



**First Start  
Partnerships**  
*for* **Children & Families**

# STAFF HANDBOOK



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## Welcome

**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 organization is recognized as Pennsylvania's highest level of quality – 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.

We serve hundreds of children and their families in all five Franklin County School Districts: Chambersburg Area School District, Fannett-Metal School District, Greencastle Antrim School District, Tuscarora School District, and Waynesboro Area School District. We continue to grow as we identify more children and families who need our services.

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; 75% in the child's first year. Each person that joins First Start Partnerships for Children and Families is helping our children build those brain connections. *Each and every* one of us is responsible for the physical and emotional health, social connections, and academic readiness for learning of our children and families.

Together, with our Board of Directors and Policy Council, we collectively journey towards 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:** *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 commitment to building stronger families.*

Our program has a long history, beginning Head Start services in 1965. In 2008, we began partnering with school districts to provide Pre-K Counts programming, and in 2009, we began our Early Head Start program.

We welcome you to our growing program, and hope that this Staff Handbook will guide you in your early days and weeks as you begin making the countless decisions you make each day to meet our collective goals. We also hope that you return to this Staff Handbook often, to reconnect to what brings you to this work, and our organization's 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 you will find in this Staff Handbook. Our doors are always open to listen to your questions, concerns and ideas for meeting our goals.

In service to our children, families, and community,  
Annette Searfoss, Ph.D.  
President & CEO

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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.



# 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 our selves to be come who we want to be.



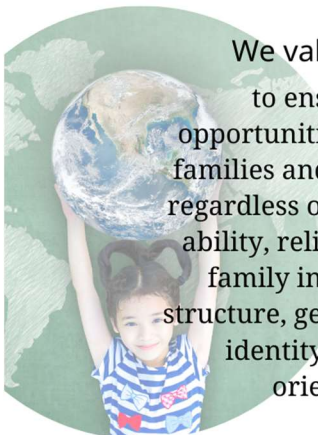
## We value **excellence**

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 Mission:**

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

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, 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.<sup>70</sup> 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 President & CEO 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 race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religious creed, union membership, age, AIDS or HIV status, disability, gender identity or expression, results of genetic testing, or service in the military or any other characteristics protected by federal, state, or local laws. Equal employment opportunity applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leave of absence, compensation, and training.

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 Harassment and Complaint Procedure.

## **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 will make reasonable accommodations 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 a 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.

## **Harassment and Complaint Procedure**

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, such as race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religious creed, union membership, age, AIDS or HIV status, disability, gender identity or expression, results of genetic testing, or service in the military or other characteristic protected by state or federal law, is prohibited.

It is First Start Partnerships for Children and Families' policy to provide a work environment free of sexual and other harassment. To that end, harassment of First Start Partnerships for Children and Families' staff members by management, supervisors, coworkers, or non-staff members who are in the workplace is absolutely prohibited. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has reported sexual or other harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. First Start Partnerships for Children and Families will take all steps necessary to prevent and eliminate unlawful harassment.

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

Unlawful harassment includes, but is not limited to, epithets; slurs; jokes; pranks; innuendo; comments; written or graphic material; stereotyping; or other threatening, hostile, or intimidating acts based on race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, veteran status, or other characteristic protected by state or federal law.

**Definition of Sexual Harassment.** While all forms of harassment are prohibited, special attention should be paid to sexual harassment. "Sexual harassment" is generally defined under both state and federal law as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of any individual's employment or as a basis for employment decisions; *or*
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Other sexually oriented conduct, whether intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a work environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to workers may also constitute sexual harassment.

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct that, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending on the totality of the circumstances, including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwanted sexual advances, whether they involve physical touching or not;

- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life, comments about an individual's body, comments about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing up against the body, sexual gestures, or suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences; *and*
- Discussion of one's sexual activities.

All staff members should take special note that, as stated above, retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of sexual harassment complaint is unlawful and will not be tolerated at First Start Partnerships for Children and Families.

**Complaint Procedure.** Any staff member who believes he or she has been subject to or witnessed illegal discrimination, including sexual or other forms of unlawful harassment, is requested and encouraged to make a complaint. You may report directly to your immediate supervisor or department manager, the HR director, or any other member of management with whom you feel comfortable bringing such a complaint. Similarly, if you observe acts of discrimination toward or harassment of another staff member, you are requested and encouraged to report this to one of the individuals listed above.

