



First Start Partnerships *for* Children & Families

STAFF HANDBOOK



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2026/27 School Year

Welcome First Start Partnership Staff Members,

Congratulations! You have joined Franklin County's leading early childhood service for children and families. We partner with our families, schools, and communities to ensure that each child arrives ready for kindergarten. **Our quality is proven by NAEYC Accreditation+ (A+), and Franklin County has proclaimed 2026 as the Year of the Young Child—a community-wide commitment to celebrating and supporting young children.** Additionally, First Start is recognized as Pennsylvania's highest level of quality: a Keystone STARS Four STAR program. We operate Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-K Counts programs for children and families prior to kindergarten entry.

Our program has a long history, beginning with Head Start services in 1965. In 2008, we began partnering with school districts to provide Pre-K Counts programming, and in 2009, we launched our Early Head Start program. We serve hundreds of children and their families throughout Franklin County in cooperation with public school districts. In addition to high-quality early childhood education, we also provide services to the adults who nurture young children's growth and learning: their families and teachers. The Family Center at First Start connects families with resources they may need along their parenthood journey. Our professional development arm, The Bloom Center, supports staff education and coaching beyond minimum training requirements to ensure consistent quality experiences for children and families.

Our community's future depends on you. Brain research tells us that 90% of a child's brain connections occur in the first four years—and 75% in the child's first year! Each educator who joins First Start Partnerships for Children and Families helps our children build those essential connections. Each and every one of us is responsible for the physical and emotional health, social connections, and academic readiness of our children and families.

Together with our Board of Directors and Policy Council, we collectively strive to meet our vision for our children, families, and communities:

- **For Children:** To ensure school readiness by providing high-quality education and strong foundations for social, emotional, and physical development.
- **For Families:** To create stronger, healthier families by ensuring access to community resources, increasing positive parenting practices, and providing opportunities for personal growth.
- **For Communities:** To build more vibrant communities through advocacy, collaboration, and a commitment to building stronger families.

We welcome you to our organization and hope that this Staff Handbook will guide you in your early days and weeks as you make the countless decisions necessary to meet our collective goals. We also hope you return to this handbook often to reconnect with what brings you to this work and our shared opportunity to impact our community's future.

Our Administration team is here to support you and your direct supervisor in understanding and utilizing the policies, benefits, and procedures in this handbook. Our doors are always open to listen to your questions, concerns, and ideas.

Best wishes for a productive and rewarding school year!

Leading the Way for Franklin County's children and families,

Rodney Benedick, M. Ed.

Chief Executive Officer

First Start Partnership for Children and Families

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First Start Partnerships for Children and Families Philosophy, Core Values and Goals

Our Journey Towards National Accreditation

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families engages in continuous quality improvement to ensure that each child arrives ready for kindergarten. As an organization, we do this by reviewing the Head Start, Early Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Pre-K Counts Guidelines and establishing strategic goals. We review data from our community and our program and establish action plans to build on strengths and make improvements where needed. We evaluate our performance annually, and celebrate each milestone along our journey.



In 2018, we established a five-year Strategic Plan, with one unifying goal: *to earn national accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*. The process of earning national accreditation builds on the strengths of Head Start's 2016 revised Head Start Program Performance Standards. It incorporates our adherence to the Pre-K Counts Guidelines. And it also requires us to go deeper into our planning for children, families and communities as we all learn about NAEYC's Accreditation Criteria in ten areas: Relationships; Curriculum; Teaching; Assessment of Child Progress; Health; Staff Competencies, Preparation and Support; Families; Community Relationships; Physical Environment; and Leadership and Management.

The individual preparation and contribution of each staff member is crucial to First Start Partnerships for Children and Families' ability to reach our goals. It takes input from staff members, families, and communities each step of the journey. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families ensures that we have this input through committees, surveys and a commitment to shared leadership, as well as continuous two-way communication structures.



**First Start
Partnerships**
for Children & Families

Our Mission:

We partner with our families, schools, and communities to ensure that each child arrives ready for kindergarten

Our Values



We value **family**

as children depend on family for love, safety, health and learning. We nurture a family-friendly workplace so our staff can be there for their families too.

We value **compassion**

dedicated to love, joy, empathy and hope necessary to support children, families and ourselves to become who we want to be.



We value **excellence**

and the continuous process of setting goals, reviewing progress, and planning for improved outcomes for children, families, and our organization.

We value **partnerships**

for the connections to others that allow us to serve our children, families, and communities better than we can serve them alone.



We value **equity**

to ensure equal opportunities for children, families and staff members regardless of race, ethnicity, ability, religion, language, family income, family structure, geography, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Our Vision:

For Children:

To ensure school readiness by providing high quality education and strong foundations for social, emotional and physical development

For Families:

To create stronger, healthier families by ensuring access to community resources, increasing positive parenting practices and providing opportunities for personal growth.

For Communities:

To build more vibrant communities through advocacy, education, collaboration, and commitment to building stronger families.

Growing **Hearts**
&
Minds

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families operationalizes these core values by planning services that align with Developmentally Appropriate Practices. NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is:

This statement's primary focus is on the decisions early childhood educators make that result in developmentally appropriate practice. It is important to note, however, that educators make these decisions within settings that include their specific programs as well as broader systems, states, and societal contexts. Decision making that advances developmentally appropriate practice is facilitated when these systems also reflect the tenets described within this statement.

Defining Developmentally Appropriate Practice

NAEYC defines "developmentally appropriate practice" as methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning. Educators implement developmentally appropriate practice by recognizing the multiple assets all young children bring to the early learning program as unique individuals and as members of families and communities. Building on each child's strengths— and taking care to not harm any aspect of each child's physical, cognitive, social, or emotional well-being— educators design and implement learning environments to help all children achieve their full potential across all domains of development and across all content areas.

Developmentally appropriate practice recognizes and supports each individual as a valued member of the learning community. As a result, to be developmentally appropriate, practices must also be culturally, linguistically, and ability appropriate for each child.

Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action: Using Knowledge of Child Development and Learning in Context

Based on the principles outlined above, the following guidelines address decisions that early childhood professionals make in six key and interrelated areas of practice: (1) creating a caring community of learners; (2) engaging in reciprocal partnerships with families and fostering community connections; (3) observing, documenting and assessing children's development and learning; (4) teaching to enhance each child's development and learning; (5) planning and implementing an engaging curriculum to achieve meaningful goals; and (6) demonstrating professionalism as an early childhood educator.

1. Creating a Caring, Equitable Community of Learners

Because early childhood education settings are often among children's first communities outside the home, the character of these communities is very influential in children's development.

Through their interactions, children learn how to treat others and how they can expect to be treated. In developmentally appropriate practice, educators create and foster a community of learners. The role of the community is to provide a physical, emotional, and cognitive environment conducive to development and learning for each child. The foundation for the community is consistent, positive, caring relationships between educators and other adults and children, among children, among educators and colleagues, and between educators and families. Each member of the learning community is valued for what they bring to the community; all

members are supported to consider and contribute to one another's well-being and learning.

To create a caring, equitable community of learners, educators make sure that the following occur for children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Each member of the community is valued by the others and is recognized for the strengths they bring.

By observing and participating in the community, children learn about themselves, their world, and how to develop positive, constructive relationships with other people. Each child has unique strengths, interests, and perspectives to contribute. Children learn to acknowledge and respect differences of all kinds and to value each person. Children with and without disabilities can learn from each other and respect each other using this strengths-based approach.

Educators demonstrate their valuing and respect for each child in different ways:

1. Educators pronounce and spell the child's name in accordance with the child's and family's preferences.
2. Educators acknowledge and accept the family composition that each family defines.
3. Educators demonstrate ongoing interest in each child's unique knowledge, skills, and cultural and linguistic experiences and recognize these as assets for learning.

B. Relationships are nurtured with each child, and educators facilitate the development of positive relationships among children.

Children construct their understandings about the world around them through interactions with other members of the community (both adults and peers). Thus, early childhood educators actively work to build their own relationships with each child as well as foster the development of relationships among the children. Educators regularly seek out opportunities for extended conversations with each child, including those with whom they do not share a language, through verbal and nonverbal interactions. Opportunities to play together, collaborate on investigations and projects, and talk with peers and adults enhance children's development and learning and should be available to all children, with support as needed. Interacting in small groups provides a context for children to extend their thinking, practice emerging language skills, build on one another's ideas, and cooperate to solve problems. (Also see guideline 2, "Engaging in reciprocal partnerships with families and fostering community connections.")

C. Each member of the community respects and is accountable to the others to behave in a way that is conducive to the learning and well-being of all.

1. Educators help children develop responsibility and self-regulation. Educators intentionally model and teach children self-regulation and calming strategies. Recognizing that behaviors reflect children's experiences and needs, educators seek to understand a child's reasons for behaving in particular ways. Knowing that responsibility and self-regulation develop with experience and time,

educators consider how to foster such development in their interactions with each child and in their curriculum planning. They work to provide predictable, consistent routines (but not rigid schedules with unnecessary transitions) and supportive relationships for all children, taking into consideration the range of current self-regulation abilities among the children. They do not blame children or families for their behavior but call on additional resources for support as needed. They work to eliminate suspension and expulsions as mechanisms for addressing challenging behaviors. Educators also take care to reflect on their own behaviors and expectations and the ways in which these may affect children's behavior. For all young children, including in K–3 classrooms, educators recognize that children are continuing to learn and refine behavior regulation. Educators implement systems of support that help children practice self-regulation and provide additional supports where needed. When using behavioral systems to guide social and emotional interactions in the early learning setting, educators ensure that the systems acknowledge positive behaviors rather than drawing attention to negative ones.

2. Educators are responsible for all children under their supervision to ensure respectful behaviors. They actively teach and model prosocial behaviors. They monitor, anticipate, prevent, and redirect behaviors not conducive to learning or disrespectful of any member of the community.
3. Educators set clear and reasonable limits on children's behavior, find ways to effectively communicate those limits to all children, and apply them consistently. Early childhood educators help children be accountable to themselves and to others for their behavior. In the case of preschool and older children, educators engage children in developing their own community rules for behavior. Educators understand that all behaviors serve a purpose; they seek to understand what may be leading to that behavior and help children learn prosocial replacement behaviors when needed.
4. Educators listen to and acknowledge children's feelings, including frustrations, using words as well as nonverbal communication techniques. Knowing that children often communicate through their behavior, especially when they are unable to verbalize their feelings, educators seek to understand what the child may be trying to communicate in any language. Educators respond with respect in ways that children can understand, guide children to resolve conflicts, and model skills that help children to solve their own problems.
5. Educators themselves demonstrate high levels of responsibility and self-regulation in their interactions with other adults (colleagues, family members) and with children. This includes monitoring their own behaviors for potential implicit biases or microaggressions on the basis of race and ethnicity, gender, disability, or other characteristics that unfairly target children or adults in the early learning setting, undermine an individual's self-worth, or perpetuate negative stereotypes. They also confront biased or stereotypical comments in interactions among children and/or adults. When they inadvertently engage in

behavior that hurts or undermines an individual's self-worth, educators' model how to manage negative emotions and to repair relationships.

D. The physical environment protects the health and safety of the learning community members, and it specifically supports young children's physiological needs for play, activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, and nourishment. The daily schedule provides frequent opportunities for self-directed play and active, physical movement, regardless of the length of the program day or the ages of the children. Children are provided opportunities for rest as needed. Outdoor experiences, including opportunities to interact with the natural world, are provided daily for children of all ages. This includes daily periods of recess for children through the primary grades. Recess is never withheld as a punishment. Mealtimes are unhurried, and conversation among children is encouraged during meals.

E. Every effort is made to help each and every member of the community feel psychologically safe and able to focus on being and learning. The overall social and emotional climate is welcoming and positive.

1. Educators monitor interactions among community members (administrators, educators, families, children), as well as their overall experiences, striving to make sure that participants feel secure, relaxed, and comfortable rather than disengaged, frightened, worried, or unduly stressed.
2. Educators build on individual children's funds of knowledge, 69 interests, languages, and experiences to foster each child's enjoyment of and engagement in learning.
3. Educators ensure that the environment is organized in ways that support play and learning and that create a positive group climate. Space, time, and stimulation are modified to take into account children's individual needs and feelings of psychological safety. Educators recognize that individual children may need or benefit from different levels of stimulation. They avoid overly cluttered environments that may be too stimulating. Flexibility and freedom of movement predominate throughout the day. Although the environment's elements are dynamic and changing, the overall structures and routines are predictable and comprehensible from a child's point of view.
4. Educators strive to make sure that each child hears and sees their home language, culture, and family experience reflected in the daily interactions, activities, and materials in the early learning setting. Each child's various social identities are affirmed in positive ways that do not negatively impact any others. Stereotypical thinking and messages are countered with opportunities to engage in more sophisticated and accurate thinking.
5. Educators are prepared to recognize signs of stress and trauma in young children and seek access to early childhood mental health experts, supports, and resources to provide healing-centered approaches to assist children. Educators recognize that children who have experienced trauma may need frequent, explicit, and consistent reminders that they are psychologically and physically safe. Educators also keep children's resilience in mind, knowing that simple

actions like being consistently warm and caring support healthy development for all children—including those who have experienced trauma.

2. Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections

Developmentally appropriate practice requires deep knowledge about each child, including the context within which each child is living. Educators acquire much of this knowledge through respectful, reciprocal relationships with children’s families. Across all ages, families’ expertise about their own children is sought out and valued.

Educators who engage in developmentally appropriate practice take responsibility for forming and maintaining strong relationships with families and communities.

They recognize that the traditional models of “parent involvement” or “parent education” are one-sided approaches that fail to give educators the knowledge or insights they need to provide learning experiences that are fully responsive to each child’s needs and experiences.

The following descriptions of educators’ behavior indicate the kinds of relationships that are developmentally appropriate for children from birth through the primary grades, in which family members and educators work together as members of the learning community.

A. Educators take responsibility for establishing respectful, reciprocal relationships with and among families. As they work to facilitate their own relationships with families, educators also encourage and support families to get to know each other, serve as resources to each other, and collaborate within and outside of the program. They strive to ensure mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility and to help negotiate conflicts as they work toward achievement of shared goals. (Also see guideline 1, “Creating a caring community of learners.”)

B. Educators work in collaborative partnerships with families, seeking and maintaining regular, frequent, two-way communication with them and recognizing that the forms of communication may differ for each family. Early childhood educators employ a variety of communication methods and engagement skills, including informal conversations when parents pick up and drop off children, more formal conversations in teacher-family conference settings, and reciprocal technology-mediated communications, such as phone calls, texting, or emails. When educators do not speak a family’s home language, they enlist the help of community resources to provide interpreters or use volunteers identified by the family. The use of children as translators should be avoided.

C. Educators welcome family members in the setting and create multiple opportunities for family participation. Families are offered multiple ways of participating, including weighing in on any program decision about their children’s care and education. If families cannot communicate with educators during drop-offs and pick-ups, alternative means provide frequent, ongoing communication.

D. Educators acknowledge a family’s choices and goals for their child and respond with sensitivity and respect to those preferences and concerns. In the event of disagreements between the family and the educator, educators listen carefully to the family’s concerns and use the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment to guide their decision making as they strive to find mutually agreeable solutions.

E. Educators and the family share with each other their knowledge of the particular child and understanding of child development and learning as part of day-to-day and other forms of communication (e.g., family get-togethers, meetings, support groups). Educators support families in ways that maximally promote family decision-making capabilities and competence. When communicating with families about their children, educators stress children's strengths and abilities and use this information to support future instructional decisions.

F. Educators involve families as a source of information about the child (before program entry and on an ongoing basis). They engage families in the planning for their child, including teaching practices, curriculum planning and implementation, and assessments.

G. Educators take care to learn about the community in which they work, and they use the community as a resource across all aspects of program delivery. The community serves as an important resource for implementing the curriculum as well as a resource for linking families with a range of services based on identified priorities and concerns. Early childhood educators also look for ways that they can contribute to the ongoing development of the community.

3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Development and Learning Observing,

documenting, and assessing each child's development and learning are essential processes for educators and programs to plan, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the experiences they provide to children. Assessment includes both formal and informal measures as tools for monitoring children's progress toward a program's desired goals.

Educators can be intentional about helping children to progress when they know where each child is with respect to learning goals. Formative assessment (measuring progress toward goals) and summative assessment (measuring achievement at the end of a defined period or experience) are important. Both need to be conducted in ways that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive to authentically assess children's learning. This means that not only must the methods of assessment, both formal and informal, be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically sensitive, but also the assessor must be aware of and work against the possibility of implicit and explicit bias, for example through training, reflection, and regular reviews of collected data.

