

OFFICE OF QUALITY PROFESSIONALS & SPECIAL SCHOOLS
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
April 19-20, 2012

MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

D. Approval of the Mississippi School for the Blind 2012-2013 Staff Handbook

Executive Summary

This document contains specific procedures that staff members employed at the Mississippi School for the Blind should use to provide guidance and directions while employed. It contains the school's mission, goals, and history. It also addresses professional matters, personnel matters, professional development, ethical policies, discipline and grievance policy, campus security, and public records. This document is not intended to usurp or replace the Mississippi Department of Education Staff Manual, but is used to supplement. This handbook contains procedures that are specifically related to the Mississippi School for the Blind. Staff Handbook changes are as follows:

Cover	Reflect 2012-2013 school year
11	Current supervisors
14-15	Health clinic
27-28	Anti-Bullying Policy
34	MSB's certified staff will abide by the MDE Code of Ethics.
35	Staff members requiring special footwear because of medical reasons should submit a doctor's statement annually to validate the need for such footwear.
36	"The superintendent"

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

**Mississippi School for the Blind
Proposed Staff Handbook Changes**

Page	Current Language	Proposed Language	Rationale
Cover	2011-2012	2012-2013	Change date to reflect current school year
11	Previous supervisors	Current supervisors	Updated to reflect current staff
14-15	Infirmary	Health clinic	Reflects current terminology
27-28		<p>Bullying or harassing behavior is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, or any act reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus.</p> <p><i>BULLYING</i> includes, but is not limited to; conduct by a student/employee/parent/other person against a Special State School student that one can reasonably believe has the effect of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Harming a student; b. Damaging student's property; c. Placing a student in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or property; or d. Creating a hostile 	New requirements, per MDE

		environment for a student. (Entire policy attached)	
35		Staff members requiring special footwear because of medical reasons should submit a doctor's statement annually to validate the need for such footwear.	Ensure information is still current
36	"He"	"The superintendent"	Gender neutral language

Mississippi School for the Blind
1252 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211



2011-2012 Staff Policy and Procedures Manual
2012-2013

Approved by Mississippi State Board of Education
May 20, 2011

Mississippi School for the Blind

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Website: <http://www2.mde.k12.ms.us/msb>

Notice of Non Discrimination

The Mississippi State Board of Education, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi School for the Arts, the Mississippi School for the Blind, the Mississippi School for the Deaf, and the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, or disability in the provision of educational programs and services or employment opportunities and benefits. The following office has been designated to handle inquiries and complaints regarding the non-discrimination policies of the above-mentioned entities:

Director, Office of Human Resources
Mississippi Department of Education
359 North West Street
Suite 359
Jackson, Mississippi 39201
(601) 359-3511

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Mississippi School for the Blind (MSB) is to promote a strong foundation for learning and independence by providing specialized adapted services and materials to enhance maximum potential for students with visual impairments or blindness.

The school's staff is dedicated to implementing curricula which meet the individual needs of students. Residential and instructional programs and services that meet or exceed state, regional and national standards are provided. MSB serves as an educational resource for visually impaired and blind students from birth through 20 years of age.

GOALS

- I. To provide a flexible and varied curriculum that meets or exceeds standards set forth by state, regional, and national accrediting organizations.
- II. To encourage parental involvement as a functional part of each child's educational experience.
- III. To design educational programs that meet the individual needs of students based on information obtained through comprehensive diagnostic evaluations.
- IV. To provide a positive school environment that promotes positive intra personal and interpersonal development.
- V. To promote positive relations between MSB and the citizens of this state, region and nation.
- VI. To provide an efficient and effective educational organization as evidenced by an administration, faculty, and staff working together to assure maximum academic and social development of each student.

MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND Some Historic Landmarks

- 1846 James Champlain, a blind philanthropist, appealed to the Mississippi legislature for funds to establish an institution for the blind. He was urged to seek private funds first, which he did.
- 1847 In March, a school was begun on North Street in Jackson. North Street is now called North Jefferson Street.
- 1848 The State legislature appropriated \$2,500.00 for the institution and officially established it as the Mississippi Institution for the Instruction of the Blind.
- 1862 The school's buildings were seized for use as a hospital by the Confederate Army. To make room for the hospital, the students were moved to a facility in Monticello, Mississippi.
- 1863 The legislature appropriated money to move the students back to the Jefferson Street location in Jackson.
- 1875 William Johnson of Vicksburg donated \$5,000.00 to the Institution. This money was used to purchase 14 acres of land on North State Street in Jackson. The Institution operated on that location from 1882 until 1950. Control of the institution rested with the Superintendent and a Board of Trustees, which consisted of the Governor of Mississippi (ex officio) and five members from the various districts of the state.
- 1897 The curriculum was expanded and was organized around three departments. The Literary Department (academics) followed as closely as possible the course of study used in public schools. The Music Department included instruction in voice, piano, orchestra, and piano tuning. The Handicraft Department instructed girls in sewing and knitting, and taught boys to make brooms, mattresses, and cane chairs.
- 1919 The curriculum was again upgraded to correspond with the public schools. The 11th and 12th grades were added and graduates were expected to earn the same 14 credits required for graduation from public schools before receiving their diplomas.