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 to one of the persons identified above.

All complaints will be investigated promptly and, to the extent possible, with regard for confidentiality.

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.

Problems, misunderstandings and frustrations may arise in the workplace. It is First Start Partnerships for Children and Families' intent to be responsive to its staff member and their concerns. Therefore, a staff member who is confronted with a problem may use the Internal Staff Complaint procedure to resolve or clarify any concerns.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a quick, effective and consistently applied method for a staff member to present his or her concerns and have those concerns internally resolved.

## **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.

### **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 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 President & CEO.

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. 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.

### **POSITION STATEMENT**

**naeyc**

## **Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment**

Revised April 2005, Reaffirmed and Updated May 2011

**A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children**

*Endorsed by the Association for Childhood Education International and*

*Southern Early Childhood Association*

*Adopted by the National Association for Family Child Care*

### **Preamble**

NAEYC recognizes that those who work with young children face many daily decisions that have moral and ethical implications. The **NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct** offers guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood care and education. The **Statement of Commitment** is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgement of an individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education.



The primary focus of the Code is on daily practice with children and their families in programs for children from birth through 8 years of age, such as infant/toddler programs, preschool and prekindergarten programs, child care centers, hospital and child life settings, family child care homes, kindergartens, and primary classrooms. When the issues involve young children, then these provisions also apply to specialists who do not work directly with children, including program administrators, parent educators, early childhood adult educators, and officials with responsibility for program monitoring and licensing. (Note: See also the “Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for Early Childhood Adult Educators,” online at [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/ethics04\\_09202013update.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/ethics04_09202013update.pdf) and the “Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for Early Childhood Program Administrators,” online at <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/Supplement%20PS2011.pdf>)

## NAEYC Core values

Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture,\* community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

\*The term *culture* includes ethnicity, racial identity, economic level, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs which profoundly influences each child’s development and relationship to the world.

## Conceptual framework

The Code sets forth a framework of professional responsibilities in four sections. Each section addresses an area of professional relationships: (1) with children, (2) with families, (3) among colleagues, and (4) with the community and society. Each section includes an introduction to the primary responsibilities of the early childhood

practitioner in that context. The introduction is followed by a set of ideals (I) that reflect exemplary professional practice and by a set of principles (P) describing practices that are required, prohibited, or permitted.

The ideals reflect the aspirations of practitioners. The principles guide conduct and assist practitioners in resolving ethical dilemmas.\* Both ideals and principles are intended to direct practitioners to those questions which, when responsibly answered, can provide the basis for conscientious decision making. While the Code provides specific direction for addressing some ethical dilemmas, many others will require the practitioner to combine the guidance of the Code with professional judgment.

The ideals and principles in this Code present a shared framework of professional responsibility that affirms our commitment to the core values of our field. The Code publicly acknowledges the responsibilities that we in the field have assumed, and in so doing supports ethical behavior in our work. Practitioners who face situations with ethical dimensions are urged to seek guidance in the applicable parts of this Code and in the spirit that informs the whole.

Often “the right answer”—the best ethical course of action to take is not obvious. There may be no readily apparent, positive way to handle a situation. When one important value contradicts another, we face an ethical dilemma. When we face a dilemma, it is our professional responsibility to consult the Code and all relevant parties to find the most ethical resolution.

## **Section 1**

### **Ethical Responsibilities to Children**

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children’s development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to live, play, and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children’s self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being.

#### **Ideals**

**I-1.1**—To be familiar with the knowledge base of early childhood care and education and to stay informed through continuing education and training.

**I-1.2**—To base program practices upon current knowledge and research in the field of early childhood education, child development, and related disciplines, as well as on particular knowledge of each child.

**I-1.3**—To recognize and respect the unique qualities, abilities, and potential of each child.

**I-1.4**—To appreciate the vulnerability of children and their dependence on adults.

**I-1.5**—To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.

**I-1.6**—To use assessment instruments and strategies that are appropriate for the children to be assessed, that are used only for the purposes for which they were designed, and that have the potential to benefit children.

**I-1.7**—To use assessment information to understand and support children’s development and learning, to support instruction, and to identify children who may need additional services.

**I-1.8**—To support the right of each child to play and learn in an inclusive environment that meets the needs of children with and without disabilities.

**I-1.9**—To advocate for and ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have access to the support services needed to be successful.

**I-1.10**—To ensure that each child’s culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are recognized and valued in the program.