Effective assessment of young children is challenging. The complexity of children's development and learning—including the uneven nature of development and the likelihood of children fully demonstrating their knowledge and skills in different contexts— makes accurate and comprehensive assessment difficult. For example, authentic assessment takes into consideration such factors as a child's facility in each language they speak and uses assessors and settings that are familiar and comfortable for the child. When standardized assessments are used for screening or evaluative purposes, the measures should meet standards of reliability and validity based on the characteristics of the child being assessed. When these standards are not met, these limitations must be carefully considered before using the results. Using assessments in ways that do not support enhancing the child's education is not developmentally appropriate practice. Yet, decisions regarding assessment practices are often outside of the control of individual educators (also see Recommendations for research, page 31). When educators are aware of inappropriate assessment practices, they have a professional

ethical responsibility to make their concerns known, to advocate for more appropriate practices, and, within their learning environment, to minimize the adverse impact of inappropriate assessments on young children and on instructional practices.

The following practices for observation, documentation, and assessment are developmentally appropriate for children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Observation, documentation, and assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, reflective, and purposeful. Educators embed assessment-related activities in the curriculum and in daily routines to facilitate authentic assessment and to make assessment an integral part of professional practice. They create and take advantage of unplanned opportunities to observe young children in play and in spontaneous conversations and interactions, in adult-structured assessment contexts as well as when children are participating in a group activity and doing an individual activity. Observations, documentations, and the results of other formal and informal assessments are used to inform the planning and implementing of daily curriculum and experiences, to communicate with the child's family, and to evaluate and improve educators' and the program's effectiveness. Especially in K–3 classrooms, care must be taken to avoid overuse of standardized assessments, which can cause stress for young children and interfere with time for learning. Educators limit the use of digitally- based assessments, especially for young children who (appropriately) should have limited exposure to screen media.

B. Assessment focuses on children's progress toward developmental and educational goals. Such goals should reflect families' input as well as children's background knowledge and experiences. They should be informed by developmental milestones including use of state early learning standards. Goals should be aspirational and achievable and should foster a sense of pride and accomplishment for educators, families, and children. Children, educators, and families should have opportunities to celebrate both small and large achievements, while recognizing that all children need time to build mastery on a current skill before progressing to the next challenge.

C. A system is in place to collect, make sense of, and use observations, documentation, and assessment information to guide what goes on in the early learning setting. Educators use this information in planning curriculum and learning experiences and in moment-to-moment interactions with children—that is, educators continually engage in assessment for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. Educators also encourage children to use observation and, beginning in the preschool years, documentation to reflect on their experiences and what they have learned.

D. The methods of assessment are responsive to the current developmental accomplishments, language(s), and experiences of young children. They recognize individual variation in learners and allow children to demonstrate their competencies in different ways. Methods appropriate to educators' assessment of young children, therefore, include results of their observations of children, clinical interviews, collections of children's work samples, and children's performance on authentic activities. For children who speak a language the educators do not know, native speakers of the child's language such as family or community members may need to be recruited to assist with the assessment process. A plan should be in place for employing volunteer and paid

interpreters and translators as needed and providing them with information about appropriate interactions with young children and ethics and confidentiality, as well as about the features and purposes of the screening or assessment tool. Once collected, the results are explained to families and children (as appropriate) in order to extend the conversations around what is collected, analyzed, and reflected upon.

E. Assessments are used only for the populations and purposes for which they have been demonstrated to produce reliable, valid information. If required to use an assessment tool that has not been established as reliable or valid for the characteristics of a given child or for the intended use, educators recognize the limitations of the findings, strive to make sure they are not used in high-stakes decisions, and advocate for a different measure.

F. Decisions that have a major impact on children, such as enrollment or placement, are made in consultation with families. Such decisions should be based on multiple sources of relevant information, including that obtained from observations of and interactions with children by educators, family members, and specialists as needed.

G. When a screening assessment identifies a child who may have a disability or individualized learning or developmental needs, there is appropriate follow-up, evaluation, and, if needed, referral. Screening is used to identify issues needing more thorough examination by those qualified to do so; it is not used to diagnose or label children. Families are involved as essential sources of information.

4. Teaching to Enhance Each Child's Development and Learning

Developmentally appropriate teaching practices encompass a wide range of skills and strategies that are adapted to the age, development, individual characteristics, and the family and social and cultural contexts of each child served. Grounded in the caring relationships that educators nurture with each child and family as well as among all children and families (see guideline 1, "Creating a caring community of learners"), these teaching practices are designed to foster development and learning for each child across all domains and subject areas.

Teaching practices build on each child's multiple assets and actively counter various forms of bias. Through their intentional teaching, educators blend opportunities for each child to exercise choice and agency within the context of a planned environment constructed to support specific learning experiences and meaningful goals.

Educators recognize that children are active constructors of their own understanding of the world around them; they understand that children benefit from initiating and regulating their own learning activities and from interacting with peers.

Recognizing play as critical for children to experience joy and wonder, early childhood educators incorporate frequent opportunities for play in their teaching strategies. They plan learning environments that provide a mix of self-directed play, guided play, and direct instruction. Educators maximize opportunities for children to choose the materials, playmates, topics, and approaches they use throughout the day for all children, birth through age 8. Educators support and extend children's play experiences by providing materials and resources based on careful observation of children's play choices. Adult-guided activities provide for children's active agency as educators offer specific guidance and support to scaffold and extend children's interest, engagement, and learning.

Direct instruction—for example, providing children with relevant academic vocabulary, pointing out relationships, helping children recognize specific phenomena, or suggesting an alternative perspective—is an important tool for supporting children’s learning. Its effectiveness is determined by the degree to which it extends children’s interests and learning in meaningful ways and educators’ sensitivity to changes in children’s interest.

Individually or in small or large groups, across all activities—self-directed play, guided play, direct instruction, and routines—the teacher is responsible for ensuring that each child’s overall experiences are stimulating, engaging, and developmentally, linguistically, and culturally responsive across all domains of development and learning. Promoting many opportunities for agency for each child is essential to fulfilling this responsibility.

The following descriptions of educators’ actions illustrate teaching practices that are developmentally appropriate for young children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Educators demonstrate and model their commitment to a caring learning community through their actions, attitudes, and curiosity. They recognize that through their actions, they are influencing children’s lifelong dispositions, confidence, and approaches to learning.

B. Educators use their knowledge of each child and family to make learning experiences meaningful, accessible, and responsive to each and every child. Building on the relationships they nurture with each child and family and between children (see also guideline 1, “Creating a caring community of learners”), educators design learning activities that reflect the lives and cultures of each child.

1. Educators incorporate and integrate a wide variety of experiences, materials, equipment, and teaching strategies to accommodate the range of children’s individual differences in development, languages, skills and abilities, prior experiences, needs, and interests.
2. Educators, with the support of families, bring each child’s home culture(s) and language(s) into the shared culture of the learning community. They model recognition and valuing of the unique contributions of the home cultures and languages so that these contributions can be recognized and valued by the other members of the learning community. They strategically use the child’s home or family language and cultural ways of learning to enhance each child’s communication, comprehension, self-expression, and learning. Educators continually strive to support and sustain each child’s connection with their family, languages, and cultures.
3. Educators provide all children opportunities to participate in all activities and encourage children to be inclusive in their behaviors and interactions with peers.
4. Educators are prepared to individualize their teaching strategies to meet the specific needs of individual children, including children with disabilities and children whose learning is advanced, by building upon their interests, knowledge, and skills. Educators use all the strategies identified here and consult with appropriate specialists and the child’s family; they see that each child gets the adaptations and specialized services needed for full inclusion as a member of the

community and that no child is penalized for their ability status.

C. Educators effectively implement a comprehensive curriculum so that each child attains individualized goals across all domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and general learning competencies) and across all subject areas (language and literacy, including second language acquisition, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health). Educators follow Universal Design for Learning principles by proactively providing multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression.⁷⁰ Educators design experiences that celebrate the diversity in the experiences and social identities of each group of children and counter the biases in society. They build upon the children's combined funds of knowledge to foster each child's learning and understanding. Educators design activities that follow the predictable sequences in which children acquire specific concepts, skills, and abilities and by building on prior experiences and understandings. (Also see guideline 5, "Understanding and using content areas to plan and implement an engaging curriculum designed to meet goals that are important and meaningful for children, families, and the community in the present as well as the future.")

D. Educators plan the environment, schedule, and daily activities to promote each child's development and learning.

1. Educators arrange firsthand, meaningful experiences that are cognitively and creatively stimulating, invite exploration and investigation, and engage children's active, sustained involvement. They do this by providing a rich variety of materials, challenges, and ideas that are worthy of children's attention and that reflect the funds of knowledge each child brings to the setting. Materials are periodically rotated and revisited to provide children with opportunities to reflect and re-engage with the learning experiences.
2. Educators consistently present children with opportunities to make meaningful choices. Children are encouraged to shape specific learning activities and to identify projects that can be used to extend their learning. Children are regularly provided with opportunities for child-choice activity periods— not simply as a reward for completing other work. Educators assist and guide children who are not yet able to enjoy and make good use of such periods.
3. Educators organize the daily and weekly schedules to provide children with extended blocks of time in which to engage in sustained investigation, exploration, interaction, and play. Children are encouraged to freely interact with peers, and collaborative learning opportunities with peers are frequently used. Adults offer questions to stimulate children's thinking, introduce related vocabulary, and provide specific suggestions to scaffold children's thinking. As much as possible, educators use multiple languages to support bilingual and multilingual children and also use nonverbal means of communication such as images and gestures.
4. Educators routinely provide experiences, materials, and interactions to enable children to engage in play. Play allows children to stretch their boundaries to the fullest in their imagination, language, interaction, and self-regulation, as

well as to practice their newly acquired skills. Play also provides an important window for educators to observe children's skills and understandings.

5. Educators create language-rich environments that focus on the diversity and complexity of language in children's communities. Given the importance of vocabulary for conceptual development and as the key building blocks for academic subject areas, this is especially crucial. Educators affirm children's use of home dialects, vernaculars, and language as strengths as they also support the development of academic English.

E. Educators possess and build on an extensive repertoire of skills and teaching strategies. They know how and when to choose among them to effectively promote each child's development and learning at that moment. Such skills include the ability to adapt curriculum, activities, and materials to ensure full participation of all children. These strategies include but are not limited to acknowledging, encouraging, giving specific feedback, modeling, demonstrating, adding challenge, giving cues or other assistance, providing information, and giving directions.

1. To help children develop agency, educators encourage them to choose and plan their own learning activities. Self-directed learning activities are important for all young children, including those in K–3 classrooms. Self-directed activities can engage children in meaningful learning that is relevant to all curriculum and applicable learning standards.
2. To stimulate children's thinking and extend their learning, educators pose problems, ask questions, and make comments and suggestions.
3. To extend the range of children's interests and the scope of their thoughts, educators present novel experiences and introduce stimulating ideas, problems, experiences, or hypotheses.
4. To adjust the complexity and challenge of activities to suit children's skills and knowledge, educators increase the challenge as children gain competence and understanding or reduce the complexity for those who struggle.
5. To strengthen children's sense of competence and confidence as learners, motivation to persist, and willingness to take risks, educators provide experiences that build on a child's funds of knowledge, are culturally and linguistically responsive, and are designed for each child to be challenged and genuinely successful.
6. To enhance children's conceptual understanding, early childhood educators use various strategies, including conversation and documentation, which encourage children to reflect on and revisit their experiences in the moment and over time.
7. To encourage and foster children's development and learning, educators avoid generic praise ("Good job!") and instead give specific feedback

("You got the same number when you counted the beans again!"). They use the home or family languages, images, or other forms of non-verbal communication to be sure the child understands the feedback. With frequent, timely, specific feedback, educators help children evaluate their own learning.

8. Educators focus on what children can do rather than what they can't or don't do. For example, a child who responds to a question asked in academic English by speaking in their home dialect is recognized for their receptive language. Similarly, invented spellings or other "errors" in children's thinking or language are analyzed for what they reveal of children's current understanding.

F. Educators know how and when to scaffold children's learning. Based on their ongoing interactions and knowledge of each child, educators provide just enough assistance to enable each child to perform at a skill level just beyond what the child can do on their own, then gradually reduce the support as the child begins to master the skill, setting the stage for the next challenge.

1. Educators recognize and respond to the reality that in any group, children's skills will vary and they will need different levels of support. Educators also know that any one child's level of skill and need for support will vary over time and in different circumstances.
2. Scaffolding can take a variety of forms, such as giving the child a hint, providing a cue, modeling the skill, or adapting the materials and activities. It can be provided in a variety of contexts, not only in planned learning experiences but also in free play, daily routines, and outdoor activities.
3. Peers can be effective providers of scaffolding in addition to educators. Peer learning can be an effective mechanism to provide individual support and assistance across all areas of development and learning. Peer learning can be especially useful for children who are bilingual or multilingual.

G. Educators know how and when to strategically use the various learning formats and contexts.

1. Educators understand that each major learning format or context (for example, large group, small group, learning center, routine) has its own characteristics, functions, and value. They consider the characteristics of the learners in choosing the most appropriate format, such as limiting the use of large groups with very young children or of groups led in a language not understood by all the children. Educators recognize that they need to balance activities that require attentive behavior with time for more active movement. Circle time and large group instruction periods are limited in length to match age-appropriate attention span limits. Breaks for self-directed and active play are provided throughout the day. Flexibility of participation is provided to all children to accommodate individual needs.
2. Educators think carefully about which learning format is best for helping children

achieve a desired goal, given the children's ages, abilities, experiences, temperaments, and other characteristics. Especially in the case of large group activities, educators change formats when attention wanes. In K–3 classrooms, educators ensure that individual seatwork is used only when it is the most effective format for meeting the learning objective. They encourage collaborative learning through peer interaction and provide frequent opportunities for children to support each other's learning in pairs and small groups. Educators strive to provide opportunities for physical activity throughout the day, including the use of learning activities that incorporate movement.

3. Educators minimize time in transitions and waiting for children to line up or be quiet. Educators who document how children spend their time are often surprised at how much time is spent in transitions, often in ways that do little to support children's development and learning. Reducing the time and amount of full-group activities, providing children with advance notice of the transition, and incorporating songs, pretend play, and/or movement into the transition can be useful strategies. Educators strive to reduce the need for transitions through flexible schedules, strategic use of staff members and volunteers, and helping children take responsibility for their own learning.

H. Educators differentiate instructional approaches to match each child's interests, knowledge, and skills. Children who need additional support receive extended, enriched, and intensive learning experiences, always building on the child's current interests, strengths, and cultural ways of knowing.

1. Educators take care to provide each child with opportunities to be successful and to engage in joyful learning. They work to avoid children having frustrating or discouraging experiences that lead to a negative association with schooling.
2. Regardless of their need for additional support, all children are provided agency to the greatest extent possible. Educators are highly intentional in use of time, and they focus on key skills and abilities through highly engaging, play-based experiences to build on the assets of children and their families.
3. Recognizing the self-regulatory, linguistic, cognitive, and social benefits that play and active self-direction affords, educators do not reduce or eliminate play opportunities, recess, or any other important community and inclusive activities for children who need additional support to meet school readiness/grade level or behavioral expectations.

5. Planning and Implementing an Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals

The curriculum consists of the plans for the learning experiences through which children acquire knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding. Implementing a curriculum always yields outcomes of some kind—but which outcomes those are and how a program achieves them are critical. In developmentally appropriate practice, the curriculum helps young children achieve goals that are meaningful because they are culturally and linguistically responsive and developmentally and educationally significant. The curriculum does this through learning experiences that reflect what is known about young children in general and about each child in

particular.

Learning through play is a central component of curriculum, and it incorporates strategies to extend learning through play across the full age and grade span of early education. Ideally, the curriculum is planned in a coordinated fashion across age and grade spans so that children's knowledge and skills are developed in a coherent, aligned manner, with each age or grade span building on what was learned previously. A well-designed developmentally and culturally relevant curriculum avoids and counters cultural or individual bias or stereotypes and fosters a positive learning disposition in each area of the curriculum and in each child.

The idea of mirrors and windows is useful for curriculum development. The curriculum should provide mirrors so that children see themselves, their families, and their communities reflected in the learning environment, materials, and activities. The curriculum should also provide windows on the world so that children learn about peoples, places, arts, sciences, and so on that they would otherwise not encounter. In diverse and inclusive learning communities, one child's mirrors are another child's windows, making for wonderful opportunities for collaborative learning.

