

**The Mission of the Mercer County Early Childhood Alliance is to provide children and families with a system of linkages, continuity and multiple supports that facilitate optimal growth and development for young children and their families.**

**I. Purpose, Guiding Principles and Goals of This of Community Collaboration**

The purpose of this agreement is to promote cooperation in the development of a coordinated, interagency system of services for all children receiving services and supports from early childhood participating parties from birth through eight and their families.

Families often access services from multiple agencies for their young children. Coordination of these services will make these services more easily understood, accessible and flexible to meet the needs of all families. Service coordination and program continuity will also support children in achieving outcomes at high levels as competencies acquired in one service setting are reinforced and advanced in subsequent services.

All participating parties agree to these guiding principles for services that serve as a foundation for the development of a collaborative early childhood system at all levels:

- Family-centered
- Individualized
- Culturally sensitive
- Community-based, occurring in natural and inclusive environments
- Quality services promoting continuity from one service setting to another

The goals of this collaborative agreement:

- Foster communication and information sharing among agencies, personnel and families regarding the services and responsibilities of each agency participating in this agreement in order to better serve young children and families.
- Foster the clarification of family roles and responsibilities to ensure participation of families as members of the early childhood community collaborative team.
- Foster collaboration among early childhood programs to facilitate smooth transition for children, families and staff.
- Promote resource sharing and collaborative opportunities in the development, provision and evaluation of early childhood services.
- Provide a format for joint planning and sharing of training and service resources.
- Foster the coordination of collaborative child find efforts to identify young children eligible for services provided by participating agencies.
- Identify monitoring, self-assessment and/or evaluation procedures for participating agencies to ensure implementation and regulatory compliance with the goals of the agreement.

**II. Participating Organizations with Contact Persons**

**Agency: Mercer County Board of Education**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: WV Birth To Three**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: CASE WV Head Start**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: CASE WV Healthy Families America**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: CASE WV Starting Points Program**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: Right From The Start**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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Mercer County Early Childhood Collaborative Agreement

**Agency: MountainHeart Child Care Resource & Referral**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: Child Protect of Mercer County, Inc.**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: TSN / WIC**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: Mother Goose Child Care Co-Op**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: Mary's Cradle Maternal & Infant Resource Center**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: Children's Home Society of West Virginia**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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**Agency: Family Day Care Association**

Mission:

Agency Representative with Contact Information:

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### III. Applicable Legal Requirements

- 1997 WV State Interagency Agreement among the Department of Education, The Department of Health and Human Resources, the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families, the Head Start Association, Region III Resource Access Project and ACF Region III Head Start.
- WV Board of Education Policy 2525 (Universal Pre-K), Policy 2419 (Special Education), Policy 2520.15 (Early Learning Standard Frameworks – Content Standards and Learning Criteria for WV Pre-Kindergarten); Policy 2510 (Quality Education including early childhood); Policy 4336 (WV School Transportation Regulations); Policy 2520.15 (Early Learning Content Standards and Frameworks); and Policy 5202 (Minimum Requirements for the Licensure of Professionals/Paraprofessional Personnel)
- Regulations under Part C and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources Regulations for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities. Policy 8500 Series
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources Regulations for Child Care
- Head Start Performance Standards
  - Early Childhood Development and Health
    - 1304.20 - Child Health and Development
    - 1304.21 - Education and Early Childhood
    - 1304.22 - Child Health and Safety
    - 1304.23 - Child Nutrition
    - 1304.24 - Child Mental Health
  - Family and Community Partnerships
    - 1304.40 - Family Partnerships
    - 1304.41 - Community Partnerships
  - Program Design and Management
    - 1304.50 - Program Governance
    - 1304.51 - Management Systems
    - 1304.52 - Human Resources Management
    - 1304.53 - Facilities, Materials, and Equipment
  - Other
    - 1305 - ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance)
    - 1308 - Services for Children with Disabilities
    - 1310 - Head Start Transportation
- American with Disabilities Act
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

#### IV. Areas of Agreement

##### 1. Collaboration Area: Public Awareness, Child Find and Screening Activities

Collaborative Policy: The team will collaborate on activities to promote public awareness about the availability and benefit of services for ALL young children regardless of ability and socioeconomic level and their families. The team will develop collaborative strategies for screening young children related to immunizations and problems or delays in hearing, vision, speech, language, development and dental health. Assist families and other community partners in gaining greater understanding of the referral process for various community services for children regardless of ability and socioeconomic level and other special needs.

