

# **Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD**

## **2024–2025 Employee Handbook**

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**Coldspring-Oakhurst**  
CONSOLIDATED I.S.D.

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# Employee Handbook Receipt

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Campus/Department \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge receipt of a copy of the Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD Employee Handbook. I agree to read the handbook and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

Employees have the option of receiving the handbook in electronic format or hard copy.

[www.cocisd.org>Staff>Employee Handbook](http://www.cocisd.org>Staff>Employee Handbook)

Please indicate your choice by checking the appropriate box below:

- I choose to receive the employee handbook in electronic format and accept responsibility for accessing it according to the instructions provided.
- I choose to receive a hard copy of the employee handbook and understand I am required to contact my campus/department secretary to obtain a hard copy.

The information in this handbook is subject to change. I understand that changes in district policies may supersede, modify, or render obsolete the information summarized in this document. As the district provides updated policy information, I accept responsibility for reading and abiding by the changes.

I understand that no modifications to contractual relationships or alterations of at-will employment relationships are intended by this handbook.

I understand that I have an obligation to inform my supervisor or department head of any changes in personal information such as phone number, address, etc. I also accept responsibility for contacting my supervisor or the HR Coordinator if I have questions or concerns or need further explanation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Please sign and date this receipt and forward it to the campus secretary.**

# Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information that will help with questions and pave the way for a successful year. Not all district policies and procedures are included. Those that are, have been summarized. Suggestions for additions and improvements to this handbook are welcome and may be sent to the HR Department.

This handbook is neither a contract nor a substitute for the official district policy manual. Nor is it intended to alter the at-will status of noncontract employees in any way. Rather, it is a guide to and a brief explanation of district policies and procedures related to employment. These policies and procedures can change at any time; these changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change. For more information, employees may refer to the policy codes that are associated with handbook topics, confer with their supervisor, or call the appropriate district office. District policies can be accessed online at [www.cocisd.org](http://www.cocisd.org).

# District Information

## Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives

The mission of COCISD is to educate and equip all learners with knowledge, skills and experiences to be successful in life.

All students will achieve high standards in all academic programs.

Parent and community participation will improve through effective communication and developing partnerships.

A positive, safe and drug-free learning environment will be fostered that supports academic achievement.

The District will actively recruit, retain and train highly qualified staff, as well as provide sustained high quality professional development.

Fiscal responsibility will be ensured through sound and transparent practices with the District's financial resources.

Policy AE

## Board of Trustees

*Policies BA, BB series, BD series, and BE series*

Texas law grants the board of trustees the power to govern and oversee the management of the district's schools. The board is the policy-making body within the district and has overall responsibility for the curriculum, school taxes, annual budget, employment of the superintendent and other professional staff, and facilities. The board has complete and final control over school matters within limits established by state and federal laws and regulations.

The board of trustees is elected by the citizens of the district to represent the community's commitment to a strong educational program for the district's children. Board members are elected each May and serve three-year terms. Board members serve without compensation, must be qualified voters, and must reside in the district.

Current board members include:

- President – Paul Buchanan
- Vice-President – MJ Coker
- Secretary – Dale Richards

- Berlin Bradford, Trustee
- Tony Sewell, Trustee
- Alec McGowen, Trustee
- William Baker, Trustee

The board usually meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30 PM at Coldspring-Oakhurst High School. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted on the district website and the administration building at least 72 hours before the scheduled meeting time. The written notice will show the date, time, place, and subjects of each meeting. In emergencies, a meeting may be held with a one-hour notice.

All meetings are open to the public. In certain circumstances, Texas law permits the board to go into a closed session from which the public and others are excluded. Closed session may occur for such things as discussing prospective gifts or donations, real-property acquisition, certain personnel matters including employee complaints, security matters, student discipline, or consulting with attorneys regarding pending litigation.

## **Board Meeting Schedule**

August 26, 2024 at 6:30PM

September 23, 2024 at 6:30PM

October 28, 2024 at 6:30PM

November 18, 2024 at 6:30PM

December 16, 2024 at 6:30PM

January 27, 2025 at 6:30PM

February 24, 2025 at 6:30PM

March 24, 2025 at 6:30PM

April 28, 2025 at 6:30PM

May 27, 2025 at 6:30PM

June 23, 2025 at TBD

July 28, 2025 at TBD



# Administration

## CENTRAL OFFICE

### SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Bryan Taulton  
Cindy Elliott, Superintendent Administrative  
Asst.  
14210 State Highway 150 West  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936) 653-1114 Fax (936) 653-2197

### ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Dr. Elizabeth Klammer  
Patti Wolsey, Administrative Assistant  
(936) 653-1138 Fax (936) 653-2197

### CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

John W Kirkham  
Record Retention Officer  
Safety and Loss Control Officer  
(936) 653-1105 Fax (936) 653-3031

### SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Dr. Beth Klammer  
Missy Eichman  
(936)653-1175 Fax (936) 653-2197

### CTE

Beldon Rudloff  
(936)653-1110

### SPECIAL EDUCATION

Jennifer Rudloff, Director  
(936) 653-1179 Fax (936) 653-2197

## SUPPORT SERVICES

### COCISD POLICE DEPARTMENT

Jack Dean, Chief  
District's Emergency Management Co-  
Coordinator  
121 Commercial Avenue  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936) 653-1136 Fax (936) 653-8125

## CAMPUSES

### COLDSRING-OAKHURST HIGH SCHOOL

Dr. Matthew Bess, Principal  
Joel Casiday, Assistant Principal  
14100 State Highway 150 West  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936)653-1141 Fax (936) 653-3689

### LINCOLN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Courtney Robison, Principal  
Brandice Keel, Assistant Principal  
13605 State Highway 156  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936) 653-1167 Fax (936) 653-3688

### COLDSRING INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Paula McClendon, Principal  
Alicia Plock, Assistant Principal  
1510 State Highway 150  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936) 653-1151 Fax (936) 653-3689

### STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Shalonda Washington, Principal  
Michelle Birmingham, Assistant Principal  
125 Jones Avenue  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936) 653-1187 Fax (936) 653-3690

### DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM (DAEP)

Wesley Seagraves, DAEP Coordinator  
125 FM 1514  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936) 653-1104 Fax (936) 653-3600

### TRANSPORTATION

Tammy Caldwell, Director  
201 Jones Avenue  
Coldspring, TX 77331  
(936) 653-1194 Fax (936) 653-2503

**MAINTENANCE/CUSTODIAL**

Jack Dean – Maintenance/Grounds  
 Candy Yeager – Custodial/Floor Crew  
 125 FM 1514  
 Coldspring, TX 77331  
 (936) 653-1171 Fax (936) 653-3457

**CHILD NUTRITION**

Amanda Dunaway, Director  
 125 FM 1514  
 Coldspring, TX 77331  
 (936) 653-1108 Fax (936) 653-2527

**HEALTH SERVICES**

Kristi Benestante, R.N., Director  
 125 Jones Avenue  
 Coldspring, TX 77331  
 (936)653-1185 FAX (936)653-5137

**SHIPPING ADDRESS**

All shipments to the District must be delivered to address below and must include a purchase order:  
 Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD  
 Attention: Warehouse Mgr.  
 936-653-1171 125 FM 1514, Coldspring, Texas 77331

**TECHNOLOGY**

Charles Camden, Director  
 125 FM 1514  
 Coldspring, TX 77331  
 (936) 653-1119 Fax (936) 653-2116

**ATHLETICS**

Ken Stanley, Director  
 14100 State Highway 150  
 Coldspring, TX 77331  
 (936) 653-1123 Fax (936) 653-3465

**School Calendar**

[www.cocisd.org](http://www.cocisd.org)>District>District Calendar

**Helpful Contacts**

From time to time, employees have questions or concerns. If those questions or concerns cannot be answered by supervisors or at the campus or department level, the employee is encouraged to contact the HR Department.

# Employment

## Equal Employment Opportunity

*Policies DAA, DIA*

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Additionally, the district does not discriminate against an employee or applicant who acts to oppose such discrimination or participates in the investigation of a complaint related to a discriminatory employment practice. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant's job qualifications, experience, and abilities.

In accordance with Title IX, the district does not discriminate on the basis of sex and is required not to discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. The requirement not to discriminate extends to employment. Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be referred to the district's Title IX coordinator, to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of the Department of Education, or both.

The district designates and authorizes the following employee as the Title IX coordinator for employees to address concerns or inquiries regarding discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment: *Beth Klammer, PO Box 39, Coldspring, TX 77331 (936)653-1138*. Reports can be made at any time and by any person, including during non-business hours, by mail, email, or phone. During district business hours, reports may also be made in person.

The district designates and authorizes the following employee as the ADA/Section 504 coordinator for employees for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of a disability: *Jennifer Rudloff, PO Box 39, Coldspring, Texas 77331, (936)653-1179*.

Questions or concerns relating to discrimination for any other reason should be directed to the Superintendent.

## Job Vacancy Announcements

*Policy DC*

Announcements of job vacancies by position and location are posted on a regular basis to the district's website. <https://gethelios.com/coldspringoakhurstcisid-jobs>

## Employment after Retirement

*Policy DC*

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) may be employed under certain circumstances on a full- or part-time basis without affecting their benefits, according to TRS rules and state law. Detailed information about employment after retirement is available in the TRS publication *Employment after Retirement*. Employees can contact TRS for additional information by calling 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. Information is also available on the TRS Website ([www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov)).

## **Contract and Noncontract Employment**

### *Policy DC series*

State law requires the district to employ all full-time professional employees in positions requiring a certificate from the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and nurses under probationary, term, or continuing contracts. Employees in all other positions are employed at-will or by a contract that is not subject to the procedures for nonrenewal or termination under Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. The paragraphs that follow provide a general description of the employment arrangements used by the district.

**Probationary Contracts.** Nurses and full-time professional employees new to the district and employed in positions requiring SBEC certification must receive a probationary contract during their first year of employment. Former employees who are hired after a two-year lapse in district employment or employees who move to a position requiring a new class of certification may also be employed by probationary contract. Probationary contracts are one-year contracts. The probationary period for those who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district may not exceed one school year.

For those with less experience, the probationary period will be three school years (i.e., three one-year contracts) with an optional fourth school year if the board determines it is doubtful whether a term or continuing contract should be given.

**Term Contracts.** Full-time professionals employed in positions requiring certification and nurses will be employed by term contracts after they have successfully completed the probationary period. The terms and conditions of employment are detailed in the contract and employment policies. All employees will receive a copy of their contract. Employment policies can be accessed online or copies will be provided upon request.

**Noncertified Professional and Administrative Employees.** Employees in professional and administrative positions that do not require SBEC certification (such as noninstructional administrators) are employed by a one-year contract that is not subject to the provisions for nonrenewal or termination under the Texas Education Code.

**Paraprofessional and Auxiliary Employees.** All paraprofessional and auxiliary employees, regardless of certification, are employed at will and not by contract. Employment is not for any specified term and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the district.

**District of Innovation(DOI) and Adjunct Educators(AE).** DOI and AE are At-Will employees and can remain on this status as long as they are recommended by the principal. If at the end of a school year a certification in the subject area is obtained and the principal recommends for hire, the employee will be placed on a contract for the next school term. Continued employment is on an at-will basis. COCISD may terminate at-will employees at any time for any reason or for no reason, except for legally impermissible reasons. At-will employees are free to resign at any time for any reason or for no reason.

Pay Plan for AE - \$40,000 plus benefits Pay Plan for DOI – will follow the District Teacher Pay Plan for up to two years. If asked to return for a third year, salary will remain at the two-year mark.

## **Certification and Licenses**

### *Policies DBA, DF*

Professional employees whose positions require SBEC certification or a professional license are responsible for taking actions to ensure their credentials do not lapse. Employees must submit documentation that they have passed the required certification exam and/or obtained or renewed their credentials to Human Resources in a timely manner. Employees licensed by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR) must notify Human Resources when there is action against, or revocation of, their license.

A certified employee's contract may be voided without due process and employment terminated if the individual does not hold a valid certificate or fails to fulfill the requirements necessary to renew or extend a temporary certificate, emergency certificate, probationary certificate, or permit. A contract may also be voided if SBEC suspends or revokes certification because of an individual's failure to comply with criminal history background checks. Contact Human Resources if you have any questions regarding certification or licensure requirements.

## **Recertification of Employment Authorization**

### *Policy DC*

At the time of hire all employees must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (Form I-9) and present documents to verify identity and employment authorization.

Employees whose immigration status, employment authorization, or employment authorization documents have expired must present new documents that show current employment authorization. Employees should file the necessary application or petition sufficiently in advance to ensure that they maintain continuous employment authorization or valid employment authorization documents. Contact Human Resources if you have any questions regarding reverification of employment authorization.

## **Searches and Alcohol and Drug Testing**

*Policy CQ, DHE*

Noninvestigatory searches in the workplace including accessing an employee's desk, file cabinets, or work area to obtain information needed for usual business purposes may occur when an employee is unavailable. Therefore, employees are hereby notified that they have no legitimate expectation of privacy in those places. In addition, the district reserves the right to conduct searches when there is reasonable cause to believe a search will uncover evidence of work-related misconduct. Such an investigatory search may include drug and alcohol testing if the suspected violation relates to drug or alcohol use. The district may search the employee, the employee's personal items, and work areas including district-owned technology resources, lockers, and private vehicles parked on district premises or work sites or used in district business.

**Employees Required to Have a Commercial Driver's License.** Any employee whose duties require a commercial driver's license (CDL) is subject to drug and alcohol testing. This includes all drivers who operate a motor vehicle designed to transport 16 or more people counting the driver, drivers of large vehicles, or drivers of vehicles used in the transportation of hazardous materials. Teachers, coaches, or other employees who primarily perform duties other than driving are subject to testing requirements if their duties include driving a commercial motor vehicle.

Drug testing will be conducted before an individual assumes driving responsibilities. Alcohol and drug tests will be conducted when reasonable suspicion exists, at random, when an employee returns to duty after engaging in prohibited conduct, and as a follow-up measure. Testing may be conducted following accidents. Return-to-duty and follow-up testing will be conducted if an employee who has violated the prohibited alcohol conduct standards or tested positive for alcohol or drugs is allowed to return to duty.

All employees required to have a CDL or who otherwise are subject to alcohol and drug testing will receive a copy of the district's policy, the testing requirements, and detailed information on alcohol and drug abuse and the availability of assistance programs.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to alcohol and drug testing policies and related educational material should contact Health Services Director.

## **Health Safety Training**

*Policies DBA, DMA*

Certain employees who are involved in physical activities for students must maintain and submit to the district proof of current certification or training in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), concussion, and extracurricular athletic activity safety. Certification or documentation of training must be issued by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or another organization that

provides equivalent training and certification. Employees subject to this requirement must submit their certification or documentation to Health Services Director by September 30.

School nurses and employees with regular contact with students must complete a Texas Education Agency approved, online training regarding seizure disorder awareness, recognition, and related first aid.

