

July 27, 2026

Head Start has been working since 1965 to enhance the health and wellbeing of children nationwide. More than 13,000 children are enrolled in our care in Indiana. The families that we serve face a variety of challenges and health issues that impact the growth and development of the children in our programs. But together we can make a difference and improve their chance for a bright future. No one specific program can address all health issues our families and children face, but with partners such as Health Ed Pros and the Indiana Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission, we can make an effort to protect and improve our children and family's health in relation to tobacco use.

We know that exposure to second and thirdhand smoke and vapor is a critical issue affecting many Indiana children on a daily basis. Children diagnosed with asthma, chronic ear infections and other ailments worsened by exposure to tobacco smoke/vapor pass through our center's doors daily. Indiana Head Start and Early Head Start programs are in a position to be allies in the fight against tobacco by educating staff and parents on the far-reaching impact of smoke/vapor exposure for children and families. We are committed to helping reduce the burden of tobacco in Indiana. By partnering with Health Ed Pros, our centers are able to meet Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.46, family support services for health, nutrition, and mental health, which calls us to educate parents on health and safety practices for the home, including health and developmental consequences of tobacco use.

We applaud the Department of Health's Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission (TPC) efforts to help Head Start meet this performance standard and improve the lives of Hoosier children by improving and protecting their health. **We encourage all Indiana Head Start and Early Head Start grantees to partner with TPC on this critical health issue.** Let us continue to work together to lower the tobacco burden through better education and awareness.

Warmest regards,



Tawni Brown
Director
Indiana Head Start State Collaboration Office



Rhett Cecil
Executive Director
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