

## Missing Child Policy

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/im/acf-im-hs-15-05>

### Supervision and Transitions ACF-IM-HS-15-05

The Office of Head Start (OHS) asks all Head Start and Early Head Start program leaders to remind staff to prioritize children's safety by providing continuous supervision. Governing bodies, Tribal Councils, Policy Councils, directors, and managers must create a culture of safety within their programs. Everyone shares responsibility for keeping children safe. Grantee staff must ensure that **"no child will be left alone or unsupervised while under their care"** (45 CFR1304.52 (i)(1)(iii)).

To prevent children from being left unsupervised, program plans should include specific strategies for managing transitions throughout the day, such as when children arrive, leave, or move from one location to another within a center. Some examples may include:

- Develop specific plans for regular routines, such as drop-off and pick-up times, including staff assignments (who will monitor the door, etc.).
- Ensure teachers, teachers' aides, and volunteers know when transitions will take place and are in position to provide constant supervision.
- Discuss how the team will adjust to maintain appropriate adult-to-child ratios at all times, including when a teacher needs to leave the room.
- Ensure parents understand their responsibilities during drop-off and pick-up of their child, and be alert to and communicate potential child wanderings as needed.
- Limit the amount of time children are waiting in line to transition.
- Reaffirm to children what adults expect during transitions.
- Include plans for irregular times, such as when a center closes early due to weather or an outside door is open to allow the delivery of supplies.

Programs should report incidents of unsupervised children to the Regional Office of Head Start within three days of the incident, including, where applicable, any reports made or information shared with child welfare agencies, state licensing bodies, and parents. Regional Offices will provide technical assistance, as appropriate.