

## NEIGHBORIMPACT HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START

### Policy & Procedure

<b>Policy #:</b> HS-2	<b>Approval Date:</b> 5/8/2025
<b>Title:</b> Animals in the Classroom	<b>Procedure Revision Date:</b>
<b>Section:</b> Child Development and Health Services	<b>Most Recent Board Review:</b> 5/8/2025
	<b>PC Approval Date:</b> 10/17/2024
<b>Forms Required:</b> N/A	
<b>Performance Standards:</b> OCCR: 414-300-0240	<b>Page 1 of 2</b>

**Policy:** Head Start & Early Head Start staff will ensure that only “allowable” animals will be brought into the Head Start classroom and appropriate safety and sanitation procedures will be followed at all times.

**Purpose:** In helping to care for the animals, children learn responsibility. Observation of animals develops appreciation for nature, the environment, and science. Social skills are gained as children learn to nurture.

**Procedure:**

- A. NeighborImpact Head Start & EHS follows the Office of Childcare Regulations, (OCCR 414-300-0240) and the regulations of the buildings our classrooms are located in.
  
- B. Small animals will be properly housed in a cage with removable bottom. The person cleaning the cage must not be pregnant and children may not be present during cleaning. Droppings from the cage will be disposed of in a sealed bag. **Cages will be cleaned weekly.** Latex gloves should be worn to protect staff.
  
- C. Any animal showing signs of illness, such as loss of fur, decreased appetite, or reduction in activity shall be removed from the center immediately.
  
- D. Animals may be touched by children only under adult supervision. All children, volunteers and staff that touch an animal must wash their hands afterwards. If an animal “potty accident” occurs the children must wash hands and clothing immediately. Only staff’s hands are to be inside the animal cage.
  
- E. Animals cannot roam the classroom freely without supervision. When they are out, they must be closely monitored to ensure that any accidents are cleaned up with disinfectant immediately.
  
- F. Animals and animal cages may not be allowed in areas where food or food-related supplies are prepared, consumed, or stored.
  
- G. Animal food supplies shall be kept out of the reach of children and stored separately from food supplies and equipment. Animal food shall be stored in a manner that does not attract rodents or insects.

H. Animals can visit the classroom under certain circumstances:

1. A traveling pet show can visit a classroom if they are registered with U.S.D.A. However, special arrangements must be made if snakes and reptiles which can carry **Salmonella** bacteria are to be allowed in the classroom. The Site Coordinator and the Health Services Manager will be utilized in the planning of such an event.
2. Dogs and cats from children's homes can only be brought in if they have no history of biting/scratching, have an updated rabies vaccination and children in the classroom who might be afraid are taken into consideration prior to allowing the pet.
3. Other animals with the exception of Snakes, Turtles, and other Reptiles can be brought in for sharing and for a limited time if they do not bite and hands are washed before and immediately after handling.
4. The center shall have and follow written procedures for the care and maintenance of animals in the center.

H. If an animal bites a child, follow appropriate first aid and incident reporting procedures and remove the animal from the classroom immediately. In order to avoid a bite, be sure to follow these guidelines:

- a. Talk about how to handle animals (or not to handle) prior to introducing the classroom pet.
- b. Teach animal safety – Children will be supervised when handling animals. Sometimes children want to test limits with animals or they are unaware of how big and strong they are in comparison with a small animal. In either case, an over zealous squeeze or shake may lead to a painful bite.
- c. Staff and children's hands must be washed prior to handling an animal. The smell of food may invite an animal bite.

I. Be sure to check for children's allergies before pets are introduced.

J. Parents will be notified in writing one week in advance if there will be a pet in the classroom.