## **Reassignments and Transfers**

### *Policy DK*

All personnel are subject to assignment and reassignment by the superintendent or designee when the superintendent or designee determines that the assignment or reassignment is in the best interest of the district. Reassignment is a transfer to another position, department, or facility that does not necessitate a change in the employment contract. Campus reassignments must be approved by the principal at the receiving campus except when reassignments are due to enrollment shifts or program changes. Extracurricular or supplemental duty assignments may be reassigned at any time unless an extracurricular or supplemental duty assignment is part of a dual-assignment contract. Employees who object to a reassignment may follow the district process for employee complaints as outlined in this handbook and district policy DGBA (Local).

An employee with the required qualifications for a position may request a transfer to another campus or department. A written request for transfer must be completed and signed by the employee and the employee's supervisor. A teacher requesting a transfer to another campus before the school year begins must submit his or her request by the second Friday in July. Requests for transfer during the school year will be considered only when the change will not adversely affect students and after a replacement has been found. All transfer requests will be coordinated by the Superintendent's office and must be approved by the receiving supervisor.

## **Reassignment – Supplemental Duties**

### *Policy DK*

Assigned supplemental duties, for which supplemental pay is received, may be modified or discontinued by the District at any time. An employee who wishes to relinquish a paid supplemental duty may do so only with the consent of the superintendent or designee. Paid supplemental duties are not a part of the District's contractual obligation to the employee and an employee shall hold no expectation of any continuing assignment to any paid supplemental duty.

## **Workload and Work Schedules**

### *Policies DEAB, DK, DL*

**Professional Employees.** Professional employees and academic administrators are exempt from overtime pay and are employed on a 10-, 11-, or 12-month basis, according to the work schedules set by the district. A school calendar is adopted each year designating the work

schedule for teachers and all school holidays. Notice of work schedules including start and end dates and scheduled holidays will be distributed each school year.

Classroom teachers will have planning periods for instructional preparation including conferences. The schedule of planning periods is set at the campus level but must provide at least 450 minutes within each two-week period in blocks not less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. Teachers and librarians are entitled to a duty-free lunch period of at least 30 minutes. The district may require teachers to supervise students during lunch one day a week when no other personnel are available.

**Paraprofessional and Auxiliary Employees.** Support employees are employed at will and receive notification of the required duty days, holidays, and hours of work for their position on an annual basis. Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees must be compensated for overtime and are not authorized to work in excess of their assigned schedule without prior approval from their supervisor. See Overtime Compensation for additional information.

## **Breaks for Expression of Breast Milk**

*Policies DEAB, DG*

The district supports the practice of expressing breast milk and makes reasonable accommodations for the needs of employees who express breast milk. A place, other than a multiple user bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from other employees and the public where the employee can express breast milk will be provided.

A reasonable amount of break time will be provided when the employee has a need to express milk. For nonexempt employees, these breaks are unpaid and are not counted as hours worked. Employees should meet with their supervisor to discuss their needs and arrange break times.

The Providing Urgent Maternal Protections of Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP Act) requires an employee to notify the district if they believe the district is out of compliance in providing breaks for a nursing mother. The employee must give the district 10 days to come into compliance before making any claim of liability against the district. An employee with concerns should contact the Human Resources Department at (936)653-1102

## **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act**

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) provides consideration of accommodations to employees who have known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. An employee seeking a PWFA accommodation should contact the Human Resources Department at (936)653-1102 to begin the interactive process.



## **Notification to Parents Regarding Qualifications**

*Policies DK, DBA*

In schools receiving Title I funds, the district is required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to notify parents at the beginning of each school year that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's teacher. ESSA also requires that parents be notified if their child has been assigned or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements.

Texas law requires that parents be notified if their child is assigned for more than 30 consecutive instructional days to a teacher who does not hold an appropriate teaching certificate. This notice is not required if parental notice under ESSA is sent. Inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers include individuals on an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take a certification exam) and individuals who do not hold any certificate or permit. Information relating to teacher certification will be made available to the public upon request. Employees who have questions about their certification status can call Human Resources.

## **Outside Employment and Tutoring**

*Policy DBD*

Employees are required to disclose in writing to their immediate supervisor any outside employment that may create a potential conflict of interest with their assigned duties and responsibilities or the best interest of the district. Supervisors will consider outside employment on a case-by-case basis and determine whether it should be prohibited because of a conflict of interest.

## **Performance Evaluation**

*Policy DN series*

Evaluation of an employee's job performance is a continuous process that focuses on improvement. Performance evaluation is based on an employee's assigned job duties and other job-related criteria. All employees will participate in the evaluation process with their assigned supervisor at least annually. Written evaluations will be completed on forms approved by the district. Reports, correspondence, and memoranda also can be used to document performance information. All employees will receive a copy of their written evaluation, participate in a performance conference with their supervisor, and have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

Upon receiving a report, a nursing review committee may review a nurse's nursing services, qualifications, and quality of patient care, as well as the merits of a complaint concerning a nurse, and a determination or recommendation regarding a complaint. A nurse may request,

orally or in writing, a determination by the committee regarding conduct requested of the nurse believed to violate the nurse's duty to a patient.

## **Employee Involvement**

*Policies BQA, BQB*

At both the campus and district levels, Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD offers opportunities for input in matters that affect employees and influence the instructional effectiveness of the district. As part of the district's planning and decision-making process, employees are elected to serve on district- or campus-level advisory committees. Plans and detailed information about the shared decision-making process are available in each campus office or from Central Office.

## **Staff Development**

*Policy DMA*

Staff development activities are organized to meet the needs of employees and the district. Staff development for instructional personnel is predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives, addressed in the campus improvement plan, and approved by a campus-level advisory committee. Staff development for noninstructional personnel is designed to meet specific licensing requirements (e.g., bus drivers) and continued employee skill development.

Individuals holding renewable SBEC certificates are responsible for obtaining the required training hours and maintaining appropriate documentation.

# Compensation and Benefits

## Salaries, Wages, and Stipends

*Policies DEA, DEAA, DEAB*

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and an established pay structure. The district's pay plans are reviewed by the administration each year and adjusted as needed. All district positions are classified as exempt or nonexempt according to federal law. Professional employees and academic administrators are generally classified as exempt and are paid monthly salaries. They are not entitled to overtime compensation. Other employees are generally classified as nonexempt and are paid an hourly wage or salary and receive compensatory time or overtime pay for each hour worked beyond 40 in a workweek.

All employees will receive written notice of their pay and work schedules before the start of each school year. Classroom teachers, full-time librarians, full-time nurses, and full-time counselors will be paid no less than the minimum state salary schedule. Contract employees who perform extracurricular or supplemental duties may be paid a stipend in addition to their salary according to the district's extra-duty pay schedule.

Employees should contact Business Office for more information about the district's pay schedules or their own pay.

## Credit of Higher Degrees

Teachers with a master's degree will receive a \$1000 stipend. Employee must provide adequate documentation showing any advanced degrees.

## Paychecks

All employees are paid once a month on the 15th. Paychecks will not be released to any person other than the district employee named on the check without the employee's written authorization. A schedule of payday dates can be found on our website under Human Resources>Pay Plans and Calendars

## Automatic Payroll Deposit

Direct deposit is mandatory for all employees. Please call 936-653-1113 to inquire about and/or set up direct deposit. A notification of 15 days is necessary to activate and/or change this service.

## **Payroll Deductions**

### *Policy CFEA*

The district is required to make the following automatic payroll deductions:

- Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) or Social Security employee contributions
- Federal income tax required for all full-time employees
- Medicare tax (applicable only to employees hired after March 31, 1986)
- Child support and spousal maintenance, if applicable
- Delinquent federal education loan payments, if applicable

Other payroll deductions employees may elect include deductions for the employee's share of premiums for health, dental, life, and vision insurance; annuities; and higher education savings plans or prepaid tuition programs. Employees also may request payroll deduction for payment of membership dues to professional organizations. Salary deductions are automatically made for unauthorized or unpaid leave.

**Overpayments.** Employees are not entitled to any funds the district overpays. An agreement between an employee and the district must be in place in order to deduct any overpayment.

## **Overtime Compensation**

### *Policies DEAB, DEC*

The district compensates overtime for nonexempt employees in accordance with federal wage and hour laws. Only nonexempt employees (hourly employees and paraprofessional employees) are entitled to overtime compensation. Nonexempt employees are not authorized to work beyond their normal work schedule without advance approval from their supervisor. A nonexempt employee who works overtime without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action

Overtime is legally defined as all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a workweek and is not measured by the day or by the employee's regular work schedule. For the purpose of calculating overtime, a workweek begins at 12:00AM Sunday and ends at 11:59PM Saturday.

Nonexempt employees that are paid on a salary basis are paid for a 40-hour workweek and do not earn additional pay unless they work more than 40 hours.

Employees may be compensated for overtime (i.e., hours beyond 40 in a workweek) at time-and-a-half rate with compensatory time off (comp time) or direct pay. The following applies to all nonexempt employees:

- Employees can accumulate up to 60 hours of comp time.
- Comp time must be used in the duty year that it is earned.
- Use of comp time may be at the employee's request with supervisor approval, as workload permits, or at the supervisor's direction.
- An employee is be required to use comp time before using available paid leave (e.g., sick, personal, vacation).
- Weekly time records will be maintained on all nonexempt employees for the purpose of wage and salary administration.

## Non-Exempt Athletic Game Workers

Non-exempt employees are subject to FLSA and must be paid or compensated thorough compensatory time or overtime pay for every hour that they work in a workweek that is over 40 hours at time and a half. At the District's option, nonexempt employees may receive compensatory time off, rather than overtime pay, for overtime work. The employee shall be informed in advance if overtime hours will accrue compensatory time rather than pay.( Policy DEAB Local)

A workweek is seven consecutive 24-hour periods. COCISDs workweek is defined in policy DEAB (Local) and begins 12:00am on Thursday and ends at 11:59pm on Wednesday.

Employees of the district who elect to work athletic events are considered to be doing so voluntarily at their own option

The district considers the athletic game positions to be a separate assignment from the employee's regular position.

### **These steps are to occur when an employee elects to work as an athletic worker:**

1. Employee's sign up to be an athletic game worker with the Athletic Department
2. Game Coordinator provides a list of athletic game workers to the Human Resources secretary by the end of the first week of each month
3. Human Resources secretary reviews list to determine who are exempt and non-exempt
4. Non-exempt employees will receive a memo from the HR office for the employee to acknowledge that the athletic assignment is a separate assignment from their main position
5. If there is an immediate need for an athletic game worker prior to the monthly list, the employee's name must be provided to the HR secretary to provide the employee the memo **prior** to working the assignment
6. Human Resources secretary will keep the signed memo in the employees personnel file
7. Employees will have to complete this memo yearly

***This procedure shall be provided to all non-exempt game workers prior to any event worked and on an annual basis or at the beginning of each school year.***

## **Travel Expense Reimbursement**

### *Policy DEE*

Before any travel expenses are incurred by an employee, the employee's supervisor and district administration must give approval. For approved travel, employees will be reimbursed for mileage and other travel expenditures according to the current rate schedule established by the district. Employees must submit receipts, to the extent possible, to be reimbursed for allowable expenses other than mileage.

## **Health and Life Insurance**

### *Policy CRD*

Group health insurance coverage is provided through TRS-ActiveCare, the statewide public school employee health insurance program. The district's contribution to employee insurance premiums is determined annually by the board of trustees. Employees eligible for health insurance coverage include the following:

- Employees who are active, contributing TRS members
- Employees who are not contributing TRS members and who are employed for 10 or more regularly scheduled hours per week

TRS retirees who are enrolled in TRS-Care (retiree health insurance program) are not eligible to participate in TRS-ActiveCare.

The insurance plan year is from September 1 through August 31. Current employees can make changes in their insurance coverage during open enrollment each year or when they experience a qualifying event (e.g., marriage, divorce, birth). Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, employee cost, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees in a separate booklet. Employees should contact Human Resources for more information.

**Unum** - The District provides employees with \$20,000 term life and \$20,000 Accidental Death/Dismemberment Benefits.

## **Supplemental Insurance Benefits**

### *Policy CRD*

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deduction. Employees should contact the Payroll Department for more information.

## **Cafeteria Plan Benefits (Section 125)**

Employees may be eligible to participate in the Cafeteria Plan (Section 125) and, under IRS regulations, must either accept or reject this benefit. This plan enables eligible employees to pay certain insurance premiums on a pretax basis (i.e., disability, accidental death and dismemberment, cancer and dread disease, dental and additional term life insurance). A third-party administrator handles employee claims made on these accounts.

New employees must accept or reject this benefit during their first month of employment. All employees must accept or reject this benefit on an annual basis and during the specified time period.

## **Workers' Compensation Insurance**

### *Policy CRE*

Workers' Compensation is available for any staff member injured while on duty. Beginning the eighth day, the staff member is compensated up to the maximum weekly amount set by the State.

In order to benefit from Workers' Compensation insurance, it is imperative that the staff member report any and all accidents immediately to their supervisor or supervisor's designee even if no medical attention is sought. An accident report must be completed and signed by the staff member and the supervisor at the time of the accident and forwarded to the District's payroll office. A copy of the report must be given to the injured employee.

A staff member returning from leave after an accident must submit to the personnel office a doctor's letter stating that the staff member has been released from the doctor's care and that the staff member is 100 percent recovered and able to resume his/her duties assigned in his/her job description. In most cases, a staff member will be permitted to return to work, only if he/she can perform the originally assigned duties. In some cases, the staff member will be eligible for a position change to a less demanding job, depending on the needs of the District. Upon exhausting FMLA absences for the workers compensation injury, the employee can be terminated.

## **Unemployment Compensation Insurance**

### *Policy CRF*

Employees who have been laid off or terminated through no fault of their own may be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits. Employees are not eligible to collect unemployment benefits during regularly scheduled breaks in the school year or the summer months if they have employment contracts or reasonable assurance of returning to service. Employees with questions about unemployment benefits should contact the Payroll Department.



## Teacher Retirement

All personnel employed on a regular basis for at least four and one-half months are members of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). Substitutes not receiving TRS service retirement benefits who work at least 90 days a year are eligible to purchase a year of creditable service in TRS. TRS provides members with an annual statement of their account showing all deposits and the total account balance for the year ending August 31, as well as an estimate of their retirement benefits.

Employees who plan to retire under TRS should notify the Payroll Department as soon as possible. Information on the application procedures for TRS benefits is available from TRS at Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 1000 Red River Street, Austin, TX 78701-2698, or call 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. TRS information is also available on the web ([www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov)).

## Other Benefit Programs

Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD is committed to providing you with a comprehensive benefits program. Our program allows you to customize your benefits package to best suit your needs and the needs of your family.

ENROLLMENT IS DURING THE FIRST 30 DAYS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THOSE EMPLOYEES HIRED AFTER AUGUST 9, 2024.

(You may not enroll for the new plan year after this date)

You must complete and sign a payroll authorization form in order for any of the aforementioned employee benefits to be payroll deducted, with the exception of Medicare (where applicable) and teacher retirement or 457 deferred compensation plans for substitutes.

## Leaves and Absences

### *Policies DEC, DECA, DECB*

The district offers employees paid and unpaid leaves of absence in times of personal need. This handbook describes the basic types of leave available and restrictions on leaves of absence. Employees who expect to be absent for an extended period of more than five days should call Human Resources for information about applicable leave benefits, payment of insurance premiums, and requirements for communicating with the district.

