

Sure Start Program Guide

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Department of Defense Education Activity



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An Introduction to the Sure Start Program

What Is Sure Start?

Sure Start (also referred to as SS in this text) is an exemplary, research-based preschool program that serves military children and families living overseas. In addition to offering a high-quality educational program that reflects best practices in the field, Sure Start also provides health and nutrition, social, and parent involvement services. Close collaboration between families, schools, and the installation community is viewed as essential and a required part of the program.

This multipronged approach to the delivery of services distinguishes Sure Start from all other DoDEA programs. At the same time, Sure Start ensures that participating children receive the same uncompromisingly excellent education that all DoDEA children are guaranteed.

Sure Start's comprehensive model, although appropriate for all preschool children, targets preschoolers who are "at risk" for later school failure because of economic circumstance or other health and/or family factors. Because this innovative, effective model is expensive to replicate, it is reserved for those children and families who will most benefit from participation in the program. As its name implies, Sure Start is dedicated to providing participating children with a sure start in school and later life.

Philosophy

As noted, DoDEA believes that with a sure start, children in all military families can develop the social/emotional and academic competence needed for productive, lifelong learning. The Sure Start preschool program is based on the premise that children's potential for learning is influenced by their early cultural, physical, social, emotional, linguistic, creative, and cognitive experiences. It incorporates the tenets of child growth and development and family systems theory that stem from the works of Piaget, Erikson, Vygotsky, Smilansky, Kolb, Bronfenbrenner, and Gardner, among others.

Because children who are identified as being at risk for school failure may have limited access to opportunities that enhance development in all domains, Sure Start provides children and families with an intensive curriculum that teaches requisite skills in a way that addresses children's unique learning styles and intelligences. The Sure Start program is wedded to the beliefs that risk is not destiny and that early intervention can ameliorate risk factors.

In summary, Sure Start staff and administrators believe the following:

- All children benefit from early experiences that are supportive of their ages and developmental capabilities, individual needs, and cultures.
- All children must have a healthy start in life in order to be ready to learn. All children learn best when provided with a safe and nurturing environment at home and at school.
- From the earliest age, children need to be exposed to rich experiences in language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, technology, and physical education so that maximum advantage can be made of the "windows of opportunity" for learning, as described by brain research.
- All learning for young children is interrelated, and children learn academic skills at the same time that they master social/emotional and physical skills.

- All children learn through play and benefit from adults who understand how to build upon children's natural desire to learn about the world around them.
- All children have different learning styles that need to be accommodated, taking into account their individual types of intelligences, including emotional intelligence.
- All families must have knowledge of and access to community resources and social services that address their needs if they are to provide their children with a secure and stimulating environment that supports their children's social and academic success.
- Family involvement in children's educational experiences is crucial to children's success. Children flourish when their families and schools provide consistent messages about learning and development.
- Preschool programs must link content standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment to those of the later grades to provide children with a seamless transition between preschool and kindergarten.

Eligibility

Sure Start's first responsibility is to the 4-year-old child (the child who turns 4 **by October 31 of the enrolling school year** of a military or eligible Department of Defense employee whose rank is Enlisted (E) E1 to E4; General Schedule (GS)/National Security Personnel System (**NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent) GS1 to GS4; or Non Appropriated Fund (NAF), NAF 1 to NAF 2, *rank equivalent at the date of application. (Note that the application date is not to exceed six months before the first day of the following school year.) Eligibility for Sure Start programs does not extend to students who are non-DoD sponsored or to children who are geographically in a non-DoDDS site. It is important to note that only the sponsor's rank is used to determine eligibility—not family income, **unless it is used to determine rank equivalents for NAF Levels 1-4 or **NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent GS1- GS9**. Any sponsor in the range of E5 to E9, GS5 to GS9 (**NSPS pay band 1, rank equivalent), or NAF 3-4, rank equivalent who wishes to apply for the program is eligible to do so with the understanding that first priority is given to those children whose sponsor is in the E1 to E4, GS1 to GS4/**NSPS pay band 1, rank equivalent, or NAF 1 to NAF 2, rank equivalent range. Further explanation of eligibility requirements can be found in Chapter 7, Program Logistics and Administration.

*NAF Rank Equivalent: The non-appropriated fund rank is used to determine Sure Start eligibility for the dependents of NAF employees. The NAF employee rank uses different banding levels than its counterparts (i.e. Enlisted (E) service members or General Schedule (GS) civilian employees.) In order to determine the priority order for enrollment in the Sure Start Program, the NAF employee rank must be at level which is equivalent to the enlisted service member and General GS civilian employee.

**NSPS, pay band 1, Rank Equivalent: The National Security Personnel System rank is used to determine Sure Start eligibility for the dependents of NSPS employees. The NSPS uses different banding levels than its counterparts. In order to determine the priority order for enrollment in the Sure Start Program, the NSPS employee rank must be at a level which is equivalent to the enlisted service member and General GS civilian employee.

Background Information

The Department of Defense (DoD) operates two educational systems for the children of military and civilian DoD families: Child Development Programs (CDP) and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools. CDP offers child care and before- and after-school care to dependent children from 6 weeks to 14 years of age. DoDEA educates students from PreKindergarten through 12th grade and offers programs in overseas schools for selected preschool-aged children, such as those with disabilities or in Sure Start programs. In DoDEA's stateside schools (DDESS schools), prekindergarten-aged children are also served.

For most of its existence, DoD operated CDP and DoDEA as two complementary, but independent, educational systems. However, in 1991, noting that a sizable population of preschoolers was not being served by either system—because of cost, geographic location, family factors, or lack of available child care slots—Ms. Millicent Woods, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel Support & Families Education), conceived the idea for Sure Start.

From the outset, Sure Start was designed to provide high-quality services to children identified to be at risk for future school failure. As noted, Sure Start is unique among DoDEA programs in that it includes comprehensive health and nutrition, social, and parent involvement services, in addition to providing educational programming.

Sure Start and Head Start

In developing Sure Start, program designers looked for guidance to best practices in early childhood programs throughout the country. Because Head Start functions only domestically, Sure Start was designed to provide similar services as Head Start to families living overseas. The Sure Start model has since grown and continues to develop.

From its inception, Sure Start has incorporated many of the features of Head Start that are correlated with high quality. These include the following:

- A four-tiered service delivery system (education, health and nutrition, social services, and mandatory parent/sponsor involvement). Separate component plans outline the provided services and time lines for delivery.
- Medical, dental, and developmental screenings for all enrolled children. Immediate follow-up assessment and services are provided if problems are identified.
- Nutritious lunches and snacks that take into account children's individual and cultural preferences, as well as food-related health concerns. These are provided at no cost to students.
- Active involvement in the program by families of all children through required participation in classroom activities, parent education meetings, and home visits.
- Thoughtful and intentional planning that ensures that the program environment, curriculum, materials, routines, and activities are appropriate to the children's ages, individual needs, and cultures.

To make Sure Start fit into the DoDEA culture and regulations, Sure Start has evolved into a program with a distinct personality. Specifically, Sure Start differs from Head Start in the following ways:

- Oversight for individual programs is at the Headquarters and Area Office levels, rather than resting with the local program. Parents may recommend changes, but they do not have governing power in the same sense that individual Head Start Parent Policy Councils do. All Sure Start programs follow DoD regulations.
- Unlike Head Start, which uses income as the sole defining criterion for eligibility, Sure Start regards the sponsor's rank as the first priority, but not the sole factor, considered in enrollment.
- Whereas Head Start mandates that a minimum of 10 percent of classroom slots be reserved for children with disabilities, Sure Start does not use disability status as an eligibility criterion. When screening reveals that a Sure Start child has special needs, Sure Start staff work with the DoDEA special education staff to determine the best possible

environment, placement, and services for the child.

- Parent involvement in Sure Start is mandatory. Parents are informed before registration that an involvement commitment (i.e., 30 hours per parent, unless a parent has been deployed) is a precondition for enrollment. Cooperation and participation in home visits is also an entry requirement. Parent involvement is viewed as being integral to the program's philosophy and operations. Although Head Start leaves the determination of staff-child ratios to state and local licensing boards, Sure Start specifies a ratio of two adults to 18 to 20 students. Although parent volunteers lower the adult-to-child ratio, their presence does not affect official ratios.
- Whereas Head Start programs make curriculum adoption decisions at the local level, all Sure Start programs use the same curriculum, which is based on current research about how children grow and learn and is consistent with Sure Start Program Standards and the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK. Both the Sure Start teacher and the program assistant receive annual training in Sure Start's curriculum to ensure consistent implementation. New Sure Start teachers and program assistants will receive three days of training at a determined area site. *Returning teachers and assistants will receive at least two days of training onsite or within driving distance of their respective schools.
- Whereas Head Start operates a variety of program models, all Sure Start programs operate on a full-day schedule (typically six hours).

The Sure Start Pilot Program and Evaluation

During the spring of 1992, a pilot Sure Start program was implemented at Royal Air Force (RAF) Lakenheath, England, to test the viability of the model. The results of an extensive evaluation by DoD established that all of the goals of the pilot program were successfully met, including the following two research objectives:

- Each student received a high-quality preschool education that prepared him or her for kindergarten.
- Parents were fully involved in the education of their children.

As a result of the documented successes of the pilot program (plus the enthusiastic endorsement of participating families, staff, and administrators), 26 Sure Start programs were established in Europe and the Pacific in the 1992–1993 school year. In 1997–1998, the program was expanded to 14 additional sites. By the year 2000, 65 Sure Start sites were in operation around the world. It is expected that the number of Sure Start programs will stay constant for the immediate future.

Sure Start Standards

Sure Start is governed by three sets of standards that establish the parameters for program success: Sure Start Program Standards, DoDEA ECE Space and Safety Standards, and DoDEA Content Standards for PreK.

Sure Start Program Standards

The Sure Start Program Standards provide specific guidance on how to implement this program so that it meets agreed upon indicators of quality. The program standards define the conditions and expectations for quality programming in each of Sure Start's four component areas: education, health and nutrition, social services, and parent involvement. In addition, they state what services must be provided to children and families and what the time lines for delivery are to be.

The Sure Start program standards are referenced in this Guide within each of the relevant component chapters. Sure Start Program Standards for Education are in Chapter 1; Sure Start Program Standards for Health and Nutrition are in Chapters 2 and 3; Sure Start Program Standards for Social Services are in Chapter 4; and the Sure Start Program Standards for Parent Involvement are in Chapter 5.

DoDEA Content Standards for PreK

DoDEA has developed and adopted learning standards that define the content that students should know and be able to do within a particular discipline at each grade level from PreK through 12th grade. In addition, for students in PreK, DoDEA has developed content standards that specify learning outcomes for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These DoDEA Content Standards for PreK are contained in a separate companion document for reference. As standards are developed or refined for other content area they will be added to the master document.

Although DoDEA Content Standards for PreK apply to all PreK programs operated by DoDEA, not just Sure Start, staff and administration should note that these content standards have been correlated with Sure Start's curriculum to make sure that each content standard is addressed in the curriculum. Planning in Sure Start, however, needs to begin with the content standards as well as the program standards. DoDEA embraces the position that an effective program has a comprehensive and ongoing system of curriculum assessment as well as program evaluation that is based on sound early childhood practices and philosophies. Content standards can be a valuable part of early childhood education only if they are coupled with program standards that specify the key elements needed to build an environment in which early childhood content standards can be implemented effectively. Awareness and effective implementation of both these early learning and program standards are a shared responsibility of all stakeholders, including parents.

DoDEA Space and Safety Standards

The DoDEA ECE Space and Safety Standards are provided to schools to ensure compliance and guidance with appropriate health, space, and safety requirements for young children in all DoDEA schools. The standards are based on requirements of the National Health and Safety Performance Standards (2002) and Program standards for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and DoDEA Regulation 4800.1, Department of Defense Education Activity Safety Program.

The DoDEA Space and Safety Standards and Checklist are contained in a separate companion APPENDIX for reference.

How This Guide Is Organized

Part I of this Guide (Chapters 1-5) provides an overview of each component area in the Sure Start program. Part II (Chapters 6-7) presents the mechanics of how the Sure Start program operates at each site while Chapter 8 presents Frequently Asked Questions about the program.

Chapter 1: The Educational Component

Sure Start Program Standards for the Education Component.

Fifteen program standards guide the education component. The objectives of these standards are to do the following:

- Provide children with a learning environment and varied experiences that will help them develop socially, intellectually, physically, and emotionally in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development, toward the overall goal of social and academic competence.
- Integrate the educational aspects of the health, social services, and parent involvement components into the daily program of activities for children and families.
- Assist parents in increasing their knowledge, understanding, skills, and experiences in child growth and development to enhance their role as the principal influence on their child's education and development.

The standards are as follows:

Standard 1: *A written plan for achieving the program's educational goals and objectives will be developed.*

This plan will be written by the Sure Start teacher and the program assistant with the help and approval of the building administrator. New programs will be given a model education component plan on which to structure their plan. Existing programs need only review and update the previous year's component plan from year to year. The companion APPENDIX includes an example of an education plan.

Standard 2: *All Sure Start programs will use standards-based curriculum to help children work toward mastery of content standards.*

All programs are to use the same curriculum to ensure consistent high quality across sites. The designated curriculum should be research-based, aligned to content-specific and program-specific standards, and validated for use with 4-year-olds in center-based programs. Each year, DoDEA will purchase appropriate curriculum materials using a curriculum renewal cycle and provide in-service training on the appropriate use of the materials to help children achieve the PreK Content Standards. At present, Sure Start programs use *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002) as a framework for implementing the content and program standards.

Standard 3: *The indoor physical environment will be organized into at least 10 functional interest areas as described in The Creative Curriculum via the use of centers and consistent with the health, safety, and developmental needs of 4-year-old children. The program will have access to a safe outdoor area with appropriate play equipment.*

Minimum space requirements will be 35 square feet per child inside and 75 square feet per child outside at each Sure Start program. The teacher's desk and filing space, which are not to be included in this calculation, should be located apart from the classroom.

Standard 4: *The program will provide consistent, appropriate, and sufficient furniture, equipment, and materials to meet the needs of the children. The furnishings and materials will be*

arranged in such a way as to facilitate learning, ensure a balanced program of spontaneous and structured activities, and encourage self-reliance in the children.

Furniture, equipment, and materials are to be selected in coordination with the area point of contact for early childhood education from a master inventory to provide a variety of learning experiences that encourage experimentation and exploration. The APPENDIX includes a suggested master inventory for equipping a Sure Start program.

Standard 5: *The program will establish procedures for helping children and families transition into the Sure Start program.*

Parents are to receive orientation and be encouraged to walk through the classroom with their child before the first day of class. They will also receive regular training on Sure Start practices and procedures. These procedures are detailed in Chapter 5, The Parent Involvement Component.

Standard 6: *The classroom teacher and program assistant will conduct two or three home visits per year.*

The teacher and program assistant will together visit the children's families in their homes at least twice a year. Any additional home visits may be scheduled in lieu of parent-teacher conferences in the spring. The mechanics of conducting home visits are detailed in Chapter 5, The Parent Involvement Component.

Standard 7: *The program will develop a daily schedule that balances child-initiated activities with teacher-directed instruction.*

A copy of the schedule will be posted for parents and visitors to consult; a picture-based schedule will be developed and posted at the children's eye level for students to use. These schedules will show a balance of individual, small-group, and whole-group activities, morning and afternoon group meeting times, uninterrupted child-choice time of at least one hour, and daily scheduled outdoor time of at least 45 minutes. In developing a program schedule, Sure Start staff will use the schedule provided in this chapter as a model.

Standard 8: *The program is designed to meet the individual differences and needs of all participating children and their families.*

This includes the special needs of children with disabilities and children who are English as a Second Language Learners.

Standard 9: *The program activities and resources will celebrate, honor, and respect the cultures of all children and families served.*

This includes having a mastery of some basic phrases in the host-nation language and bringing each family's cultural heritage into the classroom. It also includes encouraging the child's bilingualness while providing sound English instruction and becoming aware of local host-nation customs and norms. Examples include counting in the host-nation or prominent second language, singing ethnic or host-nation songs, displaying host-nation artifacts, encouraging families to send in photographs, and showing a general respect and value for home cultures.

The actual celebration of holidays is not part of the Sure Start program. Although the Sure Start program recognizes and respects ethnic and religious diversity and celebrations, teachers should discuss with parents that these celebrations should remain in the home as opposed to the school setting.

Standard 10: *The program will employ procedures and strategies for appropriate guidance that promote children's safe and healthy development.*

A ratio of two adults (one teacher and one program assistant) for every 18 to 20 children is to be maintained at all times to ensure child safety and so that staff can provide the individual attention children need for success. The one exception to this policy is during naptime, when only one staff member need be present so that the teacher and program assistant can take their lunch. The behavior guidance plan will be based on the teaching of social/emotional growth strategies rather than a punitive/reward system.

Administrators should ensure that this ratio is maintained. Many times SS assistants are pulled to sub in other classrooms and double at lunch duty. This compromises the safety and integrity of the program and is not consistent with DoDEA Sure Start standards.

Standard 11: *Program staff will conduct ongoing observation and assessment.*

Staff will maintain portfolios and records documenting each child's growth, development, and progress for the purposes of educational planning and informing parents of their children's progress.

Standard 12: *The program will provide for self-evaluation.*

Working together as a team, the teaching staff and the building administrator will evaluate the program to identify its strengths and target areas in need of improvement.

Standard 13: *The program will integrate the educational aspects of Sure Start with the health, social services, and parent involvement components.*

Children's screenings, family-style dining, and parent participation in classroom activities will be integrated into the daily schedule. The Sure Start teacher will work with families to make needed referrals and to involve families in community events and opportunities that will enhance the quality of life for all family members.

Standard 14: *The program will offer and require professional development activities for staff.*

To maintain program quality and enhance the personal growth of staff, both the Sure Start teacher and the program assistant will be trained annually on curriculum, instructional strategies, and program implementation. Other opportunities for professional growth will be made available to staff throughout the year.

Standard 15: *The program will participate in the school accreditation process.*

As a part of the elementary school, Sure Start classes are included in school-wide planning and activities that support continuous school improvement and the accreditation process.

Implementing the Education Component Program Standards

Following Sure Start's philosophy, Sure Start staff is to integrate curriculum, instruction, and assessment into a high-quality educational program that ensures all children reach their potential as learners. Taken together, the following descriptions provide a portrait of quality early educational programming. Each Sure Start program is to replicate these features.

Curriculum

Curriculum may be defined as a systematically organized written plan that is based on sound child development principles about how children grow and learn. As articulated in the DoDEA

Content Standards for PreK, all Sure Start curriculum materials must align with the specified goals for children’s development and learning, and with how children learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions incorporated in these goals; support the type of instruction that best helps children achieve these goals; and contribute to the type of classroom environment needed to support the implementation of the curriculum. Sure Start programs all use the same designated curriculum and use *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002) as a framework to implement the curriculum.

The curriculum focuses on providing children with learning experiences that promote their social/emotional, physical, literacy, and cognitive growth. Curriculum activities progress from simple to more complex tasks and from concrete to abstract concepts. They also allow for individualized instruction based on children’s special needs. All children, including those with disabilities who are on IEPs and English Language Learners, need to be able to access the curriculum.

Parents should be made aware of curriculum activities through newsletters, parent meetings, bulletin boards, and radio/TV announcements. They can participate in curriculum activities during their volunteer hours and at home by using activities and suggestions discussed at home visits and parent education meetings.

Instruction

When implementing activities and experiences for Sure Start, staff should be guided by an understanding of how preschool children learn. In the Sure Start classroom, instruction consists of large-group activities, small-group activities, and individual activities. Because PreKindergarten children are active learners, a significant amount of instruction and the majority of children’s work are completed in classroom activity areas. Thoughtfully planned curriculum activities are implemented with the following considerations in mind: the activities’ importance to children’s overall development, the children’s progress in accomplishing the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK, how the environment can be structured to promote these activities, what strategies can be used to enrich and extend learning, and how these activities can be coordinated with the experiences parents provide in the home. Teachers are encouraged to build instruction around materials found in the classroom, school, and home environment and the experiences and interests of the children in their program so that learning takes place in a context that is meaningful to the children.

Listed in Table 1 are examples of what you should see in a Sure Start classroom that is effectively instructing children. In the right-hand column is an explanation of how these kinds of activities and experiences enhance children’s growth, development, and learning (adapted from Koralek, Colker, & Dodge, *The What, Why, and How of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs*, 1993).

