Parent Handbook

School-age Program

How HCDDS teams and programs help your child reach his or her full potential
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Welcome

The school-age program provides individualized instruction to help your child develop to his or her full potential. Our goal is to deliver quality programming so each student we support can live, work, learn and fully participate in his or her community. Student progress is reported quarterly with an annual review of each student’s individualized plan.

Hamilton County DD Services will not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, color, creed, sex, national origin or the inability to pay.

School Programs

Bobbie B. Fairfax School
4999 Kingsley Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45227
(513) 271-2313
Principal Kim Martindell

Margaret B. Rost School
5858 Bridgetown Road
Cincinnati, OH 45248
(513) 574-2372
Principal Duerk Zinn

Satellite Programs

Three Rivers Elementary School
56 Cooper Road
Cleves, OH 45002
(513) 467-3210
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OUR APPROACH

• Every child has a right to receive an education that facilitates his/her development.

• The family is usually the most constant factor in the child's life and, as such, is the primary intervener for the child. Families have the right to information to help them facilitate the child's maximum development. A child's individualism and his/her family is respected and supported.

• Every child has the right to a nurturing environment.

• Intervention strategies should increase the child's ability to function in the least restrictive environment by drawing upon natural settings and resources.

• Families' beliefs, values, cultures and family structures are respected and valued.

• Transition planning for future work, residential and community options is an integral part of service.

• No matter how intense his/her disabilities, every student can live, work, learn and fully participate in their communities.

• Schooling should include direct preparation for the activities of daily life. Some students may need direct instruction in areas pertaining to community living in order to become active participants in daily life.
• Social integration is an essential element of an appropriate education. Becoming a part of school life is viewed as an important step toward becoming a part of community life.

• Home/school collaboration is vital to the success of an educational program. Establishing strong partnerships with parents is a priority.

• Instructional decision-making must be individualized. Decisions should reflect unique student characteristics and chronological age, as well as student and parent/guardian input.

• Interdependence and partial participation are valid educational goals. Students should not be excluded from an activity because they will not be able to do it independently.

• Each individual’s plan will be developed in partnership with families and caregivers to accommodate each student’s functioning level. Each plan will reflect an assessment completed by staff, parents and caregivers, and the Evaluation Team Report (ETR) completed by the local education agency.

• Educational programs should prepare students for the real world. The transition process involves completing the Individual Education Plan (IEP) transition section, which includes a statement of needed transition services, goal statements about options for post-secondary employment, adult living options, and community participation. It is important to begin the process early with students, parents, school district representatives and providers.

• Students with intense disabilities have ongoing opportunities to learn in the presence of, and develop friendships with, peers without disabilities.

• Programs/curriculum at all ages should help develop the student’s self-image.

• Collaboration is essential on service provisions with agencies, local school districts and other private and public service providers.


**INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

Instructors are responsible for developing student IEPs and implementing the established curriculum using good teaching principles. Instructor assistants help develop materials, provide physical care for the students and assist classroom instructors with educational programs.

Instructors are required to have at least a bachelor’s degree and are certified to teach students with disabilities by the State of Ohio. Instructor assistants are required to have a high school diploma, and an educational aide permit issued by the Ohio Department of Education. Experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities is preferred for assistants.

**Annual Review/IEP Development**

Your child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) is reviewed at least annually to see if his/her needs are being met in the least restrictive environment. During the review, your child’s progress is evaluated, and his/her plan is revised. Goals and objectives are updated/changed as determined by the IEP team members.

Participants in your child’s annual review may include you, the student, the local school district representative, instructors and related service providers. As a parent, you can invite anyone you want to attend. You can also request additional reviews, if desired.

“Whose IDEA Is This?” is a handbook you can read that will give you information about the IEP process. You can get a copy from your child’s school, their local school district or find it online at education.ohio.gov.

**Curriculum**

School-age students are taught in many different ways. Individualized and group teaching increases communication, improves physical development, develops social skills and encourages participation in activities of daily living.

The curriculum includes community, vocational and recreational/leisure activities. Instruction is aligned with Ohio Academic Content Standards. Other resources include but are not limited to:

- “A Curriculum for Profoundly Handicapped Students/The Broward County Model Program” by Les Sternberg, Helene Ritchey, Linda Pegnatore, Lynn Wills & Cathy Hill
- “A Work in Progress” by Ron Leaf & John McEachin
- The Edmark reading series
- The “Handwriting Without Tears” curriculum
- “Unique Learning System” curriculum aligned to current state common core standards
- HCDDS Self-Determination curriculum
- HCDDS Health and Safety curriculum
Cultural Arts

The cultural arts program provides opportunities for students to interact creatively with their environment. Various art/music activities are available based on the needs and interests of students.