Paid leave must be used in ½ day increments. Earned comp time must be used before any available paid state and local leave. Unless an employee requests a different order, available paid state and local leave will be used in the following order:

- Local leave
- State personal leave
- State sick leave accumulated before the 1995-96 school year

Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate form or certification. Any unapproved absences or absences beyond accumulated or available paid leave shall result in deduction from the employee's pay.

If an hourly employee does not report or request leave of absence(s) according to district procedures, the incident is considered a "no call/no show". An employee who is absent for TWO consecutive days without notice is considered to have abandoned their job and may face disciplinary consequences up to and including termination.

**Immediate Family.** For purposes of leave other than family and medical leave, immediate family is defined as the following:

- Spouse
- Son or daughter, including a biological, adopted, or foster child, a son- or daughter-in-law, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee stands in loco parentis.
- Parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, or other individual who stands in loco parentis to the employee.
- Sibling, stepsibling, and sibling-in-law
- Grandparent and grandchild
- Any person residing in the employee's household at the time of illness or death

For purposes of family and medical leave, the definition of family is limited to spouse, parent, son or daughter, and next of kin. The definition of these are found in Policy DECA (LEGAL).

**Medical Certification.** Any employee, who is absent more than five days because of a personal or family illness, must submit a medical certification from a qualified health care provider confirming the specific dates of the illness, the reason for the illness, and—in the case of personal illness—the employee's fitness to return to work.

The district may require medical certification due to an employee's questionable pattern of absences or when deemed necessary by the supervisor or superintendent. The district may also request medical certification when an employee requests FMLA leave for the employee's serious health condition, a serious health condition of the employee's spouse, parent, or child, or for military caregiver leave.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits covered employers from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, we ask that employees and health care providers do not provide any genetic information in any medical certification. 'Genetic information,' as defined by GINA, includes an individual's family medical history, the results of an individual's or family member's genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual's family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual's family member, or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services.

**Continuation of Health Insurance.** Employees, on an approved leave of absence other than family and medical leave, may continue their insurance benefits at their own expense. Health insurance benefits for employees on paid leave and leave designated under the Family and Medical Leave Act will be paid by the district as they were prior to the leave. Otherwise, the district does not pay any portion of insurance premiums for employees who are on unpaid leave.

Under TRS-ActiveCare rules, an employee is no longer eligible for insurance through the district after six months of unpaid leave other than FML. If an employee's unpaid leave extends for more than six months, TRS ActiveCare will provide the employee with notice of COBRA rights.

## Personal Leave

State law entitles all employees to five days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave is available for use at the beginning of the year. A day of personal leave is equivalent to the number of hours per day in an employee's usual assignment, whether full-time or part-time. State personal leave accumulates without limit, is transferable to other Texas school districts, and generally transfers to education service centers. Personal leave may be used for two general purposes: nondiscretionary and discretionary.

**Nondiscretionary.** Leave taken for personal or family illness, family emergency, a death in the family, or active military service is considered nondiscretionary leave. Reasons for this type of leave allow very little, if any, advance planning. Nondiscretionary may be used in the same manner as state sick leave.

**Discretionary.** Leave taken at an employee's discretion that can be scheduled in advance is considered discretionary leave. An employee wishing to take discretionary personal leave must submit a request to his or her principal or supervisor FOUR days in advance of the anticipated absence. The effect of the employee's absence on the educational program or department operations, as well as the availability of substitutes, will be considered by the principal or supervisor.

**Leave Proration.** If an employee separates from employment with the district before his or her last duty day of the year, or begins employment after the first duty day, state personal leave will be prorated based on the actual time employed. When an employee separates from employment before the last duty day of the school year, the employee's final paycheck will be reduced by the amount of state personal leave the employee used beyond his or her pro rata entitlement for the school year.

## **State Sick Leave**

State sick leave accumulated before 1995 is available for use and may be transferred to other school districts in Texas. State sick leave may be used for the following reasons only:

- Employee illness
- Illness in the employee's immediate family
- Family emergency (i.e., natural disasters or life-threatening situations)
- Death in the immediate family
- Active military service

## **Local Leave**

The District will provide TWO days local sick leave for all regularly scheduled employees. Local sick leave shall accrue within the year at the rate of one day for every 93.5 work days of employment or one-half day for each 46.75 work days of employment in the school year until the maximum of five days for the year has been reached. The five local days are available for use at the beginning of the year. If an employee leaves the district before the end of the year, the cost of unearned leave days taken shall be deducted from the employee's final paycheck.

These TWO local days will be requested under previously established guidelines for sick leave. No personal days are included in the local days. Unused personal and sick leave days shall accumulate and will be available for the employee to use in subsequent years while the staff member is employed at Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD. Local sick leave is not transferable to other school Districts.

## **Vacation**

*Policy DED*

### **NON-WORK DAYS**

### **PAID VACATION – AT-WILL STAFF**

At-will employees who are full-time and work 240 days or more per year are eligible for a paid vacation. The vacation year shall be calculated from June 1 through May 31 annually. During the first year of employment, employees shall earn a prorated vacation benefit at .833 days per month from date of hire until June 1 at which time the employee is eligible to use the vacation benefit. Vacations will be scheduled subject to the approval of the supervisor and will be scheduled at a time most convenient to the District’s needs. Generally, vacations shall be taken during school holidays and during summer recess. Vacation days will be charged in full day increments. Vacation days are not cumulative.

### **HOLIDAYS – AT-WILL STAFF**

At-will employees are eligible for 10 paid holidays. The District will establish a calendar each year to determine the 10 paid holidays.

### **HOLIDAYS – PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

*The number of days available is based on the difference between the number of annual required work days as set by the annual school calendar and the number of contract days per staff members’ annual contract.*

***Personal leave shall not be used immediately preceding or following a school holiday, days scheduled for end of the semester or end-of-year exams, days scheduled for accountability tests, professional or staff development days, or during the first or last week of school. Should the employee believe the leave is necessary and merited, the request must be approved by the superintendent one week in advance.***

## **Sick Leave Pool**

COCISD offers a Sick Leave Pool to full –time employees who have exhausted or may exhaust all personal leave due to a catastrophic illness. Please contact the Human Resources Office for more information.

## **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—General Provisions**

The following text is from the federal notice, *Employee Rights and Responsibilities Under the Family and Medical Leave Act*. Specific information that the district has adopted to implement the FMLA follows this general notice.

### **Leave Entitlements**

Eligible employees who work for a covered employer can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for the following reasons:

- The birth of a child or placement of a child for adoption or foster care;

- To bond with a child (leave must be taken within 1 year of the child’s birth or placement);
- To care for the employee’s spouse, child, or parent who has a qualifying serious health condition;
- For the employee’s own qualifying serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee’s job;
- For qualifying exigencies related to the foreign deployment of a military member who is the employee’s spouse, child, or parent.

An eligible employee who is a covered servicemember’s spouse, child, parent, or next of kin may also take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the servicemember with a serious injury or illness.

An employee does not need to use leave in one block. When it is medically necessary or otherwise permitted, employees may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule.

Employees may choose, or an employer may require, use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. If an employee substitutes accrued paid leave for FMLA leave, the employee must comply with the employer’s normal paid leave policies.

### **Benefits and Protections**

While employees are on FMLA leave, employers must continue health insurance coverage as if the employees were not on leave.

Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to the same job or one nearly identical to it with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions.

An employer may not interfere with an individual’s FMLA rights or retaliate against someone for using or trying to use FMLA leave, opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA, or being involved in any proceeding under or related to the FMLA.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

An employee who works for a covered employer must meet three criteria in order to be eligible for FMLA leave. The employee must:

- Have worked for the employer for at least 12 months;
- Have at least 1,250 hours of service in the 12 months before taking leave;\* and
- Work at a location where the employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of the employee’s worksite.

\*Special hours of service eligibility requirements apply to airline flight crew employees.

### **Requesting Leave**

Generally, employees must give 30-days' advance notice of the need for FMLA leave. If it is not possible to give 30-days' notice, an employee must notify the employer as soon as possible and, generally, follow the employer's usual procedures.

Employees do not have to share a medical diagnosis but must provide enough information to the employer so it can determine if the leave qualifies for FMLA protection.

Sufficient information could include informing an employer that the employee is or will be unable to perform his or her job functions, that a family member cannot perform daily activities, or that hospitalization or continuing medical treatment is necessary. Employees must inform the employer if the need for leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.

Employers can require a certification or periodic recertification supporting the need for leave. If the employer determines that the certification is incomplete, it must provide a written notice indicating what additional information is required.

### **Employer Responsibilities**

Once an employer becomes aware that an employee's need for leave is for a reason that may qualify under the FMLA, the employer must notify the employee if he or she is eligible for FMLA leave and, if eligible, must also provide a notice of rights and responsibilities under the FMLA. If the employee is not eligible, the employer must provide a reason for ineligibility.

Employers must notify its employees if leave will be designated as FMLA leave, and if so, how much leave will be designated as FMLA leave.

### **Enforcement**

Employees may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, 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 that provides greater family or medical leave rights.

For additional information:

1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243) TTY: 1-877-889-5627  
[www.wagehour.dol.gov](http://www.wagehour.dol.gov)

## **Local Procedures for Implementing Family and Medical Leave Provisions**

Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in the 12-month period from July 1 through June 30.

**Use of Paid Leave.** FML runs concurrently with accrued sick and personal leave, temporary disability leave, compensatory time, assault leave, and absences due to a work-related illness or injury. The district will designate the leave as FML, if applicable, and notify the employee that accumulated leave will run concurrently.

**Combined Leave for Spouses.** Spouses who are employed by the district are limited to a combined total of 12 weeks of FML to care for a parent with a serious health condition; or for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child. Military caregiver leave for spouses is limited to a combined total of 26 weeks.

**Intermittent Leave.** When medically necessary or in the case of a qualifying exigency, an employee may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule. The district does not permit the use of intermittent or reduced-schedule leave for the care of a newborn child or for adoption or placement of a child with the employee.

**Fitness for Duty.** An employee that takes FML due to the employee's own serious health condition shall provide, before resuming work, a fitness-for-duty certification from the health care provider. When leave is taken for the employee's own serious health condition, the certification must address the employee's ability to perform essential job functions. The district shall provide a list of essential job functions (e.g., job description) to the employee with the FML designation notice to share with the health care provider. Fitness for duty is not required when an employee returns to work following leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition; to care for a child following birth, adoption, or foster care placement; or for qualifying exigency leave.

**Reinstatement.** An employee returning to work at the end of FML will be returned to the same position held when the leave began or to an equivalent position with equivalent employment benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment.

In certain cases, instructional employees desiring to return to work at or near the conclusion of a semester may be required to continue on family and medical leave until the end of the semester. The additional time off is not counted against the employee's FML entitlement, and the district will maintain the employees group health insurance and reinstate the employee at the end of the leave according the procedures outlined in policy (see DECA (LEGAL)).

**Failure to Return.** If, at the expiration of FML, the employee is able to return to work but chooses not to do so, the district may require the employee to reimburse the district's share of



insurance premiums paid during any portion of FML when the employee was on unpaid leave. If the employee fails to return to work for a reason beyond the employee's control, such as a continuing personal or family serious health condition or a spouse being unexpectedly transferred more than 75 miles from the district, the district may not require the employee to reimburse the district's share of premiums paid.

**District Contact.** Employees that require FML or have questions should contact Human Resources for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

## **Temporary Disability Leave**

**Certified Employees.** Any full-time employee whose position requires certification from the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) is eligible for temporary disability leave. The purpose of temporary disability leave is to provide job protection to full-time educators who cannot work for an extended period of time because of a mental or physical disability of a temporary nature. Temporary disability leave must be taken as a continuous block of time. It may not be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule. Pregnancy and conditions related to pregnancy are treated the same as any other temporary disability.

Employees must request approval for temporary disability leave. An employee's notification of need for extended absence due to the employee's own medical condition shall be accepted as a request for temporary disability leave. The request must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming the employee's inability to work and estimating a probable date of return. If disability leave is approved, the length of leave is no longer than 180 calendar days.

If an employee is placed on temporary disability leave involuntarily, he or she has the right to request a hearing before the board of trustees. The employee may protest the action and present additional evidence of fitness to work.

When an employee is ready to return to work, Human Resources should be notified at least 30 days in advance. The return-to-work notice must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming that the employee is able to resume regular duties. Certified employees returning from leave will be reinstated to the school to which they were previously assigned if an appropriate position is available. If an appropriate position is not available, the employee may be assigned to another campus, subject to the approval of the campus principal. If a position is not available before the end of the school year, the employee will be reinstated to a position at the original campus at the beginning of the following school year.

## **Workers' Compensation Benefits**

An employee absent from duty because of a job-related illness or injury may be eligible for workers' compensation weekly income benefits if the absence exceeds seven calendar days.

An employee receiving workers' compensation wage benefits for a job-related illness or injury may choose to use accumulated sick leave or any other paid leave benefits. An employee choosing to use paid leave will not receive workers' compensation weekly income benefits until all paid leave is exhausted or to the extent that paid leave does not equal the pre-illness or -injury wage. If the use of paid leave is not elected, then the employee will only receive workers' compensation wage benefits for any absence resulting from a work-related illness or injury, which may not equal his or her pre-illness or -injury wage.

## **Assault Leave**

Assault leave provides extended job income and benefits protection to an employee who is injured as the result of a physical assault suffered during the performance of his or her job. An incident involving as assault is a work-related injury and should be immediately reported to the campus principal or immediate supervisor.

An injury is treated as an assault if the person causing the injury could be prosecuted for assault or could not be prosecuted only because that person's age or mental capacity renders the person nonresponsible for purposes of criminal liability.

An employee who is physically assaulted at work may take all the leave time medically necessary (up to two years) to recover from the physical injuries he or she sustained. At the request of an employee, the district will immediately assign the employee to assault leave. Days of leave granted under the assault leave provision will not be deducted from accrued personal leave and must be coordinated with workers' compensation benefits. Upon investigation the district may change the assault leave status and charge leave used against the employee's accrued paid leave. The employee's pay will be deducted if accrued paid leave is not available

## **Bereavement Leave**

Policy DEC

An employee shall be granted three days of bereavement leave upon the death of a member of the employee's immediate family. Such leave shall be taken with no loss of pay, compensatory time, or other paid leave.

## **Parental Leave**

Policy DEC

An employee shall be granted 12 days of paid parental leave after the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child.

For professional employees, the District shall deduct the average daily rate of pay of a substitute for each day of parental leave taken, whether or not a substitute is employed. For employees other than professionals, the District shall deduct an amount equal to one-third of the individual employee's daily rate of pay for each day of parental leave taken.

## **Jury Duty**

*Policies DEC, DG*

The district provides paid leave to employees who are summoned to jury duty including service on a grand jury. The district will not discharge, threaten to discharge, intimidate, or coerce any regular employee because of juror or grand juror service or for the employee's attendance or scheduled attendance in connection with the service in any court in the United States. Employees who report to the court for jury duty may keep any compensation the court provides. An employee should report a summons for jury duty to his or her supervisor as soon as it is received and may be required to provide the district a copy of the summons to document the need for leave.