Because children learn more in programs where there is a knowledge-rich, well-rounded curriculum that is well planned and implemented, it is important for every school and early childhood program to have its curriculum in written form. Having a written curriculum does not preclude the use of an emergent curriculum based on children's interests and experiences that is also aligned with applicable early learning standards, and it provides an organized framework through which educators can ensure that the children's learning experiences are consistent with the program's goals for the children. Use of a formal, validated curriculum can be helpful, so long as educators have the flexibility to adapt units and activities to meet the interests and experiences of each group of specific children. Rigid, narrowly defined, skills-focused, and highly teacher-scripted curricula that do not provide flexibility for adapting to individual skills and interests are not developmentally appropriate.

The following key factors, taken together, describe curriculum planning that is developmentally appropriate for children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Desired goals that are important for young children's development and learning in general and culturally and linguistically responsive to children in particular have been identified and clearly articulated.

1. Educators consider what children are expected to know, understand, and be able to do when they leave the setting. This includes across the domains of physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development and across the subject or content areas, including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health.
2. Educators are thoroughly familiar with state early learning standards or other mandates. They add to these other goals missing from the existing standards.
3. Educators and administrators establish and regularly update goals with input from all stakeholders, including families. Goals are clearly defined for, communicated to, and understood by all stakeholders, including families.

B. The program has a comprehensive, effective curriculum that targets the identified goals across all domains of development and subject areas.

1. Whether or not educators participated in the development of the curriculum, they familiarize themselves with it and consider its comprehensiveness in addressing all important goals.
2. When the program uses published curriculum products, the selected products are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive for the children served and provide flexibility for educators to make adaptations to meet the specific interests and learning needs of the children they are teaching.
3. If educators develop the curriculum themselves, they make certain it targets identified learning goals and applicable early learning standards. They actively engage families and communities to inform its development. Educators use up-to-date resources from experts to ensure that curriculum content is accurate and comprehensive.

C. Educators use the curriculum framework in their planning to make sure there is ample attention to important learning goals and to enhance the coherence of the overall experience for children.

1. Educators are familiar with the understandings and skills in each domain (physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive) that are key for the children in their group. They know how development and learning in one domain impacts the other domains and crosses subject areas. They recognize that making sure the curriculum is culturally and linguistically relevant for each child is essential for supporting all development and learning across all domains and subject areas.
2. In their planning and follow-through, educators use the curriculum framework along with what they know (from their observation, documentation, and other assessment) about the children's knowledge, interests, progress, languages, and learning needs. They carefully shape and adapt the experiences to be responsive to each child and to enable each child to reach the goals outlined in the curriculum.
3. In determining the sequence and pace of learning experiences, educators consider the learning progressions that children typically follow, including the typical sequences in which skills and concepts develop. To maximize language development, educators recognize differences in developmental progressions for monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual children and support the development of multilingualism. Educators use these progressions with an eye toward helping each child progress in all areas, and they make adaptations as needed for individual children. When children's experiences have not matched the expectations for schooling, educators can both work to change inappropriate expectations and adapt the curriculum to build on children's strengths and help them gain skills and knowledge. Such adaptations should maintain children's

agency; children can be partners with educators in guiding their learning, which reinforces high expectations and beliefs (on the part of both the child and the educator) in that child's potential.

D. Educators make meaningful connections a priority in the learning experiences they provide each child. They understand that all learners, and certainly young children, learn best when the concepts, language, and skills they encounter are related to things they know and care about, and when the new learnings are themselves interconnected in meaningful, coherent ways.

1. Educators plan curriculum experiences that integrate children's learning. They integrate learning within and across developmental domains (physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive) and subject areas (including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health).
2. Educators plan curriculum experiences to build on the funds of knowledge of each child, family, and community in order to offer culturally and linguistically sustaining learning experiences. Educators build on ideas and experiences that have meaning in the children's lives and are likely to interest them, in recognition that developing and extending children's interests is particularly important when children's ability to focus their attention is in its early stages.
3. Educators plan curriculum experiences that follow logical sequences and that allow for depth, focus, and revisiting concepts. That is, learning sequences allow children to spend sustained time with a more select set of content areas rather than skimming briefly over a wide range of topics. Educators plan to return to experiences in ways that facilitate children's memory and further understanding of concepts.

E. Educators collaborate with those teaching in the preceding and subsequent age groups or grade levels, sharing information about children and working to increase continuity and coherence across ages and grades. They also work to protect the integrity and appropriateness of practices at each level. For example, educators advocate for continuity in the curriculum that is coherent, consistent, and based on the principles of developmentally appropriate practice.

F. Although it will vary across the age span, a planned and written curriculum is in place for all age groups. Even if it is not called a curriculum, infant and toddler educators plan for the ways in which routines and experiences promote each child's development and learning. With infants and toddlers, desired goals will focus heavily on fostering secure relationships with caregivers and family members in ways that are culturally and linguistically responsive. Although social, emotional, and language development— including home languages as much as possible—take center stage, these interactions and experiences are also laying the foundation for vocabulary and concepts that support later academic development across all subject areas. For preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades, the curriculum will deepen and extend to reflect children's more complex

knowledge and skills across all subject areas. Continuing to provide culturally and linguistically sustaining care and supporting all domains of development as well as all subject areas remain essential.

6. Demonstrating Professionalism as An Early Childhood Educator

Although this position statement may offer information and support to many individuals engaged in or interested in the support of early childhood development and learning, it is focused on early childhood educators. Developmentally appropriate practice serves as the hallmark of the early childhood education profession. Fully achieving these guidelines and effectively promoting all young children's development and learning depends on the establishment of a strong profession with which all early childhood educators, working across all settings, identify. Educators use the guidelines of the profession, including these guidelines, as they conduct themselves as members of the profession and serve as informed advocates for young children and their families as well as the profession itself. Standard 6 of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators outlines specific expectations by which early childhood educators demonstrate their professionalism. Readers are referred to this statement for more specific information.

The program links families with a range of services, based on identified resources, priorities, and concerns.

The following pages outline the policies and procedures that allow our organization to meet our core values and goals. Our first priority is our mission: *We partner with families, schools and communities to ensure each child arrives ready for kindergarten.* Our staff members are critical to our mission.

Employment at Will

Employment at First Start Partnerships for Children and Families is on an at-will basis unless otherwise stated in a written individual employment agreement signed by the CEO or President of the company.

This means that either the staff member or the company may terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without notice.

Nothing in this staff handbook is intended to or creates an employment agreement, express or implied. Nothing contained in this or any other document provided to the staff member is intended to be, nor should it be, construed as a contract that employment or any benefit will be continued for any period of time. In addition, no company representative is authorized to modify this policy for any staff member or to enter into any agreement, oral or written, that changes the at-will relationship.

Any salary figures provided to a staff member in annual or every other week pay period terms are stated for the sake of convenience or to facilitate comparisons and are not intended and do not create an employment contract for any specific period of time.

Nothing in this statement is intended to interfere with, restrain, or prevent concerted activity as

protected by the National Labor Relations Act. Such activity includes staff communications regarding wages, hours, or other terms or conditions of employment. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families staff members have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.

Equal Employment Opportunity and Commitment to Diversity

Equal Employment Opportunity

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families provides equal employment opportunities to all staff members and applicants for employment without regard to the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), parental status, national origin, age, disability, genetic information (including family medical history), political affiliation, military service, or other non-merit based factors. or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws and ordinances. Equal employment opportunities apply to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, appraisal systems, promotions, training, and career development programs.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families expressly prohibits any form of unlawful staff harassment or discrimination based on any of the characteristics mentioned above. Improper interference with the ability of other staff members to perform their expected job duties is absolutely not tolerated.

Any staff member with questions or concerns about equal employment opportunities in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the HR Director. The company will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who raise issues of equal employment opportunity. If a staff member feels he or she has been subjected to any such retaliation, he or she should bring it to the attention of the HR Director.

Retaliation means adverse conduct taken because an individual reported an actual or perceived violation of this policy, opposed practices prohibited by this policy, or participated in the reporting and investigation process described below. "Adverse conduct" includes but is not limited to:

- (1) shunning and avoiding an individual who reports harassment, discrimination or retaliation;
- (2) express or implied threats or intimidation intended to prevent an individual from reporting harassment, discrimination or retaliation; or
- (3) denying employment benefits because an applicant or staff member reported harassment, discrimination or retaliation or participated in the reporting and investigation process.

Complaints of discrimination should be filed according to the procedures described in the Staff Concern and Complaint Resolution Policy.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Reasonable Accommodation

To ensure equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with a disability, First Start Partnerships for Children and Families- has systems to make reasonable accommodations, as appropriate, for the known disability of an otherwise qualified individual, unless undue hardship on the operation of the business would result. It is also possible; a short-term illness or other impairment may qualify as a disability if it is severe. Staff members who may require reasonable

accommodation should contact the Human Resources Department.

Commitment to Diversity

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace in which all staff members have an opportunity to participate and contribute to the success of the business and are valued for their skills, experience, and unique perspectives. This commitment is embodied in company policy and the way we do business at First Start Partnerships for Children and Families and is an important principle of sound business management.

Staff Concern and Complaint Resolution

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families is committed to maintaining a positive, respectful work environment where all staff members feel heard, valued, and protected from discrimination and harassment. This policy provides a clear, consistent process for addressing all workplace concerns while promoting direct communication and prompt resolution.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families prohibits all forms of unlawful harassment and discrimination based on the following policies previously stated; Equal Employment Opportunity, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Reasonable Accommodation, and Commitment to Diversity. We are equally committed to addressing general workplace concerns through fair and effective resolution processes.

Scope and Definitions

General Workplace Concerns

This policy covers workplace issues including:

- Work-related disputes or misunderstandings
- Dissatisfaction with aspects of working conditions
- Disciplinary actions
- Demotion
- Denial of promotion
- Working relationships with other staff members

Unlawful Harassment or Discrimination

Sexual and other unlawful harassment is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), as amended, as well as many state laws. Harassment based on a characteristic protected by law.

Unlawful harassment is conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; substantially and unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or adversely affecting employment opportunities because of membership in a protected class.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal

or physical conduct of a sexual nature where submission to or rejection affects employment terms or creates a hostile work environment.

Discrimination is unjust treatment based on a category of people recognized by federal and local civil rights laws – e.g. race, age, disability (see EEO and ADA descriptions for additional categories)

Examples include but are not limited to: epithets, slurs, jokes, pranks, innuendo, comments, written or graphic material, stereotyping, unwanted sexual advances, sexually suggestive materials, or other threatening, hostile, or intimidating acts based on protected characteristics.

Resolution Process

Step 1: Determine Complaint Type and Reporting Channel

For General Workplace Concerns:

- Staff members are encouraged to address concerns directly with the person involved when:
 - The situation involves a peer or colleague
 - There are no safety or legal concerns
 - Direct communication is likely to be productive For

Unlawful Harassment or Discrimination:

- **Immediate reporting required** - bypass direct communication with person involved
- Report immediately to any of the following:
 - Immediate supervisor or department manager
 - HR Director
 - Any member of management with whom you feel comfortable

Note: Staff members who observe acts of discrimination or harassment toward others are requested and encouraged to report using the same channels.

Step 2: Immediate Supervisor Involvement

- **For general workplace concerns:** If direct communication is inappropriate or unsuccessful, bring the concern to your immediate supervisor within 10 working days of the incident
- **For harassment/discrimination:** Skip to Step 4 (Administrative Review) as these concerns require immediate HR involvement

Step 3: Additional Supervisor Involvement (*General workplace concerns only*) If the discussion with the immediate supervisor does not resolve the conflict issue to the mutual satisfaction of the staff member and the supervisor, or if the supervisor does not respond to the conflict, the staff member may request a meeting with their supervisor's supervisor.

Step 4: Administrative Review

- **For general workplace concerns:** Submit written Internal Conflict Resolution Form to HR Director within 5 working days of Step 3 discussion

- **For harassment/discrimination:** HR Director immediately begins investigation upon receipt of verbal or written complaint

During the Administrative Review Process:

- All complaints will be investigated promptly and confidentially
- Information shared only with those who need to know
- If investigation confirms policy violations, immediate corrective action will be taken, including discipline up to and including termination

Step 5: Appeal Process (if not resolved) If the outcome of the Administrative Review does not resolve the conflict/concern to the staff member's satisfaction, the staff member may present her or his statement back to the Human Resource Director, Chief Operating Officer (COO), President or Chief Executive Officer (CEO). At that point, the Board of Directors and the Policy Council Chair will be informed in writing of the staff member's conflict.

Step 6: Ad Hoc Committee Review An Ad Hoc Committee will be formed, will act as the Internal Conflict Resolution Review Committee, and will consist of the Human Resource Committee of the Board of Directors and Policy Council members.

Step 7: Final Decision The staff member will be notified in writing of the final decision of the Ad Hoc Committee Review within five (5) working days following the last decision-making body's meeting. Said notification shall be given by the Human Resource Director, COO, President or CEO. This decision of the Board of Directors and Policy Council is final and binding.

If the investigation confirms conduct contrary to this policy has occurred, First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will take immediate, appropriate corrective action, including discipline, up to and including immediate termination.

Key Requirements

- **ALL** sexual or general harassment complaints filed with any manager must be reported to the HR Director
- HR Director is responsible for ensuring full investigation of harassment/discrimination allegations
- Detailed procedures can be found in the Operations Manual - Staff Concern and Complaint Resolution Procedure

Protection Against Retaliation

No reprisal, retaliation, or other adverse action will be taken against a staff member for making a complaint or report of discrimination or harassment, or for assisting in the investigation of any such complaint or report. Any suspected retaliation or intimidation should be reported immediately using the same reporting channels.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be handled with appropriate confidentiality while ensuring thorough investigation and resolution. Information will be shared only with those who need to know in order to effectively address the situation.

Whistleblower Protection

FSP will consider any reprisal against a reporting individual in an act of misconduct subject to disciplinary procedures. A “reporting individual” is one who, in good faith, reported a suspected act of misconduct in accordance with this policy, or provided to a law enforcement officer any truthful information relating to the commission or possible commission of a Federal offense.

Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

Conflicts of Interest

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families expects all staff members to conduct themselves and company business in a manner that reflects the highest standards of ethical conduct, and in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This includes avoiding real and potential conflicts of interests.

Exactly what constitutes a conflict of interest or an unethical business practice is both a moral and a legal question. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families recognizes and respects the individual staff member’s right to engage in activities outside of employment which are private in nature and do not in any way conflict with or reflect poorly on the company.

It is not possible to define all the circumstances and relationships that might create a conflict of interest. If a situation arises where there is a potential conflict of interest, the staff member should discuss this with a manager for advice and guidance on how to proceed. The list below suggests some of the types of activity that indicate improper behavior, unacceptable personal integrity, or unacceptable ethics:

1. Accepting substantial gifts or excessive entertainment from an outside organization or agency.
2. Participating in civic or professional organization activities in a manner that divulges confidential company information.
3. Misusing privileged information or revealing confidential data to outsiders.
4. Using one’s position in the company or knowledge of its affairs for personal gains.
5. Engaging in practices or procedures that violate discrimination laws or other laws regulating the conduct of company business.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families’ management and administration, will ensure as far as reasonably possible, that all program activities are conducted in a manner which provides assistance effectively, efficiently, and free of any influence of partisan political bias.

All staff members will be asked to complete a Conflict of Interest Disclosure with First Start Partnerships for Children and Families, on an annual basis.

Confidential Information

The protection of confidential children/families information is vital to the interests and success of First

Start Partnerships for Children and Families. Confidential information is any personally identifiable information, and all information disclosed to or known by you because of employment with the company that is not generally known to people outside the company about its business. A staff member who improperly uses or discloses confidential business or children/families information will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment and legal action, even if he or she does not actually benefit from the disclosed information.

All inquiries from the media must be referred to the CEO or designee.

This provision is not intended to, and should not be interpreted to, prohibit staff members from discussing wages and other terms and conditions of employment if they so choose.

NAEYC- Ethical Conduct

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families expects all staff members to conduct themselves in accordance to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment. The standards of conduct outlined in these documents relate to expectations for all staff members' distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education.

These standards are introduced at new staff orientation for all FSP staff members and includes an introduction to and review of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. With their supervisor or an FSP director, new staff members discuss the Code of Ethical Conduct and are asked to sign a statement of commitment agreeing to demonstrate this ethical behavior in their work. Each year thereafter, all staff are asked to renew their commitment by reviewing the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and submitting an updated signed agreement.