Adaptive Physical Education

The adaptive physical education program enhances development of your child’s motor skills. It helps your child maintain and develop physical fitness, acquire social skills, develop safety habits and have fun in a recreational/leisure environment.

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)

PBIS describes a school-wide systematic approach utilizing evidence-based practices and data-driven decision-making to improve school climate and culture, resulting in improved academic and social outcomes and increased learning for all students.

It encompasses a wide range of systemic and individualized positive strategies to reinforce desired behaviors, diminish reoccurrences of challenging behaviors and teach appropriate, effective behavior to students.

Copies of the School-Based Behavior Support Manual, which includes PBIS, are available to individuals served, families, staff and anyone else who would like a copy.

Speech and Language

The licensed speech and language pathologists assess and develop programs appropriate to students’ communication needs. Assistive technology, such as computers and alternative communication aids, may be used to enhance communication when appropriate. As a member of the Multidisciplinary team, the speech and language pathologist may provide consultative services or direct therapy as indicated on the IEP.
Occupational/Physical Therapy

Occupational therapists work with students on fine motor manipulative skills, positioning, feeding and dressing. They may make changes to your child’s environment and work with him/her on activities to increase or decrease muscle tone.

Physical therapists work with students on posture and movement, mobility, and equipment or task adaptation. An annual physician’s prescription is required to receive physical therapy services.

The licensed therapists and/or certified therapy assistants are members of the Multidisciplinary team and may provide consultations and/or direct therapy as indicated on the IEP.

Transition

Preparing to leave high school is a big life change for graduates and their families. For those who are eligible for services through HCDDS, our team can guide students and families through the transition years, ages 14 through 18, or up to age 22 while still enrolled in school-age services.

In each agency-operated school and community schools, as needed, staff members support the transition process for all students age 14 and older. It is important this process starts early and support is available to assist students/families with transition needs. Information about connections to services needed during the final school years and/or after graduating from school will be shared at IEP meetings.

Sharing this information increases the likelihood students will be successful when they exit the school program. The transition plan will be used to determine goals and objectives on the student’s IEP. In the final years of school, the main emphasis for the student will be vocational skills and community-based learning.

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), transition is defined as a coordinated set of activities that:

- is designed within an outcome-oriented process, promoting movement from school to post-school activities. This can include post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

- is based on the individual student’s needs, preferences, interests and strengths;

- includes instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.
Transition timeline

Starting at age 14, transition consultants from Hamilton County DD Services meet with families and students to provide information and guidance during the transition years ages 14 and older.

Transition planning involves many components as the student progresses toward the end of school age services. Transition consultants can assist with the process by providing information, resources, and direct services such as participating in transition planning meetings that can include multiple agencies.

Here is what to expect during the transition process:

Ages 14-15

- Input and guidance throughout transition planning.
- Discovery of your child’s Preferences, Interests, Needs and Strengths (PINS)
- Awareness of how to support transition at home
- Information about local resources that can build awareness and skills related to transition goals.

Ages 16-17

- Continued input and guidance through transition planning meetings.
- Information provided through a transition planning profile indicating important items to be addressed as your child progresses through transition.
- Connections to agencies who provide supplemental transition services as applicable.

Ages 18 and older

- Input and guidance to support awareness and understanding of the many resources, choices, and the necessary steps to be completed during the transition years 18 and on.
- Discussion of post-graduate options and resources.
Health and Safety

School Health Services

School health services staff provide general information to parents, care providers and staff. School nurses give medications to students, keep medical records, provide emergency care and work cooperatively with parents to monitor specific health concerns.

Please do not send your child to school with:

- Persistent cough
- Vomiting/Diarrhea
- Rash
- Runny nose with green/yellow mucus
- Injury requiring medical treatment
- Fever above 99 degrees
- Sore throat
- Swollen glands
- Lice/scabies
- Red eyes with discharge/inflammation

If a student exhibits these symptoms, the nurse may send the child home. Students may not return to school until symptoms have subsided for 24 hours. The school must follow Ohio Department of Health and Hamilton County DD Services infection control guidelines when deciding if a child can return to school. If your child is ill or has a communicable disease, please see your family physician. A doctor’s note is required to return to school.

Medication and Treatment

State law requires the school nurse to have written permission from both you and your child’s doctor before giving your child prescription or over-the-counter medication. Your child’s medication must be in the container from the pharmacy and have the original label. Medicine stays in the nurse’s office at all times and is administered by the nurse or a delegated staff member.