Table 1: *Examples of Effective Instruction*

INSTRUCTION	
What You Should See	Why
Children playing with a rich assortment of literacy materials (e.g., books, lotto games, lapboards,	Children are motivated to learn to read and write when they understand that written letters and words have meaning.

flannel boards, magnetic letters, alphabet strips, etc.). Staff encouraging alphabet and letter-sound knowledge through tactile, oral, and various other methods.	Activities like these help children to learn about the alphabet and letters in meaningful ways. Alphabet knowledge is historically one of the best predictors of a child's future literary successes.
Staff engaging children in activities related to number and math concepts (e.g., measuring ingredients for a baking project, comparing lengths of Cuisenaire rods, and tracing sandpaper numerals using their fingers).	Preschool children develop understandings of mathematical concepts through play with toys and objects they can classify, compare, measure, and order. These activities also help them learn that math is all around them. They may already know how to count by rote, but they need many opportunities to play and work with materials to understand that numerals are symbols of numbers.
Children and staff working in small groups on cooperative activities (e.g., building a bridge with blocks, carrying equipment outdoors, and playing restaurant in the dramatic play area).	Most preschool children are ready to engage in cooperative play. They discuss with one another what they will play, they assign roles, they decide what tasks to undertake, and they work toward a common goal. Playing cooperatively helps children develop the social skills they need to get along with their peers and to develop friendships.
Children at circle time writing a group story or brainstorming ideas to use in a project.	Some learning activities should be introduced by the teacher to the full group. Participating in projects is one of the best ways for children to master content in a functional way.
Teachers reading a book out loud to the whole class or small groups, encouraging children to rhyme words and engage in phonemic awareness activities. Choral poetry, songs, and chants being led by teacher or assistant in a print-rich environment. Children sorting pictures or objects by characteristics or initial-consonant sound.	Research shows that the best thing teachers can do to help children learn to read and enjoy reading is to read aloud every day and help children attend to the sounds of language. In addition, research has found that a pre-reader's letter-name knowledge is a strong predictor of success in early reading achievement (Snow et al., 1998). See APPENDIX for position papers and research articles on this subject.
Children working individually on tasks or activities they have chosen for themselves (e.g., putting together a puzzle, painting the sidewalk with water, and listening to a tape).	Sometimes preschool children like to work alone on tasks. A child might want to be alone for a while, need a break from group activities, or have a strong interest in a particular activity. Self-selection is a great motivator for learning.
Children and staff playing with blocks, experimenting with sand and water, sorting and classifying materials, drawing and painting, and observing changes around them.	Learning takes place when children can try out their ideas and see for themselves the results of their actions. Each of these activities provides opportunities for children to learn new concepts.
Children and staff engaging in activities that use and develop their gross-motor skills (e.g., jumping on one foot, running around the playground, and riding tricycles).	Physical and mental health development depends on opportunities to continually practice and refine new motor skills.
What You Should See	Why
Children and staff engaging in activities that use and develop their fine-motor skills (e.g., placing pegs in a board, rolling play-dough, finger painting, and constructing with small blocks).	These activities help children develop and practice their small-muscle skills, which they will use to perform refined tasks, such as writing.
Children and staff engaging in activities that allows them to use their imaginations and to express	By using creative methods to represent their ideas, children learn to think abstractly, building reading-readiness skills. To

themselves (e.g., making collages, telling stories, and participating in dramatic play).	read, children must understand that words represent ideas.
Staff reading and writing with children during individual, small-group, and large-group activities.	Children need to “see” themselves as readers and writers during all types of activities in the classroom.
Children and staff working together on joint projects (e.g., making a mural, planning an event, building a city in a block corner, or preparing a meal).	Working together helps children learn to respect the ideas of others, contribute to joint efforts, solve problems, and develop social skills. Project work enables children to investigate concepts at a high level of thinking.
Staff involving small groups of children in a task (such as making play-dough, planting seeds, or playing a classification game.)	Activities initiated by children should be supplemented with activities initiated by staff, What is always important is that children are actively involved.
Children floating objects in the water table to see if the objects will sink, planting seeds in different areas of the classroom to see where they grow best, or adding different amounts of yeast to bread dough to see which rises most, while teachers ask lots of open-ended questions.	Children learn best when they know how to solve problems. Using inquiry to experiment allows children to compare and contrast results. Teachers can facilitate this process by asking probing questions
Staff introducing new equipment such as a microscope or a digital camera to small groups of four to six children. Staff/children/volunteers playing a computer game or using a literacy or math program.	Before adding breakable or expensive equipment to the classroom, children need to know how to use equipment responsibly. Direct instruction is usually the most helpful approach for this.
Staff asking children open-ended questions designed to encourage them to think and express their ideas; staff accepting more than one answer as correct and encouraging creative thinking.	An important goal during the preschool years is to help children develop the self-confidence to think creatively. When staff respects children’s responses, children are more eager to freely share their ideas.
Staff continually observing children, interacting to facilitate children’s use of materials, and making suggestions that extend children’s play.	The primary role of staff is to facilitate learning. They help young children learn by observing and stepping in at appropriate times to guide and extend children’s learning, by talking to them about what they are doing, not telling them the answers or what to do.
Staff sitting together daily to plan purposeful activities for children based on their observations of the children,	The primary reason for observing children is to learn where each child is developmentally so that teachers can plan how to help each child make progress. Observations should be shared with children’s families so that their input can be incorporated into both short- and long-range planning. Staff can use observations to make plans for both individual children and the group as a whole.

A Word about Whole-Group Instruction

It is obviously important to provide a variety of choices and activities when working with young children and to plan transitions to successfully manage the classroom. The use of activity and work areas throughout the classroom is a required component of the program. This, however, should not be misconstrued to mean that some direct instruction each day, whether with the entire class or portions of the class, is inappropriate. The Sure Start teacher must be a careful planner and create a healthy balance and variety of instructional methods to meet the needs of

diverse learners. It is also important to understand that periods when preschool children are in a large group should be no longer than 15 or 20 minutes in length. Here are some examples of acceptable direct instruction:

- A shared reading or big book activity to introduce or reinforce a certain concept
- A read-aloud for simple enjoyment and to encourage, model, and nurture a love of reading and language
- Observing and discussing the weather, rote counting, singing, dancing, or any other activity that requires group awareness
- A group writing activity or composition followed by choral reading (e.g., morning message or shared writing) to model writing and/or left-right progression
- Demonstration of a new game or a piece of classroom equipment, or modeling social skills through puppetry
- Demonstration of proper use of a learning tool in an activity area
- Teaching/reinforcing a song, finger-play, or choral reading
- Introducing a classroom visitor
- Discussing safety procedures such as a fire drill
- An activity that involves all children participating in charting, listing, or large-group graphing activities to collect mathematical and scientific data for comparison and/or study
- Orally collecting information and interpreting it in a picture graph

A Word about Using Food in the Classroom

Being aware of children's cultural sensitivities is part of developmentally appropriate practices and therefore an essential part of the Sure Start classroom. Because food is considered sacred in many cultures and scarcity is a reality in many families, food in the Sure Start program must be used only for consumption. Although cooking activities and snack preparation are highly appropriate and encouraged, food products are not to be used for art activities or display purposes. The rule of thumb is that all foods used in the classroom need to be consumed. Use of food for art purposes or use of rice or beans as a substitute for sand in the sand table does not occur in the Sure Start classroom.

A Word about Specialists

If a school's Sure Start program includes specialists on an as needed basis, collaboration between the Sure Start teacher and the specialist is vital to the success of this option to ensure that Sure Start program standards are not compromised.

Specialists, who work with Sure Start students, should do so within the Sure Start classroom environment and with the students in a way that does not compromise the Sure Start program standards and guidance. Following are several scenarios:

- A music teacher could speak to the whole class during center time for 5 minutes about the similarities of rhythm to patterns and demonstrate clapping to make some patterns. Then she/he could introduce some simple rhythm instruments and put them in a center for students to explore. The music teacher could remain in the Sure Start classroom and be

at the center with the instruments and interact with small groups of students who choose to participate and show an interest in that center and learning more about rhythm, patterns, etc.

- A PE teacher could introduce a hopping game to children as a whole group of children during outdoor play and then interact with small groups of children who are interested in continuing to play the game or extend their learning around this concept.
- In general, a Sure Start teacher would want to have a time period when all centers are open and the specialists could position themselves in a center that most closely aligns with their area. While the specialists are there, they can observe the children's interactions with the materials and interact with the children and the materials.

It is important to remember that Sure Start enrollment is not included in the school population when determining their school's staffing ratio for specialists. Due to the staffing ratio used for specialists, it is not recommended that Sure Start be included in the school's specialist rotation on a regular basis. While the examples given above show how specialists may work with Sure Start students, it is anticipated that the majority of support will be consultation with the Sure Start Teacher.

Lesson Planning

Teachers are required to develop weekly lesson plans that will create ways for students to achieve the DoDEA PreKindergarten Content Standards. Although there is not a prescribed method for lesson planning, it is recommended that lesson plans include a variety of activities that are thoughtful and intentional and incorporate time and materials needed. Teachers should also strive to employ both teacher-directed and child-initiated activities.

Some teachers find lesson plans that include books to be read, circle-time topics, special activities/projects, and additions to specific centers work well for them. Other teachers find that including specific time frames and specific teacher-directed activities related to content areas help them in planning. Many teachers rely on curriculum-webbing to begin their planning and add lists of anticipated activities under content areas and/or centers.

Teachers may wish to use a prepared framework to do their planning, such as the form which appears in *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, 4th edition (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002). (See companion APPENDIX for Planning Form)

Lesson plans must be flexible and fluid enough to accommodate students' interests and the divergent ways that they may discover and explore during any day. Lesson plans are only "anticipated" or "expected" ways that children may proceed through the week's activities. It is understood that unexpected events and teachable moments may waylay the best of planned lessons. Children's interests and needs must always be at the heart of the Sure Start day.

A Word about Holidays

In the past many early childhood programs planned lessons around monthly holidays. A "holiday curriculum" or the actual celebration of holidays is not part of the Sure Start program. Although teachers certainly want to respond to student initiated inquiries and activities related to the holidays they celebrate in their homes, lesson planning should not include holiday activities or celebrations.

Daily Schedule and Routines

The daily routine organizes instruction. It provides consistent times for children to engage in individual, small-group, and large-group activities. Because preschool children are aware of the daily sequence, each Sure Start program should have a picture-based schedule that children can refer to that is posted at their eye level.

In addition, a posted schedule that everyone, including parent volunteers, can refer to should be prominently posted. All periods of the day, from the opening of the program to the departure of the last child, should be noted on this daily schedule.

A well-planned daily schedule reflects the age and developmental abilities of the children. The time allocated for each activity period should reflect recognition of preschool children's needs, interests, and abilities. For example, active and quiet periods should be balanced during the day. To extend the depth of understanding during activities, preschool children require at least 40 to 45 minutes to become fully involved in an activity. Therefore, large blocks of time of at least an hour should be allotted for self-selected activities in interest areas. Outside activities lasting 45 minutes to an hour should be included in the daily schedule. Periods when preschool children are in a large group (such as the morning meeting) should be about 15 to 20 minutes in length. Children who are developmentally immature and unable to sit in the group for this period of time should not be forced to do so. Instead, they may be referred to the program assistant for an individual parallel activity or some form of redirection; the ultimate goal is to have them be comfortable and able to participate as a member of the whole group.

Length of the Sure Start Day and Planning Time

The Sure Start program is a full-day program and normally coincides with the elementary school day and a 45-minute teacher planning time without students should be included for the Sure Start teacher. This can be achieved in one of several ways.

- The Sure Start *students' day* may start 15 minutes later than the regular students' day and end 30 minutes earlier.
- The Sure Start *students' day* may begin 45 minutes after the start time of the regular elementary *students' day*.
- The Sure Start *students' day* may end 45 minutes before the regular elementary *students' day*.

The shortened Sure Start students' day should only be an option if it results in no additional transportation costs. If these options are not a possibility, the Sure Start teacher should meet with the principal to discuss other options to allow for teacher planning time.

A Word about Using the School Information Center

A weekly library rotation should also be included in the program. This enables a Sure Start student to become familiar with life long reading habits and gives them the privilege of borrowing books from the school library. Parents are also encouraged to visit the school library to become familiar with its workings. This then lays the foundation for a parent to visit the base or community library with their child as a part of good practices in building literacy. During the scheduled weekly visits to the information center, the program assistant or teacher assists the information center specialist with book rotation, and encouraging proper literacy and library skills.

Table 2: A Sample Daily Schedule

APPROXIMATE TIME	ACTIVITY/COMMENTS	ROLE OF TEACHER AND PROGRAM ASSISTANT
30 minutes	Teacher Planning Time	Teacher and program assistant meet to go over day's plans. Teachers conduct health and safety checks (e.g., check bathroom supplies; make sure dangerous items are out of children's reach). Teachers make sure all needed materials are available to children.
SURE START SESSION BEGINS 10 minutes	Arrival: Parents and children who walk or drive arrive at the program. If bus transportation is used, buses arrive and unload children. Food (e.g., a plate of orange slices) is available so that hungry children can serve themselves. Quiet areas, such as table toys and library corner, are available.	Greet parents and children individually. Share information with parents. Help children store belongings and select an activity.
20 minutes	Group Meeting Time: Talk about what children did the night before or over the weekend. Teacher takes attendance and children count who is present and who is absent. Teacher assigns jobs to children for the day. Teacher reads aloud a story or introduces a song or finger-play. Children do rhyming activities and other phonemic awareness word-play. Teacher goes over the daily schedule, and children predict "what comes next." Teacher may complete a shared reading, choral reading, song, or group writing activity related to current concepts and themes.	Teacher leads circle time. Teacher-directed instruction takes place. Teacher leads counting and phonemic awareness activities. Program assistant responds to individual children who are not ready for large-group activities.
60 minutes	Indoor Choice Time: Children choose to participate in interest areas and/or a small-group activity. Children solve problems and conduct "research" about the project the class is currently investigating. Children may explore in depth materials or concepts introduced at morning meeting. Children clean up and put on jackets, if needed, for going outdoors.	Teacher and program assistant interact with individual children in ways that extend play and learning. Program assistant or parent volunteer leads a small-group activity that builds on children's skills and interests and/or is related to the current project study. Teachers encourage children to clean up as they play.
60 minutes	Outdoor Choice Time: Children choose to play on swings, climbers, and slides, ride trikes, jump rope, or participate in ball games. Some children may prefer quiet activities such as reading a book, playing with sidewalk chalk, or tending a garden.	Gross-motor play needs to be carefully supervised. Teachers can lead small-group activities

NOTE: Morning snack is incorporated into either indoor or outdoor choice time. Cooking area is

available to children all day for snacks.		
15 minutes	<p>Story and Lunch Preparation: Teacher reads story aloud to the class, while student helpers work with program assistant and parent volunteers to set tables.</p> <p>Children use toilet and wash hands.</p>	<p>Teacher reads a story using props.</p> <p>Program assistant oversees children setting out placemats, dishes, glasses, silverware, and napkins. Adults fill serving dishes and place bowls of food on tables.</p> <p>Staff oversees use of bathroom facilities and hand washing. Staff help children settle in for lunch.</p>
45 minutes	<p>Lunch: Children and adults enjoy a family-style meal.</p> <p>Children clean up, wash hands, brush teeth, get mats out, and get ready for naptime.</p>	<p>Adults sitting at tables with children encourage conversations about nutrition and topics of interest to the children.</p> <p>Teachers guide children to clean up, wash hands, brush teeth, and get ready for naptime.</p> <p>Adults help children set out mats.</p>
60 minutes	<p>Naptime: Children sleep or rest quietly on mats. Nonsleepers can be given a book box, puzzles, or paper and markers.</p>	<p>Staff help children relax, if needed, so they can fall asleep.</p> <p>Teacher and program assistant take turns going on duty-free lunch.</p>
60 minutes	<p>Indoor or Outdoor Child Choice: Children choose their own activities as they wake up.</p> <p>Children conduct small-group investigations as part of project work.</p>	<p>Program assistant or parent volunteers help children with investigations.</p> <p>Second “open snack” opportunity.</p> <p>Teacher interacts with children individually.</p>
15 minutes	<p>Afternoon Meeting: Teacher and children review day’s activities summarize and apply content studied. Children clean up and get ready to go home.</p>	<p>Teacher leads circle.</p> <p>Staff help children clean up and prepare to go home.</p>
15 minutes SURE START SESSION ENDS FOR THE DAY	<p>Departure: Parents pick up children, or children walk to the bus.</p>	<p>Staff greets parents and provides positive information about what children did during the day.</p> <p>Staff says goodbye to individual children and their parents, making sure that children take home what is in their cubbies.</p>
30 minutes	<p>Planning Period</p>	<p>Staff discusses day’s events—what worked well, what might need to be changed.</p> <p>Staff discusses activities and progress of individual children—skills, needs, interests.</p> <p>Staff plans for the future—the next day, week, and month.</p> <p>Interest areas are readied for the next day.</p> <p>Staff hangs children’s artwork.</p> <p>Teachers work on portfolios, enter online assessment data, and do other paperwork.</p>
15 minutes	<p>Departure: Parents pick up children, or children</p>	<p>Staff greets parents and provides positive</p>

SURE START SESSION ENDS FOR THE DAY	walk to the bus.	information about what children did during the day. Staff says goodbye to individual children and their parents, making sure that children take home what is in their cubbies.
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Transitions

Transitioning from one scheduled activity to the next is difficult for some preschool children. However, when teachers use learning games and other activities to help children adjust to and move between activities, children become accustomed to following school routines and learn new concepts at the same time.

When a visitor walks into a Sure Start program, it should be apparent that the schedule, transition, and daily routines are designed to promote learning. Table 3 describes what you should see and why (adapted from Koralek, Colker, & Dodge, *The What, Why, and How of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs*, 1993).

Table 3: *Examples of Effective Scheduling*

SCHEDULE, TRANSITIONS, AND DAILY ROUTINES	
What You Should See	Why
A balance of active and quiet times (e.g., outdoor time and music activities alternate with story time and rest periods).	Young children need lots of active play, but they also tire easily. The schedule should provide for both expending and recouping energy.
Many opportunities for children to be in small groups or to work individually.	Young children learn best in small groups, where they can participate actively and receive more individual attention than is possible in large groups, where they might be required to sit still and participate only passively.
Teachers talking to children during routines (such as meals and preparations for rest periods).	Routines provide excellent opportunities for learning new concepts and skills and for staff to engage children in conversation to get to know them better.
Children playing outdoors for at least 45 minutes a day and having alternatives during inclement weather.	Children need fresh air and a place to run, jump, and play actively. Learning experiences should incorporate the outdoors.
Time periods appropriate to the developmental abilities of children.	Behavior problems can be averted by adjusting the schedule to the children's abilities. Even though children can sit still for a while if teachers ask them to, they are not necessarily learning anything. Preschool children cannot be expected to sit still for 45 minutes of circle time; 15 to 20 minutes is much more appropriate.
Sufficient time allocated for children to select their own activities and play for an extended time (e.g., at least one hour of self-selected activities in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon).	Children learn best when they can select activities that interest them and when they have time to see projects through to completion. Increasingly complex thinking skills develop when children are given time to fully explore and

	experience.
Children receiving sufficient announcements and encouragement to complete what they are doing and prepare for the next activity (e.g., “In five minutes, it will be time for us to go outside”).	Young children respond to change better when they are not surprised by a demand to stop what they are doing. They are more likely to cooperate when they have time to complete what they have started.
Sufficient time allocated for transitions and routines, such as putting away materials, washing hands, and preparing for lunch.	Routines can be important learning times, and children should not be rushed through them.
Staff explaining what is coming next and what is expected (e.g., “In a few minutes, we will be getting ready for lunch; this means you will need to wash your hands”).	Children feel more in control when they know what is expected of them and why.
Children performing tasks individually or in small groups (e.g., washing hands and preparing for outdoor time) rather than the whole group going at once.	When children complete tasks in small groups, the routine goes more smoothly because of less waiting time.
Children meaningfully involved in transition activities such as washing paintbrushes, setting tables for a meal, or getting out their mats for naptime.	These housekeeping chores help children learn and give them an important role in maintaining the room, which helps them feel competent and builds their self-esteem.
A relaxed atmosphere at meals, with the teacher and program assistant sitting and engaging in conversations with the children, and no one rushing or being required to finish everything.	Children need time to digest their food in a calm environment and to learn about different foods. Some children need more or less food than others, so children should not be required to finish everything. Children learn many social skills during meals.
Children serving themselves family style (from bowls passed around the table) and being encouraged, but not forced, to try everything.	Serving themselves helps children learn how much they can eat, develops fine-motor control, and enhances self-esteem.

A Word about Transitioning from Sure Start to Kindergarten

The transition from the Sure Start program to Kindergarten may be difficult for some children to understand. Adults often use special events to mark the passages of time. However, young children are often more concerned about how things will stay the same over time. The Sure Start program should provide a variety of activities such as visits to Kindergarten classrooms, meeting the Kindergarten teacher when possible, visiting the cafeteria and having the opportunity to eat a lunch in the cafeteria, and talking a bout or writing stories about going to Kindergarten to make the transitions as smooth and seamless as possible. Therefore, graduation ceremonies to mark the end of Sure Start are not appropriate and should never be held.

Classroom Environment

Sure Start classrooms should be “print rich,” be supportive of the children’s home cultures, promote independence, foster decision making, and encourage initiative and involvement. The basic premise of room arrangement is that the classroom should be divided into distinct activity areas where children can play and engage in high-level learning. Noisy areas should be separated

from quiet areas, materials should be displayed on low, open shelves with written and picture labels, so children can become independent learners.

By dividing the classroom into attractive, inviting interest areas, Sure Start offers children clear choices for play and learning. Sometimes children like to work together; at other times, they prefer to work alone quietly, or to be with one or two friends. Typically young children work best in small groups, where they can learn to relate to other children.

The indoor activity areas listed below should be clearly defined for the Sure Start students, although some may need to be combined, depending on room size, arrangement, and commonalities:

1. Blocks
2. Dramatic Play
3. Table Toys, Games, and Math Manipulatives
4. Art and Construction
5. Library (books, listening)/Literacy (paper, writing, journals)
6. Computers
7. Sand and Water
8. Discovery/Science
9. Music and Movement
10. Cooking/Snack

Materials need to be available for children to explore and experiment with in each of these 10 areas, plus the outdoor area. Staff should understand that books and writing materials belong in every interest area, not just the Library/Literacy Center. Likewise, math, science, and social studies materials should not be consigned to just one area of the classroom. Literacy items such as paper, markers, and books should be available for children in each area. The APPENDIX includes a guide for ordering and stocking an appropriate inventory.

Table 4 shows what you should see (and why,) when you walk into a Sure Start classroom, (adapted from Koralek, Colker, & Dodge, *The What, Why, and How of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs*, 1993).