An employee may be required to report back to work as soon as they are released from jury duty. The supervisor may consider the travel time required and the nature of the individual's position when determining the need to report to work. A copy of the release from jury duty or documentation of time spent at the court may be required.

## **Compliance with a Subpoena**

Employees will be paid while on leave to comply with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding and will not be required to use personal leave. Employees may be required to submit documentation of their need for leave for court appearances.

## **Truancy Court Appearances**

An employee who is a parent, guardian of a child, or a court-appointed guardian ad litem of a child who is required to miss work to attend a truancy court hearing may use personal leave or compensatory time for the absence. Employees who do not have paid leave available will be docked for any absence required because of the court appearance.

## **Religious Observance**

The district will reasonably accommodate an employee's request for absence for a religious holiday or observance. Accommodations such as changes to work schedules or approving a day of absence will be made unless they pose an undue hardship to the district. The employee may use any accumulated personal leave for this purpose. Employees who have exhausted applicable paid leave may be granted an unpaid day of absence.

## **Military Leave**

**Paid Leave for Military Service.** Any employee who is a member of the Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, reserve component of the United States Armed Forces, or a member of a state or federally authorized Urban Search and Rescue Team is entitled to 15 days of paid leave per fiscal year when engaged in authorized training or duty orders by proper authority. An additional seven days of leave per fiscal year are available if called to state active duty in response to a disaster. In addition, an employee is entitled to use available state and local personal or sick leave during a time of active military service.

**Reemployment after Military Leave.** Employees who leave the district to enter into the United States uniformed services or who are ordered to active duty as a member of the military force of any state (e.g., National or State Guard) may return to employment if they are honorably discharged. Employees who wish to return to the district will be reemployed provided they can be qualified to perform the required duties. Employees returning to work following military leave should contact Human Resources. In most cases, the length of federal military service cannot exceed five years.

**Continuation of Health Insurance.** Employees who perform service in the uniformed services may elect to continue their health plan coverage at their own cost for a period not to exceed 24 months. Employees should contact Payroll Department for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

## **Leave for Peace Officers**

A full-time district employed licensed police officer who regularly serves in a law enforcement capacity in a district police department is entitled to a paid leave of absence (LOA) for an illness or injury related to the person's line of duty. If necessary, the leave shall continue for at least one year.

HB 2073, effective 6/15/2021, and SB 1359, effective 9/1/2021, of the 87<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, effective 9/1/2021, created two new types of leave for peace officers employed by districts. Peace officers are provided paid mental health leave and quarantine leave. Please contact the Human Resources Department for information.

#### Payment for Accumulated Leave Upon Separation

The following leave provisions shall apply to state leave accumulated beginning on the original effective date of this program. An employee who retires from the District shall be eligible for payment for accumulated state leave under the following conditions:

1. The employee's retirement is voluntary, i.e., the employee is not being discharged or nonrenewed.
2. The employee provides advance written notice of intent to retire. Contract employees must provide written notice at least 90 days before the last day of employment. Noncontract employees must provide written notice at least two weeks before the last day of employment.
3. The employee has at least five consecutive years of service with the District.

The employee shall receive payment for each day of accumulated state leave at a rate established by the Board. If the employee is reemployed with the District, days for which the employee received payment shall not be available to that employee.

The rate established by the Board shall be in effect until the Board adopts a new rate. Any changes to the rate shall apply beginning with the school year following the adoption of the rate change.

If unable to return to work at the end of the paid leave and any extension, a police officer may use accumulated sick, vacation, and other accrued leave before being placed on unpaid temporary leave. At the end of temporary leave, the police officer will be reinstated at the same rank and with the same seniority the person had before going on temporary leave.

#### **Processing Leave**

All persons who are absent for any reason are to register their absence with the District's attendance system (Helios). All persons who are out more than two days, must notify by voice-to-voice contact their principal/director or designees on the third day that they will be out. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action or may be considered job abandonment. Educational workshops required by employer are for record information only and are not processed as sick/docking purposes.

Any questions about leave may be answered by the Human Resource office or district business office.

## **Leave and TRS Service Years**

Ninety work days of a TRS eligible year, Sept.1-Aug.31 for everyone, must be served to constitute a year for TEA purposes and for the staff member to receive credit for a year of experience.

## **Neutral Absence Control Policy**

When an employee has exhausted all available leave and fails to return to work within a period of time stated in Board policy, the District shall notify the employee in writing of its intent to deny restoration to employment. The denial of restoration to employment shall be without consideration of whether the leave was due to personal injury, an on-the-job injury or illness, or other medical condition, and will be uniformly applied in order to prevent grievous economic injury to District

# **Employee Relations and Communications**

## **Employee Recognition and Appreciation**

Continuous efforts are made throughout the year to recognize employees who make an extra effort to contribute to the success of the district. Employees are recognized at board meetings, in the district newsletter, and through special events and activities.

## **District Communications**

Throughout the school year, the Public Relations office publishes newsletters, brochures, fliers, calendars, news releases, and other communication materials. These publications offer employees and the community information pertaining to school activities and achievements.

# Complaints and Grievances

## *Policy DGBA*

In an effort to hear and resolve employee concerns or complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted an orderly grievance process. Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns or complaints with their supervisors or an appropriate administrator at any time.

The formal process provides all employees with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with an administrative response. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, employees can bring concerns or complaints to the board of trustees. For ease of reference, the district's policy concerning the process of bringing concerns and complaints is reprinted as follows:

<https://pol.tasb.org/Home/Index/1049>

# Employee Conduct and Welfare

## Standards of Conduct

### *Policy DH*

All employees are expected to work together in a cooperative spirit to serve the best interests of the district and to be courteous to students, one another, and the public. Employees are expected to observe the following standards of conduct:

- Recognize and respect the rights of students, parents, other employees, and members of the community.
- Maintain confidentiality in all matters relating to students and coworkers.
- Report to work according to the assigned schedule.
- Notify their immediate supervisor in advance or as early as possible in the event that they must be absent or late. Unauthorized absences, chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and failure to follow procedures for reporting an absence may be cause for disciplinary action.
- Know and comply with department and district policies and procedures.
- Express concerns, complaints, or criticism through appropriate channels.
- Observe all safety rules and regulations and report injuries or unsafe conditions to a supervisor immediately. All staff and auxiliary personnel employed by Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD are required to have and prominently display a photo identification card furnished by the District while on school property conducting District business, unless doing so would be a safety hazard.
- Use district time, funds, and property for authorized district business and activities only.

All district employees should perform their duties in accordance with state and federal law, district policies and procedures, and ethical standards. Violation of policies, regulations, or guidelines, including intentionally making a false claim, offering false statements, or refusing to cooperate with a district investigation may result in disciplinary action, including termination. Alleged incidents of certain misconduct by educators, including having a criminal record, must be reported to SBEC not later than the seventh day after the superintendent knew of the incident.

The Educators' Code of Ethics, adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification, which all district employees must adhere to, is reprinted below:

### ***Texas Educators' Code of Ethics***

#### **Purpose and Scope**

The Texas educator shall comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession,



shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty and good moral character. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, shall measure success by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, shall cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community. This chapter shall apply to educators and candidates for certification. (19 TAC 247.1(b))

## **Enforceable Standards**

### **1. Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices, and Performance**

**Standard 1.1** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district, educational institution, educator preparation program, the Texas Education Agency, or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and its certification process.

**Standard 1.2** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.

**Standard 1.3** The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.

**Standard 1.4** The educator shall not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.

**Standard 1.5** The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or that are used to obtain special advantage. This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents of students, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.

**Standard 1.6** The educator shall not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.

**Standard 1.7** The educator shall comply with state regulations, written local school board policies, and other state and federal laws.

**Standard 1.8** The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.

**Standard 1.9** The educator shall not make threats of violence against school district employees, school board members, students, or parents of students.

**Standard 1.10** The educator shall be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state.

**Standard 1.11** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresent his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment.

**Standard 1.12** The educator shall refrain from the illegal use, abuse, or distribution of controlled substances, prescription drugs and toxic inhalants.

**Standard 1.13** The educator shall not be under the influence of alcohol or consume alcoholic beverages on school property or during school activities when students are present.

## **2. Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues**

**Standard 2.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

**Standard 2.2** The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.

**Standard 2.3** The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.

**Standard 2.4** The educator shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities.

**Standard 2.5** The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability, family status, or sexual orientation.

**Standard 2.6** The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.

**Standard 2.7** The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the SBEC or who provides information for a disciplinary investigation or proceeding under this chapter.

**Standard 2.8** The educator shall not intentionally or knowingly subject a colleague to sexual harassment.

## **3. Ethical Conduct toward Students**

**Standard 3.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

**Standard 3.2** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly treat a student or minor in a manner that adversely affects or endangers the learning, physical health, mental health, or safety of the student or minor.

**Standard 3.3** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresent facts regarding a student.

**Standard 3.4** The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, national origin, religion, family status, or sexual orientation.

**Standard 3.5** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in physical mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of a student or minor.

**Standard 3.6** The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor.

**Standard 3.7** The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child or knowingly allow any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.

**Standard 3.8** The educator shall maintain appropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries based on a reasonably prudent educator standard.

**Standard 3.9** The educator shall refrain from inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication such as cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication. Factors that may be considered in assessing whether the communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

- (i) the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
- (ii) the subject matter of the communication;
- (iii) whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
- (iv) whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
- (v) whether the communication was sexually explicit; and

whether the communication involved discussion(s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student.

## **STAFF MEMBERS AS ROLE MODELS**

### *Policy DH*

Staff members serve as role models for students and are expected to represent a positive influence. No staff member shall engage in behavior on the job that holds the potential for severely damaging or destroying the professional and personal trust required for a cooperative working relationship. Employees with access to confidential information are expected to maintain that confidentiality. Violation of confidentiality issues by employees could be cause for disciplinary action. By example, but in no way as a limiting factor, such behavior shall include profanity, displays of vulgarity, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, possession, use or being under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, and alteration of records.

## **DRESS AND GROOMING CODE**

### *Policy DH*

Opinions of Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD and its campuses are formed many times by the appearance and dress of the faculty, staff and students. All employees, substitutes, and volunteers are expected to project a professional image that sets positive dress and grooming examples for students and shall adhere to the standards of dress and appearance that are compatible with an effective learning environment at all times. Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD employees serve as role models for the students and as representatives of Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD. Professional dress reflects the value placed upon education and the learning environment that we are striving to create and maintain for our students and staff. **The dress and grooming of District employees shall be professional, clean, neat, in a manner appropriate for their assignment and in accordance with any additional standards established by their supervisors and approved by the superintendent.** Employees of COCISD will maintain personal dress and hygiene standards commensurate with employment assignments and job performance requirements. Department directors will address specific assignments where daily tasks and employee safety concerns may create employee dress requirements that vary from the general employee standards of dress. These may include but are not limited to maintenance, custodial, child nutrition and transportation. General employee guidelines for dress and appearance will include:

**Mask/Face covering policy in response to COVID-19:** Masks/face coverings are optional for all COCISD employees. If a mask/face covering is worn, it may be a mask, shield/mask combination, surgical, cloth or gator. Masks/face coverings can be personalized as long as it is not vulgar, inappropriate, or represent a political statement.

- Clothing that is ripped, torn, revealing, low cut, tight or too short is prohibited.
- Any article of clothing or decoration such as patches or badges containing obscene, or offensive language, symbols or phrases that create a nuisance, represent a political statement, or draw undue attention is prohibited.
- Gang affiliation colors, hats, symbols are not permitted.

- Male employees shall wear slacks or khaki-type type pants that are neat and clean. AG/Building Trades teachers may wear jeans with appropriate shoes for safety while in the **shop area**.
- Shorts or wind pants worn by employees will be considered appropriate when the assignment is in the gym or on the athletic field. **When in the main buildings or classrooms, or when involved in duties not in the gym or on the field, shorts or wind pants are considered inappropriate and are therefore prohibited(unless given prior approval by campus administration.)**
- Hats are not to be worn inside unless used as protective wear appropriate for one’s job function.
- Male employees are required to wear collared shirts and may wear a necktie if they prefer to do so.
- Male employees are not allowed to wear earrings.
- Females may wear no more than three(3) earrings in each ear.
- Employees may not wear visible body piercings/ornaments including but not limited to facial, eye, mouth, tongue or nose (exception to only nose piercings: clear, flush spacers are allowed.) Gauges are not allowed. Employees who have any of the aforementioned visible body piercings/ornaments will have to remove them or keep them covered at all times in the workplace. This also includes anytime the employee is representing COCISD/working any school-related activity/event as a coach, sponsor, etc.
- Hair (including facial hair) should be neat, clean and well-groomed. Hair should be of a natural color and style. Colors should not be extreme. (No pink, orange, green, purple, etc.)
- Female employees are encouraged to wear dresses, skirts, slacks or mid-calf dress capris. The minimum length of dresses or skirts must be at or about the top of the knee.
- Employees may not wear halter tops, see-through clothing, low-cut tops, tank tops, or strapless garments. Employees may not wear muscle shirts or clothing with spaghetti straps unless accompanied by a jacket or cardigan. Employee’s clothing may not be tight or revealing. No cleavage, mid-riffs or undergarments are to be visible.
- House shoes, shower type shoes or flip-flops are not permissible.
- T-shirts are not considered professional dress and are not allowed unless they represent a school club or organization (principal/director discretion) and may **only be worn on designated Spirit Days**. In general, employee dress should be moderate and express employment in a public school. Employees should set themselves apart from students by their choice of clothing.

### **Spirit Day Dress and Guidelines**

Trojan Spirit Day will be on Fridays during the school year and is designed to promote pride in Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD and increase school community connectedness. If there is no school on Friday throughout the school year, Thursday will serve as the designated Spirit Day. Please note that throughout the school year, Spirit Days may also fall on different dates outside of Friday. The principal may establish these dates per the athletic schedule(s)/campus events calendar. Spirit Day should not be interpreted as a casual dress day. Employees may wear jeans while adhering to the following guidelines:

- A District-specified shirt which exemplifies school spirit and Trojan pride are the only shirts allowed.

- Jeans, which are clean, neat, and in good condition are allowed. The skin should not be showing/exposed through holes or frayed fabric.

### **College & University/Postsecondary Awareness Day: Dress and Guidelines**

Every Wednesday, employees are encouraged to wear a shirt from their Alma mater or favorite college, university, trade/vocational/business school, or military branch to promote higher education after graduation. Employees who participate may wear professional-looking jeans as described above.

**Any employee deemed inappropriately dressed according to this dress code policy will be required to change or be sent home until he/she returns in appropriate attire.**

**Tattoo Regulations:** COCISD recognizes and values the diversity of our workplace. We understand that personal appearance is an integral part of individual identity. This tattoo policy is designed to strike a balance between individual freedom and maintaining a professional and inclusive work environment. In line with our commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace, we hereby establish a practice regarding the appropriate display of tattoos (**ones that are not Offensive, Unprofessional, Distracting, or Disruptive**) in the workplace and at all school events. Tattoos should not compromise the professional image of COCISD.

