



Volunteers of America
Los Angeles

Family Handbook

2026-2027



FAMILY HANDBOOK 2026-2027

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*Volunteers of America of Los Angeles
Children's Services*

Mission Statement

*Providing quality education and
comprehensive services to children,
families and communities through
support, guidance, resources and advocacy.*

Welcome & Program Philosophy

Welcome parents, guardians, and volunteers:

Toby our Safety Mascot
Welcomes You to School
Safety is our #1 Priority
and we welcome all of our
students, families,
visitors, and staff to
follow all safety rules to
ensure a fun and safe
school environment.



Welcome to Our Program Family! We are excited to work with you to give your child a bright future full of opportunities. Volunteers of America of Los Angeles has helped children and families in our area for over 100 years. Our goal is to give you and your child the best care possible. This handbook will help you understand our programs and what you need to know. We offer Head Start (HS), Early Head Start (EHS), California State Preschool (CSPP), General Child Care (CCTR), and Child Care Partnership (CCP). We welcome you and your family to our program. We look forward to working together!

Felix Cruz – Director of Children's Services

Our Program's Goals and Values

What Our Programs Do

Our Head Start, Early Head Start, and other programs help children from birth to age 5. We want to help your child:

- Get ready for school
- Learn and grow in all areas
- Be healthy and safe

We also help pregnant women get the care they need for a healthy baby.

Our Beliefs About Families

We believe that:

- Parents are their child's first and most important teachers
- Every family has strengths
- Families know what they need and can find solutions with support
- Children learn best when their family's culture is respected

Our Four Main Goals (2024-2029)

Goal 1: Keep Children, Families and Staff Healthy and Safe

Goal 2: Help Children Who Need Extra Support Get Services Early

Goal 3: Help Children Become Life-Long Learners

Goal 4: Connect Families and Communities

We Treat All Families Fairly We welcome all children and families, no matter their:

- Race or skin color
- Culture or language
- Religion or beliefs
- Family income
- Disabilities

We celebrate what makes each family special. We help all children learn about different cultures while preparing them for success in school and life.

VOALA refrains from any religious instruction and is inclusive of all cultures and beliefs



How to Enroll Your Child

We welcome all children no matter their race, religion, gender, or disability. Spots are limited by how many children each class can hold.

We follow federal and state rules about who can join. We give first spots to families who:

- Have low income
- Have children with disabilities
- Are in foster care
- Are homeless
- Have other difficult situations

Papers You Need to Bring

To Prove Your Income:

- Tax papers, W2s, pay stubs
- CalFresh, Cal-Works, or SSI papers

To Prove Where You Live:

- Utility bill, phone bill, rent receipt, or cable bill

To Prove Your Child's Age:

- Birth certificate, hospital certificate, baptismal certificate, or passport

Health Papers:

- TB test results for child and parent
- Child's insurance card (if you have one)
- Shot records
- Physical exam results
- Dental exam results

Health Requirements – Very Important! You cannot skip shots because of personal or religious beliefs. This is California state law.

California law says: NO SHOTS, NO SCHOOL.

Your child must have all required shots before starting our program. In special situations, some children may have 10 days after starting to finish their shots.

Required Shots by Age:

Under 2 months: Hepatitis B

2-3 months: 1 Polio, 1 DTaP, 1 Hib, 1 Hepatitis B

4-5 months: 2 Polio, 3 DTaP, 2 Hib, 2 Hepatitis B

6-14 months: 3 Polio, 3 DTaP, 2 Hib, 2 Hepatitis B

15-18 months: 1 MMR (after 1st birthday), 1 Varicella (chickenpox)

18 months-5 years: 3 Polio, 4 DTaP, 3 Hepatitis B, 1 MMR, 1 Hib, 1 Varicella

Medical Exams Required Before Your Child Starts:

- TB test (tuberculosis screening)
- Current physical exam
- Current dental exam

What the Physical Exam Must Include:

- Hearing and vision check
- Height and weight
- Blood test (hemoglobin)
- Lead level check
- Blood pressure
- Mouth check
- Special blood lead tests at 12 months and 24 months

Getting Help

Need to find a doctor or dentist? We can help you find one.

No insurance? We can help you find low-cost care.

We accept virtual doctor visits (telehealth appointments).

What Happens After You Start

- If your child missed hearing or vision tests, we can do them at school within the first 45 days.
- If your child is absent for school testing, you must get results from your doctor within 45 days of starting.
- In special situations, some children can finish dental exams within 30 days of starting.
- If the dentist says your child needs treatment, you must follow up.
- Stay with the same dentist we refer you to - not all dentists work with our program.
- If you don't like your dentist after the first visit, tell your Family Advocate so they can help you find another one.