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: The organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Informing families and the public regarding available developmental screening opportunities.
- Public awareness about the benefit of early childhood services and how to access these services, including (but not limited to) the “Looking Into Child Care and Pre School in Mercer County” publication and [www.MercerResources.org](http://www.MercerResources.org).
- Appropriate identification, location, referral and, if needed, evaluation of children who need early intervention services, specially designed instruction, Even Start, Early Head Start, Head Start, Universal Pre-K or other services for which eligibility criteria are established in federal or state law. The team acknowledges that the alignment of eligibility requirements can minimize possibilities for children needing services to fall through “cracks” in the service delivery system. Such alignment provides staff and families across agencies with a common understanding of these requirements and an opportunity to minimize duplication of efforts related to the collection and sharing of information used for eligibility determination.
- Joint strategies for conducting evaluation and assessment.
- Enhancement of primary referral sources including Health Care providers’ knowledge of the referral process and evaluation services offered.
- Promoting the early identification of children with social/emotional/behavioral and/or mental health needs.
- Provide information as requested by the WV Birth to Three Regional Administrative Authority (RAU) for inclusion in its Community Resource Directory of local, regional and state resources for services, supports, family leadership, model programs, etc.
- Providing information, if appropriate, to assist in the identification of preschool programs in the country as required by WV Board of Education Policy 2525.
- Kiddie Fair

**2. Collaboration Area: Quality Services for ALL Children**

Collaborative Policy: This team commits to inclusive services for ALL children ages birth through eight years that use curricula and assessment reflecting high quality standards and a developmental array for preparing children to achieve developmental and performance outcomes at high levels. This team commits to meeting the individual needs of ALL young children. Where appropriate, this includes development of Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and/or Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: The organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Supporting the implementation of the WV Pre-K system and early childhood services to address school readiness.
- Supporting state initiatives such as early literacy, parent involvement and positive behavioral supports initiatives through the community's early childhood service providers.
- Meeting state requirements in the design and delivery of collaborative services for children with and without special needs and their families.
- As appropriate, using the document, IFSP and IEP: A Comparison of Program Components, developed by the WV Early Childhood Transition Steering Committee as a tool for educating families and staff.

**3. Collaboration Area: Transition and Continuity**

Collaborative Policy: The team commits to establishing a plan for the transition of children and their families into and out of the various early childhood services available in the county. Collaborative team procedures and activities will integrate, as appropriate, relevant requirements and effective practice of participating agencies to ensure one coherent community system.

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: The organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Establishing one transition contact person in each agency.
- Providing parents with written information on programs and/or services including enrollment requirements and registration.
- Communicating with agency staff to facilitate continuity of curricula, programming and/or services.
- Providing transition related training to prepare staff to follow appropriate procedures and to support children and families in the transition process.
- Providing an opportunity for staff in sending and receiving programs to meet at least annually to discuss how to facilitate successful transitions and curricula continuity.
- Providing training for parents regarding the transition process and future options in a way that includes interagency partners in the training.

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- Involving parents in transition planning to advocate for children and communicate with personnel in next environment.
- Planning activities to prepare child for next environment.
- Providing options for visits to the next environment(s) by children, families, and staff.
- Coordinating with other agencies to transfer relevant records to the next placement.
- Releasing demographic information, screening evaluation and assessment data to the receiving agency/program with parental permission as necessary in order to assist that agency/program in meeting the individuals needs of each child.
- To the maximum extent possible, designing programs that minimize the number of settings in which a child receives education and care services. This will include giving parents/guardians options to enroll their child in a program that meets the needs of the family and supports consistency and continuity for the child.
- Ensuring transition planning for all children exiting the WV Birth to Three system including those eligible and ineligible for preschool special education services under IDEA, Part B. Such planning will include the use of forms required by WV Birth to Three and adopting policies and procedures consistent with the templates related to transition developed by WV Birth to Three: (1) Transition Procedures From Part C To Part B Under The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and (2) Transition Procedures From Part C To Head Start/Early Head Start. It will also include participating, as requested, in WV Birth to Three transition surveys for families to identify whether children and families received appropriate services on exit from WV Birth to Three.
- Ensuring that all children eligible for services under IDEA, Part B are receiving special education and related services by their third birthday.
- Ensuring appropriate transition planning for children entering and exiting Early Head Start and/or Head Start.
- Ensuring appropriate transition planning for children entering and exiting child care, private schools or other community settings.
- Ensuring appropriate transition planning for children entering and exiting the WV Pre-K System including procedures that follow the WV Early Childhood Transition Checklist developed by the WV Early Childhood Transition Steering Committee and required by WV Board of Education Policy 2525.
- Providing, as requested, transition data to the WV Early Childhood Transition Steering Committee to guide technical assistant and continuous improvement.