**I-1.11**—To provide all children with experiences in a language that they know, as well as support children in maintaining the use of their home language and in learning English.

**I-1.12**—To work with families to provide a safe and smooth transition as children and families move from one program to the next.

\*There is not necessarily a corresponding principle for each ideal.

## **Principles**

**P-1.1**—Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.

**P-1.2**—We shall care for and educate children in positive emotional and social environments that are cognitively stimulating and that support each child’s culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure.

**P-1.3**—We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against children by denying benefits, giving special advantages, or excluding them from programs or activities on the basis of their sex, race, national origin, immigration status, preferred home language, religious beliefs, medical condition, disability, or the marital status/family structure, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs or other affiliations of their families. (Aspects of this principle do not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children.)

**P-1.4**—We shall use two-way communications to involve all those with relevant knowledge (including families and staff) in decisions concerning a child, as appropriate, ensuring confidentiality of sensitive information. (See also P-2.4.)

**P-1.5**—We shall use appropriate assessment systems, which include multiple sources of information, to provide information on children’s learning and development.

**P-1.6**—We shall strive to ensure that decisions such as those related to enrollment, retention, or assignment to special education services, will be based on multiple sources of information and will never be based on a single assessment, such as a test score or a single observation.

**P-1.7**—We shall strive to build individual relationships with each child; make individualized adaptations in teaching strategies, learning environments, and curricula; and consult with the family so that each child benefits from the program. If after such efforts have been exhausted, the current placement does not meet a child’s needs, or the child is seriously jeopardizing the ability of other children to benefit from the program, we shall collaborate with the child’s family and appropriate specialists to determine the additional services needed and/or the placement option(s) most likely to ensure the child’s success. (Aspects of this principle may not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children.)

**P-1.8**—We shall be familiar with the risk factors for and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse and physical, emotional, educational, and medical neglect. We shall know and follow state laws and community procedures that protect children against abuse and neglect.

**P-1.9**—When we have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, we shall report it to the appropriate community agency and follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken. When appropriate, parents or guardians will be informed that the referral will be or has been made.

**P-1.10**—When another person tells us of his or her suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, we shall assist that person in taking appropriate action in order to protect the child.

**P-1.11**—When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of children, we have an ethical responsibility to protect children or inform parents and/ or others who can.

## **Section II**

### **Ethical Responsibilities to Families**

Families\* are of primary importance in children’s development. Because the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child’s well-being, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the home and early childhood program in ways that enhance the child’s development.

## **Ideals**

**I-2.1**—To be familiar with the knowledge base related to working effectively with families and to stay informed through continuing education and training.

**I-2.2**—To develop relationships of mutual trust and create partnerships with the families we serve.

**I-2.3**—To welcome all family members and encourage them to participate in the program, including involvement in shared decision making.

**I-2.4**—To listen to families, acknowledge and build upon their strengths and competencies, and learn from families as we support them in their task of nurturing children.

**I-2.5**—To respect the dignity and preferences of each family and to make an effort to learn about its structure, culture, language, customs, and beliefs to ensure a culturally consistent environment for all children and families.

**I-2.6**—To acknowledge families' childrearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.

**I-2.7**—To share information about each child's education and development with families and to help them understand and appreciate the current knowledge base of the early childhood profession.

**I-2.8**—To help family members enhance their understanding of their children, as staff are enhancing their understanding of each child through communications with families, and support family members in the continuing development of their skills as parents.

**I-2.9**—To foster families' efforts to build support networks and, when needed, participate in building networks for families by providing them with opportunities to interact with program staff, other families, community resources, and professional services.

\*The term family may include those adults, besides parents, with the responsibility of being involved in educating, nurturing and advocating for the child.

## **Principles**

**P-2.1**—We shall not deny family members access to their child's classroom or program setting unless access is denied by court order or other legal restriction.

**P-2.2**—We shall inform families of program philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment system, cultural practices, and personnel qualifications, and explain why we teach as we do which should be in accordance with our ethical responsibilities to children (see Section I).

**P-2.3**—We shall inform families of and, when appropriate, involve them in policy decisions. (See also I-2.3.)

**P-2.4**—We shall ensure that the family is involved in significant decisions affecting their child. (See also P-1.4.)

**P-2.5**—We shall make every effort to communicate effectively with all families in a language that they understand. We shall use community resources for translation and interpretation when we do not have sufficient resources in our own programs.