DO NOT send medication in student backpacks, lunch boxes or clothing. Please bring the medicine to school or send it with the student’s bus driver. You also need to supply the equipment and formula your child needs for tube feedings or other treatments. For tube feedings, medication orders are valid for one school year.

Tuberculosis testing

Students entering a program for the first time from another state must have a tuberculin skin test. Tuberculosis testing and treatment procedures follow the regulations of the Hamilton County Tuberculosis Control Center. Any student with a new positive reaction must obtain a chest X-ray.

Medical Evaluations

If current physical exam information is not available, or if immunizations are not up-to-date, students will not be allowed to attend. A medical evaluation may be required as part of the three-year Evaluation Team Report (ETR).
Immunization

Your child needs certain immunizations to prevent common childhood diseases. State law requires your child’s doctor to verify which vaccines your child received. The school needs this document within 14 days of your child’s first day.

Children must have the following immunizations before coming to school:

- 4 doses: DTap/DT or Tdap/TD vaccine (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus); if all four doses were given before age 4, a fifth dose is required. For grades 7-12, one dose of Tdap prior to entry.
- 3 doses: Polio vaccine; a fourth dose may be necessary for children who received the third dose before age 4.
- 2 doses: MMR vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella); one dose after age 1, and a second dose administered at least 28 days after first dose
- 3 doses: Hepatitis B vaccine
- 2 doses: Varicella (Chickenpox); first dose must be administered on or after first birthday; for grades 8-11, one dose of varicella vaccine required.
- 1-2 doses: meningococcal (MCV4); one for grades 7-10; two for grade 12

Immunizations are typically given according to a schedule. Ages may vary with each doctor and medical situation. Additional boosters are required for students entering seventh grade. Please consult your physician.

Emergencies

Parents must authorize the school to take care of their child in an emergency. A form gives the school permission to get your child emergency treatment if you cannot be reached and medical attention is needed quickly. It is critical listed phone numbers and emergency contact names are current. Please call the school with any changes.

If your child gets sick or hurt at school, you will be called to pick up your child. If you cannot be reached, the school will call the other emergency contacts. Please inform them of this process.

When your child is on a community trip, the teacher carries a copy of the emergency form. If immediate emergency care is necessary, the school will:

- Call 911
- Give first aid and emergency treatment until EMS arrives.
- Call you, the child’s guardian or residential provider to meet the child at the hospital. If your child goes to the hospital in an ambulance, the city will charge you for this service.
- Accompany the student to the hospital until the family arrives.

Safety

Each building is required to comply with the agency’s safety policies and procedures. All staff and students receive yearly mandated training. Safety drills are conducted according to the agency’s schedule. Each building has a safety committee, and a representative from school programs attends agency-wide safety meetings.
**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Attendance**

Daily attendance of all students is required by law. Acceptable reasons for absences are personal illness, critical illness in the family, quarantine of the home, the death of a relative or observance of religious holidays.

With enactment of the federal Missing Children’s Act, parents/guardians are required to call the school before 9:30 a.m. if their child is absent. In the event that a call is not received, a school official will contact the parent/guardian before noon.

House Bill 410 defines chronic absenteeism, habitual truancy and excessive absences as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consecutive Hours</th>
<th>Hours per school month</th>
<th>Hours per school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitual Truancy</strong></td>
<td>30 hours without legitimate excuse</td>
<td>42 hours without legitimate excuse</td>
<td>72 hours without legitimate excuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excessive Absences</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>38 hours with or without legitimate excuse</td>
<td>65 hours with or without legitimate excuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic Absenteeism</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10% of school year or 92 hours with or without legitimate excuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exceeding limits as defined above require the development of a truancy intervention plan, an absence intervention plan, possible participation in truancy prevention mediation programs an up to legal action.

**Temporary Removal**

A student may be temporarily removed from school activities if it is determined that he/she poses a continuing danger to himself/herself or others. If your child is removed from school, you and your child’s local school district will be notified immediately.

**Transportation**

Transportation is a related service and any special arrangements should be discussed and documented at the IEP review. Your child can be brought to school and taken home by:

- Buses or other transportation provided by your school district.
- Parent/guardian
Emergency or weather-related closures

School may be canceled or delayed in emergency situations or for severe weather. Notice will be posted on the agency website, hamiltondds.org, and the school Facebook page, as well as on local news websites, television and radio stations.

Hamilton County DD Services also operates a Community Safe program, which allows you to receive important announcements via telephone. Please contact your building secretary to sign up for Community Safe and have your phone number added to the system.