The standards, stated as Principles, are outlined in detail for Ethical Responsibilities for Children, Families, Colleagues, and Community and Society.

The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and the Statement of Commitment is listed below in its entirety, including specifics related to First Start Partnerships stipulations as well.

Adopted by the NAEYC
National Governing
Board July 2025

Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators

National Association for the Education of Young Children

Along with core knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions, early childhood educators who work in homes, centers, and schools have professional, ethical responsibilities. These responsibilities guide the ethical decision making and behaviors that support each and every child's healthy development, learning, and well-being.

Purpose

The "Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators" outlines the essential ethical responsibilities for the early childhood education profession. This means it speaks to a set of professional ethics-the

moral responsibilities that go beyond personal beliefs and that guide decision making and behavior in a workplace.

The Code is intended to be helpful to all individuals who care for and promote the learning, development, and well-being of children birth through age 8 in all early childhood settings, as well as program administrators and those involved in educator preparation and support. The accompanying "Statement of Commitment" provides a way for individuals in the early childhood field to acknowledge and embrace the distinctive values and ethical obligations an early childhood education professional has to young children, families, and other educators. Individuals who commit to upholding the Code and programs that promote awareness of and adherence to it help to strengthen the field's professionalism and ethical behavior.

Although not all issues educators confront have a moral or ethical component, early childhood educators do face daily ethical challenges, often without sufficient support or resources. Early childhood educators navigate hard decisions that may conflict with our personal beliefs or well-being, while also working within systems that can be inequitable or unjust. All practitioners can use the Code as a guide for and defense of ethical conduct and decision making, especially when navigating complex dilemmas that require professional judgment.

The ethical standards in this Code of Ethics focus on areas of practice over which early childhood educators have professional autonomy and decision-making authority. The Code guides educators' responsibilities to others-children, families, colleagues, employers, communities, and society. While society has a responsibility to support early childhood educators, and educators have ethical and moral responsibilities to ourselves and our own well-being, the purpose of this Code is not to address the ethical obligations that others have toward educators, nor the responsibilities educators have to ourselves.

A Future Purpose

In the future, members of the early childhood education profession who are licensed to practice, as outlined by the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*, would be required to follow a code of ethics just like other licensed professionals.

Many fields-such as social work, nursing, audiology, teaching, and engineering-have codes of ethics that guide professional practice and conduct, and that hold individuals within the profession accountable to that code. In a licensed profession, behavior that is determined to be unethical can lead to consequences up to and including losing a professional license.

This "Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators" could one day be adapted to serve this purpose in early childhood education. It could provide state licensure bodies with a profession-led framework that can guide early childhood educators' professional, ethical conduct and protect families, children, and the public from unethical practices by institutions or individuals within the profession.

Structure

This position statement begins with the articulated position and core values that are categorized to guide early childhood educators in their professional relationships with (1) children, (2) families, (3)

colleagues and employers, and (4) community and society.

The statement then outlines the ethical responsibilities **for early childhood educators working with young children, families, and other educators** in those same four categories of professional relationships. Then, it expands on specific responsibilities for **program administrators** and those **involved in the professional preparation of early childhood educators (adult educators)**. These areas were previously covered in separate, supplemental documents. However, they have been brought together to streamline the responsibilities, increase ease of access, and reflect the inclusion of all individuals who are members of the early childhood education profession as outlined in the consensus *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession*.

Each section of the current version of the Code includes a brief introduction, followed by a list of essential ethical responsibilities. With the exception of **Responsibilities 1.1 and Admin 1. 1**, the responsibilities begin with practices that are positively required (what we must do) and move to those that are prohibited (what we must not do). Where positively required responsibilities have negative corollaries (i.e., because we must do X, we must NOT do Y), the items are cross-referenced in parentheses.

Key core values and responsibilities inform a "Statement of Commitment" for individuals that has been included at the end of the Code of Ethics position statement. It may also be used as a standalone document for individuals to voluntarily sign.

This Code of Ethics concludes with a glossary of terms. Additional information, including the research that informs the Code of Ethics along with its history and context, are available on NAEYC's website. The structure of this document does not allow for the inclusion of all practical implications in ethical decision making; rather, additional resources will be shared on an ongoing basis to help early childhood educators navigate complex ethical situations-especially when values come into conflict and the right course of action is unclear.

The Position

Along with core knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions, early childhood educators who work in homes, centers, and schools have professional, ethical responsibilities. These responsibilities guide the ethical decision making and behaviors that support each and every child's healthy development, learning, and well-being.

Core Values

These core values are shaped by the past, relevant to the present, and responsive to the future. These values specifically apply to professional practice between. They serve as the foundation for and among **colleagues and employers**:

Early childhood educators should apply these values to **all relationships we have in professional contexts** including those with children, families, colleagues, and staff:

- > Respect and support the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each and every individual.
- > Respect and support the diversity of individuals and groups, including their backgrounds and lived experiences.
- > Recognize that all individuals-children and adults-thrive within relationships based on trust and

respect.

These values apply specifically to professional practice with **children**:

- > Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable part of the human life cycle.
- > Base professional practice on up-to-date and accurate knowledge of how children develop and learn.
- > Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society.

These values apply specifically to professional practice with **families**:

- > Recognize families' primary role **in** children's learning and development.
- > Appreciate, value, and support the bond between children and their families.
- > Respect and support families **in** their task of nurturing children.
- > Be open to ideas and willing to learn.
- > Recognize the importance of maintaining and contributing to a supportive and fulfilling work environment.
- > Commit to and support continuous reflection, professional learning, and growth.
- > Use research and insights from relevant disciplines, including adult development and learning.

These values specifically apply to professional practice in community and society:

- > Serve as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society.
- > Recognize the importance of and advocate for a knowledgeable, competent, diverse, and well-compensated early childhood education workforce working across all settings.
- > Actively contribute to the well-being of the community.

Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Early Childhood Education Communities

The nondiscrimination and inclusion principles in the "Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators" apply equally to children, families, and educators. Except for programs that serve specific age groups or those legally required or permitted to serve certain populations, early childhood educators have an ethical duty to reject all discriminatory practices. This includes but may not be limited to discrimination based on race, national origin, age, immigration status, home language, medical condition, disability, marital status, family structure, sexual orientation of family members or caregivers, sex, gender identity, gender expression, religious beliefs, faith orientation, or other family affiliations.

Ethical Responsibilities for Early Childhood Educators Working with Young Children, Families, and Other Educators

1. Ethical Responsibilities to Children

Early childhood educators have many ethical responsibilities and relationships, but our first and most important obligation is to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in our care. Our highest priority is to provide education and care that is safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each and every child. No matter where we work, we are committed to supporting each child's development, encouraging joyful learning, and respecting individual differences. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, self-worth, physical and mental well-being,

competence, and resiliency.

Early childhood educators:

1.1-Do not harm children. This means we do not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating. This responsibility has precedence over all others in this Code.

Below are First Start's definitions of this harmful behavior:

Corporal punishment or physically abusive behavior, defined as intentional use of physical force that results in or has the potential to result in physical injury.

Sexually abusive behavior, defined as any completed or attempted sexual act, sexual contact, or exploitation.

Emotionally harmful or abusive behavior, defined as behaviors that harm a child's self- worth or emotional well-being.

Neglectful behavior, defined as the failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs including access to food, education, medical care, appropriate supervision by an adequate caregiver, and safe physical and emotional environments.

Coercion, defined as the use of manipulation to force a child to do something against their will, using threats, intimidation, or emotional manipulation.

Abuse or Mistreatment

First Start Partnerships has **zero tolerance** for any type of abuse including sexual abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of children, families, volunteers, or staff members. Any mistreatment or abuse by a staff member or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service. Further, First Start Partnerships will fully cooperate with law enforcement throughout the investigation and resolution of mistreatment or abuse incidents.

1.2-Provide care and education in nurturing environments that support children's emotional, social, cultural, and learning needs. These environments should be developmentally appropriate, cognitively stimulating, and affirming. *(For related prohibitions, see 1.10.)*

1.3-Support children's well-being.

- a. Encourage the development of strong bonds and trusting relationships between and among children, families, educators, and communities.
- b. Recognize the many strengths and qualities that each young child brings to the early learning program as a unique individual and as a member of a family, culture, and community.
- c. Build bonds with families and communities to promote those strengths and qualities, including by creating consistency and stability between the program and home(s).
- d. Work to build individual relationships by adapting teaching strategies, learning environments, and curricula so that each child can benefit.

1.4-Use assessments that are appropriate and, whenever possible, valid, unbiased, and reliable. Draw from multiple sources of information to accurately understand and evaluate children's

learning, development, and experiences in the program. *(For related prohibitions, see 1.9.)*

1.5-Apply program policies and practices relating to children consistently, fairly, and without bias. *(For related prohibitions, see 1.11.)*

1.6-Maintain the confidentiality of a child's information, images, and data, including assessment data, sharing only when there is a legitimate need.

1.7-Stay informed about the risk factors and signs of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse and physical, emotional, educational, and medical neglect.

- a. Follow state laws and community procedures (including reporting, informing, connecting with resources and community supports, and completing any follow-up requirements) that protect children against abuse and neglect when there is reasonable cause to suspect harm.
- b. Assist in taking appropriate action or informing a parent, legal guardian, and/or others who can act when another person shares a suspicion that a child is being harmed.
- c. Consider the risk and impact of unsubstantiated reporting and reflect on how biases and stereotypes can influence reporting.

1.8-Use digital technologies, interactive media, and artificial intelligence responsibly, intentionally, and only in ways that protect privacy, are developmentally and age appropriate, and have clear benefits to children.

- a. Align technology with efforts to support each child's learning, strengthen family connections, and provide equitable access for children with special needs.
- b. Use technology tools to help children develop inquiry skills and mindful digital habits that prepare them for the modern world.
- c. Monitor and remain vigilant about children's use of technology and media to protect them from exploitative online content.

1.9-Do not base high-stakes decisions-such as those related to enrollment, retention, or assignment to special education services-on a single assessment, such as a test score or a single observation.

1.10-Do not suspend or expel young children. If, after all reasonable supports have been exhausted, a program is unable to meet a child's needs and/or the child's continued placement seriously jeopardizes a safe learning environment for others, then educators must work to engage in a collaborative, respectful process with the family and relevant professionals to determine the most supportive next steps for alternate options. (This principle may not apply to programs legally required to serve a particular population of children.)

1.11-Do not engage in discriminatory policies and practices that deny benefits, provide unfair advantages, or exclude children from programs or activities based on their abilities or identities. (This principle may not apply to programs legally required to serve a particular population of children.)

A Note About Technology

Technology changes rapidly. So far, research indicates that, when used responsibly and intentionally, technology, interactive media, and artificial intelligence can be tools to support developmentally appropriate practice and family engagement. However, research

is also clear that technology can cause harm to children and adults. Updated and evolving guidance for early childhood educators on the use of technology can be found through NAEYC's technology position statement and related professional development and practice supports. The guidance will continue to *evolve* as technology does.

2. Ethical Responsibilities to Families

Families play a primary role in children's learning and development. We recognize a core responsibility to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate with each child's home, family, and community by building relationships based on mutual trust and respect, and in ways that enhance a child's development and well-being.

Early childhood educators:

- 2.1- Develop reciprocal relationships with each child's family.
 - a. Uphold every family's right to make decisions for and with their children.
 - b. Actively involve families **in** decisions about their children.
 - c. Invite and support families to contribute to overall program planning and implementation.

- 2.2-Work to create a respectful environment for and a working relationship with all families.
(*For related prohibitions, see 2.12.*)

At First Start Partnerships: Building authentic partnerships rooted in compassion is at the heart of our work with families. Our commitment to family, equity, and excellence means creating welcoming, safe environments where everyone feels valued and supported. These partnerships follow NAEYC ethical guidelines while maintaining operational excellence. All staff and volunteers are required to have their identification badge available while present at any First Start facility and be prepared to display their badge when meeting families or visitors, demonstrating our value of compassion through transparent, welcoming interactions. Staff must document all family interactions and follow safety protocols when unusual incidents occur.

One-on-one Interactions

One-on-one interactions with families and/or volunteers should occur during regularly scheduled programming. Supervisors should be made aware of requests for one-on-one interactions. When possible, at least two staff should be present when meeting with families and/or volunteers. Staff must schedule meetings in safe environments that allow for confidentiality to be maintained. All communication with families must be documented within ChildPlus.

If a one-on-one interaction occurs, staff should be in an observable space, able to be observed through an open door or through a window. Staff should immediately leave unsafe situations and report any unusual incidents to the supervisor as soon as possible. *For additional guidance relating to Home Visits, please see the Education Procedures-Home Visit Safety.*

- 2.3-Provide prospective and current families with complete, honest, and nonbiased information about the program, including enrollment practices, philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment systems, cultural practices, and staff qualifications.
- 2.4-Make every effort to engage in two-way communication with families, in their preferred

language. Seek external support for translation and interpretation as needed, which may include responsible use of artificial intelligence and interactive technology.

2.5-Respond positively to families' requests when they align with program philosophy, standards of practice, and available resources. *(For related prohibitions, see 2.13.)*

2.6-Apply program policies and practices relating to families consistently, fairly, and without bias.

2.7-Share screening and assessment information and results in ways that are accessible to families, honor knowledge families have about their own children, convey children's strengths, and acknowledge the limitations of the evaluation instruments.

2.8-Ensure that parents and legal guardians can access their children's records and classrooms or program settings, unless a court order or legal restriction prohibits it.

2.9-Respect families' right to privacy and work with families to protect children's data, images, and information. (This principle does not apply **in** cases where a child's welfare is at risk and it becomes critical to share confidential information with agencies, organizations, and/or individuals who have legal responsibilities to intervene **in** the child's interest.)

2.10-Keep families informed about injuries and incidents involving their children, potential exposure to communicable diseases, and events that could cause emotional stress.

2.11-Stay informed about community resources and support services, referring families as needed and following up as much as possible to ensure they receive appropriate support.

2.12-Do not use relationships with families for personal gain or enter into relationships that could compromise professional judgment or negatively impact children.

2.13-Do not comply with family requests that could cause physical or emotional harm to children based on professional expertise and judgment. In such cases, clearly explain the reason(s) for not honoring the request and work with the family to find an alternative solution.

3. Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues and Employers

A caring, cooperative workplace respects human dignity, fosters professional satisfaction, and nurtures positive relationships. Guided by our core values, our primary responsibilities to our colleagues-including other educators, other staff, volunteers, and employers -are to create and maintain inclusive environments and respectful relationships that promote meaningful work and that support each individual's physical and mental well-being. *Specific responsibilities that program administrators, directors, and owners have to their staff are outlined in the section entitled "Ethical Responsibilities Specific to Program Administrators."*

A-RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

Early childhood educators:

3A.1-Recognize and honor the perspectives, strengths, and contributions of colleagues. *(For related*

prohibitions, see 3A.5 and 3A.6)

3A.2-Respect confidentiality regarding job performance and uphold the right to privacy regarding personal and personnel issues.

3A.3-Consider our own biases and exercise caution when expressing views about colleagues' personal attributes or professional conduct. *(For related prohibitions, see 3A.6)*

3A.4-As applicable, raise concerns about a colleague's behavior, competence, fairness, ethics, or accuracy **in** a respectful manner that honors personal dignity and differences. *(For related prohibitions, see 3A.5.)*

- a. If children's well-being is not at risk, make every effort to resolve the matter collegially and confidentially.
- b. If children are at risk or the issue remains unresolved after addressing it with the colleague, report the colleague's unethical or incompetent behavior through official channels or to an appropriate authority.

3A.5-Do not engage **in** practices that harm colleagues' reputations or interfere with their ability to effectively support children and families.

B-RESPONSIBILITIES TO EMPLOYERS

Early childhood educators:

3B.1-Follow all program policies. If educators disagree with a policy, seek to make changes through constructive action. *(For related prohibitions, see 3B.5.)*

3B.2-Report concerns about circumstances or conditions that impact the quality of education and care to the program's administration or, when necessary, other appropriate authorities.

3B.3-Speak or act on behalf of an organization only when authorized and clearly distinguish between official statements and personal opinions.

3B.4-Stay informed about laws and regulations that protect children's health and safety and ensure that these laws and regulations are followed. *(For related prohibitions, see 3B.5.)*

3B.5-Do not participate **in** practices that violate laws or regulations designed to safeguard children. If educators are aware of such violations, take appropriate action **in** accordance with this Code.

3A.6-Do not participate **in** practices that discriminate against a colleague.

