

**Tri-County Community Council, Inc.**  
**Head Start/Early Head Start**

**Part: 1302 Program Operations**

**Subpart: E- Family and Community Engagement Program Services**

**Section: 1302.50 Family Engagement**

**Subject: Child Custody Issues**

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**Policy**

The following methods are to be used to handle situations and issues that arise regarding child custody conflicts. If there is a change in an enrolled child's legal custodial arrangements, a copy of the court document must be submitted to staff and placed in the child's family file.

**Procedure**

1. If a written custody agreement exists between two parents:
  - a. The agreement must be on file in the child's family file housed in the office of the child's Head Start/Early Head Start center.
  - b. Family Service Advocates will inform parents that we must legally follow the orders of the custody agreement.
2. The Family Service Advocate and Home Visitor will inform all appropriate education staff and management staff of the custody agreement, and what it means. If questions arise regarding the content of the document, the Family Service Advocate/Home Visitor will contact the Family Service Coordinator.
  - a. All staff will follow the court order in regard to all aspects of program including sharing of information, pick-up and parent involvement.
3. If there is a legal change in custodial arrangements, staff must obtain copies of court documents to follow them.
4. Family Service Advocates will notify staff of the changes. Staff will ensure that the child is released to an authorized person or parent.

**NOTE: Without legal documentation on file stating the non-custodial parent may not pick up the child, Head Start staff cannot legally prevent them from removing the child from the center, providing we are knowledgeable of whom that parent is, and the person shows proper identification.**