**P-2.6**—As families share information with us about their children and families, we shall ensure that families' input is an important contribution to the planning and implementation of the program.

**P-2.7**—We shall inform families about the nature and purpose of the program's child assessments and how data about their child will be used.

**P-2.8**—We shall treat child assessment information confidentially and share this information only when there is a legitimate need for it.

**P-2.9**—We shall inform the family of injuries and incidents involving their child, of risks such as exposures to communicable diseases that might result in infection, and of occurrences that might result in emotional stress.

**P-2.10**—Families shall be fully informed of any proposed research projects involving their children and shall have the opportunity to give or withhold consent without penalty. We shall not permit or participate in research that could in any way hinder the education, development, or well-being of children.

**P-2.11**—We shall not engage in or support exploitation of families. We shall not use our relationship with a family for private advantage or personal gain, or enter into relationships with family members that might impair our effectiveness working with their children.

**P-2.12**—We shall develop written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children's records. These policy documents shall be made available to all program personnel and families. Disclosure of children's records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).

**P-2.13**—We shall maintain confidentiality and shall respect the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we have reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies, as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child's interest.

**P-2.14**—In cases where family members are in conflict with one another, we shall work openly, sharing our observations of the child, to help all parties involved make informed decisions. We shall refrain from becoming an advocate for one party.

**P-2.15**—We shall be familiar with and appropriately refer families to community resources and support services. After a referral has been made, we shall follow up to ensure that services have been appropriately provided.

## Section III

### Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues

In a caring, cooperative workplace, human dignity is respected, professional satisfaction is promoted, and positive relationships are developed and sustained. Based upon our core values, our primary responsibility to colleagues is to establish and maintain settings and relationships that support productive work and meet professional needs. The same ideals that apply to children also apply as we interact with adults in the workplace. (Note: Section III includes responsibilities to co-workers and to employers. See the “Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for Early Childhood Program Administrators” for responsibilities to personnel (staff in the original 2005 Code revision), online at [http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05\\_supp.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05_supp.pdf).)

#### A—Responsibilities to co-workers

##### Ideals

**I-3A.1**—To establish and maintain relationships of respect, trust, confidentiality, collaboration, and cooperation with co-workers.

**I-3A.2**—To share resources with co-workers, collaborating to ensure that the best possible early childhood care and education program is provided.

**I-3A.3**—To support co-workers in meeting their professional needs and in their professional development.

**I-3A.4**—To accord co-workers due recognition of professional achievement.

##### Principles

**P-3A.1**—We shall recognize the contributions of colleagues to our program and not participate in practices that diminish their reputations or impair their effectiveness in working with children and families.

**P-3A.2**—When we have concerns about the professional behavior of a co-worker, we shall first let that person know of our concern in a way that shows respect for personal dignity and for the diversity to be found among staff members, and then attempt to resolve the matter collegially and in a confidential manner.

**P-3A.3**—We shall exercise care in expressing views regarding the personal attributes or professional conduct of co-workers. Statements should be based on firsthand knowledge, not hearsay, and relevant to the interests of children and programs.

**P-3A.4**—We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against a co-worker because of sex, race, national origin, religious beliefs or other affiliations, age, marital status/family structure, disability, or sexual orientation.



## **B—Responsibilities to employers**

### **Ideals**

**I-3B.1**—To assist the program in providing the highest quality of service.

**I-3B.2**—To do nothing that diminishes the reputation of the program in which we work unless it is violating laws and regulations designed to protect children or is violating the provisions of this Code.

### **Principles**

**P-3B.1**—We shall follow all program policies. When we do not agree with program policies, we shall attempt to effect change through constructive action within the organization.

**P-3B.2**—We shall speak or act on behalf of an organization only when authorized. We shall take care to acknowledge when we are speaking for the organization and when we are expressing a personal judgment.

**P-3B.3**—We shall not violate laws or regulations designed to protect children and shall take appropriate action consistent with this Code when aware of such violations.

**P-3B.4**—If we have concerns about a colleague’s behavior, and children’s well-being is not at risk, we may address the concern with that individual. If children are at risk or the situation does not improve after it has been brought to the colleague’s attention, we shall report the colleague’s unethical or incompetent behavior to an appropriate authority.

**P-3B.5**—When we have a concern about circumstances or conditions that impact the quality of care and education within the program, we shall inform the program’s administration or, when necessary, other appropriate authorities.

