

*Celebrating 60 Years of Service
to Children & Families*

POLICY COUNCIL

2025-26

Informational Brochure

Rock-Walworth C.F.S. Inc.

Head Start Pre-School and Early Head Start



Policy Council Representatives

(Past Members)

Your Current Policy Council Leaders 2025-26

Nailah Adama P.C. Chairperson
Lori Harvel Vice-chair
Jacer (Jason) Tapia
Treasure Lopez
Helena Fatoba
Shared Valdez

Merrill E.H.S.
Beloit Community Partner
Beloit H.S
Beloit Community Partner
Walworth Co. H.S.
Walworth Co. HS



What Is the Policy Council?

Parents and family members often have questions about their program's Policy Council. Explore this tip sheet to learn answers to common questions about the Policy Council.

As a parent, you may wonder what the Policy Council is and about its role in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. You may have questions about how to join, serve on, or leave the Policy Council.

We encourage you to discuss your questions with your child's teacher, your family service worker, the program director, or other staff. They can partner with you to make your Policy Council experience the best it can be.

The Policy Council is a group of Head Start and Early Head Start parents and community members who help lead and make decisions about their program. Policy Council members are elected by the parents of children enrolled in the program. Parents often join the Policy Council after serving on a parent committee.

The Policy Council meets regularly as a group. Members can serve for one year at a time, and for up to five years. They work closely with the program's management team and governing body to provide overall direction for the program.

Why Do Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Have a Policy Council?

When Head Start began in 1965, its founders understood that parents are essential partners in educating young children. They felt parents should help decide how Head Start services can most benefit their family and other families in the community.

Head Start created the Policy Council as a formal leadership and policy-making role for parents. Today, every Head Start and Early Head Start program must have a Policy Council as part of its leadership structure. Through the Policy Council, parents have a voice in decisions about how the program spends money, what children do in their classrooms, and how the program works with community partners.

Children, parents, and the program benefit when parents take on leadership roles. Children learn more and experience healthier development at school and at home. Parents can become more confident, gain skills, and connect with other parents and staff. Program staff learn about the strengths, interests, and needs of the children, families, and community they serve.

Serving on the Policy Council

Congratulations! You have been elected to the Policy Council. Let's explore what it's like to be a member.

Read the scenario below.

Scenario

Yvonne is excited to attend her first Policy Council meeting. Her family service worker, Maria, has explained what to expect. She also offered to attend Yvonne's first meeting with her. She introduced Yvonne to Susan, a former parent member. Susan agreed to become her mentor and answer any questions.

At the first meeting, the Policy Council chairperson welcomes new members. Maria introduces Yvonne to the group. During the meeting, a policy document is handed out for review. It will be voted on at the next meeting.

The next morning, Yvonne calls Susan to ask about the policy document. She tells Susan she does not understand what she needs to vote on. She felt too shy to ask questions at the meeting. Susan explains the proposed policy change and why it is being discussed. Yvonne now understands the proposal and the different opinions to consider. Yvonne feels more confident about speaking up at the next meeting.

Like Yvonne, many parents have questions after they join the Policy Council. See some common questions below. You may have other questions. Every program is unique. Be sure to talk with program staff about specific questions you have.

Common Questions About Serving on the Policy Council

- **What happens after the Policy Council training if I am still not sure what to do?**

You can connect with program leadership for more support. Go to the program director, family services manager, or parent engagement coordinator to talk about your questions and concerns. Work with a staff member to discover together how you can feel successful and confident as a member of the Policy Council.

- **Can I make suggestions about proposed policies?**

As a Policy Council member, you can make suggestions or ask questions about any matters that are brought to the Council. It is your right and responsibility as a Council member to help with decision-making. Ask program staff for more information if you need it. You can also ask the Policy Council to delay a vote while you learn more.

Common Questions About Joining the Policy Council

- **Why are you asking me to consider joining the Policy Council? What can I offer?**

The Policy Council represents parents' voices and perspectives to guide decisions about the program. Policy Councils welcome parents and family members from all backgrounds and family structures. They may be mothers and fathers of all ages, grandparents, foster or adoptive parents, or other important adults in a child's life.

You are being asked because you are the most important teacher in your child's life. Staff value your ideas about how to best serve all the children in the program.

- **What do I need to know before I join?**

What's most important is that you want to help your program provide a positive learning experience for your child and other children. Once you are elected, you will receive training about how your Policy Council works. Some things that the group may discuss in Policy Council meetings are decisions about program policy, budgets, center activities, and hiring staff.

- **When and where do the meetings take place?**

Policy Councils typically meet monthly at the program. When they meet varies. Some programs hold meetings during the day. Others hold them in the evenings. Meals are usually provided. Childcare is offered. Some programs assist with transportation or arrange for members who live far away to attend remotely.

Programs also can provide interpretation services. Be sure to let your program know of anything you need to make it easier to attend meetings.