#### 4. **Collaboration Area: Family Involvement and Support**

Collaborative Policy: Family involvement and support is critical for effective services for children and will be integrated into activities, policies and procedures related to each of the collaboration areas addressed in this agreement.

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: In addition to family involvement strategies that are inherent in other areas of this agreement, the organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant

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individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Linking families to appropriate education and related agencies and services in the community, advocacy groups and family leadership opportunities.
- Providing and documenting the giving of information to families in various communication modes as needed to ensure full understanding, e.g., written, spoken, video, electronic, various languages including both English and the family's native language, nontraditional formats and venues for training to reach more parents, etc.
- Working with families as partners in the design, delivery and decision-making related to services needed to support their child's development.
- Promoting family involvement in all levels of decision-making (individual, system, policy).
- Providing training regarding positive behavior supports and interventions, discipline procedures and positive family involvement.
- Ensuring the protection of parent rights in collaborative services as established by law through the participating organizations.
- Ensuring that disputes with parents are resolved in a timely manner.

### 5. **Collaboration Area: Confidentiality**

Collaborative Policy: The team acknowledges that compatible confidentiality policies, procedures and forms among agencies (a) makes it easier for families to understand "the paperwork" of the various agencies/providers with which the family is working which, in turn, helps promote informed consent and (b) helps ensure that families and staff across agencies have a common knowledge base related to confidentiality. Compatible transfer of records policies and procedures among agencies helps collaborative teams (a) facilitate the transition of children and families from one agency/provider to another; (b) offer collaborative or braided services such as through the WV Pre-K System or some other similar service arrangement and (c) have available comprehensive information about the child to support planning appropriate services for children and families.

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: The organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Establishing compatible confidentiality procedures across participating organizations.
- Assuring that families and staff from participating agencies are knowledgeable about confidentiality and records transfer procedures.

### 6. **Collaboration Area: Resource Sharing**

Collaborative Policy: The team acknowledges that resource sharing enables communities to pool resources to provide more comprehensive, high quality services in a more coherent fashion. Resource sharing includes, but is not limited to, facilities, materials, and equipment, collaborative services, screening, transportation, etc. In some instances such as WV Board of Education Policy 2525, resource sharing/braided services are expressly required. Sometimes, it



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may not be expressly required but may be necessary in order to meet a particular mandate such as for services in the natural environment or least restrictive environment under IDEA. In other instances, resource sharing is an option that is both programmatically sound and cost effective.

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: The organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Establishing procedures for the use of funds that are generated when one agency is permitted to count children from another agency as is allowed by some funding sources.
- Establishing plans for the sharing of resources.
- Completing a document entitled, TADPOLE Team Profile, as requested by WV Early Childhood Training and update this profile as needed. (Profiles describe how county teams are collaborating and provides contact information to facilitate networking among teams. A compilation of profiles of WV teams appears at [www.wvearlychildhood.org](http://www.wvearlychildhood.org).)
- Using this overall agreement template as a resource for meeting the requirements of WV Board of Education Policy 2525 for developing the county plan and, in particular, this section for planning resource sharing to be addressed in contracts.

### 7. **Collaboration Area: Personnel Standards and Professional Development**

Collaborative Policy: The team commits to ensuring that personnel have the common knowledge and skills needed to provide high quality services to young children and their families. The team acknowledges that collaborative training is an effective tool for maximizing professional development. It also helps to foster relationship building among staff across agencies. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of service continuity and quality and, thus achieving developmental and performance outcomes for children.

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: The organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Ensuring that personnel providing collaborative services to young children meet personnel standards of their discipline or agency.
- Providing or arranging for ongoing professional development that follows the WV State Training and Registry System (S.T.A.R.S.).
- Using a variety of high quality professional development strategies, e.g., joint workshops/events, cross program visitation, cross agency study/networking groups, sharing professional development resources, collaborative training calendar that permits staff from one agency to attend training in another, using staff from one agency as a trainer in another, etc.
- Notification of trainings to be posted on relevant websites.

## 8. Collaboration Area: Data Collection and Sharing

Collaborative Policy: The team acknowledges that sharing aggregate information among agencies can assist those agencies in individually or collectively planning service systems. Effective local systems for information management enable agencies to collect, report and analyze reliable data. This aids in decision-making and ensures system accountability. In some instances, agencies can generate funding based on services offered through the Collaborative. In such cases, it is critical to have policies, procedures and timelines for the prompt and appropriate sharing of such data.