4. Ethical Responsibilities to Community and Society

Early childhood education programs function within a broader community that includes families and other entities that support children's well-being. As members of a broader community, early childhood education programs (and the people who work within them) try to meet the diverse needs of families; cooperate and coordinate with other agencies, programs, and professions that share

responsibility for children; help families connect with each other, as well as with available services and supports; and contribute to the development and resourcing of community programs that are needed but unavailable.

Our specialized expertise in early childhood education and development also leads us to recognize our collective duty to advocate for children. This includes speaking up for their needs within early childhood programs and in the broader community, serving as a voice alongside young children and their families.

Early childhood educators:

4.1-Communicate openly, clearly, objectively, and honestly about what we do and why we do it with the public and relevant oversight bodies. This includes communication about services, scope, and purpose. *(For related prohibitions, see 4.7.)*

Society Also Has Ethical Obligations to Early Childhood Educators

Young children's access to equitable learning opportunities depends upon the ethical treatment of early childhood educators. This means that-just as educators have ethical responsibilities to community and society-so too do families, employers, institutions of higher education, policymakers, and the public have a responsibility to support and invest in early childhood educators in recognition of their essential, complex, and valuable work.

"Developmentally Appropriate Practice" and "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education" position statements outline specific recommendations for policies and actions that individuals, organizations, and institutions can make to fulfill their obligations to early childhood educators so that educators can fulfill our obligations to children and families.

Community members, leaders, families, and other stakeholders can and should also work alongside early childhood educators to advocate for investments that support educators' success and well-being. These investments should move toward a future in which each and every child has the opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood education, delivered by an effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated ECE workforce across all states and settings.

4.2-Base opinions when evaluating issues, practices, products, or programs on professional perspectives, relevant experiences, knowledge of child development, and established standards of practice.

4.3-Exercise care and caution when recommending the use/purchase of commercial products or services to families or the public, particularly if the products or services have been heavily advertised or sponsored.

4.4-Educate ourselves about the systems, policies, and practices that contribute to inequitable and unethical outcomes for children and actively work to change them.

4.5-Recommend for employment only people whose competence, qualifications, and character make them well-suited for the position.

4.6-Exercise caution when considering whether to report concerns or disclose program identities to

the public or the media. Ensure that children are not placed at risk if a public report is deemed necessary.

4.7-Do not mislead families or the public by offering services without the necessary competence, qualifications, or resources to provide them.

Ethical Responsibilities Specific to Program Administrators

Early childhood educators who are administrators-such as child care center directors, school principals, and those who operate, own, or manage a family child care program-have many teaching and management duties. As administrators, we are leaders both within our programs and in the broader community. Our responsibilities may include guiding educational practices, selecting and implementing curricula and assessments, managing daily operations and budgets, building and maintaining strong relationships with families, staff, and oversight bodies, and representing the field to the public.

Early childhood programs vary in their structure, funding, mission, and oversight. Administrators must work within these systems while keeping the program stable and maintaining its reputation through licensing, quality ratings, and/or accreditation. Administrative tasks include hiring, onboarding and supervising staff, keeping the facility or home safe, and managing finances. Administrators are responsible for making sure the program's mission is reflected in its policies and procedures. We are also committed to ongoing professional development and to supporting the continued education of our staff. In addition, we may advocate for children and families, working to ensure access to high-quality, inclusive early learning environments.

Because our work is broad and complex, administrators often face ethical challenges, such as making decisions about enrollment policies, staffing, and balancing the needs of families, licensing agencies, boards, and funders.

This section outlines administrators' ethical responsibilities toward: (a) personnel we supervise and/or employ, and (b) sponsoring agencies and governing boards.

ADMIN 1: RESPONSIBILITIES TO PERSONNEL

Administrators:

Admin 1.1-Do not allow staff to engage in any activities or practices that could cause physical or emotional harm to a child.

Admin 1.2-Ensure staff have a safe, supportive workplace that respects diversity, protects privacy, assures physical and psychological well-being, promotes professional growth, and supports ethical decision making.

Admin 1.3-Create an environment that supports the full participation of all children and families, including those with special needs. This includes a responsibility to seek resources that support needed adaptations.

Admin 1.4-Empower and equip staff in using a strengths-based approach that fosters

children's positive and joyful learning and development.

Admin 1.5-Lead and support staff in making informed decisions about if, how, and when to appropriately select, use, integrate, and evaluate technology, interactive media, and artificial intelligence to meet the cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and linguistic needs of young children.

Admin 1.6-Act proactively when conflicts arise between family members and staff, helping all parties express their needs and perspectives to work through disagreements and to support informed decision making. Ensure that all voices and perspectives are heard; this includes assisting families in effectively communicating their concerns, using interpretation and mediation, if and as needed.

Admin 1.7-Recognize, value, and draw upon different kinds of education, training, experiences, and expertise of staff when making decisions about children and programs.

Admin 1.8-Offer staff ongoing professional development and advancement opportunities that are research-based and relevant.

Admin 1.9-Train and hold staff accountable for understanding all relevant standards and regulations.

Admin 1.10-Develop and maintain written policies protecting confidentiality, responsible use of technology (including artificial intelligence), and the sharing of children's records. These policies must be made available to all program staff and families.

Admin 1.11-Ensure that children's records are only ever shared beyond parents or legal guardians, staff, and confidential consultants when there is family consent-except in cases of suspected abuse or neglect.

Admin 1.12-Develop and maintain comprehensive and clearly written personnel policies that outline program standards and expectations. Provide these policies to all new staff and ensure that they are easily accessible.

Admin 1.13-Apply all personnel policies consistently, fairly, and without bias and ensure all personnel records are kept confidential.

Admin 1.14-Take appropriate action to address any violations of policies.

Admin 1.15-Follow all employment laws and regulations and make hiring, retention, promotion, and termination decisions based solely on a person's qualifications, performance, and ability to fulfill the role. *(For related prohibitions, see Admin 1.20.)*

Admin 1.16-Understand and comply with rules and agreements established by unions or other organizations representing staff interests.

Admin 1.17-Evaluate the performance of all staff regularly.

- a. Inform staff whose performance does not meet expectations, provide feedback, and offer coaching and additional support when possible.
- b. Ensure staff are aware of grievance procedures if they disagree with their performance evaluation.

Admin 1.18-Conduct personnel dismissals lawfully and ethically.

- a. In cases of termination, ensure there is documented, current, and accurate evidence of misconduct or poor performance.
- b. Share the reasons for termination with staff who are dismissed.

Admin 1.19- Provide accurate and truthful personnel evaluations, judgments, and references.

Admin 1.20-Do not make hiring, retention, promotion, and termination decisions based on personal characteristics or identities.

ADMIN 2: RESPONSIBILITIES TO SPONSORING AGENCIES AND GOVERNING BODIES

Administrators:

Admin 2.1- Review all program policies from sponsoring agencies and governing bodies to assess the extent to which they serve the best interests of children.

- a. Raise concerns if directives from a sponsoring agency or governing body do not align with the best interests of children.
- b. Comply with all relevant regulations and standards that do align with the best interests of children.

Admin 2.2-Carry out job responsibilities conscientiously and with the goal of fulfilling all role-related responsibilities.

Admin 2.3-Manage resources responsibly and accurately account for their use.

Admin 2.4-Evaluate programs using agreed-upon standards and report findings to appropriate authorities.

Admin 2.5-Communicate necessary information honestly and thoroughly while maintaining confidentiality unless disclosure is required.

Admin 2.6-Confirm that any external research the program allows, facilitates, or participates in is appropriately designed to reflect the diversity of the populations upon whom its results may have future impacts. *(For related prohibitions, see Admin 2.7 and 2.8.)*

Admin 2.7-Do not allow, facilitate, or participate in research that could hinder the well-being, development, or education of children or staff.

Admin 2.8-Do not involve children in research projects without fully informing parents or legal guardians and giving them the opportunity to consent or decline without penalty.

Ethical Responsibilities Specific to Adult Educators

Early childhood educators working in professional preparation and training programs have a key responsibility to help

adult learners (or "students") develop the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to support young children's well-being, learning, and development. Our role includes both guiding adult learners and ensuring that the field has well-prepared, caring, competent professionals to work with children and families.

To meet this responsibility, adult educators must follow the "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators," which outlines the essential skills, dispositions, and practices required for working with children from birth through age 8 across all early learning settings. The "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education" position statement provides key recommendations for preparing early childhood educators to create fair and inclusive learning opportunities for all children.

As we focus on training and supporting adult learners, adult educators face unique ethical challenges. These challenges arise within a complex network of relationships, including those with practicum sites, colleges and universities, and agencies that provide professional development. While these entities, agencies, and institutions also have ethical obligations to early childhood education students, teachers, and faculty members, those responsibilities are beyond the scope of this Code of Ethics.

This section outlines early childhood adult educators' ethical responsibilities toward: (a) adult learners in training classes and higher education courses, (b) partnership and practicum sites, and (c) institutions of higher learning and agencies that provide professional training.

PREP 1: RESPONSIBILITIES TO ADULT LEARNERS

Adult educators:

Prep 1.1-Provide learning experiences that meet the unique needs and strengths of adult learners; adapt to their learning styles, cultures, languages, practice settings, and career stages; and offer equitable pathways for success.

Prep 1.2-Offer high-quality educational experiences that prepare adult learners to support children's development, communicate with families, use technology, interactive media, and artificial intelligence appropriately and intentionally, and maintain their own health and well-being. *(For related prohibitions, see Prep 1.8.)*

Prep 1.3-Clearly communicate expectations for conduct, academic integrity, performance, writing standards, and responsible use of technology (including artificial intelligence). *(For related prohibitions, see Prep 1.9.)*

Prep 1.4-Protect the confidentiality of adult learners by sharing only necessary information through appropriate professional channels and only with those who need to know.

Prep 1.5-As applicable, ensure adult learners have access to a diversity of practicum and field experiences-both in-person and virtually-that take their current workplaces into account and that offer opportunities for them to benefit from qualified staff and mentors who can effectively support their development.

Prep 1.6-Provide programmatic and additional support to help adult learners who struggle in the training, class, or program, but who are deemed to have the potential to work effectively with young children. If additional support does not lead those students toward meeting academic and practical expectations, however, adult educators should turn toward helping them explore alternative educational or career paths.

Prep 1.7-Assist adult learners who raise concerns about a colleague's competence, fairness, or ethics by helping them clarify their concerns and take appropriate action, which may include following institutional policies for addressing complaints.

Prep 1.8-Do not sell products or services for personal gain in the context of training and coursework unless they are directly relevant, serve educational goals, and the connection is disclosed upfront.

Prep 1.9-Do not promote or advance adult learners who have shown that they do not possess the required knowledge, do not relate positively and effectively with children and families, or may cause harm to children's physical, emotional, or psychological well-being. Institutional policies and procedures that prevent such adult learners from completing a program must be followed.

PREP 2: RESPONSIBILITIES TO PRACTICUM SITES

Adult educators:

Prep 2.1-Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of adult learners, mentors, and administrators and ensure all are well-prepared for practicum experiences.

Prep 2.2-Recognize the partnership between early childhood programs and education preparation programs. Work collaboratively to meet expectations and provide necessary support.

Prep 2.3-Ensure qualified staff regularly supervise practicum experiences to support adult learners' professional development and to safeguard children's well-being.

Prep 2.4- Protect the privacy of programs, teachers, families, and children-including on all social media platforms-and instill this professional responsibility in adult learners.

Prep 2.5-Move adult learners to a more suitable placement when a practicum placement is not beneficial to the adult learner or to the children.

PREP 3: OBLIGATIONS TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND AGENCIES PROVIDING TRAINING

Adult educators:

Prep 3.1- Teach and provide training only in areas where we have appropriate experience and expertise or can acquire it.

Prep 3.2-Ensure course and training content aligns to the "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators" position statement.

Prep 3.3-Evaluate adult learners fairly and without bias, using standards that align with both the mission of the institution and accepted practice in the field.

Prep 3.4-Maintain course integrity by following approved descriptions and updating content based on current research.

Prep 3.5-Keep professional roles distinct when interacting with an adult learner in multiple capacities (i.e., instructor, employer, supervisor). Provide feedback appropriate for each role.

Glossary of Terms

This list of terms was adapted from existing position statements. Additional terms and full definitions can be found via [www. NAEYC.org/position-statements](http://www.NAEYC.org/position-statements). For ease of reference, the list is organized into terms that are specific to ethics, morality, and values, followed by those that are more generally applicable to early childhood education.

Core values: The shared commitments of a profession that guide its members in making a contribution to society. There is a difference between personal values and the core values of a profession.

Ethical dilemma: A situation in which an individual must choose between conflicting values and responsibilities.

Ethical responsibilities: Behaviors that one must or must not engage in (i.e., prohibitions).

Ethics: The study of right and wrong, including moral choices, responsibilities, and the effects of decisions on relationships.

Morality: People's views of what is good, right, and proper; their beliefs about their obligations; and their ideas about how they should behave.

Personal values: Qualities or principles that individuals believe to be important and strive to uphold for themselves, others, and society.

Professional ethics: The moral responsibilities of a profession that go beyond personal beliefs and that guide decision making and behavior in the workplace.

Adult educator: A professional who teaches early childhood educators inclusive of those in degree-granting educator preparation programs, as well as those providing credentials, nondegree training, and mentorship in early childhood education settings.

Adult learner/student: An individual training to work in early childhood education, whether already working or preparing to work with children from birth to age 8. This includes high school and college students under 18 who meet these criteria.

Administrator: An individual responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating an early childhood education program for infants and toddlers, preschoolers, kindergartners, or children in

primary grades. The administrator's setting may vary and may include a child care center, family child care home, or school. The administrator's title may vary and may include director, family child care owner or operator, site manager, administrator, program manager, early childhood coordinator, and principal.

Bias: Attitudes or stereotypes that favor one group over another. Explicit biases are conscious beliefs and stereotypes that affect one's understanding, actions, and decisions; implicit biases work in an unconscious manner. An anti-bias approach to education explicitly works to end all forms of bias and discrimination.

Colleague: A fellow educator, administrator, or adult educator, including coworkers and volunteers. Colleagues may work in the same program or different programs.

Early childhood education profession: Members of the ECE profession include early childhood educators, higher education faculty, and pedagogical and instructional leaders in early learning settings.

Early childhood educator: An individual who cares for and promotes the learning, development, and well-being of children birth through age 8 in all settings, meeting guidelines of the profession to establish a foundation for children's lifelong learning and success.

Equitable learning opportunities: Learning opportunities that help each and every child thrive by building on their unique set of individual and family strengths-including cultural background(s), language(s), abilities and disabilities, and experiences.

Family: A child's family includes a parent, parents, or other adults who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth, kinship, and/or adoption or placement, and who, together, assume some key responsibilities for the raising and nurturing of children.

Gender identity and expression: A social concept that reflects how individuals identify themselves. Traditionally viewed as a binary category of male/female linked to an individual's sex, gender identity and expression can also be viewed as fluid and expansive.

Inclusion: The belief and practice that all children, regardless of ability or identity, have the right to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society.

Mentor: An experienced early childhood professional who provides guidance and counsel and who may work with adult learners in an early childhood program.

Technology: Encompassing the broad and expanding range of digital and virtual materials, devices, and tools, such as computers, tablets, televisions, whiteboards, mobile devices, cameras, electronic toys, games, e-book readers, and other analog devices, as well as other tools that may be part of or be powered by interactive media and artificial intelligence.

Research, History, and Other Resources

Additional information, including descriptions of the research, history and methodology grounding the revision of the Code of Ethics are available on [NAEYC's website](#).

*Please note for further information and resource materials, as it relates to classroom and program guidance/ discipline expectations when working with children, please go to the Educational Procedure Manual which is found in KRONOS/ UKG, under My Company, and Documents.

And First Start Partnerships for Children and Families expects Additionally, each staff member, Policy Council and Director of the Board will review and sign NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment at time of hire and annually.

Statement of Commitment

This "Statement of Commitment" is my personal pledge to uphold the core values and ethical responsibilities of early childhood educators. **At the heart of this Commitment is a guiding principle that early childhood educators have embraced throughout the history of the Code of Ethics: Above all, we do not harm children.** This means that *"we do not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating. This responsibility has precedence over all others in this Code."*

By signing this statement, I affirm my professional dedication to conducting myself with honesty and integrity in upholding the responsibilities outlined in the "Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators."