## **Section IV**

### **Ethical Responsibilities to Community and Society**

Early childhood programs operate within the context of their immediate community made up of families and other institutions concerned with children’s welfare. Our responsibilities to the community are to provide programs that meet the diverse needs of families, to cooperate with agencies and professions that share the responsibility for children, to assist families in gaining access to those agencies and allied professionals, and to assist in the development of community programs that are needed but not currently available.

As individuals, we acknowledge our responsibility to provide the best possible programs of care and education for children and to conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity. Because of our specialized expertise in early childhood development and education and because the larger society shares responsibility for the welfare and protection of young children, we acknowledge a collective obligation to advocate for the best interests of children within early childhood programs and in the larger community and to serve as a voice for young children everywhere.



The ideals and principles in this section are presented to distinguish between those that pertain to the work of the individual early childhood educator and those that more typically are engaged in collectively on behalf of the best interests of children—with the understanding that individual early childhood educators have a shared responsibility for addressing the ideals and principles that are identified as “collective.”

### **Ideal (Individual)**

**1-4.1**—To provide the community with high-quality early childhood care and education programs and services.

### **Ideals (Collective)**

**I-4.2**—To promote cooperation among professionals and agencies and interdisciplinary collaboration among professions concerned with addressing issues in the health, education, and well-being of young children, their families, and their early childhood educators.

**I-4.3**—To work through education, research, and advocacy toward an environmentally safe world in which all children receive health care, food, and shelter; are nurtured; and live free from violence in their home and their communities.

**I-4.4**—To work through education, research, and advocacy toward a society in which all young children have access to high-quality early care and education programs.

**I-4.5**—To work to ensure that appropriate assessment systems, which include multiple sources of information, are used for purposes that benefit children.

**I-4.6**—To promote knowledge and understanding of young children and their needs. To work toward greater societal acknowledgment of children’s rights and greater social acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of all children.

**I-4.7**—To support policies and laws that promote the well-being of children and families, and to work to change those that impair their well-being. To participate in developing policies and laws that are needed, and to cooperate with families and other individuals and groups in these efforts.

**I-4.8**—To further the professional development of the field of early childhood care and education and to strengthen its commitment to realizing its core values as reflected in this Code.

### **Principles (Individual)**

**P-4.1**—We shall communicate openly and truthfully about the nature and extent of services that we provide.

**P-4.2**—We shall apply for, accept, and work in positions for which we are personally well-suited and professionally qualified. We shall not offer services that we do not have the competence, qualifications, or resources to provide.

**P-4.3**—We shall carefully check references and shall not hire or recommend for employment any person whose competence, qualifications, or character makes him or her unsuited for the position.

**P-4.4**—We shall be objective and accurate in reporting the knowledge upon which we base our program practices.

**P-4.5**—We shall be knowledgeable about the appropriate use of assessment strategies and instruments and interpret results accurately to families.

**P-4.6**—We shall be familiar with laws and regulations

that serve to protect the children in our programs and be vigilant in ensuring that these laws and regulations are followed.

**P-4.7**—When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of children, we have an ethical responsibility to protect children or inform parents and/ or others who can.

**P-4.8**—We shall not participate in practices that are in violation of laws and regulations that protect the children in our programs.

**P-4.9**—When we have evidence that an early childhood program is violating laws or regulations protecting children, we shall report the violation to appropriate authorities who can be expected to remedy the situation.

**P-4.10**—When a program violates or requires its staff to violate this Code, it is permissible, after fair assessment of the evidence, to disclose the identity of that program.

### **Principles (Collective)**

**P-4.11**—When policies are enacted for purposes that do not benefit children, we have a collective responsibility to work to change these policies.

**P-4.12**—When we have evidence that an agency that provides services intended to ensure children's well-being is failing to meet its obligations, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to report the problem to appropriate authorities or to the public. We shall be vigilant in our follow-up until the situation is resolved.

**P-4.13**—When a child protection agency fails to provide adequate protection for abused or neglected children, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to work toward the improvement of these services.

### **Glossary of Terms Related to Ethics**

**Code of Ethics.** Defines the core values of the field and provides guidance for what professions should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work.

**Values.** Qualities or principles that individuals believe to be desirable or worthwhile and they prize for themselves for others, and for the world in which they live.