Table 4: *Examples of Effective Room Arrangement*

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	
What You Should See	Why
Noisy areas separated from quiet areas (e.g., blocks and dramatic play located near each other, separated from books and table toys).	Most children cannot focus on quiet activities if they are distracted by noise from neighboring centers. Separating the areas allows children to get the most out of both types of activities and to play undisturbed.
Low furniture (such as bookshelves, tables and chairs, and dividers) and floor coverings (such as carpeting and linoleum) used to create work areas and work surfaces for small-group activities (36-inch-height-maximum regulation).	Using low furniture to define workspaces helps children concentrate, because they are not distracted by activities in other areas. At the same time, Sure Start staff can watch over the children to ensure their safety and respond to their needs.
Indoor areas set up for 10 different kinds of self-	An important goal of early childhood education is to help children

selected activities, as noted above.	learn to make their own choices. Sure Start staff should set up the interest areas so that the choices are clear to children and so that children can select from a variety of quiet and other kinds of activities.
Materials displayed on low shelves labeled with pictures and words, where children can reach what they need and replace items when they are finished. Digital photos of centers and shelves that allow children to replace items correctly; labels on shelves (e.g., a picture of a fire hat laminated and affixed where the fire hat should be stored, or block-shaped cut-outs on shelves for sorting).	When materials are readily accessible, children can choose what they want to use. Labeling the place where each object belongs helps the children maintain the environment and learn that orderliness is valued. This helps children take responsibility for their environment and develop independence and self-esteem. The cleanup process promotes cognitive skills such as sorting and matching.
Labels and signs written in English plus the children's home languages and the language of the host nation.	Children feel valued when they see writing in their home language. All children will pick up vocabulary in a second language when it is so featured. Experts recommend scattering labels and signs in the different languages in a functional way around the room. Thus one container might be labeled "chalk" and another "las tijeras."
Toys with small pieces stored in dishpans or plastic storage containers labeled with pictures or photos of what is inside.	This keeps the shelves attractive and inviting and also allows children to find and use what they need without assistance.
Private hideaways and soft spaces where children can relax and be alone or with chosen friends (e.g., large pillows, rugs, rocking chairs, lofts, and couches).	Children who spend long hours in a Sure Start program need a soft and comfortable place to relax and get away from noise and over-stimulating activities. Being able to recoup their energy contributes to the children's emotional well-being and encourages positive behavior.
Logically organized materials displayed on low shelves near the area where children use them (e.g., crayons and markers with drawing paper, pegs with the pegboards, blocks and accessories in the block area). Markers and paint should be provided in colors that reflect multicultural skin tones as well as basic colors.	This tells children which materials belong together, suggests how materials can be used, and supports complex play. Logical grouping of materials promotes their appropriate use. Multicultural art supplies show a respect and understanding for cultural diversity.
Pictures and photos hung on the walls and on the backs and sides of room dividers at the children's eye level (e.g., children's work, photographs of children and their families, and other pictures relevant to the children's interests).	Children are unlikely to notice pictures that are hung far above their eye level. Displaying their work conveys respect for their efforts and gives them pride in their accomplishments. Ask children which of their paintings, drawings, and writing samples they would like to display in the classroom and which they would like to take home.
An area set up with equipment such as a climber or balance beam or used for movement activities that allow children to use their large muscles.	Young children need many opportunities to exercise their large muscles. Children develop many physical skills during the preschool years that they will use throughout their lives. Physical development contributes to positive self-esteem as children learn to feel good about their bodies and their gross-motor skills.
A safe, well-organized outdoor play area that includes a variety of surfaces, equipment, and materials for large-muscle play and space for activities such as painting, woodworking, and playing with water that might also take place indoors.	The outdoors provides a new world for children to explore and room for them to release pent-up energy. Activities that might take place indoors are enjoyed by children in different ways when conducted outdoors.

Classroom Atmosphere

The atmosphere in the Sure Start program reflects the tone set by staff. Visitors should hear lively chatter from children talking and working together and from staff interacting with and responding to children. You should expect to see Sure Start teachers and program assistants who are genuinely interested in what the children are doing, how they are feeling, and what they have to say. The staff's expectations for each child should be appropriate to what the child can understand and do at his or her stage of development. Cooperation and caring among the children and between children and staff should be evident.

Table 5 shows what you should see (and why,) when observing a Sure Start classroom (adapted from Koralek, Colker, & Dodge, *The What, Why, and How of High-Quality Early Childhood Programs*, 1993).

Table 5: *Examples of Effective Classroom Atmosphere*

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE	
What You Should See	Why
Staff responding quickly and positively to children's needs and questions, comforting distressed children, and helping them deal with their problems constructively.	Children develop a sense of trust and self-esteem when adults respond to their needs. Being comforted helps children learn that they are important and cared for.
Staff bending, kneeling, or sitting down to establish eye contact when talking to children.	Eye contact promotes good communication. Children feel more respected when adults are at their level.
Staff showing respect for children's feelings and ideas, even while disagreeing with them or when children misbehave.	Children's feelings and concerns are important and should be honored; children learn that they are valued, and their self-esteem is enhanced when they are afforded respect.
Staff establishing clear rules and limits for behavior and applying them consistently and calmly.	Children are likely to cooperate with the rules and limits in the room when they know what is expected of them and when they feel the rules and limits are enforced fairly.
Staff describing the behavior they would like to see—not just complaining about the behavior they want stopped.	When staff give children a clear understanding about what they can do as well as about what behavior is not acceptable, children learn what is expected of them and change their behavior accordingly.
Staff helping children discuss and resolve their conflicts. Staff redirecting children to make other choices when they are inappropriately interacting with other children or materials (e.g., not using the slide safely or correctly).	It is not easy for children to live and work in a group setting. Many times, their needs and desires conflict with those of other children in the room. Staff can help children develop social skills (such as cooperation, negotiation, and problem solving) that will allow them to develop their own solutions to conflicts. When children resolve their own conflicts, they feel

	competent.
Staff praising children for cooperative behavior and encouraging them to work together, to help one another, and to care for one another.	When children acquire skills in working with others, their self-esteem grows and their behavior improves. They also gain a sense of community.
Staff helping children to understand other people's points of view and to accept individual differences.	The ability to see things from another's perspective is an important cognitive skill and critical to living successfully in a group.
Staff providing encouragement and suggestions to enable children to solve problems on their own, to complete challenging tasks, and to learn from their mistakes.	Encouragement and support boost children's confidence, self-esteem, and understanding of new concepts. Children who feel good about themselves are likely to try new challenges, which will help them develop new skills.
Teachers and program assistants helping children make friends and supporting each child's efforts to renegotiate friendships when necessary.	The ability to make friends and renegotiate friendships is central to children's mental health. Children who leave the preschool years feeling friendless are likely to experience social and learning problems later in life.

Social and Emotional Competence

Social and emotional curriculum is not a week of "I Am Special" or "We are Friends." The real curriculum is reflected in the norms, language and values that teachers establish for the classroom community.

Teachers pass on important social and emotional messages in every interaction that they have with the children in their care. Make sure to model for children the language and attitudes that you wish they would use with each other.

The first, and most important message, is that school is a physically and emotionally safe place for children to learn and grow, and that teachers are there to act as partners in this exciting journey. From that strong base, move on to establish a respectful and cooperative classroom community where problems are just puzzles to be solved, where children's strengths and gifts are celebrated, and where children gain pride in learning how to manage emotions.

Table 6: *Examples of Effective Adult/Child and Child/Child Interactions*

DAILY INTERACTIONS	
What You Should See	Why
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When speaking to children, get down and talk quietly at their eye level • "Tell me about this picture you drew." • "You seem sad about something? Can I help?" • "I can see you don't want to share the markers, but at school we share school things." 	<p>Help children develop a sense of trust in adults and their world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build individual and personal relationships with each child and their family. • Show respect for children's feelings, even if you feel differently

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Damiano, can I use the scissors when you’re done with them?” • “Fiona, did I step on your fingers? I’m sorry.” • “Luci, you made room for Justin at the water table. That was friendly.” • “Brandon, I saw you help Ahbre figure out what we are doing. That was helpful.” 	<p>Help children learn how to have a friend and be a friend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model and teach friendship skills such as sharing, apologizing, taking turns, conversing and entering and exiting play. • Recognize and give descriptive feedback to children who exhibit friendship skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Your body looks all tense. Are you angry about something?” • “Stop, take a deep breath and relax.” • “At school, even when you’re really angry, you need to keep others safe.” • “Let’s think about what you can do at school when somebody calls you a name.” 	<p>Help children develop self regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach children to recognize, label and manage their emotions. • Clearly define limits of acceptable school behavior • Support children as they learn to control their impulses and to make thoughtful choices about their behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I can see you put a lot of work into your self-portrait.” • “Oops, the water splashed out of the table. Who can figure out how we can clean it up?” • “What can we do when two kids both want the same book? How can we solve this problem?” 	<p>Help children learn to embrace challenges and resolve problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the process instead of the product • Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities • Embrace problems as challenges to be conquered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How do you think Goldilocks felt when she woke up and saw the bears looking at her?” • Make an expert chart for the wall of the classroom highlighting each person’s skill or strength that they contribute to the community. • “You need somebody to help you draw a house? I see on our chart that Davinia is an expert at drawing. See if she will help you.” 	<p>Help children accept and celebrate the uniqueness of each and every individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach children to take the perspective of others • Celebrate the unique contributions of each individual in the community

Assessment

The following factors are critical to the assessment of young children:

- Children should be assessed in their natural settings.
- Children should be assessed by people they know.
- Accurate assessment of children requires multiple assessments using multiple measures.

Additionally, effective assessment of young children should be designed to ascertain more than a child’s achievement at one given time; rather, it should encompass a child’s physical, social, and language development, as well as how a child approaches learning as expressed through such factors as curiosity and ability to stay on task. Many experts view a child’s approach to learning as the most important element to measure. Sure Start follows the position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, November, 2003) in “Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation. Sure Start programs participate in two types of assessment: (1) initial screening of students to identify needs and (2) ongoing assessment to monitor and measure student growth and progress and inform planning.

Educational Screening

Within 45 days of program start-up, all children are to be screened for potential developmental, medical, and language problems. Because the majority of these initial screenings are health-

related, detailed procedures for conducting these screenings are described in Chapter 2, The Health and Nutrition Component: The Health Component. One type of screening, though, is education-specific and needs to be mentioned in this chapter—screening for developmental delays. This screening is to be done by the Sure Start teacher using a standardized screening tool. Currently, Sure Start programs use the ESI-Revised.

Because developmental delays are by far the most common type of disability affecting preschoolers, teachers need to be trained on use of the screening tool. Immediate follow-up is to be provided if needs are discovered. For students with IEPs, Sure Start staff will work closely with special education service providers to ensure the most appropriate interventions and support. The goal is to keep any child identified with developmental delays in the best environment for that child, which typically means letting the child remain within an inclusive Sure Start classroom.

Ongoing Assessment

Sure Start uses developmentally appropriate approaches to document how well the program is meeting its goals for children and to adjust instruction to meet each child's needs. Staff are required to regularly observe and annotate children's behavior to see how well they interact with materials, with other children, and with adults, as well as demonstrate to what extent they are meeting or exceeding the PreK standards. A narrative progress report (to be shared with parents) is required twice a year; at the end of the first and second semester. Through direct observations and approved assessment tools, staff can determine whether children are making developmental gains and use this information to adjust to the program and communicate meaningful information to families about their child's progress.

Observational Tools

The basic component of a developmentally appropriate assessment system is observation. Using observation-based assessment tools, staff can determine the extent of progress each child is making toward achieving DoDEA's Content Standards for PreK as well as how well their interactions with others. Children will not be required to show success or development in only one way; they will have opportunities to show understanding in a variety of contexts. For example, a child might demonstrate understanding of the math concept of serration by stringing attribute blocks together in order of size, clanging bells in sequence of tone, or arranging a collection of leaves from lightest to darkest.

At this time, Sure Start staff must use the Creative Curriculum.net to document student achievement and progress. Use of the information gathered through observation is integral to ongoing planning and individualization of the curriculum. These observations also provide a running commentary on how Sure Start is meeting the needs of the students it is committed to serving. Staff are to complete these observational assessments by October 31st, again at midyear (January), and at the close of the school year. All completed copies of these assessments should be kept in the child's folder in a secured place.

Portfolios

Staff members are to use portfolios. Portfolios are a selection of children's work that illustrates development over time and becomes evidence of children's progress in meeting the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK. Because work added to the portfolio is dated, children's progress as they move through the curriculum can be tracked. Portfolios provide a living history of how children learn and acquire social, emotional, physical, literacy, and cognitive skills.

What goes into children's portfolios? Here are some suggestions.

Actual work completed by children:

- Drawings, paintings, collages (Including those inspired by stories or music)
- Writing and number writing
- Books/stories dictated and illustrated by children
- Computer printouts of art, writing, or creative experiences
- Graphs of science-related experiments

Photos of children's work:

- Artwork
- Cooking activities created on their own or as part of a group project
- Dramatic play
- Block buildings
- Working and interacting with one another

It is important to annotate and date these samples to make them useful tools at parent conferences. The teacher or program assistant may also photograph children completing a repeat activity with more success or progress (e.g., a child sorting and classifying unifix cubes by color, who could not do so a month before).

Portfolios, though, must be more than a selection of students' work and teachers' observations. To truly be assessment tools, they must contain teacher commentary on the context in which the work was produced. In addition, teachers must summarize how and to what degree the child's work illustrates mastery of the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK. To this end, staff might include the following written records:

- Questions, issues, and brainstorming notes from children's involvement in small-group project work
- Notes and comments by children about their work, including descriptions of their artwork recorded by staff on a sentence strip
- Interviews with children about favorite play activities
- Children's personal reactions to classroom experiences
- Children's self-evaluations of their work

To make this a team effort, both teachers and program assistants will share the responsibility for regularly adding to the children's portfolios.

Portfolios obviously are growing documents. To be useful, they must be expandable, durable, accessible, and portable. Accordion files, portfolio holders, or plastic containers with lids can serve as portfolio containers. Any container that offers enough room to organize the contents is appropriate.

Because a number of portfolio entries will accumulate throughout the year, it is a good idea to group them by subject matter. Within each category, place the dated items in the container chronologically. The following may prove a useful way to organize portfolios:

- Art Activities (fine-motor-skill development)—Drawings, photos of block constructions, collages, samples of writing with letters
- Movement (gross-motor-skill development)—Videos of movement activities, observations of outdoor play, interviews with the child about favorite games
- Math and Science Activities (concept development)—Photos of the child measuring

during a cooking activity, chart of activities performed by the child in caring for plants, checklists covering the child's use of creative thinking and problem-solving skills

- Language and Literacy (early reading and writing skills)—Tape recordings of stories, signs written by the child, copy of child's effort to print name, stories or poems dictated by the child
- Personal and Social Development (self-concept, social skills, self-help skills)—Observation notes on social skills, chart of the child's choices, notes from conversations with parents

The purpose of maintaining portfolios is not to compare children with one another. Rather, the sole purpose of this type of assessment is to monitor and measure each child's progress and then plan—with parental input—how to best meet the educational needs of every individual child.

Individual Goals and Education Plan

Teachers are to develop and maintain an Individual Goals and Education Plan (which should not be confused with the legally mandated IEP for children with identified disabilities) for each child in Sure Start by the November in-school conference. This plan becomes the basis for instructing and guiding each child's learning.

Teachers will generate this plan by completing the Creative Curriculum Progress Checkpoints for each child. By completing the Checkpoints, a Developmental Area Report will generate for each of the four developmental areas (e.g., Social Emotional, Physical, Cognitive, and Language). Teachers are then required to document how each child will progress by adding individual goals and plans to the comment section of this report. Additionally, parent input should be solicited to complete this section of the report. This completed Developmental Area Report becomes the Individual Goals and Education Plan for the year. A printed form of this report is generated and kept in the child's records and used throughout the year to plan and guide instruction.

Program Evaluation

In addition to evaluating children's progress, Sure Start staff will assess the effectiveness and quality of their program as a whole. This will be done through the following:

- Administration of an observational tool for pinpointing program strengths and weaknesses. Programs now use *The Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs, Abbott-Shim & Sibley*.
- Completion of the Sure Start Program Progress Plan
- Completion of the DoDEA Annual Sure Start Report.
- Surveys and reports compiled by the Area in coordination with DoDEA Headquarters.
- Participation in the school accreditation process.
- Using the reports from the monitoring and evaluation of programs by the Area Office in coordination with DoDEA Headquarters to ensure the program is being implemented as required and intended. These visits will occur in the third year of the NCA accreditation cycle.

Observational Program Evaluation Tool

The Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs, Abbott-Shim & Sibley, which Sure Start programs now use, should be completed by the Sure Start teaching staff in cooperation with the school administrator by October 31.

Sure Start Program Progress Plan

Areas shown to be in need of improvement should be targeted for focus. Staff should work with their administrator to identify areas that need special focus. The staff and administrator may use input from any sources, including *The Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs, Abbott-Shim & Sibley* results from the Parent Questionnaire, or from student data results to set goals for program improvement and an action plan for achieving them. Each Sure Start program is to have a Sure Start Program Progress Plan on file. The companion APPENDIX includes a format for the Sure Start Program Progress Plan.

Staffs are to review the Sure Start Program Progress Plan with the administration to compare how program quality has changed at midpoint during the school year and within one month of the schools year's end. For example, staff might find at the initial examination that the classroom does not contain enough science-related materials or that no schedule is posted for children or parents. These easily correctable omissions can readily be added to the classroom so that the next time the self-improvement plan is consulted, these items would no longer be noted as areas needing a focus.

Program evaluation as described here is intended to be a training tool for staff and should in no way be used to evaluate staff performance.

DoDEA Annual Sure Start Report

At the end of the program year, each Sure Start program is to complete written documentation of the services they've rendered. This includes recording data on the following:

- Characteristics and demographics of the student population
- Sponsor's rank
- Teacher's experience
- Program assistant's experience
- Parent meetings
- Volunteer hours
- Student progress as monitored and measured by using CreativeCurriculum.net
- Summarized findings and comments received on the parent questionnaire

The companion APPENDIX includes a copy of the Sure Start Annual Summary Report.

Accreditation

The design of the education component of the Sure Start program includes a third-party evaluation of quality. To this end, all Sure Start programs are to participate in the DoDEA school accreditation process. In essence, accreditation is a means of determining whether or not a Sure Start program meets nationally recognized criteria for high-quality early childhood programs. Currently, DoDEA uses the NCA/CASI accreditation system.

Site visits for NCA/CASI accreditation will be set up with the District and Area Offices in coordination with DoDEA Headquarters to ensure the most advantageous time frame. In addition

to being a part of the NCA/CASI accreditation process, each site will be monitored and evaluated during the third year of the five year NCA cycle, to ensure that Sure Start is meeting the standards of a high-quality early childhood program. These “third year monitoring and evaluation” visits will involve the District and Area Offices in coordination with DoDEA Headquarters. The focus of these visits will be on providing technical assistance to bring sites into compliance with Sure Start’s standards.

Table 7 summarizes Sure Start’s assessment and evaluation activities. A copy of this chart also appears in the companion APPENDIX.

Table 7: Sample Assessment and Program Evaluation Timeline

AUG/ SEPT	OCT	NOV	JAN	MARCH/ APRIL	MAY/JUNE
Assess children using <i>CreativeCurriculum.net</i> (within 45 days of start-up)		Prepare child’s <i>Individual Goals & Education Plan</i> (with input from parents).	Prepare first Narrative Progress Report.	Review child’s <i>Individual Goals & Education Plan</i>. Revise as necessary.	Conduct end-of-year review using <i>CreativeCurriculum.net</i>. Prepare second Narrative Progress Report.
Complete parent survey. Incorporate results into Program Progress Plan as appropriate.					Display results of parent survey in the Sure Start Annual report.
Complete health screenings (within 45 days of start-up).					Submit Sure Start Annual Report to Area Office.
Complete educational screenings, ESI-R (within 45 days of start-up).					
Complete program evaluation using an <i>Assessment Profile (Abbott-Shim & Sibley)</i> (by October 31).					
Develop a Program Progress Plan based on results of program evaluation and parent survey input.			Conduct midyear review of Program Progress Plan to check for progress on program improvements.		Conduct end-of-year review of Program Progress Plan to check for progress on program improvements.
Beginning of the year Home Visit (conducted before school begins).		Individual in-school conference to set individual student goals.	Conduct second home visit or in-school conference and share narrative summary report.		Conduct final home visit (or in-school conference) and share narrative summary report.

Professional Development

Sure Start's continued strength and success are due, in large part, to the professional development component that has been a part of the program since its inception. Yearly and ongoing professional development ensure that as new knowledge and innovative practices evolve, Sure Start practices themselves will be modified or updated to reflect the most current research and understanding of child development and learning. As curricular areas review standards and obtain new materials, Sure Start teachers and program assistants will also be trained in the use of best practices using current materials as part of the normal PK-12 curriculum implementation cycle.

Training informs both the Sure Start teacher and the program assistant about what is expected of them, how they are to accomplish these expectations, how they can determine whether they are doing things appropriately, and what refinements are indicated. Training also ensures that the program is being administered as required and that the staff is implementing the program as mandated.

Professional development for new staff has two training strands. The first strand covers program guidance, addressing the health and nutrition, social service, and parent involvement components. New teachers receive training on the Sure Start philosophy and on operations and management of the program, including setting up the environment, policies and procedures, and program evaluation. Returning teachers are updated on any new or modified procedures and receive continued training in appropriate guidance and child development.

The second training strand addresses the educational component and how this supports the DoDEA curriculum cycle and the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK. Teachers receive training on specific instructional strategies for different curriculum content areas.

Logistics of Training: Timing, Location, and Funding

Training for new and returning staff members is to occur within the first two full weeks of the school year, before the return of students. Also, because Sure Start must ensure consistency in approach and delivery of content and program requirements, training has been funded to include both the new Sure Start teacher and the new program assistant. Training also connects teachers with other teachers and provides collegiality in a program that, because of geography, may keep them isolated from one another and their programs. Therefore, training at the district or the area level for new Sure Start staff is required annually. How the training schedule is arranged and conducted is flexible. The training should meet the needs of the area. In addition, returning teachers and program assistants should check the ECE Blackboard site for updates in the program guidance and look at available training modules for review and new information. The training can follow one of these schedules:

- Three-four days of training for “new” staff at a designated area site.
- At least two days of training for “returning staff members” (e.g., one day of online training; one day of training organized into school cluster groups or training by district at designated site within commuting distance.
- Returning teachers will be updated on any new or modified procedures and receive continued training in appropriate guidance and child development.

Funding for new staff training is a Headquarters responsibility. Training will be coordinated between the Area Offices and Headquarters.

Administrator Training

As an education leader, the Sure Start principal is responsible for many of the Sure Start program features including oversight, supervision, and monitoring of the program. Therefore, the administrator must have a working knowledge of the Sure Start Program Standards, the administration of the program, the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK, and the supporting curriculum materials. It is recommended that administrators attend the new teacher training at least once, as well as any recurring training that may be specialized for the school administrator. In addition the administrator should check the ECE Blackboard site to be apprised of updates in the program guidance and training in the educational component, which follows the DoDEA curriculum cycle. To ensure program and community leadership at a site that hosts a Sure Start program, administrators should not consider training to be voluntary, and they should make every effort to attend. If requirements at the beginning of school year make it difficult for administrators to attend the August Sure Start training, the Area and/or District Office may organize and offer a one-day administrator training in late September or October as an alternative.

Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities (PSCD) Teachers

To provide quality services, DoDEA Sure Start programs must have a professional relationship with PSCD teachers. When possible, Sure Start training should be extended to PSCD teachers. This collaborative training is consistent with the DoDEA Strategic Plan outlining continued professional development opportunities to support student learning. Funding for the inclusion of PSCD teachers is a Headquarters responsibility.

Professional Development During the School Year

Other supporting training is to occur during the school year. Sure Start teachers are required to go to all school-related trainings (e.g., SIP, faculty meetings). However, if there is a school or district-sponsored training day that is not applicable to the Sure Start teacher (e.g., a training on standardized testing), every effort should be made to allow Sure Start teachers to visit another Sure Start site or to meet with other Sure Start teachers for professional development opportunities.

Table 8: *Sample Training Agendas*

SAMPLE TRAINING AGENDA FOR NEW TEACHERS, PROGRAM ASSISTANTS, AND ADMINISTRATORS	
I. Overview of Sure Start	
a. History of program	
b. Structure	
i. Roles and relationships of key players (teachers, program assistants, DoDEA administrators, and district/area liaisons)	
ii. Role of Advisory Committee	
iii. Role of parents	
iv. Budget and administration	

II. Education Component

- a. Current research in early childhood education
- b. Developmentally appropriate practices
- c. The center-based approach to teaching (room arrangement/environment)
- d. DoDEA Content Standards for PreK
- e. Best Instructional Practices
- f. Planning and scheduling
- g. Curriculum materials that support the standards
- h. Curriculum projects and long-term studies
- i. Social and emotional growth of children, including positive guidance

III. Assessment in Sure Start

- a. Inclusionary practices for children with disabilities
- b. Portfolios
- c. Observational Continuum (CreativeCurriculum.net)
- d. Program evaluation
 - i. Yearly program evaluation using a Pre-school Assessment Profile, (Abbott-Shim & Sibley)
 - ii. Accreditation with NCA/CASI
 - iii. Area/district monitoring visits

IV. Health and Nutrition Component

- a. Screening and assessment
- b. Nutrition and family-style dining
- c. Safety standards, including child-abuse prevention and reporting
- d. Cleaning guidelines

V. Social Services Component

- a. Resource and referral services

VI. Parent Involvement Component

- a. Parent orientation
- b. Volunteering, including hours and forms of volunteering
- c. Home visits and conferences
- d. Parent education

**SAMPLE TRAINING AGENDA FOR RETURNING TEACHERS, PROGRAM ASSISTANTS,
AND ADMINISTRATORS**

I. Program Guidance

- a. Implications from the Sure Start Annual Summary Report
- b. Clarifications/modifications to Program Standards
 - i. Health and nutrition component
 - ii. Social service component
 - iii. Parent component

II. Education Component

- a. Current research in early childhood education
- b. Review of DoDEA Content Standards for Pre-K
- c. Instruction
 - i. Responsive teacher practices
 - ii. Appropriate instructional strategies
- d. Curriculum
 - i. Using the standards to guide instruction

ii. Using the materials to support the standards

e. Assessment

i. Using appropriate content assessments

ii. Portfolios

iii. Continuum/online assessment

III. Accreditation Updates

Chapter 2: The Health and Nutrition Component: The Health Component

Sure Start Program Standards for the Health Component

Six program standards govern the health component. These standards are designed to do the following:

- Provide a comprehensive health services program that includes a broad range of medical, dental, and mental health services to preschool children to assist in their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development toward the overall goal of social and academic competence.
- Promote preventive health services and early intervention.
- Provide the child's family with the necessary skills and insight to ensure that the child continues to receive comprehensive health care even after leaving the Sure Start program.

The six health standards are as follows:

Standard 1: *A written plan for achieving the program's health goals and nutrition standards will be developed.*

This plan will be written by the pediatrician or other health representative on the Advisory Committee, with input from the Sure Start teacher and program assistant. At the annual training, new programs will receive a model health component plan on which to structure their plan. Existing programs need only review and update the previous year's component plan from year to year. The APPENDIX includes a sample Health and Nutrition Component Plan.

Standard 2: *Each child enrolled in the Sure Start program will undergo a complete medical examination.*

Results should be recorded by the participating physician and pertinent information shared with the child's family and the school nurse. Immediate follow-up will be provided for any indicated problems.

Standard 3: *Each child enrolled in the Sure Start program will undergo a complete dental examination.*

Results should be recorded by the participating dentist and pertinent information shared with the child's family and the school nurse. Immediate follow-up will be provided for any indicated problems.

Standard 4: *Each child enrolled in the Sure Start program will undergo a complete vision examination.*

Results should be recorded by the participating health professional and pertinent information shared with the child's family and the school nurse. Immediate follow-up will be provided for any indicated problems.

Standard 5: *Each child enrolled in the Sure Start program will undergo a complete hearing examination.*

Results should be recorded by the participating health professional and pertinent information shared with the child's family and the school nurse. Immediate follow-up will be provided for any indicated problems.

Standard 6: *A mental health professional who is familiar with installation resources will be available to the Sure Start program on a consultation basis.*

Results of any referrals should be recorded by the participating health professional and pertinent information shared with the child's family and the school nurse. Immediate follow-up will be provided for any indicated problems. Referrals will follow the same protocol as those in the elementary school.

Implementing the Health Component Standards

These standards and this Guide should be shared with the military installation health professionals and the school nurse.

Screenings

All childhood immunizations must be completed before a child attends the Sure Start program or in accordance with local policy. Present policy calls for the following inoculations:

- DPT (Diphtheria, Pertussis, and Tetanus)—Five doses of vaccine.
- Polio—Four doses of trivalent (i.e., containing three kinds of antibodies) oral vaccine or three doses of monovalent (containing only one kind of antibody) oral vaccine plus one dose of trivalent vaccine.
- Rubella/Measles - One dose of live measles vaccine or serologically documented immunity.
- Rubella/German Measles - One dose of live rubella vaccine or serologically documented immunity.
- Mumps - Where mumps vaccine is part of a combined vaccine, it is appropriate for use in the immunization program.

To further ensure that each child receives a sure start in life, medical, dental, and developmental screenings are to be administered to each child within 45 calendar days of program entrance. Parental consent for these screenings is a precondition for enrollment in Sure Start.

Appointments for the health screenings should be arranged during the first month of program operations and completed no later than October 15 or within 45 days of the child's entrance into the program, whichever is sooner. This schedule is used so that follow-up referrals, if appropriate, can begin without delay. The results of all screenings and follow-up treatment must be kept strictly confidential.

Although each site implements its own screenings, the following plan is suggested:

- The school nurse can complete the height, weight, vision, and hearing portions of the screenings. Vision screenings should be done for visual acuity and strabismus (crossed-eyes).
- The other facets of the medical screening need to be performed by the installation pediatrician. The examination is to include the following:
 - Child's complete developmental history
 - Status review of immunizations
 - Blood pressure
 - Hemoglobin (the iron-containing protein found in red blood cells) or hemocrit (the proportion, by volume, of the blood that consists of red blood cells) concentration—as a test for anemia/lead poisoning

- Search for possible defects in specific regions common or important in this age group, such as skin, eye, ears, nose, throat, heart, lungs, and groin area
- Identification of speech problems, if present
- Identification of disabilities, if present
- Identification of food and other allergies, if present (shared with staff and school nurse)
- Tuberculin testing where indicated (Testing and reading of results should be performed in accordance with local military policy.)
- Other selected screenings such as sickle cell anemia or intestinal parasites, based on community health problems
 - Health screening data can be recorded on forms used by the community agency or on the sample forms found in the companion APPENDIX. Copies of the completed health screening records are to be maintained in the school nurse's office.
 - Dental screenings may be performed on site at the school or at the dental clinic. Screenings are to be performed within 45 days of the child's entrance into the program and completed by October 31. The dental screening is an oral diagnostic procedure, with emphasis on parental education as well as child self-care skills. X-rays (radiograph) should be used only if the dentist deems it necessary. Follow-up services will be provided for the relief of pain or infection, restoration of decayed teeth, pulp therapy, extraction, and dental prophylaxis (cleaning).
 - Self-care oral hygiene procedures should be a part of the daily schedule. Supervised tooth brushing is part of classroom teaching. This takes place after lunch or at any other appropriate time during the class day. As part of the health component plan, the dental health services should provide appropriate child toothbrushes and toothpaste to use in class, when possible. In locations and circumstances where this is not possible, commissary funds can be used to purchase toothbrushes and toothpaste for every student, because this is to be considered part of the curriculum. It is also appropriate and necessary for the parent to supervise the child brushing his or her teeth at home during the preschool years. Parental involvement and example are essential for the child to form proper self-care oral hygiene habits.

Ongoing Health-Related Measures

Children's health is to be monitored daily. This monitoring includes daily observation for illnesses, re-admittance of sick children, emergency situations, and administration of medication, all in accordance with school guidelines.

The school nurse, in compliance with the School Health Services Guide (DSM2942.1), makes decisions to advise Sure Start staff and parents about whether or not to leave a sick child in the classroom, to send the child home, or to refer the child for medical attention. As a general rule, a child who develops a fever of 100 degrees F. or higher should be sent home. A child may return to Sure Start after he or she has been free of fever for 24 hours without the use of Tylenol™ or any other antipyretics (i.e., a type of medication that will prevent or reduce fever by lowering body temperature from a raised state).

Other policies governing the admittance of sick children are as follows:

- A child with uncontrollable diarrhea should stay at home and remain at home until diarrhea symptoms are not present for 24 hours.
- A child diagnosed with strep throat must have antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to Sure Start.

- A child diagnosed with bacterial conjunctivitis (pink eye) must have medications for 24 hours before returning to Sure Start. Children with viral conjunctivitis must have a doctor's release before returning to Sure Start.
- A child with chicken pox must have lesions that are crusted over, fading, and/or disappearing 24 hours before his or her return to Sure Start.
- A child with ringworm must be treated and the affected area covered before returning to Sure Start.
- A child with impetigo must be free of weeping lesions. The lesion must be covered and medical treatment initiated before returning to Sure Start.
- A child with head lice must have all nits removed and be checked by the school nurse before returning to Sure Start.
- A child must be free of fever and nausea for 24 hours before returning to school in the case of intestinal viruses.
- A child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school in the case of only a fever.

A sick child will remain in the school nurse's office until he or she is picked up by a parent or guardian when a condition is present that is considered contagious and easily passed from child to child. A child who is not feeling well but has no signs of a contagious disease can remain in the classroom until being picked up by a parent or guardian.

A Word about Toilet Training

A child cannot be denied enrollment in school because of a lack of toilet training. The school nurse needs to ensure that the child has no physical problems or developmental delays. It is also suggested that the teacher and the school nurse work on an action plan along with the parents to develop toilet training skills. In most cases, the typical 4-year-old is toilet trained.

Sanitation of Classroom Environment

Young children do not have fully developed immune systems and may be more susceptible to germs and diseases than adults. Therefore, the Sure Start program has the following sanitation guidelines.

To prevent the spread of germs, staff must follow diligent cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Tabletops, counters, and other environmental surfaces need to be cleaned daily with detergent and rinsed with water. Following this, staff should spray surfaces with a bleach solution made of ¼ cup of household bleach to 1 gallon of water until they glisten. The bleach spray can either be allowed to air dry or be wiped dry with paper toweling after two minutes.

The bleach solution must be prepared fresh daily and discarded at the end of the day. This solution (500-800 parts per million chlorine) has been shown in laboratory settings to effectively kill high numbers of blood-borne viruses, including the HIV and hepatitis B viruses. At the same time, this solution is nontoxic if accidentally swallowed. (NOTE: NEVER MIX THE BLEACH SOLUTION WITH VINEGAR OR AMMONIA. HIGHLY POISONOUS CHLORINE GAS WILL BE PRODUCED!)

Odors in bathrooms need to be controlled by ventilation and sanitation. Chemical air fresheners are not to be used because they may cause nausea or an allergic response in some children because of children's immature immune systems. Ventilation and sanitation also help control and prevent the spread of disease and contamination.

The cleaning contract let by the school must ensure that the above procedures are followed. Sure Start teachers should work with their administration to ensure that these requirements are specified. In particular, staff needs to make sure that Lysol™ is not used in cleaning as a substitute for the required bleach solution. The cleaning schedule on the next page has been adapted from *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*, Second Edition (2002). If the cleaning contract does not provide for the provisions stated above and in Table 9, it is the Sure Start teacher's responsibility to ensure that cleaning and sanitizing requirements are met by informing the Principal for immediate follow-up.

Table 9: Sure Start Cleaning Schedule

AREA	CLEAN	SANITIZE	FREQUENCY
Classroom/Food Areas			
Countertops/tabletops	X	X	Daily and when soiled.
Floors	X		Mopped daily and swept as needed, especially after lunch is served. Broom sweeping is the desired method for removal of food scraps on the floor/carpet areas when children are present.
Food preparation and service surfaces	X	X	Before and after contact with food activity; between preparation of raw and cooked foods.
Carpets and large area rugs	X		Vacuum daily when children are not present. Clean carpets only when children are not present. Carpet must have adequate time to dry before children arrive. Clean carpets at least twice a year; spot clean as needed.
Small rugs	X		Shake outdoors daily or vacuum daily. Launder as needed.
Utensils, surfaces, and toys that go into the mouth or have been in contact with saliva or other body fluids	X	X	Clean after each child's use, or use disposable, one-time utensils or toys.
Toys that are not contaminated with body fluids; dress-up clothes not worn on the head	X	X	Every two weeks and when visibly soiled.
Sheets and pillowcases, blankets, combs or hairbrushes	X	X	Weekly.
Sleeping mats		X	Weekly and whenever soiled or wet.
Water tables	X	X	Bleached daily
Sand tables	X	X	Sand tables are required to have lids if located in an

			outside area. Sand needs to be replaced as needed. The bleach-water solution must be sprayed on the sand weekly to maintain cleanliness.
Trash cans	X	X	Empty after lunch and at the end of the day. Clean when soiled. Sanitize frequently to eliminate odors.
Toilet Areas			
Hand-washing sinks, faucets, surrounding counters, soap dispensers, door knobs	X	X	Daily and when soiled.
Toilet, floors, walls in bathrooms	X	X	Daily, or immediately if visibly soiled.
General Facility			
Any surface contaminated with body fluids (saliva, mucus, vomit, urine, stool, or blood)	X	X	Immediately, using the appropriate bleach solution.
Playground area	X		Cleaning contract should include removal of leaves, debris, snow, and ice as needed. Teacher/program assistant is required to inspect and remove items that may harm children before the start of the school day.

Child Safety

As with health concerns, safety concerns are of vital importance to the Sure Start program. The following provisions need to be adhered to:

- Students are to be under adult supervision at all times.
- Students and staff are to follow proper procedures during hand washing, which include using soap and running water for at least 10 seconds. Hands are to be wiped with single-use or disposable towels. To avoid recontamination from faucets, faucets are to be turned off using a disposable towel.
- Staff are to wash their hands with soap and water at appropriate times, including before preparing or serving food or assisting students with toileting or nose wiping, after handling pets or animals, or after contact with any potentially infectious materials, including bodily fluids. Handi-wipes™ and other towelettes are not a substitute for hand washing with soap and water. Waterless, antibacterial soap is also not a substitute for hand washing.
- Students are to wash hands after using the bathroom, blowing their noses, and before meals or engaging in cooking and food-handling activities.
- Any adult entering a Sure Start classroom must immediately wash his or her hands, using the recommended method. It is suggested that a child be assigned to greet visitors and “walk” them through the process of appropriate hand-washing technique.
- Materials and furniture in the classroom must be regularly checked so that they do not pose a risk to students’ safety.
- The height of classroom furniture should not impair visual access to students. The height

of any piece of furniture that is not placed flush against a wall must not exceed 30 inches in the Sure Start classroom.

- Potentially dangerous materials are to be stored in a location that is not accessible to students.
- All chemicals and potentially dangerous products such as cleaning supplies, bleach, and nonprescription medications are stored in original, labeled containers inaccessible to students in a locked cabinet. The bleach solution must be in a marked spray bottle and also kept in a locked cabinet.
- Prescription medications are only allowed to be stored in the classroom if they are properly secured in a locked cabinet and out of reach of children in all grades.
- Staff is to be familiar with and make use of the universal precautions to prevent transmission of blood-borne diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C.
- Electrical outlets not in use must be covered with protective caps.
- Written emergency-evacuation procedures are to be posted at all exits.
- Facilities must have a minimum of 35 square feet of usable space per student indoors and a minimum of 75 square feet of space per student outdoors.

Naptime

To ensure that all Sure Start children receive sufficient rest, the daily schedule includes naptime. Typically, naptime follows lunch/recess. The recommended time allocation for naps is one hour. As children finish eating, they clear their plates, clean the table areas, use the restroom, wash their hands, brush their teeth, and get out their mats. (Mats may be placed in sleep areas before lunch if space is available.)

Although children are encouraged to sleep, they are not forced to do so. Children may rest quietly on their mat with a book or a stuffed animal. Typically, though, most 4-year-olds will sleep if given the opportunity. If children are not napping, observations should be conducted to determine why. With guidance, teachers will find that they will rarely have more than one or two children who do not fall asleep.

To promote sleep, staff should dim the lights and make sure that mats are separated, talkers are separated, and children are encouraged to sleep. Soft classical music or nature sounds playing in the background is likewise conducive to rest. Exit areas are not to be blocked. Children should be positioned on their mats so as not to distract each other. Non-sleepers should be provided with book boxes and quiet toys.

Pets

If a local school and/or base has regulations concerning pets, these requirements supersede Sure Start policy and must be followed. Otherwise, Sure Start permits pets with the exception of ferrets, turtles, iguanas, lizards and other reptiles, psittacine birds (i.e., those of the parrot family), or any wild or dangerous animal. In caring for and maintaining pets, staff should follow the guidelines from *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*, Second Edition (2002).

Staff needs to ensure that none of the children or staff is allergic to the pet. In addition, the following rules must be adhered to:

- Pet immunizations shall be signed by a veterinarian and kept on file in the school.
- Animal cages shall be of an approved type with removable bottoms and shall be kept

clean and sanitary.

- Animal litter boxes shall not be located in areas accessible to children. All litter shall be removed and discarded as required by the local authorities.
- Animal food supplies shall be kept out of reach of children.
- Live animals and fowl shall be kept distant from food preparation, food storage, and eating areas.

Hands must be washed after handling any animal.

Chapter 3: The Health and Nutrition Component: The Nutrition Component

Sure Start Program Standards for the Nutrition Component

Six program standards govern the nutrition component. These standards are designed to do the following:

- Provide lunch and snacks at no cost to the student that will help meet the child's daily nutritional needs, recognizing individual differences and cultural patterns, and thereby promoting sound physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth and development.
- Provide an environment for nutritional services that will support the use of the snack and lunchtime as an opportunity for learning.
- Help staff, child, and family to understand the relationship of nutrition to health and the variety of ways to provide for nutritional needs and to apply this knowledge in the development of sound food habits even after leaving the Sure Start program.
- Demonstrate the interrelationships of nutrition to the educational activities of the Sure Start program and its contribution to the overall child development goals.
- Commit the resources and support of the agency, staff, and parents in meeting the child's nutritional needs so that nutritional care provided by Sure Start complements and supplements that of the home and community.

The six nutrition-related standards are as follows:

Standard 1: *A written plan for achieving the program's health and nutrition standards will be developed.*

This plan will be written by the installation nutritionist/dietician or other health representative on the Advisory Committee, with input from the Sure Start teacher and the program assistant. The plan needs to be shared with and involve the participation and commitment of the food provider (i.e., AAFES). New programs will be given a model nutrition component plan on which to structure their plan. Existing programs need only review and update the previous year's component plan from year to year.

Standard 2: *As a part of the Sure Start curriculum, the Sure Start program will provide—at no cost to the students—two snacks and lunch for every child enrolled in the program. Together, lunch and snacks will provide one-half of the child's daily nutritional needs.*

DoDEA will be responsible for providing the funding for the nutritional component in cooperation with USDA, which will provide funding for free and reduced lunches. In planning for these meals in cooperation with the food provider (i.e., currently AAFES), staff need to consult the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Guide Pyramid for children 2 to 6. (The Food Guide Pyramid is provided in the APPENDIX.)

Standard 3: *The program will serve lunch in the classroom, family style.*

Staff and parent volunteers are to sit with children during family-style dining and provide a socializing experience in a relaxed atmosphere. Food is not to be used as punishment or reward, and children are encouraged, but not forced, to try all foods.

Standard 4: *The curriculum will include nutrition education for children.*

Meal periods and food are planned to be an integral part of the total education program. Snacks are to be integrated into child-choice times and available to Sure Start children throughout the day.

Standard 5: *The program will involve parents in the nutrition services.*

Information about menus and nutrition activities will be shared regularly with parents. Parents are required to provide information on children's food allergies and sensitivities, preferences, and cultural heritage.

Standard 6: *Staff will comply with applicable service regulations, sanitation laws, and regulations for food service operations.*

Implementing the Nutrition Component Standards

All meals served must meet the nutritional guidelines established by the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program. A hot lunch and two snacks are to be served during the time the children are in care, and they will provide one-half of the child's daily nutritional requirements. Snacks are to be available to children throughout the day on a self-serve basis. No Sure Start child is ever to go hungry.

To ensure that children have access to good nutrition and grow up healthy, they need to eat a wide variety of foods, as prescribed by the Food Guide Pyramid for children 2 to 6. "In reading the food pyramid chart, bear in mind that there is wide variation in what constitutes a 'serving.' A serving of bread, for example, will vary according to children's ages and metabolisms. An older, active preschooler will typically eat one slice of bread as a serving. On the other hand, an average serving size of bread for most 3-year-olds is typically a half a slice. There is no need to consider portion sizes as exact amounts. Rather, let children determine what constitutes a serving size for them. It is the number of servings which should remain constant for all preschoolers. At their age, it is much more important that they eat a variety of foods rather than an exact measurement" (L. J. Colker, *The Cooking Book*, NAEYC, 2004).