PRINTED NAME:

SIGNED NAME:

NAME OF PROGRAM:

LOCATION:

DATE:

And First Start Partnerships for Children and Families expects Additionally, each staff member, Policy Council and Director of the Board will review and sign NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment at time of hire and annually.

Employment Relationship

Employment Classification

In order to determine eligibility for benefits and overtime status and to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations, First Start Partnerships for Children and Families classifies its staff members as shown below. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families may review or change staff member classifications at any time.

Exempt. Exempt staff members are paid on a salaried basis and are not eligible to receive overtime pay.

Non-exempt. Non-exempt staff members are paid on an hourly basis and are eligible to receive overtime pay for overtime hours worked.

Regular, Full-Time. Staff members who are not in a temporary status and work a minimum of 30 hours weekly and maintain continuous employment status. Generally, these staff are eligible for the full-time benefits package and are subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefits program.

Regular, Part-Time. Staff members who are not in a temporary status and who are regularly scheduled to work fewer than 30 hours weekly, but at least 20 hours weekly, and who maintain continuous employment status. Part-time staff members are eligible for some of the benefits offered by the company and are subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefits program.

Temporary, Full-Time. Staff members who are hired as interim replacements to temporarily supplement the workforce or to assist in the completion of a specific project and who are temporarily scheduled to work the company's full-time schedule for a limited duration.

Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status.

Temporary, Part-Time. Staff members who are hired as interim replacements to temporarily supplement the workforce or to assist in the completion of a specific project and who are temporarily scheduled to work fewer than 30 hours weekly for a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status.

Compensation

We know and support the great value and service that our staff members offer to our children and families. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families strives to attract and retain staff members by offering competitive wages and benefits to our workforce. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families recognizes three parts to a staff member's compensation package: base wage, cost of living raises, and staff benefits. It is the intent of the company to pay wages and provide cost of living increases as well as maintain the various staff benefits. Compensation is determined by reviewing job descriptions responsibilities, base job position qualifications, knowledge, skills, competencies,

applicable work experience, wage grade, analysis of wage surveys, and outside benchmarking materials.

Compensation Review- In the event a staff member would like to have their compensation rate reviewed they may contact his or her supervisor. The supervisor may conduct a compensation review, if asked, in January or June of each year. The supervisor will be responsible for understanding the reason and rationalization for the staff member requesting the raise. The compensation review will look at criteria such as: any changes in the scope of the work, ability to meet objectives, amount of responsibility, value the staff member delivers to the organization's mission, consistency of work performance, internal pay equity, and external market rate of position. The supervisor will complete a Wage Justification form for signature approval if a raise is deemed to be an appropriate action. The supervisor, Program Director, Finance Director, Chief Operating Officer, President, and CEO will review for potential approval of the raise by signing the Wage Justification Form. The supervisor will relay the result of the review with the staff member after the compensation review has been completed.

Temporary Staff Coverage Compensation- In the event a staff member assumes additional responsibilities beyond their regular job duties due to staffing changes, extended absences, or operational coverage needs they may be eligible for temporary additional pay. Your supervisor will review the guidelines to determine if the type of additional workload meets the requirements for additional compensation.

The company reimburses staff members for actual and necessary travel and other expenses incurred while conducting program business such as members per diem for work related travel or training and work-related mileage reimbursement.

Work Week and Hours of Work

The standard workweek is from Sunday 12:00 a.m. until Saturday 11:59 p.m. and generally consists of 37.5 work hours. Individual work schedules may vary depending on the needs of each department and classroom. Meal and/or rest breaks will be scheduled by the department supervisor based on program needs.

Time Records

All staff members are required to complete accurate weekly time reports showing all time actually worked. These records are required by governmental regulations and are used to calculate regular and overtime pay (non-exempt staff). Non-exempt staff members must clock in and out of work each day. At the end of each pay period, the staff member and his or her supervisor must "sign" by submitting and approving the timesheet in the electronic database system.

Overtime

When required, due to the needs of the business, you may be asked to work overtime. Overtime is actual hours worked in excess of 40 in a single workweek. Non-exempt staff members will be paid overtime compensation at the rate of one and one half their regular rate of pay for all hours over 40 actually worked in a single workweek. If a Non-exempt staff member works over 37.5 hours in a single workweek, and less than 40 hours the staff member will be paid that additional time at their regular per hour rate. Paid leave, such as holiday, PTO, bereavement time, and jury duty does not apply toward work time. All overtime work must be approved in advance by a supervisor or manager.

Deductions from Pay/Safe Harbor Exempt Staff

The Company does not make improper deductions from the salaries of exempt staff members and complies with the salary basis requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Staff members classified as exempt from the overtime pay requirements of the FLSA will be notified of this classification at the time of hire or change in position.

Permitted deductions. The FLSA limits the types of deductions that may be made from the pay of an exempt staff members. Deductions that are permitted include:

- Deductions that are required by law, e.g., income taxes;
- Deductions for staff benefits when authorized by the staff member;
- Absence from work for one or more full days for personal reasons other than sickness or disability;
- Absence from work for one or more full days due to sickness or disability if the deduction is made in accordance with a bona fide plan, policy or practice of providing compensation for salary lost due to illness;
- Offset for amounts received as witness or jury fees, or for military pay; or
- Unpaid disciplinary suspensions of one or more full days imposed in good faith for workplace conduct rule infractions.

During the week an exempt staff member begins work for the company or during the last week of employment, the staff member will only be paid for actual hours worked. In addition, a staff member may be paid only for hours worked during a period when the staff member is using unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Improper deductions. If a staff member classified as exempt believes that an improper deduction has been taken from his or her pay, the staff member should immediately report the deduction to the Human Resources Department. The report will be promptly investigated and if it is found that an improper deduction has been made, the company will reimburse the staff member for the improper deduction.

Paychecks

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families' pay period for all staff members is every other week on Friday. If pay day falls on a federal holiday, staff members will receive their paychecks on the preceding workday. Paychecks are directly deposited into your checking and/or savings accounts. First Start Partnerships uses electronic tools to process and communicate payroll procedures. Current tools are outlined at hire, with any changes noted in First Start's monthly E-newsletter.

Paycheck deposit stubs are accessible through FSP's designated online payroll account. Each staff member will register for an individual account.

Access to Personnel Files

Staff member files are maintained by the Human Resources department and are considered

confidential. Managers and supervisors may only have access to personnel file information on a need-to-know basis. Personnel file access by current staff members and former staff members upon request will generally be permitted within 3 days of the request unless otherwise required under state law. Personnel files are to be reviewed in the Human Resources department. Staff members may ask for copies or take photographs of some items in their own file, when reviewing. Representatives of government or law enforcement agencies, in the course of their duties, may be allowed access to file information.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will provide employment references and verification of past and current staff members, upon request.

Employment of Relatives and Domestic Partners

Relatives and domestic partners may be hired by the company if (1) the persons concerned will not work in a direct supervisory relationship, and (2) the employment will not pose difficulties for supervision, security, safety, or morale. For the purposes of this policy, “relatives” are defined as spouses, children, siblings, parents, or grandparents. A “domestic partnership” is generally defined as a committed relationship between two individuals who are sharing a home or living arrangements.

Current staff members who marry each other or become involved in a domestic partnership will be permitted to continue employment with the company provided they don’t work in a direct supervisory relationship with each other or otherwise pose difficulties as mentioned above. If staff members who marry or live together do work in a direct supervisory relationship with each other, the company will attempt to reassign one of the staff members to another position for which he or she is qualified if such a position is available.

Separation from Employment

In all cases of voluntary resignation (one initiated by the staff member), staff members are asked to provide a written notice to their supervisors at least 10 working days in advance of the last day of work. The 10 days must be actual working days. Holidays and paid time off (PTO) will not be counted toward the 10-day notice. Staff members who provide the requested amount of notice will be considered to have resigned in good standing and generally will be eligible for rehire.

In most cases, the staff member’s supervisor/ coordinator will conduct an exit meeting on or before the last day of employment and collect all company property. Human Resources will email exit information to the staff members, with further explanation of the process.

If the staff member has medical insurance through FSP; their insurance coverage will end on the last day of the month in which they were employed, per their resignation letter notice date. And if applicable, information regarding benefits continuation through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) will be sent to the staff member’s home address.

Should it become necessary because of business conditions to reduce the number of staff members or work hours, this will be done at the discretion of the company.

Workplace Safety

Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families to maintain a drug- and alcohol-free work environment that is safe and productive for staff members and others having business with the company.

The unlawful use, possession, purchase, sale, distribution, or being under the influence of any illegal drug and/or the misuse of legal drugs while on company or children/families premises or while performing services for the company is strictly prohibited. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families also prohibits reporting to work or performing services under the influence of alcohol or consuming alcohol while on duty or during work hours. In addition, the First Start Partnerships for Children and Families prohibits off-premises abuse of alcohol and controlled substances, as well as the possession, use, or sale of illegal drugs, when these activities adversely affect job performance, job safety, or the Company's reputation in the community.

To ensure compliance with this policy, substance abuse screening may be conducted in the following situations:

For Cause: Upon reasonable suspicion that the staff member is under the influence of alcohol or drugs that could affect or has adversely affected the staff member's job performance.

Random: As authorized or required by federal or state law.

Compliance with this policy is a condition of employment. Staff members who test positive or who refuse to submit to substance abuse screening will be subject to termination.

Notwithstanding any provision herein, this policy will be enforced at all times in accordance with applicable state and local law.

Any staff members violating this policy is subject to discipline, up to and including termination, for the first offense.

Smoke-Free Workplace

Smoking is not allowed in or around any company buildings, surrounding outdoor property, or work areas at any time. "Smoking" includes the use of any tobacco products (including chewing tobacco), electronic smoking devices, and e-cigarettes.

Workplace Violence Prevention

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families is committed to providing a safe, violence-free workplace for our staff members. Due to this commitment, we discourage staff members from engaging in any physical confrontation with a violent or potentially violent individual or from behaving in a threatening or violent manner. Threats, threatening language, or any other acts of aggression or violence made toward or by any staff members will not be tolerated. A threat may include any verbal or physical harassment or abuse, attempts to intimidate others, menacing gestures, stalking, or any other hostile, aggressive, and/or destructive actions taken for the purposes of intimidation. This policy covers any violent or potentially violent behavior that occurs in the workplace or at company-sponsored functions.

All First Start Partnerships for Children and Families staff members bear the responsibility of keeping our work environment free from violence or potential violence. Any staff member who witnesses or is the recipient of violent behavior should promptly inform their supervisor, manager, or the Human Resources Department. All threats will be promptly investigated. No staff member will be subject to retaliation, intimidation, or discipline as a result of reporting a threat in good faith under this guideline.

Any individual engaging in violence against the company, its staff members, or its property will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. All acts will be investigated, and the appropriate action will be taken. Any such act or threatening behavior may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families prohibits the possession of weapons on its property at all times, including our parking lots or company vehicles. Additionally, while on duty, staff members may not carry a weapon of any type. Weapons include, but are not limited to, handguns, rifles, firearms, and knives that can be used as weapons (excluding pocketknives, utility knives, and other instruments that are used to open packages, cut string, and for other miscellaneous tasks), martial arts paraphernalia, stun guns, and tear gas. Any staff members violating this policy is subject to discipline up to and including dismissal for the first offense.

The company reserves the right to inspect all belongings of staff members on its premises, including packages, back packs, briefcases, purses and handbags, gym bags, and personal vehicles on company property. In addition, First Start Partnerships for Children and Families may inspect the contents of lockers, storage areas, file cabinets, desks, and work stations at any time and may remove all items that are in violation of Company rules and policies.

Commitment to Safety

Protecting the safety of our children, families, staff members and visitors is the most important aspect of running our business.

All staff members have the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to a safe work environment by following rules and safe practices and by notifying management when any health or safety issues are present. All staff members are encouraged to partner with management to ensure maximum safety for all.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, staff or volunteers should notify the appropriate emergency personnel by dialing 911 to activate the medical emergency services.

Health

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families is required under the law to maintain compliance with all local and state Department of Health regulations including but not limited to reporting communicable diseases in children and staff members, maintaining a hygienic environment and proper storage and service of food items. For further information and resource materials, as it relates to classroom health and safety, please go to the Health Manual which is found in KRONOS/ UKG, under My Company, and Documents. Staff members are required to comply with all posted and expressed policies and procedures to ensure compliance with Department of Health regulations.

Universal Precautions and Blood borne pathogens practices are followed for child and staff member health and safety. Please refer to the Health Manual for a full explanation of staff and classroom/ workplace health and safety procedures.

Emergency Closings

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will always make every attempt to be open for business. Due to severe weather conditions or other emergency situations, there may be times when the classrooms and office facilities may be closed. In case of closure for inclement weather (i.e. snow) the program will close or delay according to the area school district in which the classroom or office is located. Other closures will be determined by the designated management staff member.

Staff members will be paid for emergency closures beyond their control, as long as funding is available. Staff members will report on any make-up days needed.

Workplace Guidelines

Attendance

In order to best serve our children and families each staff member needs to be available to work during their agreed upon work arrangements and schedule based on their job position.

When needing to use Emergency PTO, classroom staff must call the Substitute & Volunteer Coordinator directly at (717) 753-0542 by 6:00AM regardless of working the AM or PM shift. All other staff should contact their supervisor, if they will not be at work.

If unable to arrive at work on time, or if a staff member will be absent for an entire day, classroom staff and staff who require coverage must call the Emergency PTO line by 6:00AM regardless of their shift start time. And also contact their supervisor as soon as possible, no later than the supervisor's requested time frame. All other staff should contact their supervisor, if they are late or will not be at work. Classroom staff members should also review the operations manual procedures in their program for further call off information.

Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will result in discipline up to and including termination. Failure to show up or call in for a scheduled shift without prior approval may result in termination. If a staff member fails to report to work or call to inform the supervisor of the absence for 3 consecutive days or more, the staff member will be considered to have voluntarily resigned employment.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are used to provide information based on qualifications of a position, minimum education levels required, dual language needs, if applicable, physical functions, work environment, and job duty overviews.

Complete job descriptions for all First Start positions are available in the shared OneDrive folder. [Insert hyperlink] These descriptions include detailed information about responsibilities, qualifications, and performance expectations for each role.

Job Performance

General Expectations for Job Performance

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families (First Start) invests a great deal of time and resources in identifying, selecting, training, mentoring and supervising our staff members. It is in the organization's best interest for staff to be successful. When YOU are successful, our children are successful, our Community Hubs are successful, and our organization is successful.

First Start's policies reflect our Core Values of Compassion; Equity; Family; Excellence; and Partnerships. We have high expectations for excellence – AND we understand that growth and learning take time, practice, and support. This process, called **Continuous Quality Improvement**, or CQI – is the basis of our Head Start Program Performance Standards, Pre-K Counts Standards, NAEYC Standards, and our entire organization.

The continuous growth and development of an individual's skills, knowledge, and job performance is a critical component of CQI. While some learning happens with formal education and training, most professional growth happens through less "formal" experiences in on-the-job application, learning from mistakes, and engaging in intentional reflection. As such, regular and ongoing communication with and between staff members, mentors, supervisors, and coaches regarding expectations and job performance is critically important to a staff member's full understanding of a complex work environment. This communication can be initiated by staff members, coaches, and/or supervisors.

In general, a "job performance" expectation for all First Start staff is to follow and demonstrate the professional standards mentioned above. If/When there is an opportunity to enhance an individual's understanding of specific expectations, or there is a concern about a staff member's job performance, the communication initiated will depend on the nature of the situation/concern. The information below provides descriptions, examples, and documentation related to job performance communications.

Regularly Scheduled Job Performance Communications

1. **Annual Performance Review:** All staff participate in an annual performance review with their supervisor to formally reflect on and document job performance successes and goals. This is a culmination of evidence reviewed and discussed throughout the year in regular meetings between a staff member and supervisor. Specific directions and required documentation will be distributed by the Human Resources Director. Note: The Annual Performance Review should never be the first time a staff member hears about a job performance concern.

(**Introductory Performance Review:** All newly hired staff will meet with their supervisor for an Introductory Performance Review approximately 12 weeks after their start date.)

2. **Monthly/Regular Individual Meetings with Supervisor:** Monthly meetings are held between staff members and supervisors. The purpose of these meetings is to track and discuss progress on goals, child outcomes, or other metrics related to job expectations, review and analyze child and/or teacher data, and troubleshoot challenges. Documentation is uploaded to ChildPlus and accessible to the staff member.