Collaborative Procedures and/or Activities: The organizations that are party to this agreement hereby incorporate by reference relevant individual agency and/or collaborative procedures and activities addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- Developing compatible systems for collecting and reporting information on collaborative services provided and children served.
- Maintaining data on service delivery, transitions and related compliance issues and reporting to state/federal sources as required. This includes data collection on entry route and services in inclusive placements for young children, with particular emphasis on 3-year olds.
- Providing representation/input as appropriate for local/regional advisory boards that review data and provide advice and assistance related to services for young children and their families.

## 9. Other Collaboration Areas

*Not applicable at this time.*

## V. Mechanisms for Coordinating Agreement Implementation, Decision-Making and Dispute Resolution

The collaborative team designees (representatives of the agencies signing this agreement) will meet according to an annual schedule developed by the team. Team decisions will be made using modified consensus. Modified consensus key questions: Can we live with the proposal and publicly support it? If not, what needs to be added to, deleted from or changed in the proposal so that we can live with it and publicly support it?

Substantive policy and fiscal decisions will require the approval of the heads and/or governing boards of the participating agencies. The team itself can make basic coordination and implementation decisions.

If disputes arise, the team will attempt to resolve these at the local level through forthright communication emphasizing the development of locally relevant solutions that are responsive to individual agency and community needs. If necessary, the team will consult with applicable state or regional agencies related to such disputes.

**VI. Monitoring, Evaluation and Program Improvement**

Each agency is responsible for the general administration and supervision of their respective programs and monitoring programs and activities used to carry out early intervention and early care and education programs for children with and without disabilities or other special needs.

At each Alliance for Childhood Transition (team of representatives from participating agencies) meeting, the team will monitor the agreement and related activities to ensure they are being implemented as planned and evaluate activities related to effectiveness, adjusting plans/activities as needed.

At the Annual Early Childhood Alliance / Alliance or Childhood Transition Planning Meeting, the team will formally evaluate both the outcomes and impact of the collaboration and use this information for program improvement. The team will use input from its members as well as available formal and/or informal feedback on progress and needs from administrators, staff and families directly involved in the collaboration as well as data on child impact, as appropriate.

Annually, the team will also formally evaluate its operation related to:

- The degree to which current team priorities and activities are responsive to individual agency and overall community needs (worth their time),
- Active participation of members, including families directly involved
- Team cohesiveness,
- Team meeting location(s) and meeting schedule
- Team membership (Does team membership include key agencies that have a direct relationship to team priorities? Do team members need to be added or dropped to align with current team priorities?)

This evaluation will be done using a self-assessment survey and post-survey group discussion

**VII. Agreement Effective Date, Renewal, Modification and Withdrawal of Participating Agency (ies)**

This agreement will take effect as of the date of signing by all parties. It will be reviewed annually to determine if extensions or modifications are needed. If no changes are needed, the agreement will be automatically renewed.

Modifications to this agreement will be made based on decisions of the collaborative team arrived at through modified consensus as outlined above. Modifications will be adopted based on approval of the heads and/or governing boards of the participating agencies as evidenced by signatures of the authorized representatives of those agencies. Modifications will be maintained as an attachment to the original agreement by each of the participating agencies. Reconsideration of the agreement can be requested by any of the participating agencies or by the Early Childhood Alliance.

Copies of this agreement, agreement implementation procedures, resource sharing agreements and other relevant documents including modifications will be maintained by each of the participating agencies.

If a participating agency chooses to withdraw from this agreement, such action will be documented through written notification sent to all participating agencies by the authorized representatives of those agencies seeking withdrawal.

**VIII. Signatures**

Each agency, by the signature below of its authorized representative, hereby acknowledges understanding of this agreement and agrees to be bound by its terms.

**Participating Agency: Mercer County Board of Education**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: WV Birth To Three**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: CASE WV Head Start**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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Mercer County Early Childhood Collaborative Agreement

**Participating Agency: CASE WV Healthy Families America**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: CASE WV Starting Points Program**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: Right From The Start**

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Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Participating Agency: MountainHeart Child Care Resource & Referral**

Date:

Name (typed):

Mercer County Early Childhood Collaborative Agreement

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: Child Protect of Mercer County, Inc.**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: TSN / WIC**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: Mother Goose Child Care Co-Op**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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Mercer County Early Childhood Collaborative Agreement

**Participating Agency: Mary's Cradle Maternal & Infant Resource Center**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: Children's Home Society of West Virginia**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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**Participating Agency: Family Day Care Association**

Date:

Name (typed):

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone:

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