Staff should note the following recommendations for children with small appetites:

- Do not insist that children eat when they are not hungry
- Keep records of children who have odd eating habits and seem to be under eaters, and report this information to the school nurse for follow-up.
- Keep healthy snacks available for eating between regularly scheduled meals.
- Offer energy-dense foods such as peanut butter, cheese, and higher-fat yogurt and milk than you might ordinarily serve.

In addition to a wide variety of foods, all young children should have 6 to 8 servings daily of water. Because water accounts for a higher percentage of body weight in young children than it does in adults, they can become quickly dehydrated. To ensure that children drink enough water, adults need to offer children water several times a day, even when water fountains or bottled water are visibly available.

Although the nutrient needs of children with disabilities are typically the same as for other children, difficulties in chewing or swallowing or a lack of feeding skills may require that the texture and consistency of foods be modified. For other conditions that require modification of the menu, such as food allergies and digestive or metabolic disturbances, this information should be part of the child's health record, and a physician's prescription must be kept on file at the

school and at the food preparation site and updated periodically. A qualified nutritionist should help plan for meeting these needs.

The Advisory Committee is to work out food preparation and delivery requirements and include them in the nutrition component plan. The Sure Start staff will not be responsible for heating or preparing any lunch food item. It is recommended that the Advisory Committee exhaust all means for providing the appropriate food requirements. An excellent resource for additional information on food service for preschoolers is the USDA Web site, <http://www.usda.gov>.

Serving and Eating Family-Style Lunch

Mealtimes should promote the physical, social, and emotional development of the children. They should take place in a quiet, well-lit, and well-ventilated area. Meal-related activities provide opportunities for decision making, learning to take responsibility, and sharing. Communicating with others, muscle control, and eye-hand coordination are also developed.

Family-style lunch is a requirement of the Sure Start program and is a part of the Sure Start curriculum. Children are to eat in their classroom, not in the cafeteria. Everyone eats the same foods, serves himself or herself, and enjoys pleasant conversation. Because they serve themselves, children are more likely to try new foods. They can decide for themselves whether to put one pea or a spoonful on their plates.

Staff is required to sit with students during lunch, as part of Sure Start's curriculum. Parents are likewise encouraged to join the children for family-style lunch. They may sit with their own child or join another table, as is their preference. Neither staff nor parents are required to purchase a lunch; however, they are welcome to do so. The purpose of family-style dining is to model appropriate eating habits. Staff lunchtime occurs during the nap period.

The following procedures will help make family-style dining experiences successful:

- Plan to seat four to six children and one adult at each table. When this is not possible, the teacher may change tables in order to help promote conversation during family-style dining.
- Tables should remain in the interest areas where they are located, rather than being moved to a central location. The tables do not have to be on linoleum flooring.
- Sure Start staff, parents, and other volunteers who join the class for lunch are to model appropriate manners, promote self-help skills, and engage children in conversation.
- Children are responsible for setting the table, bringing food to the table, and cleaning the table. It is recommended that children set the table before the delivery of the food. This is best accomplished by assigning two or three children to be helpers. Each child, however, should clean up after himself or herself when finished eating.
- Food is to be served in child-sized bowls and platters with child-sized serving pieces provided and maintained by the food provider (currently AAFES).
- Food service managers may not be aware of Sure Start standards and may need to be informed of this by the administrator.
- Drinks, including milk, are to be served from small pitchers (not milk cartons) so children can serve themselves.
- Salt and sugar should not be served or available to diners.
- All children at a table should be seated before any child starts to eat. Table groups, however, need only wait for everyone at their table to be seated—not the entire class. Children may recite a poem or chant, or sing a song that lets them know when to begin

eating.

- Invite children to begin passing the food clockwise as soon as the poem, song, or chant is completed.
- Maintain a leisurely pace so children do not feel hurried.
- Allow children to refuse food, but encourage them to taste a little of everything.
- Encourage children to serve themselves only as much as they can eat. If they cannot finish what is on their plate, do not force them to do so.
- Model good hygiene, safety practices, and manners.
- Have children clean up their own spills.
- Encourage conversation about the foods served, the day's events, or other topics of interest to the children.
- Model a calm, relaxed manner.
- Allow children to leave the table when finished. They can clear their dishes, wash their hands, brush their teeth, and then get ready for naptime. Children who are slow eaters should be allowed to take their time.
- Ask the children to help clean up and wipe the tables. Children should not use the bleach water but should wipe the tables with a wet rag containing detergent. The teacher/program assistant/parent volunteer will spray the tables with the bleach solution once the tables have been cleaned.

Some children with disabilities may be eating at a different developmental level than the other children. For example, if a 4-year-old is eating with the skills of a 2-year-old, start where the child is and plan with a nutritionist or occupational/physical therapist how to help the child reach an adequate level of self-feeding skill.

For all children, the food needs to be cut into smaller pieces than are normally served to older children. For example, hotdogs should be sliced lengthwise and then into smaller pieces to prevent choking. Burgers and sandwiches should be cut into fourths, so that children may help themselves to manageable portions. Fruit should be saved until halfway through the meal; chips should be brought out at the end of the meal. Sweets should not be served in Sure Start.

If a child refuses a food, offer it again at some future time; however, don't keep asking the child. Forcing children to eat or using desserts or other food as reward or punishment may create problem eaters and unpleasant or undesirable associations with the food. Remember that all foods offered should contribute to the child's needs, including the dessert. "Clean plate" clubs, stars, and other gimmicks to encourage children to eat are not appropriate.

Food-related activities should be planned within the child's range of abilities. Activities related to meal service include shopping for food, setting the table, serving the food to others or self, cleaning up, and making place mats and table centerpieces. Examples of learning activities are field trips, tasting parties, food preparation, planting and growing food, reading stories about food, role-playing parents or grocer, making scrapbooks and exhibits, feeding classroom pets, and planning menus to share with parents. Children should be allowed to help with all of these activities. These may need to be coordinated with food service personnel as well.

Meal periods are part of the flow of the day's activities. Food-related activities can be used to teach language arts, color, texture, arithmetic, science, social skills, and hygienic practices; however, the primary purpose of these activities is to establish sound long-term food habits and attitudes. The education program may include a special nutrition focus that carries over into the menu and mealtime activities. For example, if a trip is planned to an orchard, related emphasis

should be placed on the fruit in the menus, mealtime conversation, and classroom food preparation experiences.

Parents can be involved in nutrition through formal and informal presentations; individual counseling by a nutritionist, nurse, or other staff; attendance at local adult education programs; and cooking classes. Also, parents can participate in menu-planning committees for snacks, and staff can distribute pamphlets and newsletters, and employ audiovisual aids.

Snacks

Snacks are to be funded and provided by programs following local guidance. Snacks need to be made available to children throughout the day, because some children may arrive at the program hungry and others may become hungry during the day. Programs need to offer both a morning and afternoon snack. Water should be available to children at all times.

Snacks are a part of the Sure Start curriculum, and therefore funds are to be designated for purchase of snacks through AAFES or through a commissary fund. Sure Start staff should work with the principal to budget for and procure snacks.

Snacks should represent two of the levels in the Food Guide Pyramid for children 2 to 6. As per the Pyramid's guidelines, high-fat snack foods should be served only in moderation or when recommended by the nutritionist for a child having trouble maintaining weight. Children with known high cholesterol levels should be served snacks low in cholesterol. Sweets are not allowed in Sure Start. Choose foods for snacks that contribute not only to the child's nutrient needs but also to good dental health.

Snacks should be available as a self-help activity in the cooking area. The snack center should be open all day to children, not just during choice time. Occasionally, a snack may be served family style as a culminating activity for a cooking project or group study.

Menus for snacks should be dated and posted in the classroom for parents to view. The food items should be identified by the kind of food, not just the category of food group; for example, specify "orange juice" rather than "fruit juice." All substitutions must be indicated on the menus.

In serving themselves snacks, children should be able to follow recipe cards that give them pictorial instructions. Children should also consult a posted picture menu and sign a snack sheet, showing they have had a snack. Many teachers like to make the snack area an inviting place for children to eat, setting up a Sure Start Café complete with umbrella and red-checkered tablecloth.

Table 10: *Five-Week Sample Snack Menus*

MORNING SNACK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Week 1	Apple slices and crackers	Cereal and milk	Muffins and juice	Orange slices and toast	Peanut butter crackers and milk
Week 2	Applesauce and graham crackers	Cheese toast	Muffins and milk	Fruit kabobs and Saltines™	Ants on a log

Week 3	Raisin toast and milk	English muffins with cheese	Fruit and oyster crackers	Cereal and milk	Peaches and crackers
Week 4	Oranges and cinnamon toast	Banana milkshakes	Fruit and cheese kabobs	Graham crackers and milk	Cheese crisps
Week 5	Apple slices and pretzels	Pita bread cheese melts	Cornbread and milk	Raisins and cereal mix	Frozen blueberry waffles and milk
AFTERNOON SNACK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Week 1	Burritos	Vegetables and cheese sticks	Frozen fruit pops and crackers	Milk and graham crackers	Pigs in a blanket
Week 2	Banana milkshake	Peaches and breadsticks	Oranges and pretzels	Rice with milk and cinnamon	Pears and string cheese
Week 3	Pineapple chunks and Hawaiian bread	Yogurt with granola	Cheese crisps	Baked apples and milk	Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and milk
Week 4	Breadsticks and cheese chunks	Melon wedges and Saltines™	Whole wheat bread with butter and milk	Vegetable sticks and cheese dip	Orange slices with cinnamon graham bears
Week 5	Granola and milk	Pumpkin bread and milk	Banana pudding	Jello with fruit and crackers	Apples and cheese crackers

Chapter 4: The Social Services Component

Sure Start Program Standards for the Social Services Component

Three program standards govern the Sure Start social services component. The objectives of these standards are to do the following:

- Establish and maintain an outreach and recruitment process that systematically ensures enrollment of eligible children.
- Provide enrollment of eligible children regardless of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, or disability.
- Assist and support parent participation in the school and home program and related activities.
- Assist the family in its own efforts to improve the condition and quality of family life.
- Make parents aware of community services and resources, and facilitate their use.

The standards that guide the social services component are as follows:

Standard 1: *A written plan for achieving the program’s social services goals and objectives will be developed.*

This plan will be written by the social services representative on the Advisory Committee, with input from the Sure Start teacher and program assistant. New programs will be given a model social services component plan on which to structure their plan. Existing programs need only review and update the previous year’s component plan from year to year. The plan must address the following:

- Recruitment of children
- Providing referrals for counseling, as appropriate
- Emergency assistance or crisis intervention
- Furnishing information about available community services and how to use them
- Contacting parent or guardian with respect to an enrolled child whose participation in the Sure Start program is irregular or who has been absent three consecutive days
- Identification of the social service needs of Sure Start families and working with other community agencies to develop programs to meet those needs.

Standard 2: *The social services component will provide for close cooperation with existing community resources.*

Through the social services representative on the Advisory Committee, staff will develop a system for making community counseling, referral services, and resources available to Sure Start families.

Standard 3: *Sure Start staff will provide for the establishment, maintenance, and confidentiality of all social services–related records including completed enrollment forms, referral and follow-up reports, reports of contacts with other agencies, and reports of contacts with families.*

All confidential records must be kept in locked filing cabinets and accessible to individuals only on a “need to know” basis.

Implementing the Social Services Component Program Standards

The social services component's mission is to help improve the quality of life for the families of enrolled children by making parents aware of available community services and facilitating use of such services, and by assisting participating families in their efforts to improve the condition and quality of their family's life.

Recruitment of Children

The recruitment process involves systematically seeking out children who are "at risk" for failure in school and life. Recruitment techniques include door-to-door contact, use of sponsor's rank eligibility lists, and consultations with community agencies that are in a position to know eligible families. A copy of the Sure Start Application appears in the companion APPENDIX.

Services to Families

The Family Service Center or appropriate base agency will provide the following services to the Sure Start Program:

- Designate a member of the Advisory Committee to make initial contact with community agencies to ensure that they will be providing services to Sure Start families.
- Provide registration information to families on the base on an ongoing basis.
- Maintain recruitment for eligible children.
- Help families improve family life (e.g., by providing information about parenting skills, budgeting, planning, counseling).
- Provide support services for the Sure Start program.
- Be a resource for presenters at the parent meetings during the year.
- Maintain a master list of services provided and available to families.
- Consult with teachers and parents as needed.
- Refer families for emergency placement (a family does not need to meet the regular eligibility requirements for an emergency placement).

Sure Start programs should make every effort to involve parents in identifying individual family needs and in planning ways to meet those needs.

The Sure Start teacher and program assistant will, as appropriate, do the following:

- Solicit ideas from community agencies on how they can provide support to families.
- During initial home visits, discuss the social services component with families and let them know about the availability of services.
- Work with the social services representative to ensure families have the services they require.
- Follow established school guidelines for referring families to counseling, if indicated.
- Follow established school guidelines for referring families to agencies that provide for crisis intervention and emergency assistance.
- Invite base agencies to tour the program and include them in outreach mailings.
- Maintain confidential records.

- Contact parents or guardians whose children's attendance has become irregular or when children are kept out of the program for three consecutive days without any communication with the program.

The Sure Start teacher is to be the lead liaison between families and the social service agencies. Even before start-up, staff should seek from community agencies letters of intent to cooperate with Sure Start in the referral and treatment of families.

Sure Start staff should facilitate communication with other social service providers in the community by visiting those providers, inviting those providers to visit the Sure Start program, placing providers on a special Sure Start mailing list to receive pertinent information, requesting placement on providers' mailing lists to keep abreast of the providers' activities, and developing a media relations program with local press, radio stations, and TV stations.

Finally, the role of the social services component is to study and assess information. The Sure Start staff should maintain a master list of all identified needs and services being offered so that a comprehensive perspective exists for the provision of services. The social services component is dynamic in nature and must ensure that emerging family needs are consistently being addressed and met. Staff should periodically review these needs and services as a program-monitoring tool. A tally of services accessed during the year is included in the DoDEA End-of-Year Annual Report.

Chapter 5: Parent Involvement Component

Sure Start Program Standards for the Parent Involvement Component

Ten program standards guide the parent involvement component. The objectives of these standards are to do the following:

- Provide a planned program of experiences and activities that support and enhance the parental role as the principal influence in children's education and development.
- Provide a program that recognizes parents as integral contributors to the Sure Start program and to their communities.
- Encourage participation in classroom and other program activities as volunteers and observers.

The ten standards that guide the parent involvement component are as follows:

Standard 1: *A written plan for achieving the program's parent involvement component's goals and objectives will be developed.*

This plan will be written by the Sure Start teacher with input from the program assistant and members of the Advisory Committee. New programs will be given a model parent involvement component plan on which to structure their plan. Existing programs need only review and update the previous year's component plan from year to year.

Standard 2: *The program will provide methods and opportunities for involving parents in experiences and activities that lead to enhancing the development of their skills, self-confidence, and sense of independence in fostering an environment in which their own children can develop to their full potential.*

Parent participation in classroom activities is a precondition for enrollment.

Standard 3: *The program will provide methods and opportunities for involving parents in experiences in children's growth and development, which will strengthen their role as the primary influence in their children's lives.*

Along with parent meetings, the Sure Start teacher will provide opportunities for active parent involvement in the classroom and for sharing information based on observations at home that helps to assess the child's strengths, development, and needs.

Standard 4: *The program will provide methods and opportunities for involving parents in ways of providing education and developmental activities for children in the home and the community. Through parent education meetings, in-school conferences, and home visits, staff will guide parents in implementing activities at home that reinforce the Sure Start curriculum.*

Standard 5: *The program will provide methods and opportunities for involving parents in activities in health, mental health, dental, and nutritional education.*

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, parents will be involved in children's screenings and be invited to participate in family-style dining.

Standard 6: *The program will provide methods and opportunities for involving parents in identification and use of family community resources to meet basic support needs of the family.*

As outlined in Chapter 4, staff will work with families to secure needed community resources and referrals.

Standard 7: *The program will provide methods and opportunities for involving parents in identification of opportunities for continuing education that may lead toward self-enrichment and employment.*

As outlined in Chapter 4, staff will work with families to secure needed resources and referrals for obtaining continuing education opportunities.

Standard 8: *The program will provide methods and opportunities for parents to meet with the Sure Start teachers and other appropriate staff to discuss and assess their children's individual needs and progress according to the proposed schedule for home visits and parent conferences. Staff will meet with parents four times a year to discuss children's needs and progress. Two or three of these meetings will be home visits; one or two of these meetings will be school conferences.*

Standard 9: *The program will provide for two-way communication between staff and parents on a regular basis throughout the program year.*

Staff need to have both formal and informal channels of communication in place.

Standard 10: *The program will provide for a system for ensuring that parent needs are communicated to the Advisory Committee.*

The Advisory Committee must be able to react to parent concerns and address challenges faced by staff in administering the parent involvement component.

Implementing the Parent Involvement Component

In serving children, Sure Start also serves their parents and the entire family. Sure Start meets parents' needs through four main types of activities:

- Parent orientation
- Parents as volunteers in the classroom
- Home visits and parent conferences
- Parent education Meetings

It is vital for the teacher and program assistant to become aware of local cultural customs and how parents view their role in the school. This is especially relevant in the overseas military forces, where many foreign national parents are married to U.S. military personnel. Many are apprehensive about volunteering because of their culture or a lack of confidence in their English-language skills. Customs and superstitions also play a role. For example, in Korea writing someone's name in red ink is considered inappropriate. It is important for the teacher and the program assistant to prepare themselves for helping the host-nation parent assimilate into the American system. One of the ways that a teacher can learn about a culture is by conferencing with the Host Nation teacher.

Parent Orientation

To acclimate parents to the Sure Start program, staff will schedule an Orientation Day for Parents before the start of school. A parent needs to attend this meeting. The orientation will cover the following:

- An overview of the Sure Start program—its goals, philosophy, operating procedures, schedule, and so on.
- An introduction to the Sure Start curriculum, including a tour of the classroom interest areas and an overview of the daily schedule

- An explanation of what children learn in Sure Start
- A discussion of the role of parents in Sure Start—as classroom participants, as recipients of services, and as teachers of their children
- An explanation of how to work with children in the classroom:
 - Suggested activities, including tips on reading books with children
 - Positive guidance, including strategies to guide children to act appropriately
 - Family-style dining
 - Using open-ended questions to stimulate children’s thinking
 - Distribution of parent surveys and school calendars
 - Discuss policy of bringing siblings during volunteer hours

Parents as Volunteers in the Classroom

Because Sure Start views parent participation as integral to the success of the program, parents must agree to volunteer their time as a precondition to their child’s enrollment. Thirty hours per parent are required for each participating family. In two-parent families, both parents are expected to contribute their time equally. Parents who are deployed for an extended period of time are expected to volunteer an equivalent of four hours per month that they are at their permanent duty station while their child is enrolled in Sure Start.

To facilitate the volunteer process, the principal should send a letter to the base commander at the start of the program year, explaining the need for parental participation in Sure Start and enlisting the commander’s support in allowing parents to meet this obligation. The Sure Start teacher should keep a calendar or log on which parents either sign up for classroom time or the teacher assigns parents to come at times when parent support would be appreciated (e.g., at lunchtime so that the group can be divided into tables of six children each for family-style dining).

In working with parents in the classroom, Sure Start staff should make every attempt to match parents’ interests with the activities they are assigned to do with children. Some suggested Parent Volunteer activities include the following:

- Reading a story to children
- Leading a song
- Facilitating an art project (after parents have been made aware of appropriate art practices)
- Working with children on completing puzzles or building with blocks or manipulatives
- Introducing children to a recipe representative of their culture or background
- Working with children in preparing and setting up snacks and meals
- Being a part of family-style dining

Teachers may post “Volunteer Ideas” in each work area of the classroom to assist adults. This might include specific activities for child choices in centers, models of printing, steps to operate a computer program or game, and so on. This allows for parent and child choices.

Sure Start is fully committed to the belief that parents can best contribute to their children’s growth and development by actively participating in the classroom. Therefore, staff should encourage parents to use their volunteer hours in this way; however, extenuating circumstances may prevent some parents from volunteering in the classroom. In these instances, Sure Start staff must work with parents to help them find a meaningful way to contribute their time. Some suggested ways of volunteering time outside the classroom include the following:

- Translating program materials, such as the Parent Handbook, into a language spoken by Sure Start parents
- Accompanying the class to the library or on field trips
- Repairing books or toys
- Making materials or play props for the class
- Putting together prop boxes for dramatic play
- Maintaining a class scrapbook or photo album
- Designing a logo for the program
- Publishing a parent newsletter

If during the program year staff become aware that one or more parents have not volunteered their time either in the classroom or in an alternative manner, the teacher should contact the parent and see if there is a problem and arrange times for completing volunteer hours. If this does not resolve the problem, the teacher and the administrator should meet together with the parent(s) to discuss the problem. In some cases, the administrator may need to send the parent's unit commander a friendly reminder letter underscoring the need for Sure Start parents to be released from their jobs to fulfill their volunteer obligation in their child's classroom.

The goal is to successfully get all parents into the classroom—not to punish them if they fail to do so. Many times it is the parent who fails to meet his or her volunteer obligation who is in most need of Sure Start's services. Therefore, no child is to be expelled from Sure Start because his or her parents failed to meet their volunteer requirement. Rather, a way must be found to facilitate parent participation in the program. Parent volunteers, whether they participate in classroom activities or volunteer in alternative ways, are to be afforded the same respect as paid staff; the contributions of both are integral to the success of the program.

Teachers should discuss with the Advisory Committee at the beginning of the school year local policies and options for parents who request to bring siblings to the Sure Start classroom during required parent volunteer hours. The policy that is set should align with the current school and district policies.

Home Visits and Parent Conferences

Sure Start mandates that both the teacher and the program assistant together make two or three home visits per year to each Sure Start family. Parents must agree to these before their child is enrolled in the Sure Start classroom. In addition, depending upon the teachers' preferences, one or two parent in-school conferences will be held at school.