Performance Enhancement Communications

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) requires clarity of expectations, while also expecting that learning is a *process*, not an event. This section, previously called "Disciplinary Action" outlines the clarity of the expectations, and accompanying documentation, in four categories:

1. Immediate Feedback:

When a supervisor, staff member or coach observes a “critical incident” that *could jeopardize the safety and/or health of a child or another person*, **the person must immediately go to the individual and privately, verbally share the observation, along with an expectation going forward.**

This immediate feedback helps the staff member more clearly understand written expectations, which can be easily misunderstood, especially when someone is in a newer role.

Follow up: The supervisor staff member will enter the “critical incident” into ChildPlusas to document the event and the expectations that were shared with the staff member. reflection of what occurred, what was said, by whom, and what he or she will do next time (per the person’s advice).

2. Performance Success Plan – N (for **NON-SERIOUS** performance concerns):

A non-serious performance concern can be described as any behavior or action that does not align with performance expectations (as defined by job description and professional standards outline by NAEYC, Office of Head Start, or PA Pre-K Counts), but **DOES NOT** result in potential risk for a child or adult’s safety or health. Examples could include, but are not limited to:

1. A staff member is repeatedly* absent, tardy, or late to work (removed paperwork piece)
2. A staff member repeatedly* initiates or engages in interpersonal conflicts
3. A staff member repeatedly* intentionally disregards (non- or low-risk) policies
4. Any other short-term issue that can be resolved through discussion with the staff member, and Human Resources as needed

*repeatedly = three or more times

In the event of a non-serious performance concern, a Performance Success Plan - N (PSP-N) will be initiated to define and communicate non-serious performance concerns that have been previously communicated by the supervisor and/or coach, but have not been satisfactorily resolved with training and coaching.

The Performance Success Plan - N is written as a three-month process, with monthly progress reviews by a supervisor and/or coach, and a final evaluation meeting with all participants to assess the extent to which the staff member's performance concerns have been resolved. The process includes initial documentation and assessment of concerns, a formal meeting to develop specific improvement goals with timelines and support resources, ongoing implementation with regular check-ins, and systematic monitoring throughout the three-month period. (Please see Director's Manual for procedure and forms). Documentation will be filed in the staff member's permanent performance record in ChildPlus (and accessible to the staff member).

3. Performance Success Plan - S (for **SERIOUS** performance concerns):

A serious performance concern can be described as anything that **jeopardizes the safety and/or health of a child or another person**. This includes:

1. A staff member leaves a child or children unattended.
2. A staff member leaves children out of ratio for more than five minutes.
3. A staff member repeatedly neglects (three or more times) using active supervision strategies.
4. A staff member repeatedly does not follow safety protocol (three or more times) when an adult or child is injured.
5. A Staff member does not renew required clearances or staff physicals.

6. A Staff member refuses to sign required acknowledgements.

In the event of a serious performance concern, a Performance Success Plan - S (PSP-S) will be initiated to define and communicate areas of *serious* performance concern, recognize gaps in work performance, review First Start expectations, and provide staff members the opportunity to demonstrate improvement, commitment and success.

The Performance Success Plan - S is written as a three-month process, with bi-weekly observations by a supervisor and/or coach, and a final “exit” interview with all observers to discuss the extent to which the staff member’s performance has improved. (Please see Director’s Manual for procedure and forms). The Human Resources Department will be consulted for all Performance Success Plans - S, and the documentation will be filed in the staff member’s permanent performance record in ChildPlus (and accessible to the staff member).

The Performance Success Plan - S is NOT to be used for absences, tardiness, interpersonal conflicts, and/or short-term issues that can be resolved through discussion with the staff member, and Human Resources consultations as needed.

4. **Immediate Dismissal Notice:** The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct outlines several expectations that are required of all staff members, board members, and volunteers. The following outlines the reason(s) for **immediate dismissal**, temporary and/or permanent, pending an investigation, with or without pay, depending on the circumstances:

1. A staff member is observed physically or emotionally harming a child or children.
2. A staff member is observed physically or emotionally harming a colleague.
3. A staff member is observed physically or emotionally harming any family member or guardian.

“Harming a child” does NOT include **unintentional** child neglect (such a lapse in active supervision incident) **UNLESS it occurs three times in one school year, OR the staff member fails to make improvements necessary within three months of the incident.**

Background Checks

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families requires all new and current staff members to obtain clearances from the Pennsylvania State Police, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) with fingerprints, Department of Human Services Child Abuse History, and a sex offender registry. The checks are done in accordance to HS Performance Standards, applicable laws/regulations, and as required by the PA Department of Human Services.

All current staff members are required to renew clearances every 60 months (5 years) and submit documentation to Human Resources to remain in the classroom. Additionally, staff members may be required to re-submit clearances at any time during their employment.

Health Assessments

Employment at First Start Partnerships for Children and Families is contingent upon receipt of the completed Staff Physical form in which a licensed health care provider indicates fitness for duty.

All staff members are expected to be able to perform physical activities that may include: lifting and

carrying young children or boxes and office materials, activities such as bending, twisting, kneeling, stooping, getting up and down from the floor, playing outside, close interactions with children, food preparation, office work, desk work, and must be able to lift at least 40lbs.

Staff members are required to obtain a Staff Physical and TB test prior to hiring and must have a bi-annual staff physical examination and TB Risk Assessment.

Child Abuse Mandated Reporting and Training

At First Start Partnerships for Children and Families, all staff are mandated reporters. According to Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), as mandated reporters, staff members are legally obligated to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate state agency. For more information on Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law, visit www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov.

Staff members are required to report incidents where there is reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred or there is a substantial risk that abuse or neglect may occur, either in the care of the FSP program or outside of the program. It is not the responsibility of the program to investigate whether abuse or neglect actually occurred, but rather to report probable incidents. Any staff member who is the subject of a reported case of abuse or neglect will be removed from contact with children during the investigation and until the charge is fully resolved.

Staff who report suspicions of child abuse and/or neglect will not be discharged, retaliated against, or receive other disciplinary action for that reason alone, unless it is proven that a report was made with the intention to do harm.

For detailed procedures, further information, and resource materials, on Child Abuse Mandated Reporting please go to the Health and Safety Manual which is found in KRONOS/ UKG, under My Company, and Documents.

Training- All staff members must participate at least once every five years in the required Child Abuse Mandated Reporter training program. This training must be done through an identified and approved vendor. Staff members must submit the training's certificate of completion to the Human Resources department.

On an annual basis all staff members and volunteers must participate in a training inclusive of abuse prevention elements, such as: abuse & types of abuse, inappropriate and appropriate behaviors, proper methods for contact with individuals, how to identify & report when inappropriate behavior is observed as a policy violation, consumer complaints, identifying red flag behaviors, how to report & handle policy violations, and how to document internal feedback systems.

Outside Employment

Staff members are permitted outside employment as long as it does not interfere with their job performance with First Start Partnerships for Children and Families. Staff members are expected to work their assigned schedules. Outside employment will not be considered an excuse for poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, refusal to travel, or refusal to work overtime or different hours.

If outside work activity causes or contributes to job-related problems, it must be discontinued, or the staff member may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Dress and Grooming

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families provides a casual yet professional work environment for its staff members. Even though the dress code is casual, it is important to project a professional image to our children/ families, visitors, and coworkers. Any staff member working in a school district building will adhere to the school district's dress code expectations. All staff members are expected to dress in a manner consistent with good hygiene, safety, and good taste. Please use common sense.

Any questions or complaints regarding the appropriateness of attire should be directed to your supervisor.

Social Media Acceptable Use

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families encourages staff members to share information with co-workers and with those outside the company for the purposes of gathering information, generating new ideas, and learning from the work of others. Social media provides inexpensive, informal, and timely ways to participate in an exchange of ideas and information. However, information posted on a website is available to the public and, therefore, the company has established the following guidelines for staff members participation in social media.

Communications between staff and enrolled families – of a professional nature must take place through company provided communication tools.

Note: As used in this policy, “social media” refers to blogs, forums, and social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and SnapChat, among others.

Off-duty use of social media. Staff members may maintain personal websites or blogs on their own time using their own facilities. Staff members must ensure that social media activity does not interfere with their work. In general, the company considers social media activities to be personal endeavors, and staff members may use them to express their thoughts or promote their ideas.

On-duty use of social media. Staff members may engage in social media activity during work time provided it is directly related to their work

Respect. Demonstrate respect for the dignity of the company, its Board of Directors, its children/families, its vendors, and its staff members. A social media site is a public place, and staff members should avoid inappropriate comments. For example, staff members should not divulge First Start Partnerships for Children and Families confidential information. Similarly, staff members should not engage in harassing or discriminatory behavior that targets other staff or individuals because of their protected class status or make defamatory comments. Even if a message is posted anonymously, it may be possible to trace it back to the sender.

Post disclaimers. If a staff member identifies himself or herself as a company staff member or discusses matters related to the company on a social media site, the site must include a disclaimer on the front page stating that it does not express the views of the company and that the staff member is expressing only his or her personal views. For example: “The views expressed on this website/blog are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.” Place the disclaimer in a prominent position and repeat it for each posting expressing an opinion related to the company or the company's business. Staff members must keep in mind that if they post information on a social media site that is in violation of company policy and/or federal, state, or local law, the disclaimer will

not shield them from disciplinary action.

Confidentiality. Do not identify or reference children, families, other staff members, or vendors without express permission. Staff members may write about their jobs in general but may not disclose any confidential or proprietary information. For examples of confidential information, please refer to the confidentiality policy. When in doubt, ask before publishing.

New ideas. Please remember that new ideas related to work or the company's business belong to the company. Do not post them on a social media site without the company's permission.

Trademarks and copyrights. Do not use the company's or others' trademarks on a social media site, or reproduce the company's or others' material without first obtaining permission.

Legal. Staff members are expected to comply with all applicable laws, including but not limited to, copyright, trademark, and harassment laws.

Discipline. Violations of this policy may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment.

Note: Nothing in this policy is meant to, nor should it be interpreted to, in any way limit your rights under any applicable federal, state, or local laws, including your rights under the National Labor Relations Act to engage in protected concerted activities with other staff members to improve or discuss terms and conditions of employment, such as wages, working conditions, and benefits.

Legal Postings

All required governmental postings are posted on the boards located in the break room or in an area that staff members gather in each work building site and located on the First Start Partnerships for Children and Families website. These boards may also contain general announcements.

Solicitation

Staff members should be able to work in an environment that is free from unnecessary annoyances and interference with their work. In order to protect our staff members and visitors, solicitation by staff members is strictly prohibited while either the staff member being solicited or the staff member doing the soliciting is on "working time." "Working time" is defined as time during which a staff member is not at a meal, on break, or on the premises immediately before or after his or her shift.

Staff members are also prohibited from distributing written materials, handbills, or any other type of literature on working time and, at all times, in "working areas," which includes all office areas. "Working areas" do not include break rooms, parking lots, or common areas shared by staff members during nonworking time.

Non-staff members may not trespass or solicit or distribute materials anywhere on company property at any time.

Computers, Internet, Email, and Other Resources

The company provides a wide variety of communication tools and resources to staff members for use in running day-to-day business activities. Whether it is the telephone, voice mail, fax, scanner, Internet, intranet, e-mail, text messaging, or any other company-provided technology, use should be

reserved for business-related matters during working hours. All communication using these tools should be handled in a professional and respectful manner.

Staff members should not have any expectation of privacy in their use of a company computer, phone, or other communication tools. All communications made using company-provided equipment or services including email and internet activity, are subject to inspection by the company. Staff members should keep in mind that even if they delete an email, voicemail or other communication, a copy may be archived on the company's systems.

You should be aware that information transmitted through e-mail and the internet is not completely secure or may contain viruses or malware, and information you transmit and receive could damage the company's systems as well as the reputation and/or competitiveness of the company. To protect against possible problems, delete any e-mail messages prior to opening that are received from unknown senders and advertisers. It also is against company policy to turn off antivirus protection software or make unauthorized changes to system configurations installed on company computers. Violations of this policy may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment.

The company encourages staff members to use e-mail only to communicate with fellow staff members, suppliers, community representatives, children/ families, business partners, or potential children/ families regarding company business. Internal and external e-mails are considered business records and may be subject to federal and state recordkeeping requirements as well as to discovery in the event of litigation. Be aware of this possibility when sending e-mails within and outside the company.

All use of company-provided communications systems, including e-mail and internet use, should conform to our company guidelines/policies, including but not limited to the Equal

Opportunity, Harassment, Confidential Information, and Conflicts of Interest. For example, staff members should not engage in harassing or discriminatory behavior that targets other staff members or individuals because of their protected class status or make defamatory comments. Similarly, staff members should not divulge confidential information such as children/ families lists, or information restricted from disclosure by law on social media sites.

Because e-mail, telephone and voicemail, and internet communication equipment are provided for company business purposes and are critical to the company's success, your communications may be accessed without further notice by Information Technology contractor administrators and company management to ensure compliance with this guideline.

The electronic communication systems are not secure and may allow inadvertent disclosure, accidental transmission to third parties, etc. Sensitive information should not be sent via unsecured electronic means.

Office telephones are for business purposes. While the company recognizes that some personal calls are necessary, these should be kept as brief as possible and to a minimum. Personal use of the company's cell phones is strictly prohibited. Abuse of these privileges is subject to corrective action up to and including termination.

The company reserves the right to monitor customer calls to ensure staff members abide by company quality guidelines and provide appropriate levels of customer service.

Nothing in this policy is designed to interfere with, restrain, or prevent staff communications regarding wages, hours, or other terms and conditions of employment as protected under the National Labor Relations Act. Staff members have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.

Staff Cell Phone Usage During Classroom Hours

First Start values classroom engagement by limiting staff cell phone use to authorized educational purposes and emergency situations only, restricting personal calls, texts, social media, and non-educational browsing during classroom hours.

Vehicle Use

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families provides vehicles for business use to allow staff members to conduct company-designated business. Staff members are reimbursed for business use of personal vehicles according to specific guidelines.

Time Off and Leaves of Absence

Holidays

The company observes and allows time off with pay for the following holidays:

- Martin Luther King Day
- Presidents' Day
- Spring Break
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous Peoples (Columbus) Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Break
- Winter Break
- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day

Any additional holidays will be designated by the company at the start of each calendar year.

If one of these holidays falls on a Sunday, it will be observed on the following Monday. If the holiday falls on a Saturday, the company will select either the following Monday or the preceding Friday as a substitute holiday. The company reserves the right to pay eligible staff members in lieu of time off if the holiday falls on Saturday.

Holiday pay. Full-time regular staff members are eligible for holiday pay. Part-time staff members are eligible for holiday pay.

Holiday pay shall be at the staff member's regular straight-time rate, inclusive of shift premiums, times his regularly scheduled hours (not to exceed 7.5 hours).

A holiday shall not be considered as 7.5 hours worked for the purpose of computing overtime.

Emergency Make up Days. Holidays may be used when it becomes necessary to schedule an emergency closure make up day to assure the number of classroom days are provided to our students. Up to four holidays will be named each school year; based on the area school districts makeup schedule to potentially work on an already designated holiday.

Religious observances. Staff members who need time off to observe religious practices or holidays not already scheduled by the company should speak with their supervisor. Depending upon program needs, the staff member may be able to work on a day that is normally observed as a holiday and then take time off for another religious day. Staff members may also be able take PTO time, or take off unpaid days. The company will seek to reasonably accommodate individuals' religious observances.

PTO- Paid Time Off

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families recognizes the importance of time off from work to relax, spend time with family, and enjoy leisure activities. First Start Partnerships also acknowledges the need for staff members to obtain medical care, recover from illness, and manage overall wellness. The company provides paid PTO time to full-time staff members for this purpose and staff are encouraged to take PTO during the year. (Note: PTO includes sick, vacation, and personal time off.)

Full-time staff members will accrue paid time off according to the following schedule:

Up to Number of Hours/Days Annually

		Work Weeks (7.5hrs/day)	Work Weeks (7.5hrs/day)	Work Weeks (7.5hrs/day)	Work Weeks (7.5hrs/day)	Work Weeks (7.5hrs/day)
		42	44	48	50	52
1 year or Less	Days	13	14	15	16	17
2 to 3 years	Days	17	18	20	21	22
4 years	Days	21	22	25	26	27
5 to 9 years	Days	23	25	28	29	30
10 to 14 years	Days	25	28	31	32	33
15 plus years	Days	27	29	33	34	35
*If you work less than 37.5 hours per week your PTO will be pro-rated based on the number hours you work						

Staff members may take paid time off prior to their full accrual of time for the year.

Requesting PTO time.

Generally, staff members will submit PTO plans to their supervisor at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested time off date. In order to request time off a staff member will data enter their time off request through their UKG account.

