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|  | **Teaching and the Learning Environment** |
| **Category: Education and Child Development Program Services** | **Regulations: 1302.31 (part 2)Teaching and the Learning Environment** |
| **Purpose:** | Our Seedling’s center-based programs will provide responsive care, effective teaching practices, and will provide an environment that promotes healthy development and children’s skill growth in all of our children. |
|  | **Activity / Steps:** |
| **Teaching and the Learning Environment:** | The environment and the teaching practices will ensure safety, promote developmental growth in all of the children, and individualization by:  1. Utilizing The Creative Curriculum Foundation Books Volume 1-6 that support an environment that is engaging, welcoming and age-appropriate, and supports all learning domains.  Volume books are:  a. The Foundation of a classroom  b. The Interest areas of the classroom  c. Promoting Literacy, Math, Science, and Technology & the Arts in the classroom, and supporting Dual Language Learners.  2. The staff must follow the Active Supervision Policy # 220 and implement the procedures of the policy to ensure that no child is ever left alone. 3. The staff must follow the Safe, Nurturing & Responsive Environment Policy #221 to assure that children under our supervision are in an environment that is safe, nurturing and responsive.  4. The staff must follow all health protocols and policies to ensure healthy practices are being implemented in the classroom and with all the children being served (see health policies and procedures).  5. The staff must follow all safety protocols and policies to ensure safety practices are being implemented in the classroom with all children being served (see policies and procedures).  6. Align developmental goals and progress of children with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Birth to Five  7. Individualize the children based on parent input, assessment results, individualized plans from school districts, health care providers, or other outside agencies that are connected to the child and family.  8. Utilize collected data from classroom observations, CLASS observations, monitoring reports, assessment reports, parent feedback, etc. to maintain and enhance teaching and learning environments.  9. Provide on-going training and resources to the staff to support and expand their professional development that will then promote effective teaching practices in the classroom.  10. Provide on-going training and resources to the staff that will promote safe teaching practices, routines, and environments. |
| **Effective Practices:** | The staff must provide nurturing and responsive interactions with the children that will help build emotional security and help with language development, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills.  Seedlings staff will utilize the Creative Curriculum volume books and kits for Infant and Toddlers and the Preschool kit with the Study Guides to:   1. Plan for age-appropriate experiences 2. Enhance instructional teaching practices 3. Develop focus lesson plans that support individual children’s skill level/goals/interest. 4. Promote growth in the developmental domains that are in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Birth to five. 5. Measure and assess the children’s developmental growth through the Teaching Strategies Gold assessment system. 6. Provide data to the parents and receive parent input for goals, lesson plans, and assessment. |
|  | The Seedlings staff will maintain and further develop effective teaching practices by:   1. Communicating with the children at their level and in their home language. 2. Individualize the children based on needs, patterns of growth, and interest of the children. 3. Support and utilize parent input gathered from screenings and through communication with the family. 4. The staff will be observed for CLASS (2x per program year) and work on the 3 domains social emotional, classroom organization and instructional support through developing and learning plans that have been established by the teaching staff, center manager, and the School Readiness Coach. 5. Utilize data that is gathered from the assessment system Teaching Strategies Gold (3x per program year) to individualize and plan for the children’s next steps in development for all learning domains: literacy, math, social-emotional, language, physical, creative arts, science, social studies that will also achieve progress outlined in the Head Start Early Learning Framework: Birth to Five. 6. The staff will receive on-going training and resources both as an individual need and interest and as an agency need and interest. |
|  | For Dual Language Learners: staff must recognize and support bilingualism and bi-literacy using research–based practices that support development by:   1. Respecting and recognizing the home language that is used in the family’s home. 2. Provide screenings to parents in their home language or parent’s language preference. If needed, provide a translator to support home language. 3. Engage and have teacher practices that focus on the development of the home language first, and then provide some teacher instruction or experiences in English. 4. Provide materials and information to the parents in their home language or in the parent’s preferred language. If needed a translator may be needed to support home language. 5. For the preschool children utilize the Home Language Survey to help assess children with both the parent and the teacher input in the child's dominant language. 6. The staff will support dual language learners by providing their teaching practices in the language the child understands most through individual support or small group support. 7. Teachers will avoid code-switching between languages. 8. The teachers will support the children’s language by supporting and responding to children based on the language the child uses, code-switching in children is acceptable. 9. The classroom will display a print-rich environment that supports all the languages of the children being served. 10. Print rich will be seen through the labels of the materials, through the classroom charts (personal space for children, schedules, attendance chart). 11. Materials in the classroom which include: books, music, posters, dramatic clothes and food, musical instruments, block materials, puzzles, puppet, dolls, family photos, and art material represent multicultural awareness and acceptance to our children and families. |