The First Home Visit

The first home visit, which is mandatory, takes place between the time children are selected for Sure Start and the program's start-up date. Sure Start's delayed start-up ensures that staff has the needed time to complete these home visits. Under no circumstances are home visits to be conducted by the teacher alone, for both educational and safety reasons; both the teacher and the program assistant visit each family as a team. This first visit serves as an opportunity for the staff, children, and families to meet one another informally. Staff should use this visit to interview families about their expectations for their children in Sure Start and to identify any training or special help families might want. It is also a good time to take photographs of the children with their families that can be displayed in the classroom.

One other home visit should occur during the school year. These latter home visits are more formal attempts to help parents work with their children to effectively promote learning. Each home visit lasts approximately 30 to 60 minutes. To make all of the home visits a success, staff needs to schedule them at times that are convenient for parents. The staff's goal is to involve parents in their child's development. Partnership should always be the theme underlying home visits. The companion APPENDIX includes forms for conducting home visits.

The November In-School Conference

One or two parent conferences (depending on the number of home visits made) complement the home visits. In-school conferences in the Sure Start program should be scheduled for up to one hour since they are comprehensive and are an essential part of the Parent Component. The November meeting is a mandatory "in-school" conference, requiring parents to interact within a school environment. At this meeting, staff works with families to outline goals for the child and family for the remainder of the school year (the Individual Goals and Education Plan). Teachers can also use this time to discuss any parent concerns or insights from parents regarding their young child. At this time, both the medical and dental screenings should be complete and any concerns regarding these screenings could be discussed.

The End of First Semester Home Visit or In-School Conference

At the end of the first semester, staff can elect to either make a second home visit or hold a second parent conference at the school. At this meeting, teachers are to share the narrative summary report with parents as well as review the individual goals for the child. Teachers can also use this time to share strategies to use at home to meet the individual goals. Teachers should also use this time to discuss issues within the social service component and the health and nutrition component.

The End of Year Home Visit or In-School Conference

The final interaction (second or third home visit or the second or third school conference) takes place the week after Sure Start ends, while the rest of the school is still in session. Staff should use this time to discuss transition issues with families and to evaluate the Sure Start experience.

Release Days for Home Visits and Conferences

When at all possible, Home Visits and In-School Conferences should be scheduled during the conference days allocated at the school. However, teachers may need additional days since these parent meetings are more comprehensive and should be scheduled to accommodate this essential interaction. Teaching staff should work with the school administrator, to provide the needed hours for conducting home visits or in-school conferences (up to three days for in-school conferences and up to one week for home visits). In either venue, staff spend this time working with families on reinforcing at home what children are learning at Sure Start, sharing the narrative summary report, planning and implementing the Individual Goals and Education Plan, and sharing strategies for parents to use at home.

The schedule for conferencing with parents can be summarized as follows:

- Before School Starts: mandatory home visit
- End of First Quarter (November): mandatory parent conference at school
- End of First Semester: second home visit or second parent in-school conference, at teachers' discretion
- End of Year: second or third home visit or second parent conference, dependent upon the

end of First Semester conference.

Parent Education Meetings

Sure Start staff is to convene four parent education meetings a year, approximately one at the end of each quarter. The four meetings usually take place in October, January, March, and May. (Meetings dates can be adjusted to meet the needs of the local community and the Sure Start individual schedule.) The final parent education meeting should address transitional issues as well as summer activities to keep their child involved in exploring and learning. This last meeting can also be part of a family activity such as a picnic.

At all parent education meetings, Staff are free to select topics that will address the interests and concerns of the community they serve. Guest speakers are always a good draw. So, too, is making sure that food and child care are available. The easier staff makes it for busy parents to attend, the better the turnout is likely to be.

Some suggested topics for parent meeting sessions:

- Child growth and development: your child/infant to age 5; the school-age child; positive guidance and setting limits; nutritional needs of young children; sibling rivalry; becoming readers, becoming mathematicians, etc.
- Sure Start's approach to preventing reading problems
- The role of the curriculum in Sure Start
- The parent as educator: questions to ask; how to read to children; trips to take together; games to make and play; toys to buy and make using home materials; how to help in school; the appropriate role of TV, songs, nursery rhymes, and stories; the value of play; early stimulation for infants
- Providing children with toys and experiences that meet their ages and individual needs
- Family life: dealing with separation, moving, divorce, and death; handling stress; family counseling services
- Appreciating diversity
- Fire prevention; safety and sanitation
- Academics in Sure Start
- Positive discipline
- Making sure your child is ready for kindergarten

Some ideas for activities to do at these sessions include the following:

- Setting up a lending library for toys, books, CDs, and prop boxes
- Setting up a garden at the program
- Conducting food-related activities such as cooking classes; publishing a cookbook; and making meals with healthy foods
- Sponsoring "Everything You've Always Wanted to Know..." wellness fairs with specialists and relevant materials available: pediatricians, blood pressure technicians, nutritionists, dieticians, and other health professionals
- Computer literacy classes
- Family literacy classes (modeling reading aloud, adult literacy)
- Holding a session at the base library to introduce families to this service, obtain cards, and highlight age-appropriate literature
- Make and Take Workshops in which parents actually make items they can use to work with their child at home (e.g., letter/number cards, rhyming lotto)

- English for ESL parents

The philosophy underlying Sure Start's parent involvement component is that when the program joins forces with parents, everyone benefits. This means that parents must be supported not just through program-related activities, but in their homes as well. When parents are able to work with their children at home in the same way that Sure Start staff work with children at school, gains are inevitable. Parent education, home visits, and parent conferences all contribute to this important goal.

Chapter 6: Roles and Responsibilities of Key Staff

Six key players make up the Sure Start team:

1. The elementary school principal
2. The Sure Start teacher
3. The Sure Start program assistant
4. The Advisory Committee
5. Parents and other volunteers
6. DSO Early Childhood Representative/Area and Headquarters' early childhood education staff

The roles and responsibilities of each are described in turn.

Elementary School Principal or Designee

As with all school programs, the principal oversees the implementation and operation of the Sure Start program at the school. Although each program has a unique, individual flavor, Sure Start requires standardized procedures to guide program implementation. Principals need to be knowledgeable about Sure Start Performance Standards and the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK in order to effectively support, supervise, and evaluate Sure Start staff.

HQ designates the Sure Start teacher and program assistant as “fenced” positions. Additionally,

- Teachers receive extra-duty pay as compensation for conducting activities that take place outside of the duty day, such as home visits scheduled after normal school hours, required parent meetings scheduled after normal school hours, student recruitment, and other responsibilities. DoDEA has provided area funding for extra duty (40-to-79-hour band) to ensure that teachers are compensated for any requirements of the program that extend beyond the duty day.
- These funds are part of the district and subsequently the school extra-duty budget. These funds will be made available within the previously mentioned band of hours. It is the responsibility of the teacher to submit a time sheet and an extra-duty request when these hours are completed.
- Sure Start program assistants are authorized to be on duty the same number of days as Sure Start teachers, and may work up to 78 hours per pay period. This enables the program assistants to work together with the teacher as a team. No other use of this authorization, including duties as lunchroom or bus monitors, is permissible outside the Sure Start classroom. This also includes assistants being assigned to other classrooms to work as substitutes. This ensures safety in terms of adult-child ratios and is in accordance with national early childhood guidelines and the Sure Start Guide.
- Substitutes are used any time teachers or program assistants are absent. The school office maintains a list of authorized substitutes for Sure Start teachers and program assistants. It is a requirement of the Sure Start program staffing standards to ensure that two paid DoDEA employees are in the classroom at all times (with the exception of naptime, as already noted).

The principal has the following oversight responsibilities:

- Serving as a member of the Sure Start Advisory Committee.
- Along with the Sure Start teacher, completing an assessment of program quality at the beginning of the school year (e.g., Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs, Abbott-Shim & Sibley). The assessment is not to be used as a teacher performance appraisal; rather it ensures that Sure Start program and content standards are effectively implemented and that training needs are identified. The principal and Sure Start staff will meet to identify Sure Start program needs and set a plan of action (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 6), using the assessment instrument. This program assessment and plan of action will be completed by October 31 of each school year.
- Ensuring program staffing and initiating recruitment action to hire Sure Start staff when positions become available, as per the position descriptions.
 - Supervising Sure Start staff. In so doing, the principal must make it clear that the Sure Start teacher accounts for hours completed outside of the regular duty day and fills out necessary paperwork for extra-duty pay. (As noted, DoDEA has provided extra-duty funds [40-79 hours] for Sure Start teachers who complete program requirements after normal duty hours. A copy of this form appears in the APPENDIX.)
- Supporting the Sure Start schedule for home visits, progress reporting, and teacher training by allowing Sure Start students to begin the school year at least two **full** weeks later than other students. The two-week delay allows Sure Start staff time for selection of students, home visits, and professional development. Principals may also support a staggered start for these students, if the teacher requests. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways—for example, half the class begins on Day 1, the other half (without the Day 1 students) begins on Day 2, all students attend on Day 3; on Days 1 and 2, selected students come to school with parents at specific times, on Day 3 all students attend a full day.
- Releasing Sure Start students three to five days before the end of the school year so the staff can conduct final home visits or parent in-school conferences as well as transition activities, prepare proper end-of-year documentation, complete the Sure Start Annual Report, and move files as necessary.
- Ensuring that Sure Start staff making home visits and conducting in-school conferences are provided with the necessary student release days for making these visits (up to three days for in-school conferences and up to five days for Home Visits). Extra-duty hours are not available for program assistants; therefore it is recommended that the program assistants' hours be adjusted to accommodate the after-school hours. This schedule should be made well in advance.

In addition, the principal is responsible for the following components of the Sure Start program:

- Ensuring that the Sure Start classroom meets the space and facility requirements, as outlined in Chapter 6 and works with the Sure Start teacher to meet the Space and Safety standards.
- Ensuring that the cleaning contract for the Sure Start classroom meets the needs of the program. Because Sure Start children eat in the classroom, carpets may need to be cleaned more frequently than in other classrooms. Covered garbage cans with tight-fitting lids and foot pedals should be substituted for regular wastepaper baskets. Moreover, garbage may need to be emptied midday (following lunch), and floors may need to be damp-mopped and bathrooms cleaned more often during the day.

- Ensuring that the indoor and outdoor environments are equipped to promote learning in all learning centers. The key to this design plan is open shelving units (with a maximum height of 30 inches) that can be used both to delineate activity areas in the classroom and to allow children independent access to play materials. All furnishings must be child-sized and child-proofed. An inventory and order form that administrators may use in working with staff to equip the program appears in the companion APPENDIX.
- Ensuring that food service is provided and that Sure Start is integrated into the school lunch program. The Sure Start family-style lunch is provided through the school's lunch program and is an essential part of the Sure Start curriculum. The principal and teacher need to work with the local cafeteria manager to ensure that appropriate family-style dining requirements are met and that meals include fresh fruit and vegetables rather than sweets. Additionally, schools are to provide for two snacks per day for the Sure Start classroom. Principals must work with the DSO to secure these funds.
- All families are required to apply for the USDA free and reduced lunch program at the time of registration. Districts will fund either the full price or the reduced price of Sure Start lunches. Families will not be responsible for paying the cost of lunches.
- Providing transportation for Sure Start students at those schools where transportation is provided to the general school population. The administrator should be aware, though, that safety requirements for transporting 4-year-olds specify that children use safety belts, that vehicles have appropriate child safety seats, and that a monitor ride the bus. These safety standards also apply to any field trips. The principal needs to review transportation policy to ensure that all safety requirements for preschool children are in compliance with Logistics Division Policy 00-L-001, dated August 3, 2000 (also contained in the APPENDIX).
- Overseeing the budget for Sure Start. DoDEA funded the original setup costs for the sites. All programs are now considered to be fully equipped and operational. The maintenance, repair, and replacement of materials and equipment, along with consumables, should be part of the school's annual budget. If additional materials are needed, teachers should submit a request to the administration according to school policy. Many Sure Start materials, such as blocks, table toys, clothes for dramatic play, and so on, are considered Priority 1 curriculum materials from a Sure Start perspective because the program is not textbook driven, as is general education. These materials should be updated, replaced, and replenished yearly, along with other curriculum materials of the school.
- Acting as a liaison between the installation commander and the Sure Start program to support parent involvement. Principals are to write letters to the base command to generate support for all facets of the Sure Start program. In particular, making the base commander aware of Sure Start's parent involvement component has proven helpful. This enables parents to take leave from their jobs with the full support of their superiors.
- Providing additional technical assistance to the Sure Start program as needed. This includes, but is not limited to the following:
 - Welcoming parents to Sure Start at the orientation meeting
 - Setting expectations for attendance and parent involvement
 - Attending Advisory Committee meetings
 - Facilitating arrangements for medical and dental personnel when necessary
 - Designating a teacher workspace outside the classroom (so that the teacher's desk and filing cabinet can be removed from the classroom)

- Providing for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training, first aid training, and blood-borne pathogen certification for the Sure Start staff
- Providing a secure and locked location where Sure Start confidential records can be housed at the end of the school year
- Ensuring the indoor/outdoor areas meet the Sure Start criteria

Sure Start Teacher

The primary role of the Sure Start teacher is to provide children with an individualized developmental program based on specific standards of learning, by creating a learning environment and varied experiences that facilitate social, intellectual, physical, and emotional growth appropriate to their ages and stages of development. The teacher's role encompasses overseeing a comprehensive educational program that addresses children's needs within the context of the family; helping parents increase their knowledge, understanding, skills, and experience in child growth and development; and identifying and reinforcing experiences that occur in the home that support what children learn at school.

The Sure Start teacher works directly under the supervision of the DoDEA elementary school principal. Although the teacher works independently in accordance with established procedures, he or she must submit copies of all reports, policies, and newsletters to the principal, as per school policy. Teachers must be able to develop working relationships with agencies in the community, make home visits, and attend professional meetings as assigned.

The Sure Start teacher must promote a close working relationship between DoDEA, Child Development Programs (CDP), and the community to nurture the collaborative intent of this program and to ensure a high-quality environment for Sure Start children, families, and staff.

The teacher's specific responsibilities are as follows:

- Participate as a contributing faculty member to the total educational community.
- Attend school meetings and functions as required of all faculty members.
- Participate in the school's accreditation process.
- Take the lead role in conducting the annual early childhood program evaluation and develop a Program Progress Plan.
- Complete the DoDEA Annual Sure Start Report.
- Collaborate with the Child Development Center (CDC) personnel, community resources, and teachers who deliver services to children with disabilities, as appropriate.
- Participate in monthly fire, evacuation, and lockdown drills.
 - Oversee the day-to-day operations of the Sure Start program, including the education, health and nutrition, social services, and parent involvement components.
- Draft the education and parent involvement component plans at new programs; at continuing programs, update the annual education plan and parent involvement component plan in conjunction with the Sure Start Advisory Committee and other staff.
- Carry out the goals, policies, and activities specified in the component plans.
- Coordinate and help facilitate the Sure Start Advisory Committee meetings.
- Work with Advisory Committee to draft the health and nutrition and social service plans at new programs; at continuing programs, update the health and social service plans in conjunction with the Sure Start Advisory Committee.
 - Build and maintain positive relationships with families.
 - Conduct Sure Start parent orientation.

- Schedule welcoming visits to the classroom for children and parents before program start-up. This can be done in conjunction with the parent orientation if child care is provided during the parent orientation time.
- Conduct and/or facilitate at least four group parent meetings during the year. (One can be the orientation meeting.)
- Conduct four parent-teacher conferences during the year. The first meeting, before school start-up, must be a home visit. The November meeting must be a school-based conference. The last two meetings may be either home visits or a home visit and an in-school conference, depending on the teacher's preference. All home visits and parent conferences must include the program assistant.
- Communicate regularly with families, including publication of a weekly or monthly newsletter.
- Train and work with parent volunteers; monitor hours.
- Provide children with a high-quality learning environment
- Create a pleasant, inviting atmosphere for children.
- Maintain individual goals for each child, and adjust the goals as needed.
- Develop weekly lesson plans that reflect the individual needs of students as well as addressing the DoDEA Content Standards for PreK.
- Assess children using an approved developmental and/or learning checklist (e.g., Creative Curriculum Child Development and Learning Continuum).
- Maintain a portfolio for each child.
- Observe children regularly, and record information in children's portfolios.
- Maintain all confidential Sure Start records in secure, locked cabinets. Move program records to a secure location during the summer.
- Actively participate in family-style lunch, sitting and interacting with the children in the classroom. This is required curriculum time.
- Maintain a safe, healthy educational environment.
- Works with principal to ensure Space and Safety Standards are being met.
- Set up the Sure Start classroom using a centers-based design. Classrooms will include at least 10 interest areas (or centers) according to a prescribed design (see *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 2002*, Dodge, Colker, & Heroman).
- Maintain infant/child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training and first aid certification according to local certification requirements.
- Along with the medical representative on the Advisory Committee, coordinate screening for Sure Start children with the school nurse, military facilities, school staff, and parents, ensuring that screenings are completed by October 31 or within 45 days of the child's enrollment in the program.
- Conduct daily health checks, observing children for any signs that might indicate illness, abuse, or neglect, as per school policy.
- Ensure that safety and hygiene standards are met through constant supervision, effective arrangement of space, proper maintenance of equipment, and so forth. (See Chapter 2 for cleaning requirements.)
- Regularly conduct safety and health inspections indoors and outdoors.
- Conduct ongoing assessment of equipment and material, removing items that pose safety hazards and ordering needed or replacement items according to school policy.
- Work collaboratively with and guide the program assistant to effectively implement all Sure Start program components.

- Provide input to administration regarding performance of the program assistant.
- Reinforce procedures and strategies obtained from annual training.
- Guide appropriate interactions with children in accordance with annual training.

Sure Start Program Assistant

The program assistant's primary function is to perform duties under the direction of the Sure Start teacher while they work together as a team. The program assistant is supervised by the designated school administrator. Although assistance and guidelines are available to the program assistant, he or she is expected to use initiative and creativity in accomplishing Sure Start's standards of learning.

The program assistant must meet the qualifications of an educational aide and the position description for a Sure Start program assistant. Previous experience with preschool children is highly recommended.

Sure Start's program assistants are regarded as an integral part of the teaching team. They work even when children are not present in the classroom. Program assistants are authorized to work 78 hours per pay period so that they may plan with the teacher, participate in home visits, and attend scheduled parent education meetings.

The Sure Start program assistant has the following responsibilities:

- Be familiar with all aspects of Sure Start program components and standards.
- Attend annual Sure Start training.
- Be familiar with the written component plans.
- Follow security, safety, health, and other required rules; inform the teacher of identified problems.
- Be familiar with Sure Start program guidance.
- Assist in planning and implementing a learning environment and varied experiences that help children develop socially, intellectually, physically, and emotionally in a manner appropriate to their ages and stages of development.
- Work with the teacher in implementing the curriculum.
- Coordinate appropriate play and learning activities to foster individual and group activity, as planned with the teacher.
- With the teacher, arrange the room and play materials to accommodate the daily schedule.
- Prepare the learning environment (e.g., mix paint, prepare play-dough, assemble props for dramatic play) and help the teacher develop a list of needed supplies and equipment.
- Review and implement the daily schedule and activity plans.
- Regularly observe children.
- Assist with family-style dining, including initiating and promoting conversations and the use of good manners.
- Help children develop self-help skills.
 - Build supportive relationships with children and families.
- Create a pleasant, inviting atmosphere for children.
- Regularly greet children and families at arrival and departure times (for those programs where children aren't bused); help children collect their belongings when they depart.
- Interact with children during play activities to promote growth and learning.
- Use approved child guidance and care-giving techniques that support overall program objectives.

- Be aware of local host-nation customs.
 - Ensure that safety and hygiene standards are met through constant supervision, effective arrangement of space, proper maintenance of equipment, and so forth.
- Conduct daily health checks and observe children for any signs that might indicate illness, abuse, or neglect, as per school policy.
- Conduct safety and health inspections of indoor and outdoor equipment.
- Maintain infant/child CPR training and first aid certification.
 - Assist the teacher in leading and conducting parent involvement activities, including home visits and parent education meetings. It is a requirement that the program assistant attend home visits and parent conferences with the Sure Start teacher.
- Brief and work with parent volunteers.
- Perform other related duties as identified and assigned by the teacher that comply with program guidelines.

Sure Start Advisory Committee

The Sure Start Advisory Committee is one of the key organizational features that distinguish Sure Start from other programs. The Advisory Committee is composed of a medical/health representative, a social services representative, the Sure Start teacher, and the principal, among others. Any of the following representatives from the installation would make excellent additions to the program's Advisory Committee:

- Installation CDP/CDC/FCC director or representative
- Installation pediatrician (membership is strongly encouraged)
- Installation dentist (membership is strongly encouraged)
- Nutritionist
- Base parent education office representative
- DoDEA preschool staff person responsible for providing services for young children with disabilities (PSCD)
- Base social worker
- Family Advocacy Program Officer
- Family Support Center director or Family Service director
- Fire department, safety, or civil engineering representative, if needed
- School nurse
- Guidance counselor
- CI teacher and/or other specialists
- Elementary school kindergarten teacher
- Sure Start Program Assistant

Each site determines its own Advisory Committee members and the overall size of the group, based on local needs and the availability of community representatives. It is vital, however, that persons representing DoDEA, the Service Child Development Programs, and each of the four component areas (education, health and nutrition, social services, and parent involvement) be included. Note, however, that one person may represent more than one component area. The school administrator is encouraged to work with the base command to ensure an appropriate representation of the community service providers. Sure Start staff and a representative from school administration are mandatory members.

The Sure Start Advisory Committee is responsible for meeting two times during the year, once before the Sure Start program begins (August is suggested) and once at the end of the year (May is suggested).

The following agenda items are to be accomplished at the August meeting:

- The Sure Start teacher develops the education and the parent component plans, with support and guidance from the site administrator and other members of the Advisory Committee.
- Develop or revise component plans.
- The medical/health representative on the Advisory Committee has responsibility for the health and nutrition component plan.
- The social services representative on the Advisory Committee has responsibility for the social services component plan.
- The Sure Start teacher has responsibility for ensuring input from parents for the parent involvement component plan. Input from parents is to be solicited once school is in session.

Input to all the component plans from other members of the Advisory Committee, should, of course, be encouraged to promote collaboration and to ensure that children and families receive needed services.