- 1924 The name of the Institution was changed to its current name, the Mississippi School for the Blind. The campus consisted of four buildings: the superintendent's residence, a dormitory, a music building, and an academic building. The age limit for enrollment was lowered to seven.
- 1929 The Mississippi Commission for the Blind established a "temporary" school for Black, blind children at the Piney Woods Country Life School in Rankin County. Mrs. Martha M. Foxx was employed as the teacher.
- 1943 Applicants had to furnish a physician's statement verifying visual acuity of 20/100 or less. They were also required to have a physical examination and have sufficient intelligence to be taught. Eighteen units of credit were required for graduation.
- 1948 A new school for white students was completed on Eastover Drive in northeast Jackson.
- 1951 A new school for Black students was completed on Capers Street in west Jackson.
- 1957 The age for admission was lowered to six, and the school received an "A" rating from the Mississippi Accrediting Commission.
- 1974 Racial separation of students ended. All elementary students were located on the Eastover campus, and all upper level students were located on the Capers campus.
- The Preschool/Homebound Program was initiated with two teachers to provide home-based instruction for eligible children ages birth through five years. MSB Summer Enrichment Program (generally referred to as Summer Camp) began.
- 1980 All students were moved to the Eastover campus. The school was accredited by the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Impaired (NAC).

- 1984 The school was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and received an "AA" rating from the Commission on School Accreditation.
- 1986 The Jackson Central Lions Club Low Vision Clinic was established on the campus to provide free low vision evaluations and training for eligible visually impaired children.
- 1989 The school was placed under the control of the State Board of Education by an act of the Legislature.
- 1990 The Mississippi Instructional Resources Center for the Visually Impaired (MIRCVI) was established. The Center or textbook repository acquires and distributes large type and Braille textbooks, and other materials and equipment for use by visually impaired students enrolled in local school districts throughout the state.
- 1994 The legislature approved funds to construct new facilities for the school on a parcel of land located across Eastover Drive from the existing campus.
- 1998 MSB celebrated 150 years of providing quality services for blind and visually impaired students in Mississippi. A National Conference was held on March 26-28, 1998 to culminate the year's observance. The purpose was to provide a vehicle through which administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and alumni from across the country could come together to engage in meaningful dialogue about issues related to the past, present, and future status of special schools for the blind. Representatives from 19 states and the District of Columbia participated. The Phil Hardin Foundation, Inc. provided some funding to help underwrite the cost of the conference.

MSB took occupancy of eight of its new buildings located on the south side of Eastover Drive. August 1998, five dormitories were completed and students were housed on the new campus. The Independent Living House, Student Center, and Cafeteria (jointly used by Mississippi School for the Deaf) were released for occupancy in November-December, 1998.

The MIRCVI Repository was re-located to the New Administrative

Complex in December, 1998.

- 1999 In May, 1999, MSB successfully completed its five-year School Renewal Accreditation process to maintain its Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation.

In December, 1999, MSB's academic complex was completed. MSB moved from the old buildings on the north campus into the newly renovated buildings on the south campus and into the new millennium.

- 2000 Under MSB's expanded curriculum framework, a number of new academic and vocational classes were added.

The Comprehensive Homebased Intervention Program (CHIP), MSB's homebound preschool department, celebrated 25 years of service to visually impaired and blind children from birth to five years throughout the State.

- 2001 MSB's first annual science fair was held, based on the structure of Mississippi's regional science fairs. The school's first annual reading fair was organized allowing students to compete at MSB and in regional competition.

In July, 2001, the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development approved the supplemental endorsement program for teachers of visually impaired proposed by Jackson State University in collaboration with Mississippi School for the Blind.

- 2002 The LifeShare Foundation, Executive Director Matt Jones, facilitated construction of the LifeShare House on the campus of the Mississippi School for the Blind. This eight-bedroom, fully-furnished, state-of-the art facility was a turn-key donation from the Foundation. It was designed to primarily be used for short term lodging for parents of visually impaired children when they need to visit the MSB campus. The groundbreaking ceremony was held September, 2001 and the dedication ceremony was held October 17, 2002.

I. PROFESSIONAL MATTERS

(Also see: Section 7.0, MDE Employee Policies and Procedures Manual)

A. Professional Conduct

Staff members are expected to conduct themselves as professionals at all times. The public's perception of MSB is in large measure formed on the basis of its observation of behaviors demonstrated by our staff and the students under our supervision. All staff must be living examples of what MSB expects of its students. It is vital, therefore, that all staff members work together harmoniously and support one another by exhibiting high expectations and respect for themselves and their colleagues.

1. Contact With Students

Staff members serve as role models and should be aware that their behavior strongly influences students in many ways. Staff's conduct and behavior shall be such that students may observe appropriate social and personal values in action. Students are not the peers of staff members; therefore, staff is responsible for establishing and maintaining proper, professional relations with students.

There is absolutely no corporal punishment at MSB.

2. Contact With Parents

All parents need the assurance that their child is in capable, caring hands. Staff must be considerate of concerns expressed by parents and are expected to do every ethical thing to allay fears and concerns concerning their child's academic and residential experiences. All staff members are encouraged to promote relationships with parents that benefit students.

3. Contact With Others

Staff persons are often called upon to cooperate with other professionals for the purpose of maximizing services to students. It should be remembered that no information concerning a student may

be released to others without the proper written approval. This is necessary in order to safeguard a student's right to privacy.

4. Transporting Students/Signing Students In/Out

Staff members employed at MSB are not permitted to personally sign students in/out of school or the dorm. Staff members are not permitted to transport them in personal vehicles to and from campus. If a staff member is a relative of a student, then a waiver of this policy may be petitioned through the student's parents at the Office of the Superintendent.

B. Procedural Guidelines

1. Area Maintenance

All employees are expected to keep their work area in a neat and orderly condition. Furniture, materials, and equipment shall be properly arranged at all times.

2. Proper Dress "See MDE Dress Code Policy" Appendix A

Employees are expected to set a positive example for students. Clothing should be appropriately suited to the activities in which the employee will be engaged and should be neat and clean at the beginning of the day. The wearing of shorts is not permitted, unless such attire is deemed to be appropriate for the activity by the supervisor. The supervisor must then grant prior permission and the shorts should be at least knee length.