- All tattoos above the shirt collar shall be covered. Visible facial and neck tattoos are prohibited.
- Tattoos and brands anywhere on the body that are **\*Offensive, Unprofessional, Distracting, or Disruptive** including but not limited to anything obscene/advocating sex, racial intolerance, or religious discrimination or of a nature that tends to bring discredit to COCISD are prohibited and must be covered so they are not visible to students, other employees, or school stakeholders.
- Images of violence or gang-related tattoos must be covered at all times.
- Images of nudity must be covered at all times.
- Profanity (in any language) must be covered at all times.
- Images or words containing reference to or advocacy of drugs, alcohol, or illegal activity must be covered at all times.

Questions or concerns about tattoos should be addressed through open and respectful communication. Employees may discuss concerns with their supervisors and/or the HR Department. Questions or concerns about the appropriateness of a tattoo will be addressed with the HR Department.

During in-service of each school year, and for all new tattoos after the first initial approval, all employees whose tattoos will show while in dress code will need to have them approved and will sign a dress code agreement with HR. This agreement will document all tattoos that are to be covered while on school property; please see the form below.

Consequences for violating the dress code agreement are as follows and will be handled through HR and will include:

- Written warning with a Letter of Caution
- Written reprimand for insubordination to be placed in their personnel file
- Loss of the right to show all tattoos
- Other adverse employment action, up to and including nonrenewal or termination for insubordination

COCISD reserves the right to amend or supplement this portion of the employee dress code regulation at any time. We also reserve the right to determine the appropriateness of a tattoo as it relates to the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of Texas Educators.

\*As used herein, the terms **Offensive, Unprofessional, Distracting, or Disruptive** shall mean: Inconsistent with the professional image and standards of the COCISD and the community.

**COCISD Dress Code Agreement  
2024-2025**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above dress code regulation as it relates to tattoo standards and consequences and agree to abide by the guidelines as outlined in the dress code regulation while on COCISD property.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that I must have the following tattoos covered at all times while on COCISD property.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Signed and agreed upon with HR.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee/Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
HR/Date



## **CELL PHONE USAGE DURING WORKDAY**

Use of cell phones is prohibited during classroom instruction time. Faculty and staff may use their cell phones during conference periods and off-duty lunch times.

## **REPORTING FOR WORK**

It is mandatory for all non-exempt employees to clock in using the District's clock-in program. Staff members are expected to report to work punctually. At-will, hourly employees shall not clock in early or late without the express permission of their supervisor. It is prohibited for another employee to clock in or clock out for another employee. (See individual department procedures or school handbooks for specific directions.)

Staff members shall not conduct private business or leave their assigned work location during their assigned work hours. With the knowledge and permission of the supervisor, the staff member may check-out to take care of private business. Upon returning to duty, the staff member will inform the appropriate person that he/she has returned to work.

## **DISTRICT'S FACILITY STANDARDS**

- No candles. (open flames)
- No pesticide.
- No surge protectors plugged into another surge protector.
- No electrical cords to equipment or surge protectors missing the grounding prong. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> or round prong on an electrical cord. If prong is missing an Out of Service tag needs to be attached to plug and a work order should be sent to the Maintenance office. The cord should not be used until it is fixed.
- No cords pulled across the floor or under tables where they can cause a tripping hazard.
  
- No refrigerators, hot plates, crock pots, or microwaves in classrooms or offices. Exceptions are made for teachers' break room, vocational or extracurricular area (ag, band, athletics, building trades), science store room, nurse's office, kitchen, & life skills.
- No lighter fluid, safe heat (chafing dish fuel), gasoline, lacquer thinner, etc. in classrooms or shops unless stored in flammable storage cabinets.
- No open flame, fuel governed, or exposed elements heaters in any District facility.
- Nothing, in front of, or blocking breaker boxes. This includes those in classrooms, janitor closets, electrical closets, etc.
- Nothing in front of fire extinguishers.
- MSDS books on all campuses should include MSDS sheets on all liquids, powders, creams, lotions, medicines, etc. A copy of the annually updated MSDS books should be in your campus nurse's office, campus office and a copy sent to the Superintendent.
- No household trash in dumpsters.

- Halls are for fire exits and should not be cluttered with furniture & displays.
- Any food projects made in class must be sent home the same day.
- Thematic Units must be temporarily displayed.
- Floor plans of rooms should be designed in a manner so that the teacher has a clear view of all students at any given time.
- Do not cover the window of your classroom doors more than 75%.
- Any food items stored in the rooms must be stored out of view in cabinets or in an opaque storage container.
- Stuffed animals may be used for teaching purposes only. Stuffed animals for decorative purposes only are not permitted.
- If you must hang items on your cabinets, use yellow tacky-tack only. Wax adhesive products or hot glue should not be used.
- No thumbtacks, staples, nails, screws, etc. on walls, doors, marker boards or chalkboards.
- Bulletin boards, marker boards, chalkboards and cabinets are standard in classrooms and should remain as they are now.
- All classroom doors must remain locked at all times from hall or exterior access.
- No pets/animals in building without prior written authorization from the Superintendent

## **Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**

### *Policies DH, DIA*

Employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment, including sexual harassment, of other employees, unpaid interns, student teachers, or students. While acting in the course of their employment, employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment of other persons including board members, vendors, contractors, volunteers, or parents. A substantiated charge of harassment will result in disciplinary action.

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated or retaliated against or harassed are encouraged to promptly report such incidents to the campus principal, supervisor, or appropriate district official. If the campus principal, supervisor, or district official is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be made directly to the superintendent. A complaint against the superintendent may be made directly to the board.

Any district employee who believes that he or she has experienced prohibited conduct based on sex, including sexual harassment, or believes that another employee has experienced such prohibited conduct, should immediately report the alleged acts. The employee may report the alleged acts to his or her supervisor, the campus principal, the Title IX coordinator, or the superintendent. The district's Title IX coordinator's name and contact information is listed in the Equal Employment Opportunity section of this handbook.

The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating discrimination, harassment, and retaliation is reprinted below:

<https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/1049?filter=DH>

## **Harassment of Students**

*Policies DH, DHB, FFG, FFH, FFI, DF*

Sexual and other harassment of students by employees are forms of discrimination and are prohibited by law. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and district employees are prohibited.

Employees who suspect a student may have experienced prohibited harassment are obligated to report their concerns to the campus principal or other appropriate district official. Any district employee who suspects or receives direct or indirect notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced prohibited conduct based on sex, including sexual harassment, of a student shall immediately notify the district's Title IX coordinator, the ADA/Section 504 coordinator, or superintendent and take any other steps required by district policy.

All allegations of prohibited harassment of a student by an employee or adult will be reported to the student's parents and promptly investigated. An employee who knows of or has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect occurred child abuse must also report his or her knowledge or suspicion to the appropriate authorities, as required by law.

The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating harassment of students is reprinted below:

<https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/1049?filter=FFH>

## **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

*Policies DG, GRA*

All employees with reasonable cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect, as defined by Texas Family Code §261.001, are required by state law to make a report to a law enforcement agency, Child Protective Services (CPS), or appropriate state agency (e.g., state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering the facility) within 48 hours of the event that led to the suspicion. Alleged abuse or neglect involving a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child (including a teacher) must be reported to CPS.

Employees are also required to make a report if they have reasonable cause to believe that an adult was a victim of abuse or neglect as a child and they determine in good faith that the disclosure of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of another child, elderly person, or person with a disability.

Reports to Child Protective Services can be made online at

<https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx> or to the Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252-

5400). State law specifies that an employee may not delegate to or rely on another person or administrator to make the report.

Under state law, any person reporting or assisting in the investigation of reported child abuse or neglect is immune from liability unless the report is made in bad faith or with malicious intent. In addition, the district is prohibited from taking an adverse employment action against a certified or licensed professional who, in good faith, reports child abuse or neglect or who participates in an investigation regarding an allegation of child abuse or neglect.

An employee's failure to make the required report may result in prosecution as a Class A misdemeanor. The offense of failure to report by a professional may be a state jail felony if it is shown the individual intended to conceal the abuse or neglect. In addition, a certified employee's failure to report may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics.

Employees who suspect that a student has been or may be abused or neglected should also report their concerns to the campus principal. This includes students with disabilities who are no longer minors. Employees are not required to report their concern to the principal before making a report to the appropriate agency.

Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report it to the appropriate state agency. In addition, employees must cooperate with investigators of child abuse and neglect. Interference with a child abuse investigation by denying an interviewer's request to interview a student at school or requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator against the desires of the duly authorized investigator is prohibited.

## **Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment of Children**

The district has established a plan for addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children, which may be accessed from the Superintendent's Office. As an employee, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused or maltreated. Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Maltreatment is defined as abuse or neglect. Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility under state law for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect following the procedures described above in *Reporting Suspected Child Abuse*.

## **Reporting Crime**

*Policy DG*

The Texas Whistleblower Act protects district employees who make good faith reports of violations of law by the district to an appropriate law enforcement authority. The district is prohibited from suspending, terminating the employment of, or taking other adverse personnel action against, an employee who makes a report under the Act. State law also provides employees with the right to report a crime witnessed at the school to any peace officer with authority to investigate the crime.

## **Scope and Sequence**

### *Policy DG*

If a teacher determines that students need more or less time in a specific area to demonstrate proficiency in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for that subject and grade level, the district will not penalize the teacher for not following the district's scope and sequence.

The district may take appropriate action if a teacher does not follow the district's scope and sequence based on documented evidence of a deficiency in classroom instruction. This documentation can be obtained through observation or substantiated and documented third-party information.

## **Technology Resources**

### *Policy CQ*

The district's technology resources, including its networks, computer systems, email accounts, devices connected to its networks, and all district-owned devices used on or off school property, are primarily for administrative and instructional purposes. Limited personal use is permitted if the use:

- Imposes no tangible cost to the district.
- Does not unduly burden the district's technology resources.
- Has no adverse effect on job performance or on a student's academic performance.

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the technology resources are not confidential and can be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

Each employee is required to read and sign the "Acceptable Use of Technology" form at the beginning of each school year. Employees are required to abide by the provisions of the District's acceptable use agreement and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension of access or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary and legal

action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management may contact the COCISD Technology Department at 936-653-1118.

### **E-Mail**

E-mail is a District service provided by public funds. It is for instructional, administrative and limited personal use. Sending jokes, chain letters, etc. via e-mail is considered as an inappropriate use of District equipment.

E-mail transmissions and other use of technology resources are not confidential and can be monitored at any time by designated District staff to ensure appropriate use.

The e-mail system is filtered for both content and “junk mail.” E-mail is a public document and can become part of a legal process. Employees must check their e-mail transmissions at least once per school day

Building administrators should approve an e-mail distributed to an entire campus staff.

Revealing personal addresses or phone numbers of others is prohibited.

E-mail should be professional in nature, to the point and signed.

Use good judgment in forwarding any e-mail. Ensure that privacy considerations are taken into account.

Use proper e-mail etiquette as described below.

### **E-Mail Etiquette**

System users are expected to observe the e-mail etiquette as follows:

- Be polite; messages typed in capital letters are the equivalent of shouting and are considered rude.
- Use appropriate language; swearing, vulgarity, ethnic or racial slurs and any other inflammatory language are prohibited.
- Pretending to be someone else when sending/receiving messages is considered inappropriate.
- Transmitting obscene messages or pictures is prohibited.
- Be considerate when sending attachments with e-mail by considering whether a file may be too large to be accommodated by the recipient’s system or may be in a format unreadable by the recipient.

### **Social Networking (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)**

School faculty and staff are expected to behave honorably in both real and virtual (online) spaces. Activities which are improper, unethical, illegal, or which cause undue discomfort for students, employees, parents or other members of the school community should be judiciously avoided in both physical space and cyberspace.

See *COCISD Social Media Guidelines and Procedures* located at [cocisd.org](http://cocisd.org) > Staff > [Employee Handbook](#).

# Personal Use of Electronic Communications

*Policy CQ, DH*

Electronic communications include all forms of social media, such as text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (email), web logs (blogs), wikis, electronic forums (chat rooms), video-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Electronic communications also include all forms of telecommunication such as landlines, cell phones, and web-based applications.

As role models for the district's students, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not acting as district employees. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of electronic communications as they are for any other public conduct. If an employee's use of electronic communications interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If an employee wishes to use a social network site or similar media for personal purposes, the employee is responsible for the content on the employee's page, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends, or members of the public who can access the employee's page, and for web links on the employee's page. The employee is also responsible for maintaining privacy settings appropriate to the content.

An employee who uses electronic communications for personal purposes shall observe the following:

- The employee may not set up or update the employee's personal social network page(s) using the district's computers, network, or equipment.
- The employee shall limit use of personal electronic communication devices to send or receive calls, text messages, pictures, and videos to breaks, meal times, and before and after scheduled work hours, unless there is an emergency or the use is authorized by a supervisor to conduct district business.
- The employee shall not use the district's logo or other copyrighted material of the district without express written consent.
- An employee may not share or post, in any format, information, videos, or pictures obtained while on duty or on district business unless the employee first obtains written approval from the employee's immediate supervisor. Employees should be cognizant that they have access to information and images that, if transmitted to the public, could violate privacy concerns.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, even when communicating regarding personal and private matters, regardless of whether the employee is using private or public equipment, on or off campus. These restrictions include:
  - Confidentiality of student records. [See Policy FL]

- Confidentiality of health or personnel information concerning colleagues, unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law. [See DH (EXHIBIT)]
- Confidentiality of district records, including educator evaluations and private email addresses. [See Policy GBA]
- Copyright law [See Policy CY]
- Prohibition against harming others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system. [See DH (EXHIBIT)]

See *Electronic Communications between Employees, Students, and Parents*, below, for regulations on employee communication with students through electronic media.

## **Electronic Communications between Employees, Students, and Parents**

### *Policy DH*

A certified or licensed employee, or any other employee designated in writing by the superintendent or a campus principal, may use electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the district. The employee must comply with the provisions outlined below. Electronic communications between all other employees and students who are enrolled in the district are prohibited. Employees are not required to provide students with their personal phone number or email address.

An employee is not subject to the provisions regarding electronic communications with a student to the extent the employee has a social or family relationship with a student. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organization. An employee who claims an exception based on a social relationship shall provide written consent from the student's parent. The written consent shall include an acknowledgement by the parent that:

- The employee has provided the parent with a copy of this protocol
- The employee and the student have a social relationship outside of school;
- The parent understands that the employee's communications with the student are excepted from district regulation; and
- The parent is solely responsible for monitoring electronic communications between the employee and the student.

The following definitions apply for the use of electronic media with students:



- *Electronic communications* means any communication facilitated by the use of any electronic device, including a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. The term includes email, text messages, instant messages, and any communication made through an Internet website, including a social media website or a social networking website.
- *Communicate* means to convey information and includes a one-way communication as well as a dialogue between two or more people. A public communication by an employee that is not targeted at students (e.g., a posting on the employee’s personal social network page or a blog) is not a *communication*: however, the employee may be subject to district regulations on personal electronic communications. See *Personal Use of Electronic Media*, above. Unsolicited contact from a student through electronic means is not a *communication*.
- *Certified or licensed employee* means a person employed in a position requiring SBEC certification or a professional license, and whose job duties may require the employee to communicate electronically with students. The term includes classroom teachers, counselors, principals, librarians, paraprofessionals, nurses, educational diagnosticians, licensed therapists, and athletic trainers.

