

**Yolo County Office of Education  
Head Start/Early Head Start**

**Policy: Standards of Conduct**

Performance Standard: Federal Regulations, 45 CFR 1304.52(h)(1)-(3) require that each agency adopt a code of professional ethics and ensure that all staff, consultants, and volunteers abide by the agencies standards of conduct. The standards of conduct are used to reinforce appropriate professional behavior; to guide staff members in making decisions about their actions in potentially controversial or ambiguous situations; and to help protect staff against allegations of misconduct.

Procedure:

It is the expectation that all staff, consultants, and volunteers abide by the standards of conduct. Violating the standards of conduct will result in discipline, up to and including termination.

1. The Standards of Conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Children and families are respected, and we refrain from stereotyping. We respect the child and family and will not refer to them in any form of stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability.
  - b. Confidentiality policies must be followed and are strictly enforced. The confidentiality concerning information about the child, family or other staff members should be closely observed.
  - c. Children are always supervised. When assigned to the supervision of children, the adult under no circumstances will be allowed to leave the child unsupervised.
  - d. Positive methods of guidance and discipline are used. The employees, volunteers and consultants are expected to use positive methods of child guidance. The use of corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation is prohibited. Isolating the child is inappropriate and unacceptable in any facility. In addition, food is not to be used as a form or reward or punishment.
  - e. Prohibition of kick-backs. All employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts or other financial awards will be required to sign a statement which assures that no form of gratuity, favor or any form of monetary value will be solicited in exchange for granting a contract. The program ensures that all employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts or other financial awards sign statements that they will not solicit or accept personal gratuities, favors, or anything of significant monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.
  - f. Clothing of employees on the job should be in good taste, neat, clean, and appropriate for the duties to be performed.

- g. Each employee must cooperate with fellow workers and the public in order to set a high standard of work performance. Unwillingness or failure to cooperate shall be cause for disciplinary action.
  - h. Employees must be punctual in reporting for duty at the time and place designated. Repeated failure to report promptly at the time directed will be deemed neglect of duty and subject to disciplinary action.
  - i. Employees shall not smoke while conducting activities. Smoking may be done only in designated areas of the building and grounds.
  - j. False reporting shall be subject to disciplinary action.
  - k. Employees should never be discourteous or argumentative with program participants and, if conflicts develop, should immediately make the supervisor aware of the conflict.
  - l. All employees are urged to make any suggestions they feel will be of benefit to the program.
  - m. Employees may be granted authorization to be reimbursed for using their private vehicles when use of private vehicles is essential in the performance of the work required.
  - n. All complaints on behalf of the public are handled courteously and promptly and in accordance with the Uniform Complaint policy.
  - o. Employees will discourage personal gifts and will not accept any gift or other valuable things offered in the course of work or in connection with it when such a gift is given in the hope or expectation of receiving a favor or better treatment than accorded other persons.
  - p. Employees shall not accept nor receive money in the form of tips or rewards for services rendered.
  - q. Solicitation of funds from employees or the public is not permitted with the exception of parent fundraising. Employees desiring to solicit or to have someone else solicit, either directly or indirectly, money or materials of any kind, including prizes, for the purpose of assisting in the promotion of any program area or activity must secure approval before starting such solicitation.
  - r. Employees are responsible for the safekeeping of any funds they receive until such time as the money is delivered to some other authorized person and a receipt is obtained. Any employee who acts as a custodian for any funds must file a financial report at a time and place determined by the Program Director.
  - s. Employees are discouraged from fraternizing/dating any program participant.
2. The following actions will be considered direct violations of the Standards of Conduct and will subject an employee to disciplinary action up to and including discharge. It is not

possible to provide a complete list of every possible offense; so to give some guidance, examples of unacceptable conduct are listed below. It should be noted that conduct that is not listed, but that is unprofessional or potentially embarrassing, adversely affects, or is otherwise detrimental to the Head Start program's or the Yolo County Office of Education's interests, or the interests of its employees, participants or the public at large, may also result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

- a. Abuse or willful inattention to a participant.
- b. Refusal or failure to carry out instructions from a responsible authority or willful neglect of assigned duties.
- c. Failure to inform the supervisor in the event of absence or late arrival.
- d. Failure to report for work or to contact the supervisor for three consecutive days.
- e. Excessive or unjustified absences or late arrivals.
- f. Insubordination, including improper conduct toward a supervisor or refusal to perform tasks assigned by the supervisor.
- g. Disorderly or disruptive conduct such as fighting or threatening violence on any program site/location.
- h. Unsatisfactory performance or conduct.
- i. Violation of safety rules.
- j. Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms on any program site/location.
- k. Misuse, unauthorized use/possession, destruction, or theft of property belonging to the program, another employee, participant or visitor.
- l. Falsifying or collaborating in a falsification of any document or record of the program.
- m. Possession or use of alcoholic beverages or narcotics, unless a prescription is provided, on the premises or such use or consumption as to make an employee unfit for duty during his or her normal work day, and sale or purchase of illegal narcotics.
- n. Accepting or offering a gift to influence any matter in which the program has an interest or responsibility.
- o. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.
- p. Posting notices, signs or written material on bulletin boards or other places without specific authorization, or removing properly posted material or otherwise defacing any program site/location.

- q. Unauthorized non-work activities during working hours or any time which interferes with the work of others.
  - r. Sexual or other unlawful harassment or discrimination.
  - s. Failure to return to work on a timely basis after the termination of an approved leave of absence.
  - t. Failure to observe the terms and conditions of all software agreements and licenses to which the program may be a party.
  - u. Violation of any Head Start program policy, including the policies described herein.
3. Progressive Disciplinary Action is enforced for Violations of Standards of Conduct. The nature of discipline imposed will depend on the seriousness of the problem and the prior record of the employee's performance, behavior problems, or safety violations. Disciplinary action is based on the facts of each case, and not all the available forms of disciplinary action outlined below are appropriate to every disciplinary situation. It is not required by the program to treat each form of discipline as a step in a series with each employee before discharge, and the program reserves the right to forgo the steps of progressive disciplinary procedures at any time when deemed necessary.
- a. Verbal Warning: A form of counseling or reprimand in which a supervisor discusses a violation of a rule, policy, procedure or a performance problem with a subordinate and issues a verbal warning against further violations.
  - b. Formal Written Counseling: A warning notice through which a supervisor documents in writing problems with performance or behavior, the causes and effects of the problems, a plan of correction and the consequences of continued non-compliance. A meeting is held with the employee to discuss the counseling notice and to elicit commitment to improvement.
  - c. Suspension: An action in which an employee is given a specific period of time off the job without pay. Such a suspension of employment, in itself, may constitute a disciplinary action.
  - d. Discharge: An action in which employment is permanently terminated in response to a specific violation. Serious violations or misconduct may result in immediate termination without progressive discipline.

**Related Regulations:** 1301.31 a 3; 1304.52 h; 1304.52 h 1; 1304.52 h 1 i; 1304.52 h 1 ii; 1304.52 h 1 iii; 1304.52 h 1 iv; 1304.52 h 2; 1304.52 h 3

**ADOPTED BY POLICY COUNCIL:**