



Kennebec Valley Community Action Program

# Head Start/Early Head Start POLICY COUNCIL

## What is the Policy Council?

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

They created the Policy Council — 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, for up to five years. They work closely with the program's management team and Governing Body to provide overall direction for the program.

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.

## FAQs



### **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?**

The KVCAP Policy Council currently meets via zoom one evening per month from November through August. Meals are provided as well as reimbursement for child care. When it is deemed safe for meetings to return to in-person gatherings, meals and child care on site are provided. Travel reimbursement is also offered.

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



## 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.

Yvonne is excited to attend her first Policy Council meeting. Her Family Services Coordinator, Camden, has explained what to expect. She introduces Yvonne to Susan, a current parent member. Susan agrees to become her mentor and answer any questions. At the first meeting, the Policy Council chairperson welcomes new members. Susan 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 Camden to ask about the policy document. She tells her she does not understand what she needs to vote on. She felt too shy to ask questions at the meeting. Camden explains the proposed policy change and why it is being discussed. Yvonne now understands the proposal and the different opinions to consider and feels more confident about speaking up at the next meeting.

## FAQs



### **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 engagement manager, or your family services 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 ask the Council to delay a vote while you learn more

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Join us and let your voice matter!