3. Use of Profanity

Employees shall not use profanity at any time when students and other employees are present. Vulgarity whether verbal, gestural, or written will not be tolerated at any time.

4. Tobacco Use

According to Section 97-32-29 of the Mississippi Code, no person shall use any tobacco product on any educational property.

5. Leaving Assigned Area

Employees shall not leave their assigned duty area unless it is absolutely necessary and unavoidable. Should an employee have to leave his/her duty area, prior notice must be given to the employee's supervisor so that appropriate coverage can be taken in the event of a genuine emergency.

a. Teachers, Substitute Teachers, and Teacher Assistants should:

1. Contact the Principal by using the intercom system. The Principal is responsible for finding someone to cover the class.
2. If #1 is not feasible, staff should bring students to the school office. The Principal will designate someone to provide supervision for students.

b. Residential Education Parents, Houseparents and Substitute Houseparents should contact their immediate supervisor before the start of their work schedule, if they will be absent from work.

1. Mrs. Diann Turner, Residential Education Director - Cell – 601/955-6200
Office – 601-984-8065 or 601-984-8205
2. ~~Mr. Lewis Walton~~, Mrs. Diane Crowther
Residential Education
Co-Director - 601/471-5812 (Pager)
Office – 601/984-8220
3. Mr. Johnnie Chapman, Residential Education Supervisor - 601/471-0496 (Pager)
Office – 601/984-8268
4. ~~Mrs. Rosie Jefferson~~, Ms. LaWanda Smith
Residential Education
Supervisor - 601/471-0491 (Pager)
Office – 601/984-8269

5. Mr. Robert Baker, Residential Education
Overnight Supervisor – 601/471-9235 (Pager)
Office – 601/984-8279

6. Telephone Use

Telephones located in offices throughout the campus are for business use and should not be used routinely to make personal calls. In cases of emergencies, employees may make personal calls using these phones. Long-distance calls must be made collect or charged to the employee's home phone. Information regarding long-distance calls must be recorded on the telephone log form.

7. Use of Cell Phones, Pagers, and other Communicative Devices

It is critical that all employees adhere to the following policy concerning the use of cell phones, pagers, and other electronic communication devices:

- a. Personal cell phones should be turned **OFF** during the employee's work time. This will eliminate the possibility of incoming calls, etc. during the window of time staff members are scheduled to be on duty here at MSB.
- b. Personal cell phones may be used during breaks or planning period. However, staff should use an area away from students. Remember there are phones throughout the buildings that are accessible to staff members and may be used during breaks and/or planning time.
- c. All school issued pagers, beepers, and cell phones should be turned to a "vibrator" or some other non-disruptive mode during staff duty hours.

8. Inventory

Employees are responsible for all furniture and equipment assigned to their duty areas. Inventory lists are verified at the beginning and at the end of each school year. Unscheduled inventory checks may be made at any time during the year.

9. Supplies and Materials

Request for supplies and materials that are kept in stock must be submitted on the appropriate forms that are available in the school office and in the residential services office. Requests for items that are not kept in stock must be submitted using a MDE Request for Goods and Services form. All purchase requests must be approved by the Superintendent before purchases are made.

10. Food Service

Food services at MSB are provided on a contractual basis by a catering company. While on duty, employees may elect to purchase meals in the school cafeteria. The cost of meals for employees and/or guests is stated in the food service contract and subject to periodic review.

11. Courtesy Fund

The purpose of this fund is to extend courtesies (condolences, get-well expressions, and other expressions of concern) to employees, students, and others who are associated with the school. Guidelines concerning the Courtesy Fund are distributed to all employees at the beginning of each school year. The Fund is administered through the Superintendent's office. Other means to administer this fund may be used at the discretion of the Superintendent.

12. Fund-Raising Activities

Class and student organization sponsors must present all

fund-raising activities and plans to use funds to the appropriate Principal and the Superintendent for approval before these activities begin.

13. Enforcement of Dress Code

All staff members are expected to help enforce the dress code. The residential staff will resolve issues of dress violations before students leave the residential areas. Instructional staff members who observe students in violation of the dress code should report this to their principal/supervisor during first period.

All staff members are expected to meet or exceed the student dress code with such things as length of garments, exclusion of gaming promotions, and other components of professional attire.

14. Student Illnesses

If a student becomes ill or is injured while under the care and supervision of MSB, the member of the school staff who is in charge of the student at the time of the illness or injury will immediately complete the "Referral for Health Services" form and contact the appropriate Principal or designee who will then contact the health clinic. No student shall be taken to a physician, dentist, or hospital during clinic hours without first contacting the infirmary health clinic. If the illness or injury occurs during off campus activities, the staff person in charge will contact the school's nurse at home or pager. If the staff person is unable to contact the nursing staff and the situation warrants it, 911 should be called for paramedic services. The superintendent shall be notified as soon as possible about the incident. If the superintendent cannot be contacted prior to 911 being called because of a life-threatening situation, then contact should be made immediately afterward.

15. Hospitalization

If the student's illness or injury is such that he/she must be hospitalized, a member of the MSB staff (nurse or residential education parent) will accompany him/her to the hospital and remain until the parent(s)/guardian(s) arrives. The infirmary health

clinic staff is responsible for notifying the parent(s)/guardian(s) immediately.

Hospitalization of a student requires the presence of a parent(s)/guardian(s) and all responsibilities shall be with the parent(s)/guardian(s) during the hospital stay.