- Formalize cooperative arrangements with installation and community representatives. These may include such agreements as establishing arrangements with the base hospital for screenings, formalizing food service preparation and delivery with AAFES, and arranging with the Officers' Spouse Club or Family Support Center for child care services during parent meetings. The Advisory Committee should send copies of all agreements to the base commander and school officer, as appropriate. Copies should also be maintained at the local site.
- Select children for the remaining allotted spaces.

During the final quarter of the year, the Advisory Committee meets one last time to conclude business for the year and to set the program in operation for the next school year. Among transition activities to be addressed are these:

- Select half the students for the coming year, although the Advisory Committee may elect to defer selecting students until the August meeting.
- Set an August date for the Advisory Committee to select the remaining (or all) students for the coming year.
- Give letters of reminder for the August meetings to summer staff (e.g., the school secretary) for mailing to Advisory Committee members in July.
- Brief school staff on program advertising, application procedures, deadlines, and the student selection date.
- Set classroom policy about bringing siblings during volunteer hours.
- Set up appointments for medical screening for fall, and send out the information through the Advisory Committee's medical representative or through a formal letter to the appropriate personnel.
- Review component plans, making notes on successes and challenges to be considered for revisions for the following years.

If vacancies on the Advisory Committee occur during the year, the administration is to assist the Advisory Committee in obtaining replacement members.

Parents and Other Volunteers

An underlying premise of the Sure Start program is that children's lives are enriched when parents and other community member participate actively in classroom life. Parent participation in the classroom is a prerequisite for enrollment (30 hours per parent unless a parent is on long-term deployment or sea duty).

To ensure that the volunteer's time in the classroom is both effective and rewarding, all volunteers need to attend parent orientation. Parents who were not able to attend the initial parent orientation meeting need to meet individually with the teacher before spending time in the classroom to make the experience a positive one.

Volunteers do not count toward the teacher-child ratio requirements. Because of this (and to avoid any suggestion of impropriety) volunteers are never to be left alone with children, even during naptime. Volunteers must sign in and out and abide by any other school policies governing volunteers. Volunteers who wish to bring other children/siblings not enrolled to the classroom during their volunteer time must adhere to the local policy in place. Teachers should work with the Advisory Committee to make a policy and explore options for other children/siblings in the Sure Start classroom.

In addition to parents, volunteers in the Sure Start program can be school support staff, community members such as members of the Advisory Committee, guest presenters from offices that deal with health or safety, librarians, or child development students from high schools or colleges. Volunteers might wish to talk with students in a group or individually, read a book, or share a project. In all instances, staff must work with volunteers to ensure that the classroom experience is a positive one for the children and the volunteer.

AREA/DSO Instructional Systems Specialists/POC

Area/District Instructional Systems Specialists/POC have the job of supporting curriculum, instruction, and assessment at schools in DoDEA districts and/or areas. They should also receive training about their specific subject area as it applies to early childhood education and developmentally appropriate practices so that they are able to support and offer training to Sure Start teachers in the areas of curriculum implementation, instruction, and assessment. They must also be able to demonstrate how the preschool curricular materials ordered for the Sure Start classrooms support the achievement of the Sure Start program and content standards. In addition, they should be able to connect Sure Start teachers to curriculum and/or expert resources (e.g., materials, consultants) who can support and/or be an additional resource for program implementation.

Area/DSO Instructional Systems Specialists/POC shall do the following:

- Be knowledgeable of early childhood best practices including curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are theoretically based and consistent with developmentally appropriate practices.
- Be familiar with content area materials in and ordered for the Sure Start classroom.
- Be familiar with the Sure Start learning environment (i.e., The Creative Curriculum for Preschool).
- Plan and deliver curriculum training that supports a centers-based environment for learning.

- Have a working knowledge of the assessment system (i.e. CreativeCurriculum.net).
- Consult with teachers regarding effective and appropriate ways of assessing 4-year-old learners.
- Assist teachers with analyzing data from the Sure Start system of assessment (i.e. CreativeCurriculum.net) in their specific subject areas in order to use the data for instructional strategies.

Area Early Childhood POC/Instructional Systems Specialist

The Area Office must designate an early childhood POC/Instructional Systems Specialist to assist in providing training, professional development, and support of the Sure Start program and content standards, and to assist in the accreditation process in the Sure Start classroom. The Area POC must have a working knowledge of the Sure Start program and be able to design and deliver training to Sure Start staff for each of the four program components, as well as deliver instruction on the Sure Start program operations supporting the program standards. The Area POC must also be able to maintain training and development of the Sure Start assessment system (i.e. CreativeCurriculum.net) as well as maintain a database of Sure Start data. They must be able to plan, deliver, and coordinate with the Area/District Instructional Systems Specialist for Sure Start annual training that includes the curriculum component. Specifically, the Area Early Childhood POC must complete the following:

Administration

- Understand the requirements of the physical facilities and assist in setting up Sure Start classrooms.
- Assist building planners in designing new Sure Start classrooms and playgrounds that meet the Sure Start criteria.
- Monitor funding for system-wide initiatives for early childhood education.
- Work with schools and Sure Start teachers and administrators to coordinate the food service for Sure Start snacks and family-style dining.
- Monitor and offer training in program management.
- Work with schools and/or districts in the recruitment and training of new Sure Start teachers and program assistants.
- Work with HQ on new early childhood initiatives and program development.
- Assist schools in conducting their annual program evaluation (i.e., Abbot-Shim & Sibley).
- Collect and summarize area-wide end-of-year Sure Start evaluation forms and forward to HQ.
- Assist teachers in collecting district-wide/area-wide data from schools on student assessment.
- Assist and monitor schools in complying with the checklist of health and safety standards.
- Conduct program monitoring during the third year of the five-year accreditation cycle, providing feedback, guidance, and training, as appropriate.

Educational Component

- Have a working knowledge of early childhood theory and its application to the content areas.
- Support curriculum implementation by planning and delivering training in using the

- preschool curricular materials.
- Advocate and provide guidance for the adoption of appropriate curriculum materials to support the PreK Content Standards.
 - Serve on DoDEA educational task groups to represent and advocate for best practices for preschool programs.
 - Support the implementation of the Sure Start Education Component Program Standards.
 - Provide guidance for the completion of the schools' education component plans based on the program standards.
 - Provide updated research information on best practices in preschool education.
 - Have a working knowledge of and support best practices for ongoing, appropriate assessment and progress-reporting practices.
 - Support social/emotional goals by providing support through training and appropriate professional resources.

Health and Nutrition Component

- Provide guidance for the completion of the schools' health and nutrition component plan based on the program standards.
- Support the implementation of the Sure Start Health and Nutrition Component Program Standards at schools.
- Provide guidance and support for safety and health requirements by providing training and appropriate professional resources.

Social Services Component

- Advocate for improving the condition and quality of family life on the military bases.
- Work with Sure Start teachers to establish guidelines for referrals to community services.
- Coordinate community agency responsibilities for new Sure Start programs.
- Provide parent workshops for Sure Start meetings as requested.
- Assist with promotion of Sure Start programs.
- Support Sure Start programs with current social services information.

Parent Involvement Component

- Provide overview information to Sure Start staff about working with parents and parent recruitment.
- Assist schools with current documentation/information on parent involvement.
- Provide parent workshops or information for parent meetings, when requested.
- Help schools comply with the requirements of the parent component plans, including home visits and parent meetings.
- Assist with concerns of parents when elevated to the Area Office.

Headquarters Early Childhood Specialist/POC

The Headquarters Office will designate an Early Childhood Specialist/POC for the Sure Start program. The HQ Early Childhood Specialist will assist in policy development and monitoring of the Sure Start program. It will also be the responsibility of the HQ POC to provide guidance on the funding of the Sure Start program's initiatives to include annual training that will include curriculum implementation. The HQ POC must have expert knowledge in early childhood education and training that includes the foundations of early childhood research and theories. Specifically, the HQ Early Childhood Specialist should meet the following minimum requirements:

- Bachelor's or higher degree in early childhood education, including or supplemented by at least 24 semester hours in early childhood education, or in a specialized area with a focus on preschool through 3rd grade. This course work must have included study in at least four of the following five areas: (1) learning theory, psychology of learning, educational psychology of young children; (2) instructional design practices; (3) educational evaluation; (4) instructional product development; and (5) computers in education and training.
- One year of Instructional Systems Specialist experience equivalent to the GS12 level in the federal service or public school, which provided knowledge of system-wide curriculum development and program design for early childhood education.

Specifically, the HQ Early Childhood Specialist will include the following responsibilities:

- Serve as coordinator for Early Childhood Education (preschool-3rd grade).
- Assess the system-wide effectiveness of the Sure Start program.
- Use system-wide data from testing programs, accreditation reports, and field observations to develop comprehensive needs statements.
- Develop goals and objectives for Sure Start, including those that support the DoDEA Community Strategic Plan in Early Childhood Education.
- Establish guidance and procedures for the implementation of new programs.
- Identify training needs and provide training in methods for implementing and maintaining effective instruction in existing curriculum and in initiatives for curriculum improvement.

Represent DoDEA in meetings of various agencies and departments of the federal government relating to the area of early childhood education.

Chapter 7: Program Logistics and Administration

Sure Start Class Size

Sure Start maintains a class size of 18 students. Initially, the Advisory Committee should select 18 children for the program. A waiting list should be maintained so that new children can enroll in the program when a vacancy is created by a participating family receiving a Permanent Change of Station (PCS). Although 18 children is the ideal size for the program, up to 20 children may attend. These extra two slots are reserved for children who may be referred on an emergency basis by the chaplain's office or another community agency. Additionally, these two slots could also be used for transitioning students, which may temporarily increase the class size to 19 or 20. New children may enroll in the program as vacancies arise, up to one month before the last day of school.

Student Eligibility Criteria

Sure Start's first responsibility is to the 4-year-old child (the child who turns 4 **by October 31 of the enrolling school year** of a military or eligible Department of Defense employee whose rank is Enlisted (E) E1 to E4; General Schedule (GS)/National Security Personnel System (**NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent) GS1 to GS4; or Non Appropriated Fund (NAF), NAF 1 to NAF 2, *rank equivalent at the date of application. (Note that the application date is not to exceed six months before the first day of the following school year.) Eligibility for Sure Start programs does not extend to students who are non-DoD sponsored or to children who are geographically in a non-DoDDS site. It is important to note that only the sponsor's rank is used to determine eligibility—not family income, **unless it is used to determine rank equivalents for NAF Levels 1-4 or **NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent GS1- GS9**. Any sponsor in the range of E5 to E9, GS5 to GS9 (**NSPS pay band 1, rank equivalent), or NAF 3-4, rank equivalent who wishes to apply for the program is eligible to do so with the understanding that first priority is given to those children whose sponsor is in the E1 to E4, GS1 to GS4/**NSPS pay band 1, rank equivalent, or NAF 1 to NAF 2, rank equivalent range.

The NAF and NSPS employee ranks use different banding levels than its counterparts (i.e. Enlisted (E) service members or General Schedule (GS) civilian employees.) In order to determine the priority order for enrollment in the Sure Start Program, the NAF and NSPS employee rank must be at level which is equivalent to the enlisted service member and General GS civilian employee. In order to determine the priority for NAF levels 3-4 and the NSPS, pay band 1, enrollment in the Sure Start Program, the Sure Start Advisory Committee will need to consider the salary equivalent of E5-E9 and the GS5-GS9.

Any sponsor whose rank is E5 to E9, GS5 to GS9 (NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent) or NAF 3-4, rank equivalent who wishes to apply for the program is eligible to do so with the understanding that first priority is given to those children whose sponsor is in the E1 to E4, GS1 to GS4 (NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent), or NAF 1 to NAF 2, rank equivalent range.

This otherwise firm rule has one exception: children of all ranks may be eligible if referred for consideration by Family Advocacy, the Chaplain's Office, or other family support agencies documenting an unusual circumstance or an extraordinary hardship. This referral would,

however, still need to be submitted to the Advisory Committee for a placement decision. In addition, this referral covers one child for one year. Siblings are not covered by this decision in subsequent years.

Additional criteria are used to further prioritize students if the number of eligible applicants is greater than 18 or if there are not 18 children eligible for Sure Start using the first priority. At the date of application, the sponsor is required to show proof of sponsorship (e.g., military orders) and proof of current rank (e.g., pay stub). The proof of current rank must be dated within one month of the application date.

If the first priority range has been exhausted and the enrollment remains below 18, then students of sponsors through E9, GS9(NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent), or NAF 3-4, rank equivalent may be considered following the priority chart below. Note, though, that to comply with the Office of the Secretary of Defense's intent for the program, the majority of the students must be from the first priority.

Under no circumstances will a child be removed once accepted into the program. It is the responsibility of the Sure Start teacher, the program assistant, and community agencies to assist Sure Start families in ensuring that all program requirements are met.

Table 11 shows the bands that have been established for eligibility.

Table 11: *Prioritization of Sure Start Income Eligibility*

RANK	PRIORITY	ADDITIONAL CRITERIA
E1–E4, GS1–GS4 (NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent), or NAF 1-NAF 2, rank equivalent	First Priority	* Within each priority, additional criteria are used to further prioritize such as in the NAF category where income level must sometimes be used to determine E/GS rank equivalents for NAF Levels 1-4 or the GS 1-9 rank equivalents for NSPS, pay band 1.
E5–E6, GS5–GS6 (NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent), or NAF 3, rank equivalent	Second Priority	
E7–E9 or GS7–GS9 (NSPS, pay band 1, rank equivalent), or NAF 3-4, rank equivalent	Third Priority	

Each site is encouraged to prioritize and weight its selection criteria to reflect local needs. Each Sure Start Advisory Committee can use the following additional criteria to further prioritize selection of students within each priority band:

- Child is in a family headed by a single parent.
- Child has a parent who did not graduate from high school.
- Child has a parent who was a teenager when the first child in the family was born.
- Child has one parent that speaks a language other than English as the primary language.
- Child was of low birth weight (less than 5 lbs., 8 ozs.).
- Child has a parent who has separated from the family because of military reassignments, giving the remaining parent an extension at the present locale.
- Child has three or more siblings within five years of age.
- Child has a sibling with a diagnosed disability.
- Child is from a dual military family.

Children with disabilities who do not meet the designated criteria for selection cannot be enrolled in the Sure Start program except as noted above. However, it is important to note that Sure Start does not exclude children with disabilities; children with disabilities are in the program because

they have qualified for eligibility on the basis of the eligibility requirements cited above. Children with disabilities enrolled in Sure Start receive services in compliance with IDEA and DoDEA special education policies. Sure Start teachers are to be the general education teacher representative at CSC meetings.

Children may be placed in the Sure Start classroom only by the Sure Start Advisory Committee. When all other criteria are equal, the Advisory Committee will prioritize the order of selection.

The Sure Start Alternate Calendar

The required alternate calendar for Sure Start students and teachers allows for students to begin the school year later than other students and release Sure Start students earlier than other students. In addition to the three days allotted for teachers at the beginning of the school year, Sure Start instruction will begin at least two weeks later. The two full weeks delay allows Sure Start staff time to review all student applications and select students, inform all parents of children selected and those put on a waiting list or not chosen, conduct home visits, meet with the Advisory Committee and other essential community partners, arrange classrooms according to the prescribed room arrangement, write the four component plans with members of the community, and attend the required Sure Start training(s).

For new programs, a three week delay is supported to allow for the necessary additional preparations (i.e., site preparation, forming of committees, publicity, writing the four component plans, etc.).

The principal may also support a staggered start for these students, if the teacher requests. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways—for example, half the class begins on Day 1, the other half (without the Day 1 students) begins on Day 2, all students attend on Day 3; on Days 1 and 2, selected students come to school with parents at specific times, on Day 3 all students attend a full day.

Additionally during the school year, three additional individual parent conferences are required. A detailed description of these events, Home Visits and in-school conferences, is described in Chapter 5 under “Home Visits and Parent Conferences.” These Home Visits and in-school conferences should be scheduled, if possible, during school-wide release days for conferences. Sure Start in-school conferences usually take more than other grade levels since this a required time for a teacher to work directly with a parent or parents to share the narrative reports and student work, as well as develop and review individualized plans for students. Teachers should plan up to an hour for each conference. In the case that school-wide release days do not allow enough time for the required Home Visits or in-school conferences, the principal should release Sure Start students for the necessary days to allow the teacher and program assistant to complete these required Home Visits or in-school conferences (up to three days for in-school conferences and up to five days for home visits). Teachers must work with principals to schedule these days well in advance.

Releasing Sure Start students three to five days before the end of the school year is also necessary so the staff can conduct final home visits or parent conferences as well as transition activities, prepare proper end-of-year documentation, meet with the Advisory Committee, meet with community agencies to recruit incoming students, complete the final student narrative report, complete the Sure Start Annual Report, and move files as necessary.

Length of the Sure Start Day and Planning Time

The Sure Start program is a full-day program and normally coincides with the elementary school day. However, a 45-minute teacher planning time without students should be included. This can result in the Sure Start students' day being 45 minutes shorter than other students' day. The shortened Sure Start students' day should only be an option if it results in no additional transportation costs. Other options for incorporating a planning time are detailed in Chapter 1.

Site Selection

The best placement for the Sure Start program is in the elementary school, near groups of other young children, such as those in the PreKindergarten or the Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities (PSCD) program. This proximity will allow for joint programming and play opportunities with others of about the same age. Like all DoDEA classrooms, the Sure Start classroom must meet the National Fire Safety Protection (NFSP) code 101 for educational occupancy.

The Sure Start classroom must be large enough to provide a minimum of 35 square feet of usable space per child, which is the NAEYC standard for facilities. (Note: for a group of 18, it is recommended that the classroom be at least 900 square feet, excluding cabinets, shelving, hallways, and so on. The typical empty Sure Start classroom is 1,200 square feet.) Classrooms should have running water, built-in toileting facilities, and access to a kitchen. Furniture must be child-sized (no higher than 30 inches), meeting NAEYC's criteria for preschool classrooms. A schematic facilities requirement plan is included in the APPENDIX.

An outdoor play area with equipment appropriate for 4-year-olds must be readily accessible. Because most elementary school playgrounds are designed with older children in mind, the playgrounds and equipment must be inspected before use to ensure that Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) safety standards for preschoolers are being met. The CPSC guidelines are available from the District Office or Area Service Center.

Playgrounds also must meet the accessibility standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If programs are not able to meet these standards, they must work out accommodations with the DSO.

When a Sure Start program is established at a site for the first time, a great many planning and administrative tasks must be done. Ideally, preparation for the new Sure Start program should begin in the spring of the preceding school year. Being able to hire staff, order equipment, and convene the Advisory Committee to begin selection procedures puts the program on sound footing.

It is anticipated that once a Sure Start program is in place and procedures institutionalized, the time burden will be reduced. Nonetheless, the same milestones must be met for new and established programs. A suggested implementation plan is presented below.

Responsibilities for Program Start-up

Administrator

- Hire new staff, if a vacancy occurs.
- Ensure that the Sure Start site, including outdoor play area, meets the program facility and safety standards. (This is done with the teacher and the district facilities)

representative.)

- Order any needed furnishings, supplies, and equipment. (This is done with the teacher and program assistant and the DSO Early Childhood POC).
- Arrange for teacher and program assistant to attend annual Sure Start training for new and experienced staff.

Teacher and Program Assistant

- **Attend training(s) for the Sure Start program.**
- Work with administrator to ensure that the Sure Start site, including outdoor play area, meets the program facility and safety standards. (This is done with the teacher and the district facilities representative.)
- Set up classroom according to curriculum guidelines.
- Convene Advisory Committee meeting in August to select children.
- Contact parents concerning acceptance or rejection of enrollment application.
- Schedule and conduct home visits.
- Prepare paperwork for parent orientation meeting (teacher).
- Conduct parent orientation meeting.
- Create files and portfolios for each child.
- Enter student data in the online assessment.
- Create staggered schedule for first three days of school (if applicable).
- Prepare lesson plans for first week of school.
- Coordinate dental and medical screening schedules.
- Conduct health and safety inspection of classroom and playground.

Advisory Committee

- Select children and families for Sure Start program.
- For new programs: Write component plans. For established programs: Review and, if necessary, revise component plans (see APPENDIX).
- Advertise for Sure Start openings (see APPENDIX).

Recordkeeping

During the two- to three-week period before the opening of Sure Start, procedures for completing administrative tasks and recordkeeping should be established. Planning ahead will help ensure that accurate and timely records are maintained throughout the year.

Access to the Sure Start records should be limited to the principal, the teacher, the program assistant, and others who have a documented “need to know.” All confidential records—which include Sure Start applications and free and reduced lunch lists—are to be kept in a secure, locked cabinet.

Records can be categorized as general program information and child/family records.

General Program Information Records

These include the following:

- Installation/community point of contact
- Sure Start component plans as developed and approved by the Advisory Committee

- Notes and agendas from Advisory Committee and parent education meetings
- Completed program evaluation form and Program Progress Plan
- DoDDS/DoDEA memoranda
- Inventory of classroom supplies and equipment
- List of materials to be replenished or new items desired
- Copy of the daily schedule
- Copy of daily and weekly lesson plans
- Information for substitute teacher/program assistant
- Daily attendance (maintained as per school policy)
- Documentation of follow-up for children absent for more than three consecutive days
- Newsletters
- General correspondence

All general program records should be maintained in the Sure Start classroom. Duplicate copies of the component plans should also be filed in the administrator's office. At the end of the school year, all general records should be stored in the administrator's office or registrar's office, as per school policy.

Child/Family Records

Child/family records are sensitive, and care must be taken to maintain privacy. At the end of the school year, teachers are to prepare three files for each child: confidential records, permanent records, and a parent folder. The confidential records contain information normally not disclosed to others (e.g., income verification, Sure Start application, referrals to agencies, home visit documentation, individual and family goals) and are of a sensitive and/or confidential nature. Parents, however, have open access to their own records, with three day's written notice. Confidential records are to be given to the local administration at the end of the school year and kept in a locked and secure location. These records are to be kept for three years from date of exit. The records should be marked to be destroyed after three years.