Services Overview

What We Teach Your Child Our programs help your child grow in all areas:

- Social skills: Making friends and getting along with others
- Emotional skills: Understanding and managing feelings
- Thinking skills: Learning letters, numbers, and problem-solving
- Physical skills: Running, jumping, and using their hands

We use proven methods to get children ready for kindergarten. Our teachers work with parents because you are your child's first and most important teacher.

Our Programs Work because all our programs include:

- Education and learning activities
- Health care and checkups
- Good meals and snacks
- Help with emotions and behavior
- Support for families
- Special help for children with disabilities

Program Choices

Center-Based Programs (At Our Schools)

Where we have centers: North Hollywood, South Bay, West Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, East San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles, and Santa Clarita Valley

Schedule options:

- Full day: Up to 7 hours per week, 5 days per week
- Full working day: Up to 10 hours per week, 5 days per week (some sites)
- Part day: 4 days per week (some sites)
- Rest time: 12PM to 2PM every day



Daily Life at School

What happens in our classrooms:

- Safe, clean learning spaces
- Activities based on what your child likes and needs
- Teachers who know how children learn and grow
- Time for parents to be involved

Our teaching method: We use Creative Curriculum, which allows children to learn by doing hands-on activities. Children learn best when they can touch, explore, and discover things for themselves.

What teachers do:

- Plan fun activities each week based on your child's interests
- Watch how your child is growing and learning
- Conduct two home visits per year to connect with your family
- Hold two parent-teacher conferences per year to discuss your child's progress and plan together
- Welcome your ideas about what your child should learn

Home-Based Programs (In Your Home) The purpose of this program is to support you as your child's first teacher and help you learn how to use your home to teach your child important skills.

Home visits: A Home Visitor comes to your home once a week for 90 minutes. You and the Home Visitor plan activities together based on what your child needs. Only parents or legal guardians can be present during home visits - not babysitters.

Group activities: Twice a month, you and your child join other families for fun learning activities. This helps children make friends and learn social skills. It also gives you a chance to connect with other parents and build a support network.

For pregnant moms: If you're pregnant, we visit twice a month to help you prepare for your baby. After your baby is born, we can transition to the once a week home visits.

Health Services We provide health care for all families in our programs, including pregnant mothers and children from birth to 5 years old.

What we do:

- Help you find good doctors and dentists
- Do health checks at our centers (hearing, vision, dental, blood tests, height, and weight)
- Screen for speech, language, social, and emotional development

- Support pregnant mothers with healthy pregnancy and postpartum information
- Help with breastfeeding support
- Provide extra health services for children who need them

Important: You can choose to have your child's health checks done at our center or with your own doctor. But all children must have the required health screenings to stay in the program.

Food and Nutrition Free meals for all children - We serve healthy, balanced meals that follow government nutrition rules.

Daily meal schedule:

- Breakfast: 8:00 AM
- Lunch: 11:00 AM
- Snack: 2:30 PM

How we serve meals:

- Family-style eating (children serve themselves and pass food)
- This teaches good manners and motor skills
- Monthly menus are posted so you know what your child is eating

Food safety rules:

- No outside food allowed (to prevent contamination and allergies).
- We do not serve peanuts, tree nuts, fish, or pork.
- We cannot promise that the food we buy was not exposed to allergens like nuts or other foods your child may be allergic to before it came to us.

Special diets: If your child has food allergies or medical dietary needs, we will provide safe substitute foods. You must bring medical paperwork before your child can start.

Religious or personal food needs: We will try to accommodate your family's food beliefs as much as possible.

Nutrition education:

- Fun activities teach children about healthy eating
- Take-home lessons for families
- Parent classes about healthy cooking and eating
- Information about the dangers of sugary drinks

Nutrition monitoring: We track each child's growth and eating habits. If your child has nutrition concerns (like being underweight, picky eater, low iron, or dental problems), our nutrition staff will work closely with your family.

Need help? You can ask to meet with our Registered Dietitians anytime.

Non-discrimination: We do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, gender, disability, age, or other protected characteristics in our food program.

Need information in a different format or language?

- We can provide program information in Braille, large print, audiotape, or other formats
- Information is available in languages other than English
- Contact your local site for assistance

If you have a complaint about discrimination in our food program: Complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) or write a letter with all requested information.

Get the form:

- Online: <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda> customer
- Phone: (866) 632-9992

Submit your complaint:

- Mail: USDA Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- Email: program.intake@usda.gov

Mental Health and Wellness Support: We care about your child's feelings and behavior, not just their learning. Our goal is to help every child feel happy, confident, and ready to learn.

What we do:

- Watch for signs that children might need extra emotional support
- Teach children how to handle big feelings and get along with others
- Help families learn about trauma and how it affects children
- Connect families to mental health services when needed
- Provide a safe, caring environment for all children

Disabilities Services Area Support: We care about your child's development, not just their learning. Our goal is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed in a supportive and inclusive environment.