16. Infectious Diseases

Students with infectious diseases should not be in school where their disease may be communicated to other students. Should the disease manifest itself while the student is at school, the infirmary health clinic staff will notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and request that they arrange to take the student home. Pending arrival of the parent(s)/guardian(s), the student will be required to stay in the infirmary health clinic with appropriate supervision.

A student who has missed school due to an infectious disease should, upon his/her return to school, present a statement from a physician or health officer which certifies that he/she is no longer contagious.

Infirmary Health clinic staff, teachers, residential education parents or other school personnel are required to wear disposable gloves at all times when attending to the needs of a student with any type of bodily discharge.

17. Medications

Students are not allowed to dispense their own medications. The infirmary health clinic staff and residential education parents (trained by the school nurse in school-specific policies, guidelines, and expectations) are designated by the superintendent or principal to assist students in the self-administration of medications.

Staff members shall observe each student before and after dispensing any non-prescription drug or treatment. Only appropriate medication as indicated in the standing physician's orders may be dispensed. Any time medication or treatment is given, knowledge of that fact must be conveyed to other staff members when shifts

change. This must also be recorded on the Daily Medication Form.

Prescription drugs shall be dispensed as ordered by the physician and/or directed by the clinic staff when circumstances warrant dispensation of medication off campus. Prescription drugs shall be dispensed as ordered by the physician and recorded on the Daily Medication Form.

18. Accident Reports

A written report of each accident involving a student shall be submitted to the health clinic immediately. A copy of the report must be sent to the appropriate Principal or the Residential Education Director, whichever is appropriate, and to the superintendent. The superintendent should be immediately notified by phone of all accidents, which require treatment by paramedics or hospital personnel.

If a vehicular accident occurs that involves a school vehicle, the school employee should call the Office of Human Resources immediately as outlined in the Vehicle Log Book. This procedure is required regardless of the seriousness of the accident.

19. Discipline: Laws, Philosophy, Processes

Mississippi State Laws

The State Legislature has passed a number of laws in an attempt to prevent school violence and motivate students to modify or extinguish delinquent behavior. A copy of the entire law may be found in the volumes of Mississippi Code Annotated of 1972, as amended. The following statutes are examples of some of the state laws that pertain to student conduct, but are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all statutes applicable to student conduct on or off school property.

Mississippi Code §37-3-51	Notification of Department of Education of conviction of certificated person of certain felonies of sex offense
Mississippi Code §37-3-81	School Safety Center established by the Mississippi Department of Education
Mississippi Code §37-3-84	Confiscation of illegal firearms; reward

- Mississippi Code §37-3-89 School discipline and classroom management courses; requirement; approval
- Mississippi Code §37-3-93 School Crisis Manage Program; quick response teams; toll free telephone service for reporting school violence
- Mississippi Code §37-7-323 Application and enforcement of general criminal laws of state.
- Mississippi Code §37-9-14 General duties and powers of superintendent of school district
- Mississippi Code §37-9-17 Fingerprinting and criminal background checks for applicants
- Mississippi Code §37-9-71 Suspension of pupils
- Mississippi Code §37-11-5 Instruction in fire drills and emergency management
- Mississippi Code §37-11-18 Expulsion of student possessing controlled substance or weapon or committing violent act on school property.
- Mississippi Code §37-11-18.1 Expulsion of habitually disruptive students aged 13 years or older upon third occurrence of disruptive behavior within school year.
- Mississippi Code §37-11-19 Suspension or expulsion of student damaging school property; liability of parent or custodian
- Mississippi Code §37-11-20 Intimidation, threatening or coercion of students for purpose of interfering with attendance of classes
- Mississippi Code §37-11-21 Abuse of superintendent, principal, teacher, or bus driver
- Mississippi Code §37-11-29 Reporting of unlawful activity or violent act on educational property or during school related activity; authority of law enforcement officers; reporting of

disposition of charges against student;
liability of school personnel participating
in reporting

Mississippi Code §37-11-35 Penalties for failure to file reports
pursuant to Mississippi Code 37-11-18

Mississippi Code §37-11-37 Public high school fraternity, sorority, or
secret society; definition

Mississippi Code §37-11-39 Public high school fraternity, sorority or
secret society; illegality

Mississippi Code §37-11-41 Public high school fraternity, sorority or
secret society; membership or
participating in activities

Mississippi Code §37-11-43 Public high school fraternity, sorority or
secret society; duties of boards of
trustees

Mississippi Code §37-11-49 Wearing of approved eye protective
devices required during participation in
certain vocational, industrial arts, and
chemical-physical laboratory courses of
instruction

Mississippi Code §37-11-53. Distribution of school district's discipline
plan; content of plan; appearance by
parents, guardians or custodians at
discipline conferences; recovery from
parents for damage or destruction of
property.

Mississippi Code §37-11-55 Code of Student Conduct

Mississippi Code §37-11-57 Immunity of school personnel from
liability for carrying out action in
enforcing rules regarding control,
discipline, suspension and expulsion of
students

Mississippi Code §37-13-91 Compulsory school attendance
requirements, generally; enforcement of
law

- Mississippi Code §37-15-3 Storage of cumulative folders; access to records; disposition of records upon transfer of student between schools; destruction of records
- Mississippi Code §37-15-6 Central reporting system for information concerning expulsions from public schools, access to information
- Mississippi Code §37-15-9 Requirements for enrollment of children in public schools
- Mississippi Code §93-5-26 Rights of non-custodial parents

Philosophy

At the heart of the vision and mission of MSB is a strong belief in intellectual, academic, and social honesty and integrity. To develop a strong sense of community, the student code of conduct provides a framework within which a sense of closeness, cooperation, sharing, enjoyment, and belonging can emerge. All groups find comfort in establishing standards or rules that help guide the behavior of its members. MSB recognizes the need for such rules, and also understands the value of defining possible consequences in the event those rules are disregarded.