| **Learning Environment** | The Seedling staff must ensure that they are providing a well-organized learning environment that promotes relational learning, exploration, learning experiences, choice, and supports children’s variety of learning and interest.  The Staff will:   1. Promote relational learning for all children in the program. 2. Utilize a daily schedule that allows for children, parents and staff to know what is to occur next. 3. Establish a routine in the classroom that children can follow and predict what may occur next. 4. Establish a lesson plan that individualizes children for both indoor and outdoor experiences. 5. Be flexible when needed in order to properly support children’s needs and interests. 6. Utilize the Creative Curriculum to help establish: routine, schedules, classroom set-up, interest areas, and lesson plan ideas. The staff can also connect with their center manager or their school readiness coach for additional support. 7. The staff will plan for large group and small group experiences and will include teacher-directed and child–initiated activities and experiences and exploration. 8. Either active and quiet learning experiences or activities will be provided as well as individual and group activities and experiences. |
| **Material and Space for Learning:** | To support children’s learning the materials and furniture in the classrooms will be developmentally and age-appropriate.   1. The material / furniture in the classroom will be in fair or in good condition. 2. The material / furniture will be appropriate in size for the age group that the classroom is serving. 3. Materials will be developmentally appropriate for the age group the classroom is serving. 4. Classrooms will provide adequate usable space for children based on licensing standards. 5. Materials / furniture and space must include any necessary accommodations for children with special needs. Materials should be rotated periodically based on children’s interest and developmental learning. 6. Outdoor play areas are an extension to the indoor environment and to children’s learning, the staff must have a plan for outdoor experiences and activities for children to engage in. Indoor materials can be utilized outdoors. 7. The classroom should offer opportunities for children to engage with other children in large and small groups and a place for a child to have some alone / time to myself. |
| **Promoting learning through approaches to rest, meals, routines, and physical activity:** | Rest Time: The Seedlings program that operates for 6 hours or more or serves infants and toddlers must provide children an opportunity to rest.  1. Infant and toddlers must have a daily opportunity to sleep, for infants it will be based on the  infant’s own schedule to sleep. For toddlers the classroom will have an estimated time of when  rest time can occur, but staff must support individual children’s needs of children until a  a child can adjust to the routine.  2. For preschool children, the center must offer an opportunity for rest time which can be up to 60  minutes for 6 hour sessions and 90 minutes for programs over 6 hours. The children are  encouraged, but not forced to rest or nap.  3. The classroom staff must allow sufficient time for children to prepare for rest time and also to  conclude rest time.  4. For toddler and preschool children they are encouraged to help with the process of setting-up rest  time by preparing their mat or retrieving their blanket and sheet from their personal space.  5. Children who do not nap after 15 minutes of being on their mat, must be allowed to engage in a  quiet activity either on their mat or at a table (see rest time policy).  6. For Infants, they must be placed on their back when placed in their crib to sleep (see rest time policy).  7. For infants they must only be placed in their crib that only contains a fitted sheet when they are  sleeping, as soon as an infant awakes they must be removed from their crib (see rest time policy).  8. Sufficient lighting must be present in the room (staff should be able to see each child’s face  from anywhere in the classroom) to ensure that staff can properly supervise sleeping children. |
|  | Snack and mealtime: The Seedling staff must plan and provide sufficient time for meals to occur in the classroom and model family style meals when developmentally appropriate.   1. For infants who are bottle fed or are being introduced to solid foods will be fed based on their own individual schedule. 2. A bottle fed infant must be held appropriately while being bottle fed, this will ensure safety and time for socialization to occur between the teacher and the infant. 3. Toddlers and preschool children will follow the USDA meal time schedule. 4. The minimum of 30 minutes must be provided for each meal that is served. 5. Family style meals must be role modeled and practiced in the classroom. 6. Both toddlers and preschool children are encouraged to serve themselves or have the teacher use the hand over hand process to support children. 7. Mealtimes are an opportunity for staff-child interactions to occur. Staff must engage in conversation with the children during mealtime and contribute to children’s learning and development. 8. The staff must never use food as a reward or as a punishment and must never force children to eat nor ever deny a child food. 9. The staff must role model food tasting to the children. |
|  | Routines: The Seedling staff must ensure they provide sufficient time and planning for daily routines to occur throughout the day. Children must not be rushed through their daily routines and instead should have daily routines be a part of their development, learning, and skill growth. Daily routines include:  1. Handwashing (see hand washing protocol and procedure for details).  2. Diapering or toileting (see diapering/toileting protocol for details).  3. Transitions (from one activity to another or from one location to another).  4. The staff must plan for time needed to prepare children before and after to minimize the loss of  learning time. |
|  | Physical activity: physical activity is important to children’s development and learning. Staff must ensure they are promoting physical development in both small and large gross motor development in the classroom and outside of the classroom.  1. The staff will plan up to 2 outdoor experience for children to engage in (depending on program  hours) and develop either their small or large gross motor skills.  2. The staff will plan for an indoor physical activity to occur that can be linked to I am Moving I am  Learning Curriculum.  3. All age groups in the program will have a planned gross motor activity for indoors and outdoors.  4. Programs that have access to a gym, can utilize gym use as part of their gross motor planning as  long as it is planned on the weekly lesson plan.  5. Scheduled outdoor time for preschoolers is up to 30 minutes 2x a day for centers who operate 6  hours or more.  6. Scheduled outdoor time for infant and toddlers can be up to 20 minutes 2x a day.  7. Outdoor time may vary depending on weather conditions, Center Managers can adjust the time  when needed.  8. The staff must plan for the time needed to prepare children to go outdoors and to come indoors  with minimizing loss of learning time.  9. Opportunity to participate in physical development must never be used as a form of a reward or  punishment. |
| **Resources:** | 1. Creative Curriculum: Volume books and Learning Kits  2. School Readiness Coaches  3. Center Managers  4. Guide sheet on labeling a classroom  5. Guide sheet on Setting-up the physical environment  6. Policies and protocols on health and safety |