includes a book (they get to keep!) along with an activity you get to do together! After you have finished the activity with your child, send it back to the classroom to be proudly displayed.

Social Media – Check out Rocky Head Start on Facebook for program information and events.

- If you are visiting your child in the classroom, or on a fieldtrip, please remember to only take pictures of your child. We do have children that are not allowed to have their pictures taken. Approved group and classroom pictures submitted by teachers can be seen on the Rocky Head Start Facebook page.
- Your child’s teacher can share lesson plans, newsletters, observations, learning activities, etc. through the TSG app. Teacher’s will be sending invites to join, please visit with your child’s teacher if you haven’t received the invite.

Confidentiality –

- All child and family information obtained while working as a staff member, volunteer, or observer of Rocky Head Start will be held in the strictest confidence from any outside person or agency in locked cabinets or protected computer files.
- Only non-identifying information will be used in reports, surveys, presentations, or in the media unless a specific release of information is completed.
- The only exceptions to confidentiality include:
 - Parent/guardian requests in writing that the program release information
 - Any and all information regarding known or suspected child or elder abuse or neglect
 - Family member threatens to hurt self or others
 - Court orders disclosure via subpoena
 - All other disclosures as required by law.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting – Under Montana State Law, Head Start staff is mandated to report to the Department of Family Services any reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected.

- 1-866-8205437 is the Montana Child Abuse Hotline – Centralized Intake (Child and Family Services Division)
- <http://app.doj.mt.gov/apps/svow/> is the Sexual or Violent Offender Registry.

Tobacco Prevention – For the health of children and staff, all Rocky Head Start campuses (including parking lots) are tobacco and vaping free.

Community Complaint –

- Anyone can air complaints they may have about Rocky Head Start without concern of retribution. No anonymous complaints will be accepted or considered.
- Complaints should be made with the Rocky Head Start Director or Rocky Executive Director.
- Every attempt will be made to resolve a complaint at the lowest level of authority.
- The program has a *formal* complaint form.

Rocky Head Start Personnel Reference Guide

Head Start Director -Ashley Pena-Larsen

Support Services Manager - Leslie Cochran-Olson

Office Assistant - Lane Nash

Family and Community Partnership Manager - Jaymie Hazel

Education and Child Services Manager - Felina Lee

Health and Nutrition Manager - Cassie Drynan

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance Specialist - Jennifer Filipovich

Family Engagement and Volunteer Coordinator -Signe Ask

Education Coordinator/Supervisors - Kim Nash and Shelly McClain

Education Coach/Curriculum Specialist - Elizabeth Perrier

Behavior Support Coach - Carol Ferris

Family Advocates - Lizzie Carlson-Thompson, Dave Sorenson, Angela Lunda, Nichole Silverthorne

Family Support Coordinator/Rural Site Supervisor (Townsend) - Phyllis Oliver

Family Support Coordinator/Rural Site Supervisor (Whitehall) -

Classroom Teaching Staff – Individualized per classroom and noted on your Classroom Information Sheet.