



Empowering People, Enriching Communities

## Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation

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Dear OACAC Head Start/Early Head Start Families and Staff:

As our local, national and international communities continue to assess the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus), OACAC receives ongoing guidance from its funding sources and local County Health Departments. For over 95% of those who have been diagnosed with the coronavirus worldwide, the illness has not become life-threatening. 80% of those affected worldwide are advised to simply stay home, and they recover in a week or so. While even the experts are learning more every day and there is much that is unknown.

Currently, Springfield-Greene County Health Department has advised Springfield Public Schools, the largest school district in the state of Missouri, not to close at this time. By remaining open, we can continue to support the health and well-being of our nearly 1,000 children and their families.

As part of this guidance, OACAC Head Start is providing the following update for children, staff and parents.

### **No Current Plans for Closure**

- In collaboration with the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, there are no current plans to close OACAC Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms.
- Home visits will continue to homes as long as family members in those homes do not have flu-like symptoms. We request families notify their Home Visitor or Family Advocate if family members have a fever or have had a fever within the prior 24 hours, so they can reschedule the visit. Staff remain available by phone.
- Any future direction regarding closure would come from the local County Health Departments, based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That assessment would be made on a site-by-site, case-by-case basis in the event of increased illness among the children and staff in individual centers.
- Many factors guide the direction to avoid program-wide closure, including the following:
  - Program-wide closure would have a negative impact on the ability of our healthcare system to care for those who may become sick. A rapid, widespread need for childcare would have immediate, negative implications for our region.
  - Many of our children depend on the quality meals provided by the centers that are essential for their daily nutrition, as well as a safe and secure learning environment.
  - Program-wide closure would have a detrimental impact on many children and their families.

### **Lower Risk Factor for Children**

- COVID-19 poses the most significant risk to those who are over the age of 60 years and those who have chronic medical conditions and weaker immune systems.
- Significant risk factors remain lower for children.

### **Prevention Measures**

- As we do every flu season, OACAC Head Start/Early Head Start is vigilant in our efforts to reduce the spread of infectious diseases by educating children, families, and staff about practicing healthy habits and ways they can help prevent the spread of flu and the common cold. We are following the guidance from the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>
- Program staff have an increased focus during flu season on disinfecting frequently touched surfaces to help prevent the spread of germs.
- Deep cleanings are also performed as needed when a classroom or center experiences high absence rates due to flu-like symptoms.
- Parents/family members are requested not to come to the center if they have a fever or have had a fever within the past 24 hours.
- Parents are encouraged to prepare their households with these tips from the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html>
- Parents are encouraged to help children stay healthy in the following ways:
  - Keep children home if they are showing signs of flu, which include: fever (usually high), muscle aches and chills, headache, sore throat, extreme tiredness, sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.
  - Also keep your child home when he/she has diarrhea, vomiting, low-grade fever.
  - Children should be kept home until they are fever free for 24 hours *without fever-reducing medication* such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
  - Minimize contact with others who are ill.
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, especially when someone is ill.

### **Travel Guidance**

- The Springfield-Greene County Health Department advises staff, children, and families to be especially cautious in making travel decisions and to follow the latest guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- For those who choose to travel, it is advised that prevention tips are followed. Upon return, it is important for individuals to monitor any change in their health and to notify your local health department with questions or concerns.

### **Communication Updates**

- Moving forward, should there be an impact on individual center or classroom events, activities or other schedules, that information will be communicated by the center.
- Other guidance from county, state or federal health professionals will also be shared.

- Updated information regarding prevention and response efforts by OACAC is provided at, including health tips and links to the health department, CDC and other resources.

### **Health Department Contact Information**

- Health concerns regarding COVID-19 may be directed to your local health department:
  - Barry County Health Department – 417-847-2114
  - Christian County Health Department – 417-581-7285
  - Dade County Health Department – 417-637-2345
  - Dallas County Health Department – 417-345-2332
  - Lawrence County Health Department – 417-466-2201
  - Polk County Health Department – 417-326-7250
  - Springfield-Greene County Health Department – 417-874-1211
  - Stone County Health Department – 417-357-6134
  - Taney County Health Department – 417-334-4544
  - Webster County Health Department – 417-859-2532