School/Home Communication

You may receive notes daily or several times a week sharing special accomplishments and/or asking questions. These communications may be sent as a notebook and/or checklist. You may also receive telephone or email reports/communications, if that is your preference. Please note HCDDS staff in the school are not permitted to text a parent from their personal cell phones at any time. Staff are available for phone calls 8:30-9 a.m. and 3-3:30 p.m.

Visitor Registration

We encourage you to visit your child’s school. Please stop at the front desk to sign in and get a visitor’s badge before you go to your child’s classroom. Please wear the badge while you are in the building and sign out at the front desk when you leave.

Lunch Fees

Each school cafeteria serves a well-balanced, nutritious lunch at a reasonable price. You will receive a menu each month. If you need help to pay for your child's lunch, you can apply for either a reduced cost or free lunch based on wage guidelines from the federal government. Students not buying a hot meal may pack their lunch and buy milk or juice.

Please pay ahead and on time for lunches on one of the suggested plans: weekly, biweekly, or 20 days. Prepayment helps us keep accurate track of payments, and principals may contact you if necessary about paying for lunch.

Rates for the above plans are listed on the lunch information sheet you will receive in the mail before each school year. You also may pay for the entire year during the first month of school.

Personal Items

Write your child's name on any personal item he/she brings to school. Please send an additional outfit – shirt, pants, socks and underpants – for students who may need a change of clothing during the school day. If needed, you must provide personal hygiene items for your child while he/she is at school.

Please send a school bag or backpack with your child every day. This allows him/her to be more independent and gives the school a way to get information to and from you. Check the contents of your child’s bag/backpack daily.
Change of Address

If you are planning to move, please contact the school office and your district transportation office with your new address as soon as possible. If you know in advance you are moving, we can notify the school district before you move so they know when to pick up your child at the new address.

Early notification can minimize or eliminate the number of days your child might be without transportation services. At least three (3) working days are required to process any change in most districts. It could take up to four weeks to process if you live in Cincinnati Public School District.

If you move to a different school district, you will need to enroll your child in the new district. The new district will determine if placement into the DD Services program is the least restrictive environment for your child.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Each school has a PTA that is a member of the National Congress, State Council, and Hamilton County Council of PTAs. Each PTA actively supports classroom activities financially and in other ways.

You will be notified of meeting times and activities through email and notices sent home with your child. The PTA welcomes your participation and depends on your support.

Legal Age

When children reach their 18th birthday, they acquire all the rights and responsibilities of adulthood as outlined through the legal process.

Parents must go through the legal process if they wish to acquire guardianship or have a say in their child’s medical decisions. Males are required to register with the Selective Service System at the nearest post office. Please contact the school or your child’s service and support administrator (SSA) with questions.

Other Commitments to People with DD

Confidentiality and Access to Records

Hamilton County DD Services will abide by the policies regarding the review and inspection of records established by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act).

Your school must permit you to inspect and review any of your child’s educational records.
This includes records regarding the identification, evaluation and educational placement of your child, as well as the provision of a free, appropriate public education.

You have the right to see all the records that are collected, maintained or used by the district under Part B of IDEIA. If you ask for records, they must be provided before any IEP meeting or hearing related to your child’s identification, evaluation, or educational placement. The school must comply with your request without unnecessary delay (no more than 45 days).

You must give your permission in writing before any personal information about your child is released to anyone other than authorized staff.

Complaint Procedures

Hamilton County DD Services and its employees make every effort to offer quality programming to students and their families. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with the classroom instructor. If your concern is not resolved, you may speak with the principal.

If you would like further consideration, depending on which school your child attends, you may meet with Matt Briner, the director of Integrated Services, or Duerk Zinn, director of School Programs. Please request this meeting in writing by explaining why you want to meet and what has already been done to resolve the concern. If you feel your concern still has not been adequately addressed, you may request a meeting with the superintendent.

Child Abuse and Neglect

If you suspect child abuse or neglect, please report it to:

- Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, (513) 241-KIDS (5437)
- Hamilton County DD Services, (513) 794-3308

Staff members of Hamilton County DD Services are required by law to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect through these phone numbers.

Respectful School Environment

The school is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and civil place where students, staff and others can focus on the educational needs of the students. Harassment and discrimination is contrary to this and will not be tolerated. This includes sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Anyone who experiences or observes conduct they believe constitutes harassment/discrimination must report such behavior to school administration. All reported incidents will be investigated and appropriate action taken as indicated by Hamilton County DD Services’ policy.

The 24-hour on-call phone number for emergencies is (513) 794-3308. You can call this number at any time to report abuse or health and safety issues.

If you have questions about information in this handbook, contact Duerk Zinn, director of School Programs, (513) 559-6962 or duerk.zinn@hamiltondds.org.