Standards of discipline have been established to provide clear expectations. Both parents and students should spend time familiarizing themselves with these policies. Parents can support the school by holding their children accountable for their actions and not seeking exceptions to policies. Parents are urged to work cooperatively with the academic and residence life staff in maintaining established behavioral standards. MSB will consistently determine consequences for inappropriate behavior.

While sharing responsibility for ensuring a safe living and learning environment, students at MSB must practice self-discipline. MSB staff will assist students in managing their behaviors through education about policies, confronting those in violation, and issuing consequences. MSB encourages and promotes positive behavior and will ensure due process for all students. If students make decisions or choices that do not follow the policies and standards of MSB, they will be held accountable for their actions. The faculty and staff will handle minor violations. However, serious incidents may be referred directly to the administration. A student

who is in the presence of a peer breaking MSB policy is “knowingly present” and thus equally responsible for reporting the violation.

Willful or inadvertent disregard for school rules implies a need for learning proper conduct. Learning correct action or behavior is brought about through the use of natural, predetermined consequences. The consequence is intended to reasonably fit the seriousness of the violation and ultimately to change behavior. To this end, three levels of violations and corresponding consequences have been developed. Level I violations are minor infractions that are disruptive to the daily operation of academic and residential life. Level II violations are more serious and indicate a more substantial disregard for school procedures and demonstrate a lack of student self-control. Level III violations are the infractions indicating disregard for the welfare of self and others. Many of these violations are immediately referred to administration and some may include possible law enforcement involvement.

School officials will determine what constitutes standards of acceptable behavior and address violations of those guidelines utilizing discretion. Unanticipated, unacceptable incidents will arise and require follow-up action. The intent of the school is not to supplant student responsibilities by itemizing every possible violation and defining consequences. Hence, the absence of specifically defined rules or regulations, procedures, or policies should not be viewed as an indication of acceptable behavior. Students should ask for clarification before making assumptions or conducting questionable behavior.

The MSB administration, faculty, and staff are vested with the authority to determine appropriate disciplinary actions for each violation. An ongoing goal is to administer discipline with fairness, impartiality, and justness. MSB will judge students as individuals; considerations may include student attitudes and past disciplinary histories. Creating an all-inclusive list of actions resulting in the disciplinary sanctions is impossible. The charts at the end of this chapter shall serve as a guide.

Public Display of Affection (PDA)

Public displays of affection, beyond a friendly hug or holding hands, are considered a breach of MSB expectations and are subject to disciplinary procedures. Listing every behavior that constitutes PDA is impossible. Students must use caution and common sense in relation to appropriate behavior. Not being in a “dating” relationship or being of the same gender

does not alter the PDA restrictions. All MSB staff, not just Residence Education Staff, has the responsibility to use their judgment in asking you to cease any behavior they determine to be PDA. Failure to respond to such a request in a timely manner will escalate the situation to a more serious disciplinary matter. The Disciplinary Procedure will correspond to the gravity of the PDA situation and current disciplinary record.

Harassment

The Mississippi School for the Blind is committed to sustaining a safe and supportive school environment free from harassment. In keeping with this commitment, the school will not tolerate harassment of employees or students by anyone, including administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, volunteers or any others on campus.

Harassment is unlawful discrimination. Students must treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times. MSB prohibits all types of harassment based on, but not limited to, color, race, religion, creed, national origin, gender, age, or disability. MSB will promptly investigate all complaints of harassment— formal or informal, written or verbal—and take appropriate actions against any member of the school community found in violation of this policy.

Definitions

School Community includes, but is not limited to, all students, parents, school and state employees, contractors, volunteers, committee members, and other visitors.

School Employee includes, but is not limited to, all administrators, teachers, staff, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and agents of the school.

Harassment means verbal or physical conduct based on an individual's actual or perceived race, religion, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability that affects or interferes with a student's educational performance or creates a hostile, offensive, or intimidating environment.

Harassment may include any form of unwelcome and unwanted verbal, physical, or written conduct that offends, degrades, or belittles an individual. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, unsolicited derogatory remarks, jokes, demeaning comments, offensive behavior,

slurs, mimicking, name calling, graffiti, innuendo, gestures, physical contact, stalking, threatening, bullying, extorting, or the display or circulation of written materials or pictures.

Sexual Harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome and unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other inappropriate verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature made by any school employee or volunteer to a student or to another school employee or volunteer; a student to another student; or a student to a staff member when:

1. Submission to such contact is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of an individual's employment or educational development.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment or education decisions affecting such individual.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or educational performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment.

These stipulations apply whether the harassment is between people of the same, or of a different gender. Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to, sexually oriented verbal teasing, abuse or harassment; pressure for sexual activity; repeated remarks to a person with sexual or demeaning implications; unwelcome and unwanted touching such as pinching, patting, or constant brushing against another's body; suggesting or demanding sexual involvement accompanied by implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, employment, status, or similar personal concerns; or filing a false complaint of sexual harassment.

Peer Harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome and unwanted attention from peers or other individuals and includes such actions as name calling, threatening gestures, unwanted physical contact, vandalism of personal property, and filing a false complaint.

Racial and Color Harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome and unwanted verbal, written, or physical conduct directed at the characteristics of an individual's race or color. Nicknames, emphasizing stereotypes, racial slurs, comments on one's manner of speaking, and

negative references to racial customs are examples of racial or color harassment.

Religious Creed Harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome and unwanted verbal, written, or physical conduct directed at an individual's religion or creed such as derogatory comments regarding surnames, religious clothing, religious slurs, or graffiti.