What we do:

- Watch for signs that children might need extra developmental support
- Support children who may have developmental, learning, physical, or social emotional concerns
- Help families learn about referrals for developmental screenings, evaluations, and services
- Connect families to specialty services when needed, like ABA, or the identification of more individualized support
- Provide a safe, caring environment for all children
- Collaborate with the teaching staff to ensure classrooms are inclusive and accessible

For families: We can help with any problem that affects your daily life. We connect you with other services and support in the community.

Privacy: All mental health services are private and confidential.

Family Support Services We work with you to identify your family's strengths and needs. Together, we create a Family Partnership Agreement with goals that are important to your family.

Your Family Advocate helps you:

- Find resources like housing, jobs, or food assistance
- Access community services
- Build skills for success
- Connect with other families

Parent classes available on topics like:

- Child development
- Positive parenting
- Leadership skills
- Other topics based on what families want to learn

Father and Father-Figure Involvement: We encourage fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, and other important men in your child's life to be involved in our program.

We help father-figures:

- Be positive role models
- Build stronger relationships with their children and learn good parenting skills
- Take leadership roles in the program

Services for Children with Disabilities: At least 10% of children in our program have disabilities. We welcome ALL children and make sure every child can learn and grow.

What we provide:

- Special equipment and materials when needed
- Trained staff who know how to help children with disabilities
- Modified activities so every child can participate
- Work closely with your child's IEP (Individual Education Program) or IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan)

If you have concerns about your child's development:

- Talk to your child's teacher, site supervisor, or Family Advocate
- We can help you get your child evaluated for special services
- We will help you understand your rights as a parent
- We can attend meetings with you for support
- We offer training on child development and how to advocate for your child

Our promise: We do not discriminate against children or families because of disability, race, gender, nationality, or religion. Every child deserves the best education possible.

Team Support for Families: Our Multi-Disciplinary Team brings together teachers, managers, and specialists to help children and families who need extra support. This team includes you as the parent - we work together to find the best solutions for your child and family.

Our services are FREE to you. You never pay for any of our programs.

We follow professional rules. We promise to:

- Use the best teaching methods for young children
- Respect and support your family
- Work well with other teachers and staff
- Speak up for children and families
- Keep learning and improving and treating everyone fairly

Daily Drop-Off and Pick-Up Times

Be on time and consistent: Children do best when they have the same routine every day. This helps them get ready for kindergarten.

Who can pick up your child and when:

- Parents/guardians of any age
- Anyone you put on your Emergency Card who is at least 18 years old
- You must show ID when picking up your child
- No grace period
- We do not allow early drop-offs or late pick-ups. Your child must be picked up by the end of their scheduled class time.
- Late pick-ups: If you're late, we will call people on your Emergency Card. If we can't reach anyone, we will call the police.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures:

- Sign your child in when you arrive and out when you leave - signatures must be clear
- Come to the door, but do not enter the classroom
- Staff will bring your child to you at the door
- You must sign your child out to show you have picked them up
- Put away your cell phone when dropping off or picking up - we need you focused on your child
- Follow parking signs and guidelines at your site. Please be mindful of walking families
- Only those on your **Emergency Card** may pick up your child.

Emergency Card - Very Important! Your Emergency Card lists who can pick up your child. Keep this information current.

Requirements for emergency contacts on Emergency Card:

- Must be at least 18 years old
- Must have transportation if not within easy walking distance
- Must live nearby
- Must know your child
- Must show a valid photo ID to pick up your child

Updating your Emergency Card:

- You must come in person to make changes
- We check your card with you every three months
- Never call to add someone new - we can't verify who is calling

Court orders: If there's a up-to-date court order about your child, we follow it.

Attendance

Come to school every day. Your child learns best when they attend regularly.

How to report absences: Call your center every day your child will be absent.

What happens with poor attendance:

- After one unexcused absence, your Family Advocate will call to see if you need help
- If absences continue, we'll create an Attendance Plan to help
- If attendance doesn't improve, your child may be dropped from the program

Family vacations: Plan vacations during our scheduled breaks to avoid unexcused absences.

State Preschool (CSPP) families: You get 10 special days per year for family time.

What Your Child Should Wear

- Clothes: Casual, washable clothes your child can manage by themselves for bathroom trips.
- Shoes: Closed-toe shoes with backs or straps (no flip-flops).
- No jewelry: It gets lost easily.
- Labels on everything: Put your child's name on coats, sweaters, and extra clothes.

What Not to Bring to School

- Money, toys, toy guns, or electronic devices
- Food from home
- Siblings (they cannot be in classrooms during class time)
- Non-enrolled children cannot use playground equipment

Food for Celebrations

We provide all food at school. No outside food is allowed - this keeps everyone safe from allergies and follows health department rules.