**Core Values.** Commitments held by a profession that are consciously and knowingly embraced by its practitioners because they make a contribution to society. There is a difference between personal values and the core values of a profession.

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

**Ethics.** The study of right and wrong, or duty and obligation that involves critical reflection on morality and the ability to make choices between values and the examination of the moral dimensions of relationships.

**Professional Ethics.** The moral commitments of a profession that involve moral reflection that extends and enhances the personal morality practitioners bring to their work, that concern actions of right and wrong in the workplace and that help individuals resolve moral dilemmas they encounter in their work.

**Ethical Responsibilities.** Behaviors that one must or must not engage in. Ethical responsibilities are clear-cut and spelled out in the Code of Ethical Conduct (for example, early childhood educators should never share confidential information about a child or family with a person who has no legitimate need for knowing).

**Ethical Dilemma.** A moral conflict that involves determining appropriate conduct when an individual faces conflicting professional values and responsibilities.

Sources for glossary terms and definitions

Feeney, S., & N Freeman 2005, Ethics and the early childhood educator. Using the NAEYC code. Washington, DC NAEYC.

Kidder, R.M. 1995 How good people make tough choices: Resolving the dilemmas of ethical living New York Fireside.

Kipris, K. 1987 How to discuss professional ethics Young Children 42 (4): 26-30

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a nonprofit corporation, tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, dedicated to acting on behalf of the needs and interests of young children. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (Code) has been developed in furtherance of NAEYC's nonprofit and tax exempt purposes. The information contained in the Code is intended to provide early childhood educators with guidelines for working with children from birth through age 8.

An individual's or program's use, reference to, or review of the Code does not guarantee compliance with NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Performance Criteria and program accreditation procedures. It is recommended that the Code be used as

guidance in connection with implementation of the NAEYC Program Standards, but such use is not a substitute for diligent review and application of the NAEYC Program Standards.

NAEYC has taken reasonable measures to develop the Code in a fair, reasonable, open, unbiased, and objective manner, based on currently available data. However, further research or developments may change the current state of knowledge. Neither NAEYC nor its officers, directors, members, staff, or agents will be liable for any loss, damage, or claim with respect to any liabilities, including direct, special, indirect, or consequential damages incurred in connection with the Code or reliance on the information presented.

### **NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct 2005 Revisions workgroup**

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## **Statement of Commitment\***

As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself to furthering the values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code. To the best of my ability I will

- Never harm children.
- Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- Respect and support families in their task of nurturing families.
- Respect colleagues in early childhood care and education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Serve as an advocate of children, their families, and their teachers in community and society.
- Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
- Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.
- Continue to learn, grow, and contribute as a professional.
- Honor the Ideals and Principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

\*The Statement of Commitment is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgement of the individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education. It is recognition of the moral obligations that lead to an individual becoming part of the profession.

Each staff member, Policy Council and Director of the Board will review and sign NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment 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.

In the event a staff member would like to have their compensation rate reviewed they may contact his or her supervisor.

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 40 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). 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. 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.

## 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. Staff member files may not be taken outside the department. 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 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**

It is the policy of 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:

**Pre-employment:** May be required by the company for all prospective staff members who receive a conditional offer of employment

**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 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, 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 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.

In the event of an emergency, notify the appropriate emergency personnel by dialing 8 for an outside line, then dial 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. *Staff members can find a copy of these regulations in the area of applicable health postings and the company website of the First Start Partnerships for Children and Families.* 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 and Safety 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**

All staff members are expected to arrive on time, ready to work, every day they are scheduled to work.

If unable to arrive at work on time, or if a staff member will be absent for an entire day, the staff member must contact their supervisor as soon as possible, no later than the supervisor's requested time frame. Classroom staff members should also review the Educational 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.

### **Job Performance**

Communication between staff members and supervisors or managers is very important. Discussions regarding job performance are ongoing and often informal. Staff members should initiate conversations with their supervisors if they feel additional ongoing feedback is needed.

New staff member are considered in their Introductory Period the first 12 weeks of their employment. After the introductory period the staff member will receive a 12 week performance evaluation. Generally, for all staff members, formal performance reviews are conducted annually. These reviews include a written performance appraisal and discussion between the staff member and the supervisor about job performance, expectations, and goals for professional development / training for the coming year.

## **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. 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 prior to hiring and must have a bi-annual staff physical examination and TB Risk Assessment.

## **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.

**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 weblogs 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/Weblog 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.