An employee who communicates electronically with students shall observe the following:

- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students using any form of electronic communications, including mobile and web applications, that are not provided or accessible by the district unless a specific exception is noted below.
- Employees should never text students from their personal cell phones, or instant message/direct message students on any personal social media, messaging app or account. All communication needs to take place via Remind, school email, or other District-provided applications such as Google Classroom. Communication about school issues through personal email accounts or text messages are not allowed as they cannot be preserved in accordance with the district’s record retention policy.
- The employee shall limit communications to matters within the scope of the employee’s professional responsibilities (e.g., for classroom teachers, matters relating to class work, homework, and tests; for an employee with an extracurricular duty, matters relating to the extracurricular activity).
- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students through a personal social network page; the employee must create a separate social network page (“professional page”) for the purpose of communicating with students. The employee must enable administration and parents to access the employee’s professional page. The COCISD Social Media Request Form must be submitted and approved before the creation of any school-related social media site or account.

- The employee shall not communicate directly with any student between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. An employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog, or similar application at any time.
- The employee does not have a right to privacy with respect to communications with students and parents.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics including:
  - Compliance with the Public Information Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including retention and confidentiality of student records. [See Policies CPC and FL]
  - Copyright law [Policy CY]
  - Prohibitions against soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student. [See Policy DH]
- Upon request from administration, an employee will provide the phone number(s), social network site(s), or other information regarding the method(s) of electronic media the employee uses to communicate with one or more currently-enrolled students.
- Upon written request from a parent or student, the employee shall discontinue communicating with the student through email, Remind, or any other form of one-to-one communication.
- An employee may request an exception from one or more of the limitations above by submitting a written request to his or her immediate supervisor.
- All staff are required to use school email accounts or other District-provided applications such as Remind or Google Classroom for all electronic communications with parents. Communication about school issues through personal email accounts or text messages are not allowed as they cannot be preserved in accordance with the district's record retention policy.
- An employee shall notify his or supervisor in writing within one business day if a student engages in an improper electronic communication with the employee. The employee should describe the form and content of the electronic communication.
- **Guidelines for Use of Social Networks by School faculty and Staff**
- Exercise appropriate discretion when using social networks for personal communications (friends, colleagues, parents, former students, etc.)
- Accept social network friend requests only with alumni over the age of 18. Recognize that many former students have online connections with current students, and that information shared between school adults and former students is likely to be seen by current students as well.

- Remind all other members of your network of your position as an educator whose profile may be accessed by current or former students, and to monitor their posts to your network accordingly. Conversely, be judicious in your postings to all friends' sites, and act immediately to remove any material that may be inappropriate from your site whether posted by you or someone else.
- Faculty who use social networks should do so using their own name, not a pseudonym or nickname.

See *COCISD Social Media Guidelines and Procedures* located at [cocisd.org](http://cocisd.org) > Staff > [Employee Handbook](#).

### **User Responsibility**

- All computer workstations should be turned off at the end of each workday.
- Printing of documents should be limited to one copy. Additional copies for classroom or staff training can be made on District copiers.
- Sites accessible via the Network/Internet may contain material that is illegal, defamatory, inaccurate or controversial. Although the District will attempt to limit access to objectionable material by using filtering software, controlling all materials on the Network/Internet is impossible. A user must not knowingly attempt to access inappropriate material. If a user accidentally reaches such material, they must immediately back out of the area on the Internet. The user must then notify the Technology Department of the site address so that it can be removed from accessibility through the filtering software.
- The District's technology department provides technical support. If an employee is in need of technical assistance, they should contact the District's Department of Technology.

### **Inappropriate Use of School Computers**

- Using the system for any illegal purpose including, but not limited to: hacking, transmission or downloading of pornography, fraud, and participation in terrorist activity or purchasing illegal substances.
- Accessing or borrowing someone's account with or without permission.
- Downloading or using copyrighted information without permission from the copyright holder.
- Posting messages or accessing materials that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal.
- Wasting school resources through the improper use of the computer system.
- Gaining unauthorized access to restricted information or resources.

- Accessing the COCISD network with personal computer equipment.
- Using the network in any way that restricts bandwidth that is not school related. (e.g., music, games, etc.)
- Use of proxies is strictly prohibited.
- Accessing chat rooms and other instant messaging services.
- Creation of or posting of web pages that are commercial in nature.
- Creating or posting viruses or other destructive programs.
- Adding or removing computer files or software.
- Streaming music/video not related to a class project or other approved activity.
- Unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal information regarding students and employees.
- All other inappropriate uses as deemed by school officials.

#### **Consequences of Violations**

- Employees and students who are authorized to use the systems are required to abide by the provisions of the District's Technology Acceptable Use Policy and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary or legal action. District administrators will make the final determination as to what constitutes inappropriate use. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact the Director of Technology.

#### **Computer Software**

- It is the practice of the District to respect all computer software copyrights and to adhere to the terms of all software licenses to which the District is a party. The Director of Technology is charged with the responsibility of enforcing these guidelines.
- District employees, students, and volunteers may not duplicate any licensed software or related documentation for use either on the District's premises or elsewhere unless the Department of Technology is authorized to do so by agreement with the licensor. Unauthorized duplication of software may subject the employee and/or the school District to both civil and criminal penalties under the United States Copyright Act.
- All computer software on District equipment must be installed by the Department of Technology or designee. Software acquisition channels are restricted to ensure that the school District has a complete record of all software that has been purchased for District computers and can register, support, and upgrade the software. Software on District computers must be approved by the Director of Curriculum and the Department of Technology.

#### **Web Authoring**

- The District and each campus have an authorized web site. Students, District employees, and community members are strictly prohibited from authoring a private website which represents itself as the official site for the District. District employees, trustees, and members of the public are not permitted to publish personal web pages using District resources.
- Teachers and other instructional personnel are strongly encouraged to develop professional web pages in coordination with the Director of Technology or designee. Web pages should be used to enhance flow of information from the campuses to the students and parents.

#### **Electronic Records Retention Requirements**

- Electronic records are the information that is maintained in electronic format in a computer for and the product of computer processing. This includes any information produced by e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, etc. These procedures apply to any electronic mail messages created, received, retained, used, or disposed of using the COCISD's electronic mail system. COCISD's approved retention schedule lists the record series that are created and the retention period for each series. It is the content and function of an e-mail or other electronic message that determines the retention period for that message. All electronic messages sent or received by COCISD are considered a COCISD record. Therefore, all electronic messages, including e-mail, must be retained or disposed of according to the COCISD's retention schedule. Electronic messages usually, but not always, fall into the Correspondence and Internal Memoranda record series.
- COCISD will electronically archive all email sent to cocisd.org accounts.

#### **Disclaimer**

- The Computer Use and Data Management Guidelines apply to all computers owned by COCISD. The District makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the services it is providing and is not responsible for any damages suffered by users. This includes loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, or service interruptions caused by its negligence or user errors or omissions. The District is not responsible for phone/credit card bills or any other charges incurred by users. Use of any information obtained via the Network/Internet is at the user's own risk. The District will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials on any investigation concerning or relating to misuse of the District's electronic communications

## **Public Information on Private Devices**

### *Policy DH*

Employees should not maintain district information on privately owned devices. Any district information must be forwarded or transferred to the district to be preserved. The district will take reasonable efforts to obtain public information in compliance with the Public Information Act.

Reasonable efforts may include:

- Verbal or written directive
- Remote access to district-owned devices and services

# **Criminal History Background Checks**

## *Policy DBAA*

Employees may be subject to a review of their criminal history record information at any time during employment. National criminal history checks based on an individual's fingerprints, photo, and other identification will be conducted on certain employees and entered into the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Clearinghouse. This database provides the district and SBEC with access to an employee's current national criminal history and updates to the employee's subsequent criminal history.

### **Decision Matrix for Criminal History Checks**

1. Is the offense a non-reviewable offense?
  - a. If *yes*, then the individual cannot be considered.
  - b. If *no*, then go to **Question #2**

#### **Non-reviewable offenses include, but are not limited to:**

Criminal Homicide

Murder

Capital Murder Kidnapping and False Imprisonment

Kidnapping

Aggravated Kidnapping

Public Lewdness

Indecency with a Child

Prohibited Sexual Conduct

Sexual Assault

Aggravated Sexual Assault (Rape)

Injury to a Child

Abandoning or Endangering a Child

Sale or Purchase of a child

Arson

Robbery

Aggravated Robbery

Prostitution

Obscenity

Violation of the Texas Controlled Substance Act (except possession of two or less ounces of marijuana)

#### **Persons whose job assignments require handling District funds:**

Theft

Fraud

Computer Crimes

Insurance Fraud

## Perjury and other Falsifications

2. Is the offense a felony?

- a. If yes, go to **Question #3**.
- b. If *no*, a misdemeanor, go to **Question #5**.

3. Is the offense a Felony of the 1<sup>st</sup> Degree?

- a. If yes, then the individual cannot be considered.
- b. If *no*, then go to **Question #4**.

4. Did the felony occur 10 or more years ago?

- a. If yes, then the individual is eligible for consideration
- b. If *no*, then the individual cannot be considered.

5. Was the misdemeanor either a Class A or Class B?

- a. If yes, go to **Questions #6**.
- b. If *no*, go to **Question #7**.

6. Did the offense take place 5 or more years ago?

- a. If yes, the individual is eligible for consideration.
- b. If *no*, the individual cannot be considered.

7. Did the Class C misdemeanor involve Moral Turpitude? (Moral turpitude involves any element of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, deliberate violence, misrepresentation, or contrary to good morals.)

- a. If yes, go to **Question #8**.
- b. If *no*, the individual is eligible for consideration.

8. Did the offense take place 5 or more years ago?

- a. If yes, the individual is eligible for consideration.
- b. If *no*, the individual cannot be considered.

9. Does the Criminal History report show that one or more criminal charges were “withdrawn?”

If so, it is recommended that a letter be sent to the individual requesting the employee to explain the circumstances of the arrest and the charge in writing and to provide the District with a certified copy of the court paperwork showing the final disposition of that matter.

10. Is the offense disposition missing for one or more of the charges shown on the report?

If so, it is recommended that a letter be sent to the employee requesting that the employee explain the circumstances for the charge in writing and provide a certified copy of the court paperwork showing the final disposition of the charge.

## **Employee Arrests and Convictions**

*Policy DH,DHB,DHC*

An employee must notify his or her principal or immediate supervisor within three calendar days of any arrest, indictment, conviction, no contest or guilty plea, or other adjudication of any felony, and any of the other offenses listed below:

- Crimes involving school property or funds
- Crimes involving attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle any person to hold or obtain a position as an educator
- Crimes that occur wholly or in part on school property or at a school-sponsored activity
- Crimes involving moral turpitude

Moral turpitude includes the following:

- Dishonesty
- Fraud
- Deceit
- Theft
- Misrepresentation
- Deliberate violence
- Base, vile, or depraved acts that are intended to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of the actor
- Crimes involving any felony possession or conspiracy to possess, or any misdemeanor or felony transfer, sale, distribution, or conspiracy to transfer, sell, or distribute any controlled substance
- Felonies involving driving while intoxicated (DWI)
- Acts constituting abuse or neglect under the Texas Family Code.

If an educator is arrested or criminally charged, the superintendent is also required to report the educator's criminal history to the Division of Investigations at TEA.

**Certified Employees.** The superintendent and directors are required to report the misconduct or criminal history of a certified employee or individual applying for certification or permit to TEA Division of Educator Investigations. Information about misconduct or allegations of misconduct of a certified employee obtained by a means other than the criminal history



clearinghouse that results in termination, resignation, or criminal history (e.g., arrest, indictment, prosecution, conviction, or other disposition by the criminal justice system, including probation and deferred adjudication) will be reported to TEA.

Misconduct or allegations of misconduct include:

- Abused or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor
- Possessed, transferred, sold, or distributed a controlled substance
- Illegally transferred, appropriated, or expended school property or funds
- Attempted by fraudulent means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit to gain employment or additional compensation
- Committed a criminal offense on school property or at a school-sponsored event, or
- Solicited or engaged in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor

**Uncertified Employees.** Misconduct or criminal history of an uncertified employee also must be reported to TEA. Information about misconduct or the allegations of misconduct obtained by a means other than the criminal history clearinghouse that results in termination, resignation, or criminal history (e.g., arrest, indictment, prosecution, conviction, or other disposition by the criminal justice system, including probation and deferred adjudication) will be reported to TEA.

Misconduct or allegations of misconduct include:

- Abuse or unlawful act with a student or minor, or
- Involvement in a romantic relationship with or solicited or engaged in sexual contact with a student or minor

## **Alcohol and Drug-Abuse Prevention**

### *Policy DH*

Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD is committed to maintaining an alcohol- and drug-free environment and will not tolerate the use of alcohol and illegal drugs in the workplace and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities on or off school property. Employees who use or are under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs as defined by the Texas Controlled Substances Act during working hours may be dismissed. The district's policy regarding employee drug use follows:

<https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/1049?filter=DH>

## **Tobacco and Nicotine Products and E-Cigarette Use**

*Policies DH, FNCD, GKA*

State law prohibits smoking, using tobacco and nicotine products, or e-cigarettes on all district-owned property and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities, on or off school property. Employees are prohibited from possessing or using any type of nicotine product, including nicotine pouches, regardless of whether the product contains tobacco, while on school property or while attending an off-campus school-related activity. Exceptions may be made for smoking cessation products with supervisor approval. This includes all buildings, playground areas, parking facilities, and facilities used for athletics and other activities. Drivers of district-owned vehicles are prohibited from smoking, using tobacco products, or e-cigarettes while inside the vehicle. Notices stating that smoking is prohibited by law and punishable by a fine are displayed in prominent places in all school buildings.

## **Fraud and Financial Impropriety**

*Policy CAA*

All employees should act with integrity and diligence in duties involving the district's financial resources. The district prohibits fraud and financial impropriety, as defined below. Fraud and financial impropriety include the following:

- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of any document or account belonging to the district
- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document
- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other district assets including employee time
- Impropriety in the handling of money or reporting of district financial transactions
- Profiteering as a result of insider knowledge of district information or activities
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or proprietary information to outside parties
- Unauthorized disclosure of investment activities engaged in or contemplated by the district
- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors, or other persons providing services or materials to the district, except as otherwise permitted by law or district policy

- Inappropriately destroying, removing, or using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment
- Failing to provide financial records required by federal, state, or local entities
- Failure to disclose conflicts of interest as required by law or district policy
- Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of the district
- Failure to comply with requirements imposed by law, the awarding agency, or a pass-through entity for state and federal awards

## **INVESTIGATION RESPONSIBILITIES**

The District accountant shall have the primary responsibility for the investigation of all suspected fraudulent acts as defined in this policy. Any employee who suspects dishonest or fraudulent activity shall notify the District’s Business office at 936-653-1105. An employee shall not attempt to personally conduct investigations and shall not contact the suspected individual in an effort to determine facts or demand restitution.

Upon completion of its investigation, the District accountant shall submit a report detailing its findings to the superintendent, the Board president and to other administrators, as appropriate. The District accountant’s report may contain a recommendation to refer the matter to the appropriate law enforcement and/or regulatory agencies for independent investigation. The decision to make any such referral shall be made by the superintendent in conjunction with legal counsel.