For celebrations and birthdays:

- We celebrate in creative ways without sugary treats
- No birthday cakes, cupcakes, or candy allowed
- All food must be healthy - low in sugar, fat, and salt
- No potluck meals - everything must be prepared in our kitchen

Why these rules: We're teaching children healthy eating habits and keeping everyone safe from food allergies.

Holidays and Culture: We celebrate holidays in ways that include all families and cultures. We don't focus on any one religion, but we respect all family beliefs.

Costumes: Children can dress up using classroom materials during play time.

No Pets Policy: No pets are allowed at our centers to protect children with allergies and prevent injuries. Service animals: If you have a service animal, let your Site Supervisor know so we can make a plan.



Health and Safety

Health and Medicine Rules: If your child takes medicine provide the required paperwork:

- Written permission from you for staff to give medicine at school
- Doctor's order that includes: child's name, birthdate, today's date, medicine name, dosage, how to give it, how often, and how long to give it
- Doctor's name, California license number, phone number, and address must be clearly written
- A medication action plan signed by you and our health staff

Medicine requirements:

- Give the first dose at home to make sure it's safe
- Only prescription medicine from a doctor, including Tylenol, aspirin, other over-the counter medicine or sunscreen.
- Must be in the original pharmacy bottle with your child's name, dosage, doctor's name on the label, and **cannot be expired**.
- We can only give medicine by mouth, inhaler, or nebulizer (no IV medicines; insulin must be given by parent/guardian)

Safety procedures for Medicine:

- All medicine is locked up safely away from children
- Any changes to dosage or how to give medicine must be in writing from the doctor
- Staff must complete medicine training before giving any medicine
- You and a health team member will meet for medicine training

When to keep your child home: Check your child every morning for signs of illness before school.

Keep your child home if they have:

- Fever of 99°F or higher in the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- Bad cough or sore throat (for children 2 years and older)
- Thick mucus from the nose • Changes in behavior, appetite, or skin color
- Head lice
- Any contagious illness (pink eye, strep throat, COVID-19, hand-foot-and-mouth disease, chickenpox, ringworm, etc.)

Important: Even if symptoms seem mild, keep your child home. Childhood illnesses can get worse quickly.

What we do at school: We will send your child home if we notice:

- Temperature of 100.2°F or higher
- Any of the symptoms listed above

To come back to school:

- After being sick for 3+ days, bring a doctor's note
- For contagious illnesses, you always need a doctor's note saying it's safe to return
- If your child had a fever for more than 24 hours, see a doctor before returning

Please notify the teacher immediately if your child has a contagious illness so we can protect other children.

Daily hygiene: Send your child clean - body, hair, clothes, and short fingernails.

Glasses: If your child needs glasses, they must wear them all day at school.

Toilet training: Not required for Head Start, but we'll work with you when your child is ready.

Safety Drills

Fire drills: We practice once a month so children know what to do if there's a fire.

Earthquake drills: We practice every other month. We also join the California Great Shakeout every year. Ask to see our plans: You can review our emergency plans anytime by asking your Family Advocate or Site Supervisor.

If There's an Earthquake During School

Our job: Keep your child safe and stay with them until you pick them up.

Your job:

- Don't call the school - we need phone lines open for emergencies
- Come to the special reunion gate to pick up your child
- Bring ID and sign your child out
- Only people on your Emergency Card can pick up your child
- We can't add new people during an emergency After an earthquake: The center must be inspected before we can reopen. We'll call you with updates.

Lock Down Drills: We practice for Lock Downs in the event that there is danger in the community that can affect the safety of your child. In an actual lockdown, children cannot be picked up or dropped off. If you are at the site, you must remain on site until the lockdown is lifted. Your cooperation is important as we work together to keep everyone safe.

Child Safety and Protection Mandated reporting: All our staff are trained to recognize and report suspected child abuse or neglect. This is required by California law.

What this means:

- Staff must, by law, report any signs of abuse or neglect
 - Reports are confidential
 - We will provide you with information about what counts as abuse or neglect
 - We'll give you resources and support if needed
- Medical neglect: If your child needs medical or dental treatment and doesn't get it, this may be reported as neglect. Talk to our health staff about any treatment your child needs.

Transportation and Walking Safety

Children under 10 should always walk with an adult. Older children should walk with a buddy.