## **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.

## **Disciplinary Procedure**

The Company expects staff members to comply with the Company's standards of behavior, NAEYC code of ethical conduct and performance and to correct any noncompliance with these standards.

Under normal circumstances, the Company endorses a policy of progressive discipline in which it attempts to provide staff members with notice of deficiencies and an opportunity to improve. It does, however, retain the right to administer discipline in any manner it sees fit. This policy does not modify the status of a staff member's employment-at-will or in any way restrict the Company's right to bypass the disciplinary procedures suggested.

The following steps are suggested in the discipline procedure. All steps should be documented in the staff member's personnel file.

**Step 1: Informal Discussion.** When a performance problem is first identified, the nature of the problem and the action necessary to correct it should be thoroughly discussed with the staff member.

**Step 2: Counseling.** If a private informal discussion with the staff member has not resulted in corrective action, following a thorough investigation, the supervisor should meet with the staff



member and (a) review the problem, (b) permit the staff member to present his or her views on the problem, (c) advise the staff member that the problem must be corrected, (d) inform the staff that failure to correct the problem will result in further disciplinary action which may include discharge, and (e) issue a counseling notice to the staff member.

**Step 3: Reprimand.** If satisfactory performance and corrective action are not achieved under Steps 1 and 2, the supervisor and his or her superior should meet with the staff member in private and proceed via (a) through (d) above, and issue a reprimand notice to the staff member.

**Step 4: Suspension.** Supervisors have the authority to temporarily remove staff members from the workplace, with or without pay, if approved in advance by the department director and the director of Human Resources. An exempt staff member generally may not be suspended without pay for less than a full day, and the suspension must be related to written workplace conduct rules applicable to all staff members, e.g., such as a written policy prohibiting sexual harassment or workplace violence.

**Step 5: Failure to improve.** Failure to improve performance or behavior after the written warning or suspension can result in termination.

The progressive disciplinary procedures described above also may be applied to a staff member who is experiencing a series of unrelated problems involving job performance or behavior.

In cases involving serious misconduct, or any time the supervisor determines it is necessary, such as a major breach of policy or violation of law, the procedures contained above may be disregarded. Typically, the supervisor should suspend the staff member immediately (with or without pay) and an investigation of the incidents leading up to the suspension should be conducted to determine if any further action, such as termination, should be taken.

## **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
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day

- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Work days between Christmas Day and New Year's Day
- 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 8 hours).

A holiday shall not be considered as 8 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. The company provides paid PTO time to full-time staff members for this purpose and staff are encouraged to take PTO during the year.

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

**Up to Number of Days Annually**

	<b>Work Weeks (6hrs/day)</b>	<b>Work Weeks (8hrs/day)</b>	<b>Work Weeks</b>	<b>Work Weeks</b>
	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>1 year or less</b>	10	14	16	17
<b>2 to 3 years</b>	13	18	21	22
<b>4 years</b>	17	22	26	27
<b>5 to 9 years</b>	19	25	29	30
<b>10 to 14 years</b>	21	28	32	33
<b>15 plus years</b>	22	29	34	35

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

Generally, staff members should submit PTO plans to their supervisor at least 2 weeks in advance of the requested time off date. Managers have the right to designate when some or all of PTO must be taken.

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 an 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.

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 an 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 leaves 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 are allowed up to five (5) work days off in the event of the death of the staff's spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, stepparent, stepchildren.
2. Staff members are allowed 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.

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 8 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.

Non-exempt staff members will be paid for up to 2 weeks of jury duty service at their regular rate of pay minus any compensation received from the court for the period of service. Exempt staff members are subject to the same 2-week limitation except that they will also receive pay for any days they serve as a juror or witness in a workweek in which they actually perform work. 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 intranet, 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 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 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 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 three 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.

## 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.

If the Educational Assistance Application is approved the staff member will receive an Educational Expense Agreement which will detail out the amount funding assistance the staff

member may receive. The staff member will review and sign off on the Educational Expense Agreement before any funds are released to the institution. 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 or obtain a certification to receive the assistance. Completed coursework must be validated by providing a copy of the final grade or certification received.

**All Job Descriptions will be inserted.**

## **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 and 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 and CEO of the company.

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Staff member 's Name in Print

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Signature of Staff Member

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Date Signed by Staff Member

**TO BE PLACED IN STAFF 'S PERSONNEL FILE**