National Origin Harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome and unwanted verbal, written, or physical conduct directed at the characteristics of an individual's national origin such as negative comments regarding surnames, manner of speaking, customs, language, or ethnic slurs.

Disability Harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome and unwanted verbal, written, or physical conduct directed at a person's disabling mental or physical condition such as manner of speech or movement or interference with an individual's equipment.

Reporting Harassment

Any school employee or student who observes, overhears, or otherwise witnesses harassment is encouraged to take appropriate action to report the incident immediately. In the event the school employee or student is unable to personally take prompt action, they are encouraged to report the incident or complaint in writing to the Principal or supervisor, the Director of Residence Education, and/or the Superintendent. Any complaint of harassment filed by a student or staff member will be reported immediately to the Principal or supervisor, the Director of Residence Education, and/or the Superintendent.

An individual who alleges any form of harassment by a staff member, student, or other person may complain directly to a teacher, staff member, or administrator. An official complaint must be written and signed. Filing of a complaint or reporting harassment in any manner will not affect an individual's status, future employment, work assignments, or grades.

Under certain circumstances, sexual harassment behaviors (e.g., sexual touching, grabbing, pinching, being forced to kiss, being forced to commit acts against one's wishes) may constitute physical or sexual abuse. Therefore, when educators become aware of suspected abuse, they must report the incident to the Mississippi Department of Human Services. Such

acts constitute violations of Mississippi criminal law resulting in law enforcement investigations and possible criminal charges.

Retaliation to Harassment

Members of the school community may not retaliate against any person who reports alleged harassment or any person who testifies, assists, or participates in the investigation, proceedings, or hearing related to such harassment. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment and may be redressed through the same process for reporting, investigating, and enforcing procedures for harassment. Any person who knowingly files a false claim or report may be subject to the same actions that MSB might take against any other individual violating this harassment policy.

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and the accused, will be respected consistent with the legal obligation of the school and the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective actions when such conduct occurs.

Consequences to Violation of Harassment Policies

Any school employee or student found to have violated this policy may be subject to action including, but not limited to, warning, remedial training, education or counseling, suspension, expulsion, termination, or discharge from duties.

20. Child Abuse and Neglect

It is the policy of MSB to maintain a living and learning environment in which students are free from exposure to abusive or neglectful acts. Any staff member observing student abuse or neglect of any kind shall immediately make a verbal report of the incident to his/her immediate supervisor. If an immediate written report is not possible, the report shall be made, in writing, no later than the end of the employee's workday.

a. Reporting Abuse of Neglect

Reporting is required pursuant to Section 43-21-353 of the Mississippi Code. Any staff member having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or an abused child, shall cause an oral report to be made immediately by telephone or otherwise and followed up as soon as thereafter as possible by a report in writing to the Department of Human Services.

If information of the incident of abuse/neglect becomes known during the school day, the report should be made to the staff member's principal. If the information becomes known after the normal school day, the report should be made to the Director of Residential Services or the Houseparent Supervisor.

Upon notification of an alleged incident of abuse/neglect the supervisor will immediately inform the Superintendent and complete an Incident Report Form. Unless otherwise directed by the Superintendent, the supervisor will initiate an immediate investigation. If the alleged incident involves an MSB employee, the employee will be directed to immediately submit his/her view of the incident in writing to the supervisor. If the allegation of abuse/neglect cannot reasonably be disproved at that time, the employee is subject to immediate suspension (administrative leave) with pay pending a complete investigation to be conducted by the Office of Human Resources and the Superintendent. The parents of the child involved in the alleged incident will be notified immediately by the supervisor whenever possible.

All incidents of suspected abuse/neglect will be reported to the Department of Human Services on the date of discovery by the Superintendent or his/her designee. If an employee is found to be guilty of abuse/neglect he/she will be recommended for termination from employment. Staff members who have knowledge of abuse/ neglect, but fail to report it in the manner described above within 24 hours of the incident will also be subject to disciplinary action.

Any employee who has knowledge of or has reason to suspect the abuse/neglect may have or currently is occurring to a student outside the jurisdiction of the school or its programs shall immediately report his/her suspicions to the Department

of Human Services and to his/her supervisor. The supervisor will complete an Incident Report and notify the superintendent.

b. Policy Prohibiting Harassment and Violence

It is the policy of MSB to maintain a working environment that is free from religious, racial or sexual harassment and violence. The school prohibits any form of religious, racial or sexual harassment and violence.

Staff members are expected to maintain professional relationships with students. Any contact of a sexual context between a student and staff member is grounds for suspension and dismissal.

c. Reporting Procedures

Employees may file alleged harassment and/or violence grievances in accordance with grievance procedures outlined in the MDE Employee Policy and Procedures Manual.

21. HIV Infection/AIDS Policy

There shall be no discrimination in employment based on an employee having an HIV infection or AIDS. No school employee shall be terminated, non-renewed, demoted, suspended, transferred, or subject to adverse action based on the fact that he or she is infected with HIV or perceived to be infected. The superintendent, when notified that a student or staff member is infected or perceived to be infected with HIV, shall follow appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of persons in the school setting.

22. Anti-Bullying Policy

Definition:

Bullying or harassing behavior is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, or any act reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus. *BULLYING* includes, but is not limited to; conduct by a student/employee/parent/other person against a Special State School student that one can reasonably believe has the effect of:

(a) Harming a student;

(b) Damaging a student's property;

(c) Placing a student in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or property; or

(d) Creating a hostile environment for a student.

*Hostile environment means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior.

An act of bullying or harassing, by an individual student, a group of students, parents, employee or other person is expressly prohibited on school property, online, at school-related functions, or on a school bus. This policy applies not only to those directly engaged in an act of bullying but also to anyone who, by their indirect behavior, condones or supports an act of bullying.