Teach your child to cross streets safely:

- Use crosswalks and only cross at corners
- Stop at the curb - never run into the street
- Look left, right, left again before crossing and keep looking as you cross
- Look left, right, left again before entering or crossing any path, sidewalk, street, or driveway
- Make eye contact with each driver before crossing in front of them
- Never cross the street from between parked cars

Other important safety rules:

- Use sidewalks when possible
- If no sidewalk, walk facing traffic on the far left
- Wear bright colors and reflective materials

Why kids need extra help: Children can't judge speed and distance like adults. Their side vision isn't fully developed until age 10, and they can't always tell where sounds are coming from.

School Bus Safety at the bus stop:

- Arrive 5 minutes early
- Stand 4 big steps back from the curb
- Wait for the driver to open the door

Getting on and off:

- Use the handrail, don't push
- Make sure backpack straps and clothes won't get caught
- Walk 10 steps away from the bus immediately after getting off
- If something falls near or under the bus, children should tell the bus driver and wait to pick it up

If crossing the street:

- Only cross in front of the bus, never behind it
- Walk at least 10 steps in front of the bus
- Make sure you can see the driver's face

Car Seat Safety Car seats save lives - they reduce death risk by 71% when used correctly.

Key rules:

- Use the correct seat! Check weight, height, and age limits regularly
- Babies should face backward until at least age 2
- Follow the car seat manual for proper installation
- Everyone must buckle up - be a good example for your child



Parent Involvement and Behavior Expectations:

We treat all families with respect and expect the same from you.

Intoxicated parents: If you appear to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or marijuana, we will not release your child to you. We'll call someone from your Emergency Card instead.

Disrespectful behavior: Rude, threatening, or disrespectful behavior toward staff may result in suspension from the program.

Parent conflicts: Conflicts with other parents are not allowed at our centers. This may result in immediate suspension.

If there are problems: We'll work with you to resolve issues while keeping your child in the program when possible.

Child Behavior and Safety: If a child's behavior creates serious safety risks (like chronic biting, hitting, or throwing objects), we will:

1. Meet with the family to create a safety plan
2. Provide mental health support and behavior strategies
3. Try everything possible to help the child stay in the program safely

Only if nothing works and the child continues to pose serious safety threats will we consider removal from the program and a more appropriate placement. This is always a last resort.

Volunteering in Our Program and why We Need You: Your help is essential to our program's success. You are your child's first teacher, and your involvement makes a huge difference.

Can't volunteer in the classroom? Ask a family member to help, or do learning activities at home with your child.

Health Requirements for Volunteers Before volunteering, you need:

- TB clearance (skin test or chest x-ray)
- MMR, DTaP, and flu shot (if required)
- Same requirements for classroom visits and group activities

Open Door Policy: You can visit your child's classroom anytime during reasonable hours. We may need to limit the number of visitors at once due to space and safety rules.

To volunteer, you must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Have current vaccinations (TB, MMR, DTaP, flu shot)
- Pass fingerprint background check

Benefits of parent involvement:

- You see what your child is learning and get ideas for home activities
- Your child sees how important their education is to you
- Teachers and parents work together for your child's success

How to Be a Great Volunteer Remember:

- Children learn by talking and being heard
- Accept children's feelings, even when they're upset
- Encourage children to ask for help
- Never speak negatively about any child
- Be a positive role model

Volunteer Rules While volunteering:

- Follow all staff instructions
- Be courteous and cooperative with everyone
- No smoking anywhere on site
- No inappropriate language
- Talk to teachers about any concerns
- Sign in and out for accurate volunteer hours
- Wear closed-toe shoes and appropriate clothing
- Keep all information about families private
- Use adult restrooms only
- No cell phones in classrooms
- Only certified volunteers with food permits can help in the kitchen
- If you provide childcare for other children, arrange care for them during your volunteer time as only enrolled children can be on the playground or in the classroom

Safety Tips for Volunteers Everyone is responsible for safety:

- Always close gates behind you
- Pick up trash and dangerous objects
- Encourage children to play safely
- Let staff know if you're going to the kitchen
- Lift heavy things with your legs, not your back
- Report broken equipment immediately
- Wear appropriate clothing (no loose strings or ties)
- Wear hair nets around food
- Never leave a child alone
- Report anything suspicious to staff

Your ideas matter! We welcome your suggestions to make our program better.

Field Trips

Field trips follow important safety precautions:

Rules:

- Only enrolled children can go (except family trips)
- No siblings allowed (except family trips)
- Parents with the most volunteer hours get first choice to chaperone
- You cannot drive yourself or follow the bus
- Children must be signed in and out at school. They cannot leave with a parent from the field trip location.
- If you're uncomfortable, keep your child home that day
- Parents may be asked to join if their child needs special support





Parent Leadership and Communication

Parent Leadership and Parent Center Committee: Every parent is automatically a member of your site's Parent Committee.

