
Subject: Pets in the Classroom
Source: Early Head Start Performance Standards 1304.22

Policy

Early Head Start staff will ensure that only “allowable” animals will be brought into the classroom and appropriate safety and sanitation procedures will be followed at all times.

Procedure

1. Parents will be notified **one week in advance** of any plans by the EHS staff to bring animals into the classroom.
2. North Texas Parent & Child Development Inc. follows the NAEYC best practices guidelines which states that the following pets be considered “allowable”: fish, guinea pigs, gerbils, domestic rabbits, hamsters or mice.
3. All pet cages will be cleaned/disinfected **once a week** by staff (latex gloves should be worn while cleaning to protect staff). All food and water dishes will be removed from the cage before spraying cage with disinfectant, Staff will make sure that the animal is not put back into the cage until it has a chance to completely air dry.
4. Children will only hold the animal 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.
5. Animals cannot roam the classroom freely without supervision. When they are out, they must be closely monitored to ensure that any accidents will be cleaned up with disinfectant immediately.
6. Direct care staff will talk with the children about how to handle animals prior to introducing a pet to the class.
7. Direct care staff will teach about animal safety. Children need to be well supervised when handling animals.
8. If an animal bites a child, follow appropriate first aid and accident reporting procedures and remove the animal from the classroom immediately.
9. Staff and children’s hands must be washed prior to handling an animal. The smell of food may invite an animal to bite.