No employee of the Special State School shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying. Retaliation against a victim, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited. False accusations or reports of bullying are prohibited.

Reporting

Any person who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying or anyone with knowledge that a student or school employee has been subjected to bullying or harassing behavior shall report the alleged acts immediately to an appropriate school official. A student may report bullying anonymously. However, the school district's ability to take action based solely on an anonymous report may be limited.

All Special State School employees shall be alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying.

Reports of bullying are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted by law.

Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, or work assignments, or educational or work environment.

The Special State Schools will annually provide education and information to students regarding bullying or harassing, including this policy, the harmful effects of bullying, and other applicable initiatives to prevent bullying.

Action:

Upon receipt of a complaint or report of bullying, Special State School officials or a designated third party will act to investigate all complaints of bullying within 24 hours of the report and will discipline or take appropriate action against anyone who is found to have violated this policy.

- Investigation and action taken will be consistent with the school's policy on harassment, violence, or other action causing harm to another.
- Consequences of students may include suspension and/or dismissal.
- Consequences for employees who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying or intentional false reporting of bullying may result in disciplinary action up to termination or discharge.
- Consequences for other individuals engaging in prohibited acts of bullying may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from school district property and events.

II. PERSONNEL MATTERS

See Sections 4.0, 5.0, 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, and 9.0 of the MDE Employee Policies and Procedures Manual.

1. Personal Leave. See Section 8.0 of the MDE Employee Policies and Procedures Manual.

Personal leave will not be approved for nine and ten-month employees with direct student supervision during the first and last week on the staff members' annual work calendar and the day prior to, the day of, and the day after a school holiday.

2. Commercial Driver's License. Some job descriptions may require that an employee obtain a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) and drive a school bus.

See <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us> , MDE Employee Policy and Procedures Manual for additional information, including employee leave forms.

III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is defined as a program of activities which is initiated by MSB based on identified institutional needs and designed to

promote continued demonstration of essential competencies and responsibilities necessary for the school to meet its goals.

Procedures for documenting participation in Professional Development are as follows:

1. Employees are required to sign in for all activities. Some activities will also have an individual attendance/evaluation sheet. The original sign-in sheets serve as final documentation of an employee's attendance at a professional development activity.
2. Credit will be awarded only if the employee "signs in" for the activity. If "signing in" does not take place, credit may not be awarded.
3. Credit will be awarded based on the length of the session.
4. The Professional Development Coordinator will maintain a file for each employee. The file will contain a record of all activities completed by the employee for the current year and the preceding year. Information regarding earlier years is placed in storage and may be destroyed after five (5) years.

IV. ETHICAL POLICIES

See Section 11.0 of the MDE Employee Policy and Procedures Manual

V. DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE POLICY

The Department of Education has established disciplinary and grievance policies and procedures in accordance with guidelines set forth by the State Personnel Board. All disciplinary actions will be in accordance with these policies.

For more details, please refer to Section 10.0, Mississippi Department of Education Employee Procedures Manual.

VI. CAMPUS SECURITY

1. Identification Badges

All MSB employees are required to wear their assigned identification badges in a visible position on their outer clothing at all times while on duty. The identification badge enables employees to be easily recognized by security personnel, other staff, students, and visitors; thereby helping to ensure the safety and security of the campus. If the badge is lost or destroyed, it can be replaced by contacting the Office of Human Resources. The replacement cost is determined by the Office of Human Resources.

2. Campus Visitors

All visitors are required to acknowledge their presence on campus by signing the Visitors Log immediately upon their arrival. During the day visitors may sign in at the principal's office in Building A or at the superintendent's office in the Administrative Building. Persons visiting after normal office hours are required to register in the office of the respective dormitory being visited. Visitors will be issued a "visitor's" pass, which must be surrendered at the conclusion of the visit.

3. Security

Security staff members are authorized to stop and request identification of all vehicles and persons on campus. Security personnel wear uniforms that clearly identify them and their function.

4. Traffic Regulations

Traffic flow on the MSB campus is clearly indicated by direction, speed limit, and parking area signs. All employees and visitors must respect traffic regulations at all times. The speed limit on campus is 10 miles per hour. Automobile traffic is required to come to a complete stop when students are walking along or across a campus street. Parking on the lawn, sidewalks, or areas other than those designed for parking is prohibited.

5. Facility Usage

All buildings and facilities on the MSB campus are to be used only for the purpose for which they are intended. Exceptions may be made

only with the written approval of the Superintendent. Permission to use campus facilities may be granted only if a member of the MSB staff will be present and will be responsible for all cleanup and securing the facility at the conclusion of the event.

6. Issuance of Keys

There are numerous buildings, vehicles, and secured areas on the campus which require a key for access or operation. It is the policy of MSB to issue keys only to persons requiring them. Keys will be only issued to employees of MSB by the Office of Combined Services after authorization by the Superintendent. If keys are lost or misplaced, the replacement cost will be paid by the employee.

7. Use of Keys

Individuals to whom keys have been assigned will be responsible for their security. Any unauthorized use or duplication of keys will result in disciplinary action by the Superintendent.

8. Guest Quarters/LifeShare House

Requests to utilize guest facilities must be submitted to the Superintendent for approval. Authorized guests include parents of enrolled students, consultants, children scheduled for comprehensive screening and their parents, and other persons deemed appropriate by the Superintendent.

The guest (s) must check in with the secretary in the Superintendent's office upon arrival on campus. The guest (s) will be issued a campus pass and the key to the area to be occupied (LifeShare House Only). The key and the campus pass must be returned to the Superintendent's office before the guest (s) leaves campus at the end of the visit. The guest is responsible for any damage to the facility that might have occurred during his/her stay.