This group meets monthly to:

- Plan activities for families
- Give input on program decisions
- Elect representatives to the Policy Council

Parent Policy Council: Parents from each site are elected to serve on the Policy Council, which helps make important program decisions like:

- Reviewing the program budget
- Setting goals for the community
- Working with the Board of Directors
- Evaluating program quality

Home-based families attend their local center's parent meetings.

Shared Decision-Making We value parent involvement in all program decisions. Policy Council Officers attend Board of Directors meetings quarterly. The Board and Policy Council also have a **Program Committee** that meets quarterly to ensure parents are actively involved in how our program runs.

How We Communicate

Stay connected! Sign up for text messages and emails to get the latest program updates. If you didn't give us your email when you enrolled, contact your Family Advocate to add it.

Parent Education Classes – We offer free monthly training sessions on topics like:

- Child development
- Health and nutrition
- Mental health and behavior
- Social services and community resources

We ask families what topics you want to learn about. Classes are posted with date, time, and location information.

Information We Collect – We collect information about children and families to:

- Understand what services you need
- Show our funders how we're helping families
- Improve our programs

Types of information:

- Health screenings and services
- Child development assessments
- Family needs and surveys
- Program participation data

Your privacy is protected: All information is kept confidential and only used to help your child and family. Only staff who need the information to help you can see it.

Your Family's Privacy: We keep all information about your family private and safe. Your child's records are locked in secure file cabinets. Only staff who need the information to help your child can see it. We can only share your family's information if you give us written permission or if required by law.



Transitions and Moving Forward Moving to the Next Program

Early Head Start to Head Start: When your child turns 2½, we'll help you apply to Head Start or other preschool programs. We start planning this transition early to make sure your child has a spot.

Head Start to Kindergarten: Preparing your child and family for kindergarten happens throughout the year. This includes:

- Meeting with your child's teacher to create a transition plan
- Working with local elementary schools
- Special planning for children with disabilities
- Kindergarten readiness activities

Special Events: We celebrate your child's move to kindergarten with an end-of-year event. The number of family members who can attend may be limited based on space.

Safety note: Please don't bring balloons, stuffed animals, or gifts to events - they can be safety hazards.

Photos and Videos: We ask permission to take pictures and videos of your child to use in the classroom, and for training and program materials. You can say no, and we'll make sure your child isn't photographed.



How to Resolve Problems or Concerns

Crisis Help: If your family is in crisis, we can help. Contact any staff member to be connected to:

- Family support services
- Mental health resources
- Emergency assistance
- Community resources

Your Family Advocate can go with you to crisis centers if needed.

We want to solve any issues quickly and fairly. Here's how to get help:

Step 1: Try to Solve It First

- Talk to your child's teacher
- Contact your Family Advocate
- Speak with the Site Supervisor

Step 2: If You Need More Help For concerns or problems: Write down what happened and send it to:

- Program Director
- Policy Council Executive Committee

Timeline: You must submit your concern within 20 working days of when it happened.

What happens next:

- We'll respond within 5 working days to confirm we got your letter
- The Program Director and Policy Council will work together to find a solution

Step 3: Formal Complaints – If your concern involves a serious violation of program rules or policies, this becomes a formal grievance.

Same process: Write it down and submit within 20 working days to the Program Director and Policy Council Executive Committee. Sometimes the Policy Council and Board might not agree on a solution. Here's what happens:

Step 1: Dispute Resolution Group

- Policy Council picks 5 people
- Board of Directors picks 5 people
- These 10 people work together to solve the problem

Step 2: Mediation: If the group can't agree, they bring in a neutral mediator (someone from outside our organization who knows Head Start rules).

Step 3: Arbitration: If mediation doesn't work, they bring in an arbitrator who makes the final decision. This decision is final and everyone must follow it.

Your Rights

- Anyone can bring concerns: parents, community members, or staff
- All complaints are handled fairly and on time
- You have the right to a written response
- The process is designed to protect everyone involved

Getting Help – If you need help writing your concern or don't know who to contact, ask:

- Your Family Advocate
- Site Supervisor
- Any program staff member

We want to help you! Don't hesitate to speak up if something isn't right.

Emergency Contact Information: Call 911 for immediate emergencies

Other important numbers:

- Child Abuse Hotline: (800) 540-4000
- Domestic Violence: (213) 626-3393
- Elder Abuse Hotline: (800) 992-1660
- Psychiatric Emergency: (818) 598-6923
- Suicide Prevention: (310) 391-1253
- Crisis/Rape Support: (818) 886-0453
- Youth Crisis Hotline: (800) 922-2437
- AIDS Hotline: (800) 922-2437
- Poison Control: (800) 876-4766

Remember: This handbook is here to help you understand our program and access all the services available to your family. If you have questions about anything, please ask your Family Advocate, Site Supervisor, or any staff member. We're here to support you and your child every step of the way!



