

Animals in the Classroom

Policy: Head Start and EHS-CCP staff will ensure that only appropriate animals will be brought into the Head Start classroom and appropriate safety and sanitation procedures will be followed at all times.

Performance Standard 1304.22(d)(1), (d)(2), (e)(1)(iv), (e)(3)

Procedure:

- All pet cages will be cleaned/disinfected once a week by staff (latex gloves should be worn to protect staff). All food and water dishes should be removed before spraying cage with disinfectant. Make sure that the animal is not put back into the cage until it has a chance to completely air dry.
- Children will only hold the animal(s) outside the cage. If an animal “potty accident” occurs the children must wash hands and clothing immediately. Only staff’s hands are to be inside the animal cage.
- Animals cannot roam the classroom freely without supervision. When they are out, they must be closely monitored to ensure that any accidents are cleaned up with disinfectant immediately.
- Animals must have appropriate sized cages. Rabbits, guinea pigs and other gerbils need room to explore and use their large muscles and it is also important for children to see adult’s model humane treatment of animals.
- Animals can visit the classroom under certain circumstances.
 - Dogs and Cats from children’s homes can only be brought in if they have no history of biting/scratching, have an updated rabies vaccination and children in the classroom who might be afraid are taken into consideration prior to allowing the pet visit.
 - Other animals can be brought in for sharing and for a limited time if they do not bite and hands are washed before and immediately after handling
- If an animal bites a child, follow [medical and dental emergency procedure](#) and [accident procedure](#) and remove the animal from the classroom immediately. In order to avoid a bite, be sure to follow these guidelines:
 - Talk about how to handle animals (or not handle) prior to introducing the classroom pet.
 - Teach animal Safety-Children need to be well supervised when handling animals. Sometimes children want to test limits with animals or they are unaware of how big and strong they are in comparison with a small animal. In either case, an overzealous squeeze or shake may lead to a painful bite.

Staff and children’s hands must be washed prior to handling an animal. The smell of food may invite an animal to bite. (see [Hand Washing Procedure](#))

Referenced Procedures:

[Medical and Dental Emergency Procedure](#)

[Hand Washing Procedure](#)

[Accident Procedure](#)