9. Staff Visitors

Children, spouses, other dependents, and/or visitors are not allowed to be at work with employees. If an emergency situation arises and children must come to work, prior approval must be given by the principals/supervisor or the Director of Residential Education and the superintendent. Staff children and family members, on occasion, may be permitted to participate in school activities. Approval must be given in advance by the principal or the Director of Residential Education, with final approval granted by the superintendent.

10. Campus Entrance/Exit – Use of Prox Card

All staff members are issued a prox card to be used for admittance to and exit from campus at the Welcome Center. This prox card is not transferrable and should be returned to the immediate supervisor upon request.

VII. PUBLIC RECORDS

The State Department of Education has adopted a media and public records policy, which establishes procedures for media contacts, record access, fees, and time frames for compliance with requests for the records. The School for the Blind must comply with the provisions of this section for both media contacts and public information requests.

Due to the nature of the records maintained by the school, additional procedures have been established. Statutory provisions for these policies and procedures are detailed in the Miss Code Ann. (1972) and in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

A. Student Records

Permanent records and cumulative folders are required to be maintained for each enrolled student. Teachers and principals are responsible for ensuring that student records are maintained and current. These records are filed alphabetically in fire resistant cabinets located in the principal's office. Cumulative records must never be left in an office or classroom overnight, or taken from the school building. Under no circumstances shall any employee take a student's cumulative records home.

1. Access to Student Records.

According to federal regulations, when a student becomes an eligible student, the rights accorded to, and consent required of parents under this part transfer from the parents to the student.

2. Requests for Records.

All requests for public records and information shall be directed to the Superintendent. The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring immediately that the required request form is completed and that procedures established by the MDE are followed. The requested information should be responded to within 14 days after the request is received.

VIII. Code of Ethics

All MSB certified staff will abide by MDE's Code of Ethics.

IX. MDE Dress Code Policy

See Appendix A for the Dress Code Policy of the Mississippi Department of Education. Staff members employed at MSB will adhere to all components, where applicable. However, MSB's superintendent is allowed to set the standard for staff attire that may supersede this code. Additionally, the superintendent may also allow for special attire depending on the school activity. All staff should check with their immediate supervisor regarding any concerns about staff attire. Supervisors will receive final directives from MSB's superintendent.

All staff members are expected to meet or exceed the student dress code with such things as length of garments, exclusion of gaming promotions, and other components of professional attire.

APPENDIX A

MDE Dress Code Policy

Beginning January 3, 2007, the following guidelines set forth acceptable dress for employees of the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). The guidelines apply to all state service and non-state service employees.

The MDE exists to enable all Mississippi students to develop, in a safe and productive environment, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to reach their fullest potential as individuals and citizens. In this role, MDE employees provide services to educators who support and govern education and to the general public. While conducting business, MDE employees should always project a positive, professional image through work and appearance.

To accomplish this, all MDE employees should be well groomed and dressed in a manner that will result in a positive image of the MDE. Clothing worn should be neat in appearance, in good repair, and appropriate for employees' job responsibilities. Clothing should not be offensive to the public or fellow workers and detract from the job being performed or the message being delivered and should project a serious, competent image.

Unacceptable Clothing

The following is a list of clothing items that generally do not fall within the concept of a positive, professional image.

- Sweat suits, wind suits, warm-up suits, and other athletic attire;
- Running shoes, walking shoes, cross trainers, and other athletic shoes;
- House shoes, slippers, shower shoes, plastic sandals and flip-flops;
- Jeans, shorts, tights, spandex, leotards and tee-shirts

Exceptions

It is rarely appropriate in an office setting to wear an outfit of ultra-casual clothing. At-home lounge or outdoors activity/work clothing and foot apparel, including sneakers, are inappropriate for the office. However, some employees have primary work assignments, which require them to move or maintain equipment or work outdoors (i.e., certain MIS technical staff, property managers, mailroom workers, and building and grounds

coordinator). These employees should discuss relaxed dress code guidelines with their supervisors. Other reasons which may call for a relaxed dress code include office cleaning/packing/moving days, medical purposes, and department sponsored events. These situations should also be discussed with an employee's supervisor. Staff members requiring special footwear because of medical reasons should submit a doctor's statement annually to validate the need for such footwear.

Business Casual

Clothing should cover and fit in a manner appropriate for a business environment. Good judgment and professionalism are expected of all employees in both traditional-business and business-casual attire. Business-casual attire in an office setting means a relaxed look that differs from standard business attire. Business-casual attire is not the same as attire normally worn to ball games, picnics, or during non-work hours.

Business-casual attire typically involves no ties for men, sweaters, turtlenecks, short-sleeve, golf shirts with a collar, slacks, and appropriate shoes (sandals are not appropriate shoe attire for men). Examples of preferred options for women include flat shoes and relaxed ensembles of sweaters, turtlenecks, blouses, and skirts or slacks.

Blue Jean Day

As stated above, jeans generally are inappropriate for the office. The State Superintendent, however, may approve any day as a "Blue Jean Day" in recognition of a special occasion or event. For example, the Superintendent might designate the last business day prior to a holiday break as Blue Jean Day. He- The superintendent might allow staff participating in a special event sponsored by the Department to wear jeans.

Supervisors' Responsibility

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all employees are aware of the dress code guidelines and that staff do not abuse the flexibility intended by the business-casual provision. If an item is questionable, the employee should discuss it with his or her supervisor prior to wearing it. Should there be any questions concerning the acceptability of any clothing, supervisors shall provide guidance. Supervisors are authorized to require an employee who violates the dress code guidelines to return home to change attire.