CSPP Specific Requirements

Notice of Action, Application for Services.

Volunteers of America's decision to approve or deny services at initial certification will be communicated to the family through a written statement referred to as a Notice of Action, Application for Services. Volunteers of America will certify eligibility and provide the Notice of Action within 30 calendar days from the date the application is signed by the parent(s). Any changes to the service agreement including, but not limited to: (1) The contractor determining, at recertification, that the need or eligibility requirements are not met; (2) The contractor modifying the family fee or the amount of service; or (3) The contractor terminating services will be communicated in writing through the issuance of a Notice of Action (NOA).

Appeal Information for Notice of Action Complaints in CSPP Funded Program

If the parent disagrees with the written decision from Volunteers of America, the parent has 14 calendar days from the date the NOA was provided to the parent to make an appeal request.

Step 1. If you do not agree with the agency's action as stated in the Notice of Action, parents may appeal the intended action. To protect your rights to appeal, parents must follow the instructions described in each step listed below, also stated on the back of the Notice of Action.

Parents/Guardians must complete the back of their Notice of Action fully.

Step 2. If the parent disagrees with the written decision from PACE, the parent has 14 calendar days from the date the NOA was provided to the parent to make an appeal request. Mail or deliver your local hearing request within 14 calendar days (about 2 weeks) of receipt of your Notice of Action to:

*Los Angeles County Office of Education
Head Start Early Learning Division
Attn: Luis Baustista, Executive Director
10100 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 300
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
Phone: (562) 940-1770*

Step 3. Within ten (10) calendar days following the agency's receipt of your appeal request, the agency will notify you of the time and place of the hearing. You or your authorized representative is required to attend the hearing. If you or your representative does not attend the hearing, you abandon your right to an appeal, and the action of the agency will be implemented.

Step 4. Within ten (10) calendar days following the hearing the agency shall mail or deliver to you a written decision.

Step 5. If you disagree with the written decision of the agency, you have 19 days from the date of the written decision to file an appeal with the California Department of Education (CDE). Your appeal must include the following information (1) a written statement specifying the reasons you believe the agency's decision was incorrect, (2) a copy of the agency's decision letter, and (3) a copy of both sides of this Notice of Action. Mail your appeal to the following address:

*California Department of Education
Child Development Division
Attn: Appeals Coordinator
1430 N Street, Ste. 3410
Sacramento, CA 95814*

Step 6. Within 30 calendar days after the receipt of your appeal, COE will issue a written decision to you and the agency. If your appeal is denied, the agency will stop providing childcare and development services immediately upon receipt of CDE's decision letter.

Suspension and Expulsion

Volunteers of America will not suspend or expulse a child due to behavior, or encourage or persuade a family to prematurely pick up a child due to a child's behavior before the program day ends, unless in specific circumstances and not before collaborating with the child's parents or legal guardians to determine other reasonable options as appropriate. Suspension is only used as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances when there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated without removal. To the greatest extent possible, Volunteers of America will endeavor to ensure the full participation of enrolled children in all program activities. If suspension is deemed necessary, Volunteers of America will help the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety by doing the following:

- A. Continuing to engage with the parents or legal guardians and continuing to use appropriate community resources.
- B. Developing a written plan to document the action and support needed.
- C. Providing referrals to appropriate community services.
- D. If the child has an individualized family service plan or individualized education program, Volunteers of America, with written parental consent, will contact the agency responsible for the individualized family service plan or individualized education program to seek consultation on serving the child. Notice of suspension and expulsion will be communicated in writing to the parent or legal guardian within 24 hours the decision has been made. Parents have the right to make a appeal to the State Department of Education no later than 14 calendar days after the receipt of the notice, during which time, no services will be provided to the family.

Abandonment of Care

When the family has not been in communication with the provider for seven (7) consecutive calendar days and has not notified the Volunteers of America of the reason the family is not using services. After 30 consecutive calendar days, Volunteers of America may issue a notice of action to disenroll the family. Volunteers of America will make every possible attempt to contact the family through various methods before disenrollment.

ANNUAL PESTICIDE USE NOTIFICATION

Volunteers of America, Children's services division has adopted an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan and policy. The policy includes notifying parents/guardians of pesticide use. During the school year, it may be necessary to apply pesticides at your child's school to avoid serious health problems posed by pests and/or maintain the integrity of a structure. However, should you feel that your child's or your (for school staff) health and/or behavior could be influenced by exposure to pesticide products, you are notified as follows:

- An application of products on the approved list may be applied during the school year.
- In the event the use of a product is required that is not on the approved list, you will be notified 72 hours in advance. (Exception: Emergency circumstances that warrant an immediate response).
- Additional information regarding pesticide products, including those on the EPA approved list, is available online at <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov>

Please complete, detach and return the form below to the school's Site Supervisor, indicating whether you wish to be pre-notified each time a pesticide is scheduled to be used at the school.