If a staff member has an unexpected need arise (other than Emergency-PTO for illness/ emergency) for a request that is less than 4 weeks away, the staff member should first discuss the request with their supervisor to see if it is feasible and then enter the request in UKG, if it will be approved.

Managers have the right to designate when some or all of PTO must be taken.

Using PTO time.

PTO time will only be taken in half-day (4 hours) or full-day (7.5 hours) increments. Schedule adjustments can be utilized, with approval from the staff member's supervisor, if it does not occur during child-facing times.

Emergency PTO time.

When needing to use Emergency PTO, classroom staff must call the Substitute & Volunteer Coordinator directly at (717) 753-0542 by 6:00AM regardless of working the AM or PM shift. All other staff should contact their supervisor, if they will not be at work.

Carry Over of PTO time.

PTO should be used in the year it is earned. Staff members will be permitted to carry-over up to 10 days of accrued PTO to the following fiscal year at the end of each fiscal year. No PTO will be granted two weeks prior to a staff member's resignation/ last day to work. Time associated with PTO is not payable to a staff member who leaves the organization.

Family and Medical Leave

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families complies with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which requires employers to grant unpaid leaves of absence to qualified workers for certain medical and family-related reasons. The company also abides by other mandated leave stipulations through any federal, state and local leave laws. The more generous of the laws will apply to the staff members if the staff member is eligible under both federal and state laws.

Please note there are many requirements, qualifications, and exceptions under these laws, and each staff member's situation is different. Contact the Human Resources department to discuss options for leave.

The FMLA requires private employers with 50 or more staff members and all public agencies, including state, local, and federal employers, and local education agencies (schools), to provide eligible staff up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in any 12-month period for certain family and medical reasons. The 12-month period is a rolling period measured backward from the date a staff member uses any FMLA leave, except for leaves to care for a covered service member with a serious illness or injury. For those leaves, the leave entitlement is 26 weeks in a single 12-month period, measured forward from the date a staff member first takes that type of leave.

Basic Leave Entitlement. The FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible staff members for the following reasons: (1) for incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or child birth; (2) to care for the staff member's child after birth or placement for adoption or foster care; (3) to care for the staff member's spouse, son or daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition; or (4) for a serious health condition that makes the staff member unable to work.

Military Family Leave Entitlements. Eligible staff members with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or called to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include addressing issues that arise from (1) short notice of deployment (limited to up to seven days of leave); (2) attending certain military events and related activity; (3) arranging childcare and school activities; (4) addressing certain financial and legal arrangements; (5) attending certain counseling sessions; (6) spending time with covered military family members on short-term temporary rest and recuperation leave (limited to up to five days of leave); (7) attending post-deployment reintegration briefings; (8) arranging care for or providing care to a parent who is incapable of self-care; and (9) any additional activities agreed upon by the employer and staff that arise out of the military member's active duty or call to active duty.

The FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible staff to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered service member during a single 12-month period. A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform his or her duties and for which the service member is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

Benefits and Protections During FMLA Leave. During FMLA leave, the Company will maintain the staff member's health coverage under any "group health plan" on the same terms as if the staff member had continued to work. Upon return from FMLA leave, most staff members will be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms. However, a staff member on FMLA leave does not have any greater right to reinstatement or to other benefits and conditions of employment than if the staff member had been continuously employed during the FMLA leave period.

Staff members will use accrued PTO during their time off work while on FMLA. In the event a staff member is off work, unpaid, for at least ten consecutive work days and will not receive a pay check; Paid Time Off hours are not accrued during that time period.

Certain highly compensated key staff members also may be denied reinstatement when necessary to prevent "substantial and grievous economic injury" to the Company's operations. A "key" staff member is an eligible salaried staff member who is among the highest paid ten percent of the Company's staff within 75 miles of the worksite. Staff members will be notified of their status as a key staff member, when applicable, after they request FMLA leave.

Use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of a staff member's leave.

Staff Member Eligibility. The FMLA defines eligible staff members as a staff member who: (1) have worked for the Company for at least 12 months; (2) have worked for the Company for at least 1,250 hours in the previous 12 months; and (3) work at or report to a worksite which has 50 or more staff members or is within 75 miles of Company worksites that taken together have a total of 50 or more staff members.

Definition of Serious Health Condition. A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility or

continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the staff members from performing the functions of the staff member's job or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school, work, or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

Use of Leave. A staff member does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced work schedule when medically necessary. Staff members must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the employer's operations. Leave due to qualifying exigencies also may be taken on an intermittent or reduced work schedule basis.

Substitution of Paid Leave for Unpaid Leave. Staff members may choose or employers may require the use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. Accordingly, the Company requires staff members to use any accrued paid PTO and sick days during an unpaid FMLA leave taken because of the staff member's own serious health condition or the serious health condition of a family member or to care for a seriously ill or injured family member in the military. In addition, the staff member must use any accrued PTO (but not sick days) during FMLA leave taken to care for a newborn or newly placed child or for a qualifying exigency arising out of a family member's active duty or call to active duty status in support of a contingency operation. In order to use paid leave for FMLA leave, staff members must comply with the Company's normal paid leave procedures found in its PTO and Sick Leave policies.

Staff Members Responsibilities. Staff members must provide 30 days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days' notice is not possible, the staff member must provide notice as soon as practicable and generally must comply with the Company's normal call-in procedures. The Company may delay leave to staff members who do not provide proper advance notice of the foreseeable need for leave, absent unusual circumstances preventing the notice.

Staff members must provide sufficient information for the Company to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave.

Sufficient information may include that the staff member is unable to perform job functions, the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Staff members also must inform the Company if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified. Staff members also are required to provide a certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave.

The Company also may require a second, and if necessary, a third opinion (at the Company's expense) and, when the leave is a result of the staff member's own serious health condition, a fitness for duty report to return to work. The Company also may delay or deny approval of leave for lack of proper medical certification.

Company Responsibilities. The Company will inform staff members requesting leave whether they are eligible under the FMLA. If they are, the notice will specify any additional information required as

well as the staff member's rights and responsibilities. If staff members are not eligible, the Company will provide a reason for the ineligibility.

The Company will inform staff members if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the staff member's FMLA leave entitlement. If the Company determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the Company will notify the staff member.

Other Provisions. Under an exception to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in the FMLA regulations, hourly amounts may be deducted for unpaid leave from the salary of executive, administrative, and professional staff members; outside sales representatives; certain highly- skilled computer professionals; and certain highly compensated staff members who are exempt from the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the FLSA, without affecting the staff member's exempt status. This special exception to the "salary basis" requirements for the FLSA's exemptions extends only to eligible staff member's use of FMLA leave.

Staff members may not perform work for self-employment or for any other employer during an approved leave of absence, except when the leave is for military or public service or when the Company has approved the employment under its Outside Employment policy and the staff member's reason for FMLA leave does not preclude the outside employment.

Unlawful Acts by Employers. The FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer (1) to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under the FMLA; or (2) to discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to the FMLA.

Enforcement. A staff member may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.

The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights.

Emergency Leave

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families provides emergency leaves of absence that are authorized, without pay, to full-time staff members for up to six (6) weeks. Emergency leaves of absence may be available to staff members who have not yet qualified for or have exhausted all FMLA and/or whose situation is not a qualifying event. It is not intended to simply provide staff members with additional time off.

Military Leave

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families supports the military obligations of all staff members and grants leave for uniformed service in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Any staff member who needs time off for uniformed service should immediately notify the Human Resources department and his or her supervisor, who will provide details regarding the leave. If a staff member is unable to provide notice before leaving for uniformed service, a family member should notify the supervisor as soon as possible.

Upon return from military leave, staff members will be granted the same seniority, pay, and benefits as if they had worked continuously. Failure to report for work within the prescribed time after

completion of military service will be considered a voluntary termination.

All staff members who enter military service may accumulate a total absence of 5 years and still retain employment rights.

Bereavement Leave

Paid bereavement leave will be granted according to the following schedule:

1. Staff members will receive up to five (5) workdays of paid leave in the event of the death of the staff's spouse, domestic partner, child, unborn child, parent, stepparent, or stepchildren. Staff may request additional time off if needed beyond the allotted bereavement days using PTO or unpaid time by speaking with their supervisor
2. Staff members will receive up to three (3) work days off in the event of the death of the staff member's father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, grandparent, grandchildren, step grandparent, step grandchildren or spouse's grandparent. Staff may request additional time off if needed beyond the allotted bereavement days using PTO or unpaid time by speaking with their supervisor.

The company may require verification of the need for the leave. The staff member's supervisor and Human Resources will consider this time off on a case-by-case basis.

Payment for bereavement leave is computed at the regular hourly rate to a maximum of 7.5 hours for 1 day. Time off granted in accordance with this policy shall not be credited as time worked for the purpose of computing overtime.

Jury Duty/Court Appearance

The company supports staff members in their civic duty to serve on a jury. Staff members must present any summons to jury duty to their supervisor as soon as possible after receiving the notice to allow advance planning for a staff member's absence.

Staff members will be paid for up to 2 weeks of jury duty service at their regular rate of pay if they serve jury duty. All staff members may use any accrued time off if required to serve more than 2 weeks on a jury.

If a staff member is released from jury duty after 4 hours or less of service, he or she must report to work for the remainder of that work day.

Time for appearance in court for personal business will be the individual staff member's responsibility. Normally, PTO days will be used for this purpose.

Time Off for Voting

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families recognizes that voting is a right and privilege of being a citizen of the United States and encourages staff members to exercise their right to vote. In almost all cases, you will have sufficient time outside working hours to vote. If for any reason you think this won't be the case, contact your supervisor to discuss scheduling accommodations.

Staff Benefits

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families recognizes the value of benefits to staff members and their families. The company supports staff members by offering a comprehensive and competitive benefits program. For more information regarding benefit programs, please refer to the company Summary Plan Descriptions (SPD), which are found on the company website and benefits selection web database, or contact the Human Resources department. To the extent of the information provided here conflicts with the SPD or full plan document, the full plan document will control.

Medical, Dental, and Vision Insurance

Full-time staff members working 30 hours or more per week are eligible for insurance on the first of the month following 30 days after the date of hire. To keep coverage in force, every insured staff member must work a minimum of 30 hours per week.

Group Life Insurance/ A.D.&D. Policy

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families provides life insurance for full-time staff members who work a minimum of 30 hours per week. Staff members are eligible for this benefit on the first of the month following 30 days after the date of hire. The cost of this coverage is paid for in full by the company.

Short-Term Disability

Short-term disability is offered to full-time staff members, at no cost to the staff member, working a minimum of 30 hours per week. Staff members are eligible for this benefit on the first of the month following 30 days after the date of hire. If a staff member becomes disabled and cannot work for a short period of time, this coverage pays 60 percent of the staff member's salary, up to the policy limits. In addition, staff members will not be paid PTO or sick leave for approved absences covered by the company's program, except to supplement the short-term disability benefits.

Short-term disability benefits may run concurrently with FMLA leave and/or any other leave where permitted by state and federal law.

401(k) Plan

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families recognizes the importance of saving for retirement and offers eligible staff members a 401(k) plan.

Eligibility, vesting, and all other matters relating to these plans are explained in the Staff Resources page of our First Start Partnerships company website.

Workers' Compensation

Workers' compensation is a "no-fault" system that provides compensation for medical expenses and wage losses to staff members who are injured or who become ill because of employment.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families pays the entire cost of workers' compensation insurance. The insurance provides coverage for related medical and rehabilitation expenses and a

portion of lost wages to staff members who sustain an injury on the job.

The company abides by all applicable state workers' compensation laws and regulations.

If a staff member sustains a job-related injury or illness, it is important to notify the supervisor and Human Resources immediately. The staff member will complete an injury report and return the form to the Human Resources department within 24 hours of the injury. Human Resources will file the claim with the insurance company. In cases of true medical emergencies, report to the nearest emergency room.

Workers' compensation benefits (paid or unpaid) will run concurrently with FMLA leave, if applicable, where permitted by state and federal law. In addition, staff members will not be paid PTO or sick leave for approved absences covered by the company's workers' compensation program, except to supplement the workers' compensation benefits such as when the plan only covers a portion of the staff member's salary as allowed by state law.

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a resource designed to provide highly confidential and experienced help for staff members in dealing with issues that affect their lives and the quality of their job performance. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families wants staff members to be able to maintain a healthy balance of work and family that allows them to enjoy life. The EAP is a confidential counseling and referral service that can help staff members successfully deal with life's challenges.

This free, comprehensive counseling service offers staff members a pre-determined number of visits per issue each year, and a 24-hour hotline answered by professional, degreed counselors.

For legal or financial issues, staff members may receive a discount on any services that might be needed.

The company encourages staff members to use this valuable service whenever they have such a need. Staff members who choose to use these counseling services are assured the information disclosed in their sessions is confidential and not available to the company, nor is the company given any information on who chooses to use the services. For questions or additional information about this program, staff members may contact the Human Resources department. More information and links to the EAP website can be found in First Start's monthly staff e- newsletter.

Professional Development

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families provides opportunities for staff members to create a goal plan and *learn about* opportunities for professional growth through *training, education, coaching and mentoring*. Staff members are expected to oversee their own professional development learning by participating and attending in all scheduled professional development events, activities, and meetings.

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families recognizes that the skills and knowledge of its staff members are critical to the success of the organization. Educational Assistance for coursework also encourages personal and professional development through formal education so staff members can elect to maintain and improve job-related skills or enhance their ability to compete for jobs within First Start Partnerships for Children and Families.

Educational Assistance First Start Partnerships provides Educational Assistance to eligible staff members for continuing education through an accredited program that either offers growth in an area related to his or her current position or that may lead to promotional opportunities. This education may include college credit courses and continuing education unit courses that are job-related.

A full-time staff member is eligible to apply for educational assistance if the staff member has worked for First Start Partnerships for at least one year and has no active disciplinary actions. The Program Director may also reserve the right to request for a staff member to apply for educational assistance earlier than their one year of service period.

Under this program, eligible staff who enroll in a degree, certification program, or college credit courses may be reimbursed up to \$1200 per class for a three-credit course (Child Development Associate (CDA), Associate or Bachelor degree) and up to \$1500 per class for a three-credit course (for a Master's degree) for up to three classes per fiscal year (August 1 – July 31). Amounts are subject to change based on budget availability.

If the Educational Assistance Application/ Expense agreement is approved. The approved educational assistance will be paid directly to the institution. All tuition assistance is based on funding availability. A staff member must secure a passing grade of at least a "C" or its equivalent for an Associates or Bachelor degree credit or obtain a certification to receive the assistance. And for a staff member taking a Master degree credit course the staff member must secure a passing grade of at least a "B". Completed coursework must be validated by providing a copy of the final grade or certification received.

Apprenticeship Program First Start Partnerships also provides Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship opportunities to staff members who have been employed for at least 6 months and have no disciplinary actions. The Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship program allows staff members to earn college credit through on-the-job learning and demonstration of competency attainment. Throughout the program, apprentices are provided with support from an on-site coach as well as structured release-time to complete coursework. Please see your supervisor for more information of how to apply.

Staff Acknowledgements

All staff are expected to review and complete acknowledgments of the Staff Handbook; Conflict of Interest Disclosure; and Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment as a new hire, annually, and as needed if major amendments occur during the year outside of the normal annual cycle. These acknowledgements of receipt ensure that staff members understand their responsibilities of adhering to and abiding by the Staff Handbook policies and other materials provided.

STAFF HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECEIPT

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the staff handbook of First Start Partnerships for Children and Families. I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies in the handbook.

I understand that the handbook and all other written and oral materials provided to me are intended for informational purposes only. Neither it, company practices, nor other communications create an employment contract or term. I understand that the policies and benefits, both in the handbook and those communicated to me in any other fashion, are subject to interpretation, review, removal, and change by management at any time without notice.

I further understand that my employment is at will and that neither this document nor any other communication shall bind the company to employ me now or hereafter and that my employment may be terminated by me or the company without reason at any time. I understand that no representative of the company has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period of time or to assure any other personnel action or to assure any benefits or terms or conditions of employment, or make any agreement contrary to the foregoing.

I also understand and agree that this agreement may not be modified orally and that only the president or CEO of the company may make a commitment for employment. I also understand that if such an agreement is made, it must be in writing and signed by the president or CEO of the company.

Staff member's Name in Print

Signature of Staff Member

Date Signed by Staff Member

TO BE PLACED IN STAFF 'S PERSONNEL FILE