Permanent records, also known as 901 files, are maintained according to the procedures in place for other grades. These records include semester progress reports, health screenings, or other assessments (e.g., originals of developmental and/or learning checklists), and accident or serious injury reports. These records should follow the protocol of the school's permanent record files. The permanent record file should contain the following:

- Progress report narratives from the end of each semester
- Outcomes domain report for child (if using CreativeCurriculum.net)
- The Creative Curriculum Child Development Learning Continuum (paper-based version, if not using online programs)

The parent folder houses materials that are to be returned to families. Included in this folder are portfolios of student work and copies of developmental reports.

In summary, staff should maintain the paperwork listed in Table 12.

Table 12: Sure Start Records

	GENERAL PROGRAM RECORDS	PARENT FOLDER	CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS	PERMANENT RECORDS (901 FILES)
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom inventory • Budget sheet • Attendance • Daily schedule • Program Progress Plan • Component plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child portfolio • Developmental checklists • Progress reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income verification • Free/reduced lunch application • Sure Start application • Home visit forms • Documentation of illnesses/ absences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semester progress reports • Copies of health screening (Originals go to school nurse) • Developmental checklists
Where Records Are Stored During School Year	Sure Start classroom Copies of Component Plans and PIP sent to Administration Office	Sure Start classroom	In locked file cabinet	In locked file cabinet
Where Records Are Stored at End of Year	Administration	Given to parents	Given to administration for locked storage—destroyed in 3 years	Given to administration for storage with all student records

Keeping up with the paperwork and administrative aspects of Sure Start programs may seem tedious at times, but it is essential to operating a successful Sure Start classroom. Records serve many purposes, from justifying funding to determining the future educational placement of the children enrolled. The importance of keeping records accurate and up to date cannot be overemphasized. A word of caution: Parents who assist administratively must not have access to confidential files.

Extra-Duty Compensation

As stated in the description of program administrator responsibilities, Sure Start teachers will be entitled to extra-duty compensation for tasks specific to the position that go beyond the duty day. Examples include evening home visits to accommodate family work schedules and parent meetings as well as the completion of the necessary record keeping that is above what is expected in general education. This policy should be clarified at the start of the year when extra duties are assigned to the school faculty as a whole. It is the teacher's responsibility to log hours accurately and to complete an extra-duty form and submit it to the principal. The entitlement for these extra duties falls under the 40-79-hour band in the extra-duty schedule. Funding for this has been provided to each district/school who hosts a Sure Start Program.

Sure Start Month by Month

Once a Sure Start program is up and running, the flow of events becomes almost automatic. Until staff get to that point, it may be helpful to consult the following chart, which shows major Sure Start operations month by month. This chart can be posted as a reminder to all of what has occurred, what is presently happening, and what comes next in Sure Start.

AUGUST

- Report to duty (teachers).
- Convene Advisory Committee.
- Promote program in school and base papers.
- Review/rewrite component plans.
- Arrange for initial screenings.
- Attend Sure Start annual training.
- Select students.
- Set up classroom.

SEPTEMBER

- Conduct home visits.
- Inspect playground.
- Develop initial lesson plans.
- Students arrive.
- Conduct parent orientation meeting.
- Begin collecting student assessment data; administer, for example, the ESI-R and begin observations using CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Begin collecting materials for portfolios.

OCTOBER

- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Add to children's portfolios.
- Administer parent survey.
- Complete the Observational Program Evaluation (Abbott-Shim & Sibley).
- First Parent Education Meeting (Four Meetings Per Year Required).

NOVEMBER

- Develop Program Progress Plan, using information from the Abbott-Shim & Sibley and parent survey input.
- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Complete an Individual Goals and Education Plan for each student.
- Add to portfolios.
- Schedule parent conferences in conjunction with your school.

DECEMBER

- Complete all initial screenings, and make referrals as indicated.
- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Add to portfolios.
- Begin implementation of Program Progress Plan.

JANUARY

- Convene parent meeting (Four Meetings Per Year Required).
- Add to portfolios.

- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Adjust individual plans and goals as needed.
- Prepare first Narrative Progress Report.
- Continue implementation of Program Progress Plan.
- Conduct Home Visit or In-School Conference.

FEBRUARY

- Add to portfolios.
- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Continue implementation of Program Progress Plan.
- Advertise for next school year.

MARCH

- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Review checklists/continuums, portfolios, and individual goals.
- Continue implementation of Program Progress Plan.
- Add to portfolios.
- Advertise for next school year.
- Convene parent education meeting (Four Meetings per Year Required).

APRIL

- Advertise for next school year.
- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, or CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Continue implementation of Program Progress Plan.
- Add to portfolios.
- Accept applications for next school year.

MAY

- Convene parent education meeting (Last required parent meeting. Can be an activity for families and should also address transitional issues and summer activities).
- Accept applications for next school year.
- Continue collecting student assessment data and observations using the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, or CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Review goals.
- Complete checklist/continuums or online reports.
- Complete portfolios.
- Convene Advisory Committee:
- Select not more than one-half of class for next school year.
- Provide letters to Advisory Committee members for dates of August meeting.
- Brief summer staff on application procedures.
- Arrange medical screenings.
- Conduct transition activities for those children entering kindergarten in the fall.
- Review/revise component plans.

JUNE

- Complete collection of student assessment data and observations using Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, or CreativeCurriculum.net.
- Write summary reports/complete online reports.
- Conduct final home visit or parent-teacher conference.
- Complete DoDEA Annual Report; forward to the DSO and Area Office.
- Place designated progress assessments in Cumulative Folder (901 file) in the main office.
- Store additional information/files in the registrar's office or designated safe place.
- Provide families with children's work and related materials.
- Over time, the above schedule will become institutionalized and Sure Start activities will flow with ease.

Over time, the above schedule will become institutionalized and Sure Start activities will flow with ease.

Chapter 8: Frequently Asked Questions

ELIGIBILITY AND ENROLLMENT:

Q: Do Sure Start students register for school?

Sure Start students register just like any other student.

Q: Can children be admitted to Sure Start if they are only a few days shy of the cutoff age (e.g., they turn 4 on November 3 of the enrolling year) and there are open slots in a program?

No. Absolutely no age exceptions whatsoever are made in the Sure Start program. Parents cannot request special testing or special consideration. Insistent parents or those with children who meet all qualifications except age can be referred to the DoDEA Web site, which offers PreKindergarten Content Standards as well as parent guides that may allow them to work with their child at home during this waiting year. Sure Start teachers can also suggest the CDC or off-base preschools in the area for interaction with other children.

Q: How many children enrolled in a Sure Start classroom should have a sponsor with rank of E-1 to E-4?

To meet the intent for the program, 51% of the students enrolled should have a sponsor with a rank of E-1 to E-4.

Q: When determining eligibility the third band is E-7 to E-9. If you have enrolled all applicants in this third band, and still have not filled your class, does this mean that you stop enrolling students?

Sure Start was designed to serve children and family serving in the lower ranks of the military. The program was designed to serve not only the children but to provide education of parents, which is essential for school success. The program was originally created to provide an environment for enlisted parents where they would feel free to make choices, decisions, and express feelings about their child's education. In order to ensure we are meeting the needs of enlisted families, Sure Start should remain a program that serves enlisted ranks or rank equivalents.

Q: Is there ever a time when a child whose sponsor is above an E-9 would be accepted into the program?

The only time a child with a sponsor above E-9 would be accepted into the program, would be based on an emergency placement by a chaplain or Family Advocacy. Remember Sure Start can potentially service 20 students (with the last two slots being reserved for emergency placements). The only exception to this is in Cuba where all students are accepted into the program regardless of rank.

Q: How would you determine the NAF rank equivalent for E5-E6 and GS5-GS6, Second Priority for Sure Start eligibility? For E7-E9 and GS7-GS9, Third Priority for Sure Start eligibility?

The Sure Start Advisory Committee would have to request the salary level for the NAF Level 3 sponsor. The salary level should not be above that of E5-E6 or GS 5-6 to qualify for Second Priority eligibility. The salary level should not be above that of E7-E9 or GS7-GS9 to qualify for

the Third Priority eligibility. This is necessary because the NAF Level 3 band is equivalent to GS5-GS8 range and the NAF Level 4 band spans from a GS9-GS12.

Q: How would you determine the NSP, pay band 1, rank equivalent for E5-E6 and GS5-GS6, Second Priority for Sure Start eligibility? For E7-E9 and GS7-GS9, Third Priority for Sure Start eligibility?

The Sure Start Advisory Committee would have to request the salary level for the NSPS, pay band 1 sponsor. The salary level should not be above that of E5-E6 or GS 5-6 to qualify for Second Priority eligibility. The salary level should not be above that of E7-E9 or GS7-GS9 to qualify for the Third Priority eligibility. This is necessary because the NSPS, pay band 1 covers a wide salary range.

Q: The Chaplain's Office wants to place an officer's child in Sure Start on an emergency basis. Doesn't this go against income guidelines?

As a general rule, this does go against Sure Start guidelines, which give priority to children of sponsors in the E-1 to E-4 (or G-1 to G-4) range. However, under the "emergency placement" policy, if the Chaplain's Office or another family service office strongly believes that a child would be best served by Sure Start, the child is recommended to the Advisory Committee for emergency placement. If the Advisory Committee concurs with the recommendation, the rank requirement may be waived.

Q: How critical is it that Sure Start enrollment remains at 18 students?

Student enrollment numbers in Sure Start are monitored closely at the District, Area and DoDEA HQ levels. The program was designed to service 18 children. It is critical that schools maintain advertising the program within their communities and network with agencies on the base (WIC, Family Support, CDC) throughout the year to ensure an applicant pool is ready for selecting children as openings occur.

Q: What happens when a student already selected and enrolled in a Sure Start class transfers to another DoDDS school that has a Sure Start program?

When a Sure Start student is already selected and enrolled in a Sure Start program, and transfers to another school with a Sure Start program, they will automatically be placed in the Sure Start program at their new school, regardless of how they rank in the "new" class grouping. So, if a selected child with an E-9 sponsor was transferred to another program where the highest rank was an E-4 and there was a waiting list of E-5's and E-6's, the child would still have automatic placement in the program since he/she was already in another Sure Start program. It follows the thinking that once a student starts a program, the child is never (even if he/she transfers) dropped from that program. This also means that the enrollment of a Sure Start program could increase to 19 or 20 temporarily until another child PCSs from the program. If the classroom already has an enrollment of 20, the student will have first priority for placement when an opening becomes available.

Q: Is it ever appropriate to suspend a child from the Sure Start program or shorten their school day?

The Sure Start program is designed as an early intervention program for at risk children and families. Rarely if ever is it appropriate to suspend a Sure Start child or shorten their school day. For children who are experiencing behavioral difficulties the school should work collaboratively

with school and community resources to ensure a plan is in place to address the child/family needs. Having a child remain at home out of school rarely is in the best interest of the child.

Q: I have four families who absolutely refuse the home visit. What should I do?

Sure Start is a complete program with specific components and requirements. If parents are unable to meet a requirement (e.g., home visits), they should not enroll their child in the program. Home visits are a part of parent participation and are vital to the success of the program as well as the child's experience. Families must agree to the home visits upon registering their child for school. A sample Sure Start application is included in the APPENDIX.

SCHEDULING

Q: Is it appropriate for a specialist to service Sure Start children?

If a school's Sure Start program includes specialists, on an as needed basis, collaboration between the Sure Start teacher and the specialist is vital to the success of this option to ensure that Sure Start program standards are not compromised. In this case, specialists can work with varied sized groups of students during center time (indoor or outdoor) providing instruction related to their area. Specialists, who work with Sure Start students, should do so within the Sure Start classroom environment and with the students in a way that does not compromise the Sure Start program standards and guidance. Following are several scenarios:

- A music teacher could speak to the whole class during center time for 5 minutes about the similarities of rhythm to patterns and demonstrate clapping to make some patterns. Then she/he could introduce some simple rhythm instruments and put them in a center for students to explore. The music teacher could remain in the Sure Start classroom and be at the center with the instruments and interact with small groups of students who choose to participate and show an interest in that center and learning more about rhythm, patterns, etc.
- A PE teacher could introduce a hopping game to children as a whole group of children during outdoor play and then interact with small groups of children who are interested in continuing to play the game or extend their learning around this concept.
- In general, a Sure Start teacher would want to have a time period when all centers are open and the specialists could position themselves in a center that most closely aligns with their area. While the specialists are there, they can observe the children's interactions with the materials and interact with the children and the materials.

It is important to remember that Sure Start enrollment is not included in the school population when determining their school's staffing ratio for specialists. Depending on school size and scheduling, the involvement of the specialist with the Sure Start program may vary. Due to the staffing ratio used for specialists, Sure Start should not be included in the school's specialist rotation. While the examples given above show how specialists may work with Sure Start students, it is anticipated that the majority of support will be consultation with the Sure Start teacher.

Q: Are Sure Start students eligible for ESL services?

Sure Start classrooms are designed as language rich environments. Children whose native language is not English will benefit from the variety of activities and interactions with adults and

peers that occurs in a Sure Start classroom. ESL staffing at elementary schools is based on the K-6 student population and does not include Sure Start or PreKindergarten enrollments. The ESL teacher at a school can serve as a resource or provide consultation if time permits. In some schools it may be possible for the ESL teacher to spend sometime in the Sure Start classroom working with students in an inclusive model, however, rarely or if ever is it appropriate for a Sure Start child to be seen by an ESL teacher in a pull out model.

ASSESSMENT/BEHAVIOR

Q: When a Sure Start child transfers to another Sure Start Program, what needs to be done to transfer the child's data on CCNET?

If the Sure Start child transfers to another Sure Start program within the area, the teacher should contact the Area Office Representative. If the child transfers to another Sure Start program outside of the area, the teacher should contact the DoDDS HQ representative.

Q: If a Sure Start student transfers to a school that does not have a Sure Start program should their file be deleted?

At the end of the school year, the student's Sure Start file should be deleted.

Q: What procedure should I follow if, through screening, a child appears to be having some difficulties?

Follow normal school referral policies. Usually, the first step is to consult the PSCD teacher.

Q: What happens if a child is determined to have a disability during the school year?

The Child Case Study Committee makes a determination of the services the child needs. In most cases the child can remain in the Sure Start program, with minor modifications. It should be noted that a child cannot, however, be jointly enrolled in Sure Start and PSCD.

Q: One of my children has a real behavior problem. Where can I go to get help with this child? Can I dismiss the child from the program?

Once accepted, a child cannot be disenrolled from the Sure Start program for any reason whatsoever (see Chapter 4, The Social Services Component). First, check with the child's family to see if anything at home has changed. Often an upset in the child's routine can cause some problems with the child. Sit down with the parents and see if you can come up with some suggestions for ideas that have worked with the child before.

- Check your classroom routines. Has something changed at school, or are the behavioral expectations too high for the child's developmental level?
- Consult with the Child Development Center Training & Curriculum Specialist. Because these specialists deal with preschoolers on a regular basis, they are valuable resources to tap.
- Consult with your Area or DSO ECE POC. They should be able to provide an expert consultant in the area of appropriate guidance for preschool age children.
- A concerted effort between home and school is always in the child's best interests; be sure to share children's successes—both big and small—with parents. Often families feel they are to blame for their child's behavior and need reassurance that Sure Start staff will work with them to help their child control his or her behavior.

Although at times removal from the program might seem in the child's best interest, often it is only postponing a problem until the child begins kindergarten. Because the goal is to ensure that all children are ready to learn in kindergarten, dealing with the problem and solving it now would be most helpful, albeit more challenging. If, after trying the above, nothing seems to be working, referring the child to the school's case study committee through the regular referral process will enable you to find out if the child has a disability that could be contributing to the behavior problem. They will then determine how the child's needs can be best met.

MATERIALS/FUNDING:

Q: Isn't Sure Start a special program? How is it funded? How do I go about ensuring I get the materials and equipment that I need?

Sure Start is funded in the same way that other school programs are. Each year the school receives a certain amount of money per child that is used to fund the program. Of course, this amount covers utilities, custodial services, field trips, and so on—so not all money can go to supplies. It is a good idea to determine what items in your classroom you need to replace, what additional items you would like to purchase, and how much you need to purchase snack and cooking items from the commissary. Then sit down and discuss the program's needs with the principal. Each school is different. Some schools purchase snacks from the school lunch program, and others purchase snacks from the commissary. Some schools received a large sum to purchase materials before start-up, and others received materials from schools drawing down. No one set amount or formula covers all schools. Good communication is the key. Inviting the district's Sure Start POC to be part of the discussion might help when both the principal and the teacher are new to the program.

Q: Can I use rice in my sand table? I was told that we cannot use food for any purpose other than for eating.

This is true. In appreciating and understanding other cultures, the Sure Start program respects that food is sacred in many cultures and should be used only for consumption and not for art or play purposes.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

Q: Where are Sure Start health records kept?

The originals of health records should be kept with the school nurse. Every Sure Start teacher should have a copy of these records in the classroom as well, including a list of allergies and emergency phone numbers for each child in the program. This is especially critical when the Sure Start program is not located in the elementary school building. Emergency procedures should be set up for programs not located in the school.

Q: Can a child repeat or be retained in Sure Start?

No. A repeating Sure Start child would break age guidelines in the second year.

Q: My school has no PSCD or PreK but only Sure Start and kindergarten. A family with a developmentally delayed 3-and-a-half-year-old has recently PCS'd, and via Family Advocacy and our school special education department, there is a proposal for early intervention and partial inclusion in my Sure Start class. Is this permitted? What are my responsibilities?

The Sure Start program is funded to provide services for only those students who meet the criteria. Sure Start is not a universal PreK/General Education program and cannot be used as such.

Q: Some of my families live on the economy. My home visits require me to drive off base to locations over an hour away from the base site in heavy, foreign traffic. Can I request a military van/driver? If I use my own vehicle, is there a mileage form I can submit for reimbursement for the cost of gas?

Teachers should always be reimbursed using a local mileage reimbursement form if they are using their POV for DoDEA-directed school business. Use of military vehicles/drivers is under local governance and is a site-based decision. This may be a reasonable option given local geography or if the Sure Start teacher does not have a POV.

Q: For safety and liability issues, I am more comfortable going on the home visit with another adult from the school. What are my options?

It is a requirement that the program assistant accompany the teacher to ALL home visits. Under no circumstances should a teacher be required to make a visit without the program assistant. If a program assistant is unavailable for any reason, it is a requirement that the teacher be accompanied by another DoDEA employee (e.g., principal, school secretary, or nurse).

Q: I've just arrived at a new Sure Start program and I notice that past practice has been to schedule the program assistant beginning the first student day of school and no earlier. Are there any provisions, directives, or allocations for Sure Start assistants to start earlier, since there are so many tasks involved in preparing for the start of the year?

Sure Start program assistants are required to be on duty during the same teacher duty time that the Sure Start teacher is to report. The program assistant hours are provided by Headquarters to ensure this requirement and cannot be used in any other way.

Q: The entire school is having a Halloween Day party and parade and I was told that Sure Start teachers cannot address holidays or celebrate them. I have some angry parents. What should I do?

Teachers may refer parents to the section of this Guide that states that holidays are to be celebrated in the home and not inside the Sure Start classroom. In the same light, graduation ceremonies for PreK are discouraged. Refer to the earlier portion of this Guide for a more detailed explanation of this position.

Q: I have a child who is in no way toilet trained and soils her pants almost daily. She has no IEP or doctor's report of a physical problem. What should I do? Can she remain in school?

A child cannot be denied admission based on lack of toilet training. First, any child who is not toilet trained should be immediately referred to the school nurse. The nurse should work with the parents and pediatrician to rule out any physical problems or developmental delays. The school

nurse should then develop an action plan with parents and Sure Start staff to begin immediate toilet training.

Q: I have a mother who insists on bringing along her disruptive 2-year-old when she volunteers in the classroom. She said she has no child care. I see this as a liability issue and disruptive to the routine in my class. What should I do?

Teachers should work with the Advisory Committee to set a policy for parents who bring other children or siblings to the Sure Start Classroom. In this case, if it is the policy to allow other children or siblings in the classroom, the teacher should suggest other ways to volunteer (e.g., preparing things at home or working at another time) if child care cannot be provided.

Q: I have a child who is repeatedly absent. Are there a maximum number of days before a child is disenrolled to allow another eligible family into the program?

Sure Start students are under the same attendance requirements as all DoDEA children. If a child is absent more than one week without a doctor's excuse, he or she should be referred to the administrator. If a child has excessive absences per quarter, the administrator should be notified.

Q: The Child Development Center (CDC) is under renovation and wants to use my Sure Start classroom for after-school care for K-5 children. Is this permitted, or is it up to my administrator?

Because the Sure Start classroom has strict sanitation and environmental requirements, every effort should be made not to use the Sure Start facility for any other purposes. If the local decision is to use the Sure Start classroom, those using the facility must fulfill the sanitation requirements (e.g., using bleach solution for disinfecting toys, tabletop, cleaning restrooms, etc.).

Q: I know that program assistants are evaluated almost like teachers. How much of the evaluation is my responsibility, if any? Also, should I as the teacher be permitted to sit in on interviews and give input on who the program assistant should be?

Although program assistants take direction from the teachers, the administrator is responsible for evaluating them. In most cases, the administrator relies upon the input of the teacher to choose and evaluate the assistant.

Q: Why doesn't kindergarten or general preschool programs have similar guidelines for program administration as Sure Start?

Sure Start is a totally self-contained program for at-risk children; it is separate from those general or special education program and teaching positions in DoDEA and has separate job descriptions. The Sure Start model strives for excellence by following strict ECE guidelines from the foremost early childhood philosophies in the world. This program was funded and given to DoDEA by the Office of the Secretary of Defense with established program standards and requirements that are to be maintained and developed.

Q: How are the Sure Start classrooms and the CDC program alike and different? Are Sure Start classrooms required to follow CDC regulations (e.g., video surveillance cameras in the classroom)?

Although both the Sure Start program and the CDC offer quality preschool and early childhood programs and may have similarities, they are distinctly separate programs run under different DOD regulations and guidelines. Whereas the CDC is open to all children on a sliding-pay-scale basis, the Sure Start program is free to all DOD-eligible families who meet the criteria outlined

in this Guide. The Sure Start classroom is staffed by DoDEA personnel who must follow the regulations and policies of the schools and the additional program standards and regulations contained in this Guide. The mission of Sure Start is to prepare at-risk students for future academic and social success. Therefore, Sure Start teachers and classrooms are not required to follow the CDC regulations such as video surveillance in the classroom.