



# Early Head Start

Lifelong success starts here!

## Early Learning Center

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The Early Learning Center is open  
Monday through Friday from 7:00  
a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Early Head Start offers 6.5 hours  
of center-based classroom  
services at no cost to families.

## Getting Started

*For more information, to apply for  
services, or to schedule a tour of  
the Early Learning Center, please  
contact Sharon Hutchinson-Jones  
using the contact information  
listed above.*

*You may also apply online at  
[northernrivers.org](http://northernrivers.org).*

*These services are provided by  
Northern Rivers Family of Services  
and member agencies.*

**NORTHERN  
RIVERS**

Early Head Start is a federally funded program for families who are pregnant or have children up to age 3. The program has both a home visiting component and a center-based classroom component. Program staff help parents with the changing needs of their child and family. Parents learn ways to help their child meet milestones, including helping ensure the child is healthy, developmentally on target, and ready for the world. School readiness, including literacy, is a major component of the Early Head Start program.

The Early Head Start program, located at Northern Rivers' Early Learning Center in Schenectady, has 9 classrooms for 72 infants and toddlers in the center-based option. Each classroom is staffed with 2 highly trained and skilled teachers. In addition, 22 children are served with weekly visits by highly trained and skilled staff in the home visiting option. Staff follow a developmentally appropriate curriculum both in the home and in the center to ensure that quality care and learning is achieved.

## Services

Students referred to NHS are considered emotionally handicapped by their home school districts. Many have various secondary handicapping conditions such as ADD, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and learning disabilities. Students have displayed significant behavior/emotional problems in previous educational placements and some have been recently discharged from inpatient hospitalization for psychiatric disorders and require a transitional placement before returning to their home school.

Enriched staff-to-student ratio (8:1:2) allows for a supportive environment in which instruction is highly individualized. Staff members meet or exceed certification requirements outlined by the NYS Education Department. Upon admission to Neil Hellman School students are scoring significantly below their peers in standardized achievement tests, as well as those tests required by the Education Department for yearly school report cards. The school's state-of-the-art approach enables students to show substantial gains. Close partnerships with parents and local Committees on Special Education (CSEs) allow students to meet their goals to return to less-restrictive, community educational settings. On average, this occurs in 18 months.

## Services

Families benefit from culturally respectful and inclusive services, as well as through partnerships with other area services providers. Early Head Start provides the following services:

- Mentoring and education around maternal and child health care, including prenatal, breast-feeding, immunizations, and lead screening
- Screenings and educational activities to evaluate children's developmental needs with referrals when necessary for professional evaluation and, if deemed appropriate, intervention
- Assistance in acquiring adequate health services for the family, including physical, mental, dental, nutritional, vision, and auditory health services as needed
- Mentoring for parents regarding vocational goals and resources

(over)

- Home-based families are encouraged to attend group socializations each month so parents and children can meet other parents and children of similar age
- Center-based care, 6.5 hours on weekdays at no cost to families.

### Benefits

- Increased school readiness and early literacy skills
- Increased positive interaction between parents and children
- Improved parental and child wellness and social connectedness
- Increased economic self-sufficiency
- Fewer incidents of child abuse and neglect

### Getting Started

Pregnant women or families with children younger than age 3 whose parent(s) are living at or below poverty level in Schenectady County are eligible for services.

Apply online at [northernrivers.org](http://northernrivers.org).

## *The Northern Rivers Difference*

We work with every youth and family in our care to provide person-centered, client-driven services that helps everyone in our educational programs work toward meaningful goals and achieve success. With small class sizes, a culture based on respect, and our use of hands-on, alternative, and experiential teaching methods in conjunction with traditional traditional instruction, we do everything in our power to ensure student success.

Northern Rivers is guided by a set of universally accepted principles that guide the actions of every member of our family. We organize these values through the acronym **HOPE**.

**Honor:** To help others is the highest calling; we strive to do what is right for those in our care.

**Optimism:** We believe things can get better if we work together, aim higher, and set meaningful goals.

**Progress:** Every day provides an opportunity to improve, and we promise to continue striving.

**Excellence:** We hold ourselves to the highest standards, because our communities deserve the best from us.