## **Conflict of Interest**

### *Policy CB, DBD*

Employees are required to disclose in writing to the district any situation that creates a potential conflict of interest with proper discharge of assigned duties and responsibilities or creates a potential conflict of interest with the best interests of the district. This includes the following:

- A personal financial interest
- A business interest
- Any other obligation or relationship
- Non-school employment

Employees should contact their supervisor for additional information.

## **Gifts and Favors**

### *Policy DBD*

Employees may not accept gifts or favors that could influence, or be construed to influence, the employee's discharge of assigned duties. The acceptance of a gift, favor, or service by an administrator or teacher that might reasonably tend to influence the selection of textbooks, electronic textbooks, instructional materials or technological equipment may result in prosecution of a Class B misdemeanor offense. This does not include staff development, teacher training, or instructional materials such as maps or worksheets that convey information to students or contribute to the learning process.

## **Copyrighted Materials**

### *Policy CY*

Employees are expected to comply with the provisions of federal copyright law relating to the unauthorized use, reproduction, distribution, performance, or display of copyrighted materials (i.e., printed material, videos, computer data and programs, etc.). Electronic media, including motion pictures and other audiovisual works, are to be used in the classroom for instructional purposes only. Duplication or backup of computer programs and data must be made within the provisions of the purchase agreement.

## **Associations and Political Activities**

### *Policy DGA*

The district will not directly or indirectly discourage employees from participating in political affairs or require any employee to join any group, club, committee, organization, or association. Employees may join or refuse to join any professional association or organization.

An individual's employment will not be affected by membership or a decision not to be a member of any employee organization that exists for the purpose of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work. Use of district resources including work time for political activities is prohibited.

The district encourages personal participation in the political process, including voting. Employees who need to be absent from work to vote during the early voting period or on election day must communicate with their immediate supervisor prior to the absence.

## **Charitable Contributions**

### *Policy DG*

The Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to make a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fundraiser. Employees cannot be required to attend a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions. In addition, the Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to refrain from making a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fundraiser or attending a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions.

## **Safety and Security**

### *Policy CK series*

The district has developed and promotes a comprehensive program to ensure the safety of its employees, students, and visitors. The safety program includes guidelines and procedures for responding to emergencies and activities to help reduce the frequency of accidents and injuries.

Employees must follow established protocols and response to emergencies for each campus and department. Refer to written security procedures specific to your location and work area.

To prevent or minimize injuries to employees, coworkers, and students and to protect and conserve district equipment, employees must comply with the following requirements:

- Observe all safety rules.
- Keep work areas clean and orderly at all times.
- Immediately report all accidents to their supervisor.
- Operate only equipment or machines for which they have training and authorization.

While driving on district business, employees are required to abide by all state and local traffic laws. Employees driving on district business are prohibited from texting and using other

electronic devices that require both visual and manual attention while the vehicle is in motion. Employees will exercise care and sound judgment on whether to use hands-free technology while the vehicle is in motion.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to safety programs and issues can contact the Superintendent of Schools.

## **Possession of Firearms and Weapons**

*Policies DH, FNCG, GKA*

Employees, visitors, and students, including those with a license to carry a handgun, are prohibited from bringing firearms, knives, clubs, or other prohibited weapons onto school premises (i.e., building or portion of a building) or any grounds or building where a school-sponsored activity takes place. A person, including an employee, who holds a license to carry a handgun may transport or store a handgun or other firearm or ammunition in a locked vehicle in a parking lot, garage, or other district provided parking area, provided the handgun or firearm or ammunition is properly stored, and not in plain view. To ensure the safety of all persons, employees who observe or suspect a violation of the district's weapons policy should report it to their supervisor or call the District Chief of Police at (936)653-1136 immediately.

## **Visitors in the Workplace**

*Policy GKC*

All visitors are expected to enter any district facility through the main entrance and sign in or report to the building's main office. Authorized visitors will receive directions or be escorted to their destination. Employees who observe an unauthorized individual on the district premises should immediately direct him or her to the building office or contact the administrator in charge.

## **Asbestos Management Plan**

*Policy CSC*

The district is committed to providing a safe environment for employees. An accredited management planner has developed an asbestos management plan for each school. A copy of the district's management plan is kept in the Superintendent's office and is available for inspection during normal business hours.

## **Pest Control Treatment**

*Policies CLB, DI*

Employees are prohibited from applying any pesticide or herbicide without appropriate training and prior approval of the integrated pest management (IPM) coordinator. Any application of pesticide or herbicide must be done in a manner prescribed by law and the district's integrated pest management program.

Notices of planned pest control treatment will be posted in a district building 48 hours before the treatment begins. Notices are generally located in the Superintendent's Office. In addition, individual employees may request in writing to be notified of pesticide applications. An employee who requests individualized notice will be notified by telephone, written, or electric means. Pest control information sheets are available from campus principals or facility managers upon request.

# General Procedures

## Emergency School Closing

The district may close schools because of severe weather, epidemics, or other emergency conditions. When such conditions exist, the Superintendent will make the official decision concerning the closing of the district's facilities. When it becomes necessary to open late, to release students early, or to cancel school, district officials will post a notice on the district's website and notify the following radio and television stations:

KTHT Radio 97.1 FM Cleveland/ Houston  
KETX Radio 1440 AM, 92 FM Livingston  
KSAM Radio 101.7 FM Huntsville  
KSBJ Radio 89.3 Humble  
KPRC TV Channel 2 Houston  
KBTX TV Channel 3 Bryan  
KHOU TV Channel 11 Houston  
KTRK TV Channel 13 Houston  
[www.click2houston.com](http://www.click2houston.com)  
[www.abc13.com](http://www.abc13.com)

## Emergencies

*Policies CKC, CKD*

All employees should be familiar with the safety procedures for responding to emergencies, including a medical emergency. Employees should locate evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas and be familiar with shelter in place, lockout, and lockdown procedures. Emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with safety and evacuation procedures. Each campus is equipped with an automatic external defibrillator. Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of these devices and procedures for their use.

## Purchasing Procedures

*Policy CH*

All requests for purchases must be submitted to the purchasing department on an official district purchase order (PO) form with the appropriate approval signatures. No purchases, charges, or commitments to buy goods or services for the district can be made without a PO number. The district will not reimburse employees or assume responsibility for purchases made without authorization. Employees are not permitted to purchase supplies or equipment for



personal use through the district's business office. Contact the business office for additional information on purchasing procedures.

## **Name and Address Changes**

It is important that employment records be kept up to date. Employees must notify the Human Resources office if there are any changes or corrections to their name, home address, contact telephone number, marital status, emergency contact, or beneficiary. The employee is responsible for making changes in personal information via the Employee Portal found at [www.cocisd.org](http://www.cocisd.org).

## **Personnel Records**

*Policy DBA, GBA*

Most district records, including personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. In most cases, an employee's personal email address is confidential and may not be released without the employee's permission.

Employees may choose to have the following personal information withheld:

- Address
- Phone number, including personal cell phone number
- Emergency contact information
- Information that reveals whether they have family members

The choice to not allow public access to this information or change an existing choice may be made at any time by submitting a written request to Human Resources. New or terminated employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information may be released to the public until a request to withhold the information is submitted or another exception for release of information under law applies. An employee is responsible for notifying the district if he or she is subject to any exception for disclosure of personal or confidential information.

## **Facility Use**

*Policies DGA, GKD*

Employees who wish to use district facilities after school hours must follow established procedures. The Superintendent's office is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact the Superintendent's office to request to use school facilities and to obtain information on the fees charged.

# **Termination of Employment**

## **Resignations**

*Policy DFE, DHB*

**Contract Employees.** Contract employees may resign their position without penalty at the end of any school year if written notice is received at least 45 days before the first day of instruction of the following school year. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the employee's direct supervisor and Human Resources. Supervisors who have not been designated by the board to accept resignations shall instruct the employee to submit the resignation to the superintendent or other person designated by board action. Contract employees may resign at any other time only with the approval of the superintendent or the board of trustees. Resignation without consent may result in disciplinary action by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

The principal is required to notify the superintendent of an educator's resignation within seven business days following an alleged incident of misconduct for any of the acts listed in *Reports to Texas Education Agency*. The superintendent will notify SBEC when an employee resigns and there is evidence to indicate that the employee has engaged in such misconduct.

**Noncontract Employees.** Noncontract employees may resign their position at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the employee's direct supervisor at least two weeks prior to the effective date. Employees are encouraged to include the reasons for leaving in the letter of resignation but are not required to do so.

The principal is required to notify the superintendent of a noncertified employee's resignation or termination within seven business days following an alleged incident of misconduct of abuse of a student, or was involved in a romantic relationship with or solicited or engaged in sexual conduct with a student or minor. The superintendent will notify TEA within seven business days of receiving a report from a principal, or knew about an employee's resignation or termination following an alleged incident of misconduct described above.

## **Dismissal or Nonrenewal of Contract Employees**

### *Policies DF Series*

Employees on probationary, term, and continuing contracts can be dismissed during the school year according to the procedures outlined in district policies. Employees on probationary or term contracts can be nonrenewed at the end of the contract term. Contract employees dismissed during the school year, suspended without pay, or subject to a reduction in force are entitled to receive notice of the recommended action, an explanation of the charges against them, and an opportunity for a hearing. The timelines and procedures to be followed when a suspension, termination, or nonrenewal occurs will be provided when a written notice is given to an employee.

The principal is required to notify the superintendent of an educator's termination within seven business days following an alleged incident of misconduct for any of the acts listed in Reports to Texas Education Agency on page 60. The superintendent will notify SBEC when an employee is terminated and there is evidence to indicate that the employee has engaged in such misconduct.

Advance notification requirements do not apply when a contract employee is dismissed for failing to obtain or maintain appropriate certification or when the employee's certification is revoked for misconduct. Information on the timelines and procedures can be found in the DF series policies that are provided to employees or are available online.

## **Dismissal of Noncontract Employees**

### *Policies DCD, DP*

Noncontract employees are employed at will and may be dismissed without notice, a description of the reasons for dismissal, or a hearing. It is unlawful for the district to dismiss any employee for reasons of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, any other basis protected by law, or in retaliation for the exercise of certain protected legal rights. Noncontract employees who are dismissed have the right to grieve the termination. The dismissed employee must follow the district process outlined in this handbook when pursuing the grievance.

The principal is required to notify the superintendent of a noncertified employee's resignation or termination within seven business days following an alleged incident of misconduct of abuse of a student, or was involved in a romantic relationship with or solicited or engaged in sexual conduct with a student or minor. The superintendent will notify TEA within seven business days of receiving a report from a principal, or knew about an employee's resignation or termination following an alleged incident of misconduct described above.

## **Discharge of Convicted Employees**

### *Policy DF*

The district shall discharge any employee who has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for an offense requiring the registration as a sex offender or convicted of a felony under Title 5 Penal Code if the victim was a minor.

If the offense is more than 30 years before the date the person's employment began or the person satisfied all terms of the court order entered on conviction the requirement to discharge does not apply.

## **Exit Interviews and Procedures**

Exit interviews will be scheduled for all employees with their direct supervisors upon leaving the district. Information on the continuation of benefits, release of information, and procedures for requesting references will be provided at this time. Separating employees are asked to provide the district with a forwarding address and phone number and complete a questionnaire that provides the district with feedback on his or her employment experience. All district keys, ID badges, books, property, including intellectual property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment.

## **Reports to Texas Education Agency**

### *Policies DF, DHB, DHC*

**Certified Employees.** The resignation or termination of a certified employee must be reported to the Division of Investigations at TEA if there is evidence that the employee was involved in any of the following:

- Any form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor, or any other unlawful conduct with a student or a minor
- Soliciting or engaging in sexual contact or a romantic relationship with a student or minor
- The possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance
- The illegal transfer, appropriation, or expenditure of district or school property or funds
- An attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit for the purpose of promotion or additional compensation
- Committing a criminal offense or any part of a criminal offense on district property or at a school-sponsored event.

The reporting requirements above are in addition to the superintendent’s ongoing duty to notify TEA when a certified employee or an applicant for certification has a reported criminal history or engaged in conduct violating the assessment security procedures established under TEC §39.0301. “Reported criminal history” means any formal criminal justice system charges and dispositions including arrests, detentions, indictments, criminal information, convictions, deferred adjudications, and probations in any state or federal jurisdiction that is obtained by a means other than the Fingerprint-based Applicant Clearinghouse of Texas (FACT).

**Noncertified Employees.** The voluntary or involuntary separation of a noncertified employee from the District must be reported to the Division of Investigations at TEA by the superintendent if there is evidence the employee abused or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor, was involved in a romantic relationship with a student or minor, or solicited or engaged in sexual contact with a student or minor.

## **Reports Concerning Court-Ordered Withholding**

The district is required to report the termination of employees that are under court order or writ of withholding for child support or spousal maintenance. Notice of the following must be sent to the support recipient and the court or, in the case of child support, the Texas Attorney General Child Support Division:

- Termination of employment not later than the seventh day after the date of termination
- Employee’s last known address
- Name and address of the employee’s new employer, if known

# Student Issues

## Equal Educational Opportunities

*Policies FB, FFH*

In an effort to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Questions or concerns about discrimination against students based on sex, including sexual harassment should be directed to the Superintendent, the district Title IX coordinator. Questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability should be directed to the Director of Special Education, the district ADA/Section 504 coordinator. All other questions or concerns relating to discrimination based on any other reasons should be directed to the Superintendent.

## Student Records

*Policy FL*

Student records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. Employees should take precautions to maintain the confidentiality of all student records. The following people are the only people who have general access to a student's records:

- Parents: Married, separated, or divorced unless parental rights have been legally terminated and the school has been given a copy of the court order terminating parental rights
- The student: The rights of parents transfer to a student who turns 18 or is enrolled in an institution of post-secondary education. A district is not prohibited from granting the student access to the student's records before this time.
- School officials with legitimate educational interests

The student handbook provides parents and students with detailed information on student records. Parents or students who want to review student records should be directed to the campus principal for assistance.

## **Parent and Student Complaints**

### *Policy FNG*

In an effort to hear and resolve parent and student complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted orderly processes for handling complaints on different issues. Any campus office or the superintendent's office can provide parents and students with information on filing a complaint.

Parents are encouraged to discuss problems or complaints with the teacher or the appropriate administrator at any time. Parents and students with complaints that cannot be resolved to their satisfaction should be directed to the campus principal. The formal complaint process provides parents and students with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with a principal's response.

## **Administering Medication to Students**

### *Policy FFAC*

Only designated employees may administer prescription medication, nonprescription medication, and herbal or dietary supplements to students. Exceptions apply to the self-administration of asthma medication, medication for anaphylaxis (e.g., EpiPen<sup>®</sup>), and medication for diabetes management, if the medication is self-administered in accordance with district policy and procedures. A student who must take any other medication during the school day must bring a written request from his or her parent and the medicine in its original, properly labeled container. Contact the principal or school nurse for information on procedures that must be followed when administering medication to students.