-----Cut here and return if applicable-----

**Parent/Guardian request for notification
2025-2026**

- ☐ **I would like to be pre-notified** every time a pesticide application is to take place at my child's school (i.e., in addition to annual notification). I understand that the notification will be sent home with my child, or provided to me by school staff member at least 72 hours before application. (Exception: Emergency circumstances that warrant an immediate response).
- ☐ **I do not need to be notified** every time a pesticide is to take place at the school. I understand that I will receive an annual notification in the Parent Student Handbook, or by other means, of pesticides approved for use at schools.

Child's name (print): _____

School: _____

Name of parent/guardian (print): _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Office Use Only: Site Supervisor please file the original in the IPM binder on site. If the above "I would like to be notified" box is checked, forward a copy of this notice via interoffice mail to Gabby Ventura at gventura@voala.org

Volunteers of America of Los Angeles
HS/EHS
PARENT AGREEMENT FOR CENTER AND HOME BASE PROGRAMS

Child's Name

Date of Birth

School Site

Parent's Name

Teacher's Name

PARENT PARTICIPATION, ATTENDANCE, AND HEALTH

1. Parents or parent-substitutes are encouraged to participate in the classroom at least 4 sessions each month (20 hours per month). *Parents/Substitutes in our Home Base program are also expected to complete the assigned work left by their Home Base Teacher. (20 hours per month)*
2. Parents or parent-substitute are encouraged to attend monthly meetings. *Home Base option meets twice a month at a center and parents are highly encouraged to attend for Socializations.*
3. Child/children are to be brought and taken from HS, EHS, and CSPP class on time. In the event a parent is more than ten minutes late to pick-up child: the person on authorized list will be called.
Note: The person on the authorized list must be available, willing, and able to pick up the child in event of an emergency. This person must present a picture ID when picking up the child.
4. Late pick-ups may result in suspension of HS, EHS and CSPP services.
5. Parent or parent substitute, eighteen years or older, will sign child "IN" and "OUT" on attendance sheet at appropriate time each day writing in the exact time of day.
6. Parents or parent substitute are to notify the classroom staff when a child is absent. Chronic absences may be grounds for dropping your child from the program. *For Home Base option, after 2 missed home visits on behalf of the parents, a letter of interest will be sent to family to encourage participation.*
7. Parents or parent substitute are to notify the classroom staff when a child is going to be absent because of a family emergency, is leaving town, moving, or any other reason.
8. *Irregular attendance may result in dismissal from the program from both center and home base options.*
9. Parents or parent-substitute are to notify staff as soon as possible about any change in address, telephone numbers, work schedules, or class schedules.
10. Parents or parent-substitute are to respond as soon as possible to remove their child from class because of child's illness.
11. *Parents or parent-substitute are to complete a **TB clearance**, immunization requirements, physical exam and a dental exam for the enrolled child upon enrollment. This applies to both center base and home base options.*
12. Parent volunteers must submit a current Tuberculosis, Pertussis, Measles and Flu shot clearance PRIOR to volunteering in the classroom.

I HAVE READ, OR HAVE HAD EXPLAINED TO ME THE ABOVE INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROGRAM

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature of Staff

Date

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA OF LOS ANGELES
HS/EHS and STATE PRESCHOOL

FAMILY HANDBOOK
PARENTAL AGREEMENT

SITE NAME: _____

CHILD'S NAME: _____

I have been given the Family Handbook. The topics listed below I have read or it has been explained to me.

- HS, EHS, CSPP and CCP Program Philosophy
- Enrollment Procedures
- Introduction of Services
 - Education
 - Health and Nutrition
 - Wellness Promotion
 - Family and Community Engagement
 - Parent Involvement
 - Disabilities Services
- Attendance Policy
- Wellness Promotion and Consultation
- Incidental and Medical Services
- Center Policies and Procedures
- Volunteer Guidelines, VOALA Policy Council and Parent Center Committees
- Screenings
- Transition to Kindergarten- List of Local Elementary Schools
- Parent Community Grievances
- Parent Agreement

I understand the procedures and I will abide by the school rules.

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

DATE

PROGRAMAS DESDE EL NACIMIENTO HASTA LOS CINCO AÑOS DE EDAD/BIRTH TO FIVE PROGRAMS

ENROLL NOW!/MATRICULE A SU NIÑO (A) AHORA!

*FREE/GRATIS HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START PRESCHOOL/PREESCOLAR

(818) 980-2287
(844) 340-9140

*for qualifying families

*para familias que califican

Apply/Aplique:

voalacs.org/enrollnow

or scan the QR code

o escanear el código QR



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LOS ANGELES



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