

**B-H-K Child Development Board
700 Park Avenue
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Serving Children & Families
through:
Head Start/Preschool,
Early Start,
Child Care,
Even Start,
AmeriCorps, and
Other Family Services

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WCCY/WOLV, WCUP, WGGL-FM, WMPL/WZRK, WUPY,
WBUP-TV5, WLUC-TV6, WMTU, WNMU
From: B-H-K Child Development Board
Contact: Rod Liimatainen, 482-3663
Date: August 16, 2002



Note to editors: A chart listing Open House/Orientation dates and times is attached. Please add to community calendar listings, etc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

B-H-K ready to welcome hundreds back to preschool, childcare

Open houses set at child development centers across Copper Country

HOUGHTON – Hundreds of young children from Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw counties will enter the classroom for the first time on Tuesday, Sept. 24 when the preschool year gets under way at dozens of B-H-K Child Development Board centers across the Copper Country.

Fall headcounts are not yet complete, but an estimated 750 children will take part in center- and home-based preschool and childcare services offered this year by B-H-K Child Development Board. Registration is still open.

“Fall is always an exciting time of the year for us at B-H-K,” said Rod Liimatainen, director of the non-profit agency. “Seeing all the new faces and some returning faces always energizes the staff and gears us up for the new school year.”

Despite funding cuts from the state of Michigan, B-H-K will maintain programs and services at most of the sites at which the agency operated last year. Cuts included more than \$1 million in childcare funding.

New this year are four-day-a-week preschool programs at Lake Linden-Hubbell Schools; infant-toddler childcare at the newly renovated Portage Family Place in Houghton; relocation of three preschool

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classes from the Mohawk Early Childhood Center to the Centennial Head Start Center; additional infant-toddler classrooms and adult-education space at the June Forest Child Development Center in Baraga; and a new preschool room at Chassell Public School.

Operations will continue at all Baraga County sites, including L'Anse, Baraga, Covington, Aura and Pelkie. Houghton County programs will continue in South Range, Chassell, Dollar Bay, Stanton Township, three locations in Houghton, two locations in Hancock Ryan School, and three locations in the Calumet-Laurium area. Through local schools, B-H-K also helps to provide Kindergarten Plus services at several local elementary schools.

All center-based programs use proven, age-appropriate curriculum in safe, licensed facilities. Teachers and assistant teachers strive to provide a quality learning environment that emphasizes hands-on learning and socialization through discovery, group time and family-style meals in a school-like setting. B-H-K also offers home-based preschool options, which combines two days a week in a center and a weekly home visit, to families with 3 year olds who aren't quite ready to spend a lot of time outside the home.

Parents, especially those new to B-H-K services, should mark their calendars for upcoming Open Houses and Orientation meetings at each center (see related chart). These meetings provide parents with classroom, bus and meeting schedules; daily routines; parent resources; important events throughout the year; opportunities to guide programming through participation in parent council meetings; and other information such as volunteer opportunities.

Liimatainen said it's especially important that parents realize how crucial volunteering is to B-H-K programs. Given the agency's non-profit status, volunteers help to enrich the education and safety of children by helping out in classrooms and riding buses. B-H-K honors outstanding volunteers each month, providing them with a framed certificate, agency jacket and free pass to a B-H-K Family Wellness Center.

"Volunteers really are the lifeblood of our agency," he said, adding that parents and other volunteers contributed more than 17,000 hours to B-H-K programs last year. "It's really encouraging that parents, family members and friends are willing to invest so much of themselves into the education of our youngest citizens."

Even if parents with young children are not enrolled in B-H-K programs, they're welcome to participate in many free services designed to enhance school-readiness, Liimatainen said. Among these are:

- Parent Resource Rooms in Baraga, Houghton, Laurium and Lake Linden. These rooms

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offer toy-lending libraries and regular parent-child playgroups and preschool story hours.

- The Mobile Parent Resource Room. This converted school bus, colorfully painted with children's storybook characters, travels to remote areas in the three-county. Parents may borrow toys, books, videos and other learning materials.
- The Parent Helpline. Operated by Dial Help, this confidential service provides answers to parenting questions of any nature and links to resources for parents through a toll-free call to 1-888-610-2323.
- Health and Developmental Screenings. These comprehensive screenings provide a physical exam, health history review, lab tests and referrals as needed. Two screening dates still have openings: Aug. 26 in L'Anse and Aug. 28 in Hancock.

In addition to services for children, B-H-K also has openings in several family-service programs.

Among these are:

- Adult education programs, through which individuals may earn their high school diploma or GED while developing workforce and family literacy skills;
- Maternal health services, which provides health and nutritional information as well as fitness classes and support groups to new and expectant parents; and,
- Savings accounts, in which participants save toward a goal and then receive a cash match for first-time home ownership, post-secondary education or small business startup or capitalization. Financial education classes are provided through Michigan State University Extension and cooperating agencies.

Families who want to learn more about fall preschool, childcare or other child and family services should call B-H-K at 482-3663 or 1-800-236-5657.

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B-H-K Open Houses/Orientation Sessions

<u>Center</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Aura	Sept. 23	6 p.m.
Baraga	Sept. 20	6 p.m.
Covington	Sept. 19	6 p.m.
L'Anse	Sept. 19	6 p.m.
Pelkie	Sept. 23	6 p.m.
Chassell	To be determined	
Centennial	Sept. 23	6:30 p.m.
Dollar Bay	Sept. 19	6:30 p.m.
Houghton	Sept. 23	6:30 p.m.
Lake Linden	Sept. 23	6:30 p.m.
Lapsi Talo	Sept. 3	6:30 p.m.
Little Gippers	Sept. 10	6:30 p.m.
Little Red Schoolhouse	Sept. 11	6:30 p.m.
Portage Family Place	Sept. 16	6:30 p.m.
Ryan School	Sept. 3	6:30 p.m.
South Range	Sept. 17	6:30 p.m.
Stanton	Sept. 18	6:30 p.m.

Print Editors: Outline for photo: A group of preschoolers ponder a question from a teacher during classes earlier this year at B-H-K Child Development Board's Centennial Child Development Center. Socialization and group work are important components of preschool education.