## **TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS BY STAFF MEMBERS**

Teachers and staff members shall not transport students without prior written administrative authorization. Teachers' or staff members' personal auto insurance is the primary carrier in case of accident or injury.

If a student is at school and requires a ride home at the end of the day, the student's parents shall be contacted. If the parents cannot be reached, the emergency numbers listed on the student's enrollment card shall be contacted.

## **Dietary Supplements**

### *Policies DH, FFAC*

District employees are prohibited by state law from knowingly selling, marketing, or distributing a dietary supplement that contains performance-enhancing compounds to a student with whom the employee has contact as part of his or her school district duties. In addition,

employees may not knowingly endorse or suggest the ingestion, intranasal application, or inhalation of a performance-enhancing dietary supplement to any student.

## **Psychotropic Drugs**

### *Policy FFAC*

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

District employees are prohibited by state law from doing the following:

- Recommending that a student use a psychotropic drug
- Suggesting a particular diagnosis
- Excluding from class or school-related activity a student whose parent refuses to consent to a psychiatric evaluation or to authorize the administration of a psychotropic drug to a student

## **Student Conduct and Discipline**

### *Policies in the FN series and FO series*

Students are expected to follow the classroom rules, campus rules, and rules listed in the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct. Teachers and administrators are responsible for taking disciplinary action based on a range of discipline management strategies that have been adopted by the district. Other employees that have concerns about a particular student's conduct should contact the classroom teacher or campus principal.

## **Student Attendance**

### *Policy FEB*

Teachers and staff should be familiar with the district's policies and procedures for attendance accounting. These procedures require minor students to have parental consent before they are allowed to leave campus. When absent from school, the student upon returning to school, must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. These requirements are addressed in campus training and in the student handbook. Contact the campus principal for additional information.



## **Bullying**

### *Policy FFI*

Bullying is defined by §TEC 37.0832. All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying, including cyberbullying, to the campus principal. The district's policy includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students and is reprinted below:

**Bullying Prohibited:** The District prohibits bullying as defined by this policy. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of District policy.

**Definition:** Bullying occurs when a student or group of students engages in written or verbal expression or physical conduct that:

1. Will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property; or
2. Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.

**Examples:** Bullying of a student may include hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, name calling, rumor spreading, and ostracism.

**Timely Reporting:** Reports of bullying shall be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A failure to promptly report may impair the District's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct.

**Reporting Procedures:** Any student who believes that he or she has experienced bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, counselor, principal, or other District employee. A report may be made orally or in writing.

Notice of Report: Any District employee who receives notice that a student has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately notify the campus principal or designee.

Investigation of Report: If a report is made orally, the campus principal or designee shall reduce the report to written form.

The campus principal or designee shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by policy FFH, and if so proceed under that policy instead.

The campus principal or designee shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report. The campus principal or designee shall promptly take interim action calculated to prevent bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.

Conclusion of Report: Absent extenuating circumstances, the investigation should be completed within ten District business days from the date of the report; however, the campus principal or designee shall take additional time if necessary to complete a thorough investigation.

The campus principal or designee shall prepare a written report of the investigation, including a determination of whether bullying occurred, and send a copy to the Superintendent or designee.

District Action: If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying occurred, the District shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct in accordance with the District's Student Code of Conduct. [For information on student transfers due to bullying, see FDB.]

The District may take action based on the results of an investigation, even if the District concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying under this policy.

Confidentiality: To the greatest extent possible, the District shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation.

Appeal: A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through FNG (LOCAL), beginning at the appropriate level.

Record Retention: Retention of records shall be in accordance with CPC (LOCAL).

Access to Policy: Information regarding this policy shall be distributed annually to District employees and included in the student handbook. Copies of the policy shall be readily available at each campus and the District's administrative offices.

## **Hazing**

### *Policy FNCC*

Students must have prior approval from the principal or designee for any type of "initiation rites" of a school club or organization. While most initiation rites are permissible, engaging in or permitting "hazing" is a criminal offense. Any teacher, administrator, or employee who observes a student engaged in any form of hazing, who has reason to know or suspect that a student intends to engage in hazing, or has engaged in hazing must report that fact or suspicion to the designated campus administrator.

## TEXAS TEACHER STANDARDS

### 19 TAC, Chapter 149.1001

Statutory Authority: The provisions of this §149.1001 issued under the Texas Education Code, §21.351.

<p><b>Standard 1--Instructional Planning and Delivery.</b> Teachers demonstrate their understanding of instructional planning and delivery by providing standards-based, data-driven, differentiated instruction that engages students, makes appropriate use of technology, and makes learning relevant for today's learners.</p>
<p><b>(A) Teachers design clear, well organized, sequential lessons that build on students' prior knowledge.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Teachers develop lessons that build coherently toward objectives based on course content, curriculum scope and sequence, and expected student outcomes.</li><li>(ii) Teachers effectively communicate goals, expectations, and objectives to help all students reach high levels of achievement.</li><li>(iii) Teachers connect students' prior understanding and real-world experiences to new content and contexts, maximizing learning opportunities.</li></ul>
<p><b>(B) Teachers design developmentally appropriate, standards-driven lessons that reflect evidence-based best practices.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Teachers plan instruction that is developmentally appropriate, is standards driven, and motivates students to learn.</li><li>(ii) Teachers use a range of instructional strategies, appropriate to the content area, to make subject matter accessible to all students.</li><li>(iii) Teachers use and adapt resources, technologies, and standards-aligned instructional materials to promote student success in meeting learning goals.</li></ul>
<p><b>(C) Teachers design lessons to meet the needs of diverse learners, adapting methods when appropriate.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Teachers differentiate instruction, aligning methods and techniques to diverse student needs, including acceleration, remediation, and implementation of individual education plans.</li><li>(ii) Teachers plan student groupings, including pairings and individualized and small-group instruction, to facilitate student learning.</li><li>(iii) Teachers integrate the use of oral, written, graphic, kinesthetic, and/or tactile methods to teach key concepts.</li></ul>
<p><b>(D) Teachers communicate clearly and accurately and engage students in a manner that encourages students' persistence and best efforts.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Teachers ensure that the learning environment features a high degree of student engagement by facilitating discussion and student-centered activities as well as leading direct instruction.</li><li>(ii) Teachers validate each student's comments and questions, utilizing them to advance learning for all students.</li><li>(iii) Teachers encourage all students to overcome obstacles and remain persistent in the face of challenges, providing them with support in achieving their goals.</li></ul>
<p><b>(E) Teachers promote complex, higher-order thinking, leading class discussions and activities that provide opportunities for deeper learning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Teachers set high expectations and create challenging learning experiences for students, encouraging them to apply disciplinary and cross-disciplinary knowledge to real-world problems.</li><li>(ii) Teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in individual and collaborative critical thinking and problem solving.</li><li>(iii) Teachers incorporate technology that allows students to interact with the curriculum in more significant and effective ways, helping them reach mastery.</li></ul>
<p><b>(F) Teachers consistently check for understanding, give immediate feedback, and make lesson adjustments as necessary.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Teachers monitor and assess student progress to ensure that their lessons meet students' needs.</li><li>(ii) Teachers provide immediate feedback to students in order to reinforce their learning and ensure that they understand key concepts.</li><li>(iii) Teachers adjust content delivery in response to student progress through the use of developmentally appropriate strategies that maximize student engagement.</li></ul>

<p><b>Standard 2—Knowledge of Students and Student Learning.</b> Teachers work to ensure high levels of learning, social-emotional development, and achievement outcomes for all students, taking into consideration each student's educational and developmental backgrounds and focusing on each student's needs.</p>
<p><b>(A) Teachers demonstrate the belief that all students have the potential to achieve at high levels and support all students in their pursuit of social-emotional learning and academic success.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers purposefully utilize learners' individual strengths as a basis for academic and social-emotional growth.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers create a community of learners in an inclusive environment that views differences in learning and background as educational assets.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers accept responsibility for the growth of all of their students, persisting in their efforts to ensure high levels of growth on the part of each learner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(B) Teachers acquire, analyze, and use background information (familial, cultural, educational, linguistic, and developmental characteristics) to engage students in learning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers connect learning, content, and expectations to students' prior knowledge, life experiences, and interests in meaningful contexts.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers understand the unique qualities of students with exceptional needs, including disabilities and giftedness, and know how to effectively address these needs through instructional strategies and resources.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers understand the role of language and culture in learning and know how to modify their practices to support language acquisition so that language is comprehensible and instruction is fully accessible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(C) Teachers facilitate each student's learning by employing evidence-based practices and concepts related to learning and social-emotional development.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers understand how learning occurs and how learners develop, construct meaning, and acquire knowledge and skills.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers identify readiness for learning and understand how development in one area may affect students' performance in other areas.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers apply evidence-based strategies to address individual student learning needs and differences, adjust their instruction, and support the learning needs of each student.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Standard 3—Content Knowledge and Expertise.</b> Teachers exhibit a comprehensive understanding of their content, discipline, and related pedagogy as demonstrated through the quality of the design and execution of lessons and their ability to match objectives and activities to relevant state standards.</p>
<p><b>(A) Teachers understand the major concepts, key themes, multiple perspectives, assumptions, processes of inquiry, structure, and real-world applications of their grade-level and subject-area content.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers have expertise in how their content vertically and horizontally aligns with the grade-level/subject-area continuum, leading to an integrated curriculum across grade levels and content areas.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers identify gaps in students' knowledge of subject matter and communicate with their leaders and colleagues to ensure that these gaps are adequately addressed across grade levels and subject areas.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers keep current with developments, new content, new approaches, and changing methods of instructional delivery within their discipline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(B) Teachers design and execute quality lessons that are consistent with the concepts of their specific discipline, are aligned to state standards, and demonstrate their content expertise.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers organize curriculum to facilitate student understanding of the subject matter.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers understand, actively anticipate, and adapt instruction to address common misunderstandings and preconceptions.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers promote literacy and the academic language within the discipline and make discipline-specific language accessible to all learners.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(C) Teachers demonstrate content-specific pedagogy that meets the needs of diverse learners, utilizing engaging instructional materials to connect prior content knowledge to new learning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers teach both the key content knowledge and the key skills of the discipline.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers make appropriate and authentic connections across disciplines, subjects, and students' real-world experiences.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Standard 4—Learning Environment.</b> Teachers interact with students in respectful ways at all times, maintaining a physically and emotionally safe, supportive learning environment that is characterized by efficient and effective routines, clear expectations for student behavior, and organization that maximizes student learning.</p>
<p><b>(A) Teachers create a mutually respectful, collaborative, and safe community of learners by using knowledge of students' development and backgrounds.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers embrace students' backgrounds and experiences as an asset in their learning environment.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers maintain and facilitate respectful, supportive, positive, and productive interactions with and among students.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers establish and sustain learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and respond to students' needs, strengths, and personal experiences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(B) Teachers organize their classrooms in a safe and accessible manner that maximizes learning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers arrange the physical environment to maximize student learning and to ensure that all students have access to resources.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers create a physical classroom set-up that is flexible and accommodates the different learning needs of students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(C) Teachers establish, implement, and communicate consistent routines for effective classroom management, including clear expectations for student behavior.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers implement behavior management systems to maintain an environment where all students can learn effectively.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers maintain a strong culture of individual and group accountability for class expectations.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers cultivate student ownership in developing classroom culture and norms.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(D) Teachers lead and maintain classrooms where students are actively engaged in learning as indicated by their level of motivation and on-task behavior.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers maintain a culture that is based on high expectations for student performance and encourages students to be self-motivated, taking responsibility for their own learning.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers maximize instructional time, including managing transitions.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers manage and facilitate groupings in order to maximize student collaboration, participation, and achievement.</li> <li>(iv) Teachers communicate regularly, clearly, and appropriately with parents and families about student progress, providing detailed and constructive feedback and partnering with families in furthering their students' achievement goals.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Standard 5—Data-Driven Practice.</b> Teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student growth aligned to instructional goals and course objectives and regularly review and analyze multiple sources of data to measure student progress and adjust instructional strategies and content delivery as needed.</p>
<p><b>(A) Teachers implement both formal and informal methods of measuring student progress.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers gauge student progress and ensure student mastery of content knowledge and skills by providing assessments aligned to instructional objectives and outcomes that are accurate measures of student learning.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers vary methods of assessing learning to accommodate students' learning needs, linguistic differences, and/or varying levels of background knowledge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(B) Teachers set individual and group learning goals for students by using preliminary data and communicate these goals with students and families to ensure mutual understanding of expectations.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers develop learning plans and set academic as well as social-emotional learning goals for each student in response to previous outcomes from formal and informal assessments.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers involve all students in self-assessment, goal setting, and monitoring progress.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers communicate with students and families regularly about the importance of collecting data and monitoring progress of student outcomes, sharing timely and comprehensible feedback so they understand students' goals and progress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(C) Teachers regularly collect, review, and analyze data to monitor student progress.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers analyze and review data in a timely, thorough, accurate, and appropriate manner, both individually and with colleagues, to monitor student learning.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers combine results from different measures to develop a holistic picture of students' strengths and learning needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(D) Teachers utilize the data they collect and analyze to inform their instructional strategies and adjust short- and long-term plans accordingly.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers design instruction, change strategies, and differentiate their teaching practices to improve student learning based on assessment outcomes.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers regularly compare their curriculum scope and sequence with student data to ensure they are on track and make adjustments as needed.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Standard 6--Professional Practices and Responsibilities.</b> Teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development, pursue leadership opportunities, collaborate with other educational professionals, communicate regularly with stakeholders, maintain professional relationships, comply with all campus and school district policies, and conduct themselves ethically and with integrity.</p>
<p><b>(A) Teachers reflect on their teaching practice to improve their instructional effectiveness and engage in continuous professional learning to gain knowledge and skills and refine professional judgment.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers reflect on their own strengths and professional learning needs, using this information to develop action plans for improvement.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers establish and strive to achieve professional goals to strengthen their instructional effectiveness and better meet students' needs.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers engage in relevant, targeted professional learning opportunities that align with their professional growth goals and their students' academic and social-emotional needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(B) Teachers collaborate with their colleagues, are self-aware in their interpersonal interactions, and are open to constructive feedback from peers and administrators.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers seek out feedback from supervisors, coaches, and peers and take advantage of opportunities for job-embedded professional development.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers actively participate in professional learning communities organized to improve instructional practices and student learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(C) Teachers seek out opportunities to lead students, other educators, and community members within and beyond their classrooms.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers clearly communicate the mission, vision, and goals of the school to students, colleagues, parents and families, and other community members.</li> <li>(ii) Teachers seek to lead other adults on campus through professional learning communities, grade- or subject-level team leadership, committee membership, or other opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(D) Teachers model ethical and respectful behavior and demonstrate integrity in all situations.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Teachers adhere to the educators' code of ethics in §247.2 of this title (relating to Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators), including following policies and procedures at their specific school placement(s).</li> <li>(ii) Teachers communicate consistently, clearly, and respectfully with all members of the campus community, including students, parents and families, colleagues, administrators, and staff.</li> <li>(iii) Teachers serve as advocates for their students, focusing attention on students' needs and concerns and maintaining thorough and accurate student records.</li> </ul>

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