

# SOUTHWEST HRA HEAD START

**Section:** Administrative  
**Subject:** Telephones  
**Approved:** Policy Council, Head Start Director

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## REGULATION REFERENCE:

## POLICY:

Communication is the key to a successful Head Start Program, and the telephone is one of the major tools used. Every Head Start Center has one or more lines and telephones are in every classroom and office. The telephone lines are also used for dial-up Internet connection in some centers.

Every time you make or receive a telephone call at the Head Start Center or Central Office, you are representing yourself and Head Start. The impression you create will be a lasting one to the person on the other end of the line.

## PROCEDURE:

### TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

Proper telephone technique involves some basic common sense in which everyone who works for Head Start should use. The following are basic rules that must be used at all times:

### Receiving Calls

1. All incoming calls should be answered in a timely manner.
2. ONLY Head Start personnel should answer the telephone. This is NOT a job for parent volunteers. If it is necessary for a Teacher Assistant Sub or volunteer to be given the responsibility of answering the telephone, they should be properly trained.
3. Always identify yourself. Answer by giving the Center location and your own name. Example: "Good morning/afternoon. Sunshine Head Start Center, Sue Bloom speaking. How can I help you?"
4. If the caller does not identify him/herself, ask, "To whom am I speaking?"
5. Speak clearly and slowly when you answer the Head Start telephone. Do not slur your words or have gum or food in your mouth. Speak with confidence and with a "smile" in your voice so the person on the other end has the feeling that you know what you are doing and are happy to be doing it. Remember your manners at all times.
6. CALL WAITING is only as good as the person using it. Just because you have call waiting, it is up to you whether to use it....it is a judgment call. Your decision should be based on who you are speaking to, the intensity of the conversation, and your relationship to the person. If you are on a PERSONAL CALL, you should ALWAYS take the incoming call....it may be BUSINESS!
7. INFORM ANYONE THAT CALLS YOU ON PERSONAL BUSINESS THAT YOU ARE WORKING AND TO MAKE THE CALL AS BRIEF AS POSSIBLE (no longer than 1-2 minutes). Personal business (other than emergencies) should be handled on personal time.

## Telephones

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8. When putting a CALLER ON HOLD (this includes CALL WAITING calls), always ask permission and explain why. Examples: “Would you mind holding while I get your file?” “Can you hold briefly, I have another call coming in and it could be an emergency. I’ll get right back to you.” NEVER leave a caller on hold for more than a minute without checking back with them and ask if they would like to continue to hold – explain briefly what the situation is. This lets them know that they have not been forgotten, and that you are attending to their call. Examples: “Thank you for holding. I’m sorry, but I cannot locate your file. Can I call you back when I do find it, or would you like to remain on hold while I continue looking?” “Thank you for holding. The other call was a parent who has an emergency situation. I’m sorry, but I need to attend to this situation now. May I call you back as soon as I attend to this?” WHEN TAKING A CALLER OFF HOLD, ALWAYS THANK THEM FOR HOLDING.
9. TRANSFERING A CALLER – if the caller needs to speak to another person, transfer the call or get the person to the phone as quickly as possible. Examples: “Please hold while I transfer your call.” “Please hold while I get \_\_\_\_\_ (person’s name) to the phone.”
10. TAKING PHONE MESSAGES – When taking a phone message for someone, always be sure to include the following information:
  - Caller’s name and company name if applicable
  - Time of call
  - What the call is regarding
  - If the caller wants a return phone call, obtain a phone number and time that is best to return the call.
11. Never be rude to a caller, no matter how upset they may be. Always remember to handle yourself in a professional, business-like manner. This includes handling the situation in a calm, cool manner.

#### Making telephone calls:

1. Identify yourself when the telephone is answered. The game of “guess who this is” may not play very well to a busy co-worker – don’t assume your voice will be recognized.
2. Let the telephone ring a reasonable length of time. It is frustrating to just get to the telephone and hear a dial tone.
3. If you dial a number that is wrong, apologize to the person who answers the phone --- do not just hang up. This is especially important nowadays when people have Caller ID’s on their phone lines.
4. When calling a professional office FOR ANY REASON, always identify yourself and explain the reason for your call. Be brief.
5. When reaching an answering machine, always leave a message – even if only to identify yourself and say you’ll call back. If you want your call returned, state your name, company (Head Start Center), telephone number, time of call and reason for calling. Make your message as brief as possible.
6. If you are returning a call, let the person answering the phone know this. Example: “Good morning, this is Penny Jones. I am returning a call from Curtis Lee, is he available?” When you have reached the party, remind them of the prior conversation or reason for the call. People get busy and can seem surprised until you remind them of the reason for the initial call.
7. End all calls on a positive note by thanking the other person for their time. A gracious good bye leaves the door open for further communication.

8. **PERSONAL CALLS** must be held to a minimum and should last no longer than 1-2 minutes (except in emergency situations). Remember, Head Start is a business and the telephone is a tool for business communication, not personal business or pleasure.

#### TELEPHONE BILLS/LONG DISTANCE CHARGES AND OTHER PROCEDURES

1. All Head Start telephone bills that come to the Head Start office will be checked by a designated Head Start staff (currently the Assistant Director for MIS/PI) before they are presented to the fiscal department for payment.
2. Each bill will be checked for any unauthorized expenses and long distance charges.
3. Long distance charges will be compared with the Long Distance Telephone Log.
4. A Long Distance Telephone Log will be kept for each telephone line at every Head Start Center location. All long distance calls must be recorded on this form. This form will be turned in with the end-of-the-month bills and will be routed to the Assistant Director for MIS/PI. The person who made the call must pay for any personal long distance calls.
5. **DO NOT** use any of the instant dial long-distance services (like 10-10-220) on Head Start telephones **EVER**.
6. **DO NOT AUTHORIZE ANY SERVICES THROUGH TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS OR THE INTERNET ON ANY HEAD START TELEPHONE LINE** (even though the solicitor may state that the service is "FREE"). The only persons authorized to add, delete or change any of these services are the Head Start Director, Assistant Director for Administration and Assistant Director for MIS/PI.
7. Do not use **DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE** unless there is absolutely no other way to secure the telephone number (the telephone company charges for this service). All calls must be manually dialed using your telephone's features. Do not use "QuikComplete" (when you use Directory Assistance) **OR AUTO REDIAL** (when you get a busy signal) offered by the telephone company **EVER**—these services cost extra! You **CAN** use the "redial" feature on your telephone.
8. Report all problems with telephones or telephone service to the Assistant Director for MIS/PI.