

LEAP

(Living, Employment, Academic Planning)

Program Handbook

Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

3911 Central Avenue
Great Falls, MT 59405

Mackenzie Merja, Co-Coordinator
406-468-8119
mmerja@msdb.k12.mt.us

Carrie Dawes, Co-Coordinator
406-468-8013
cdawes@msdb.k12.mt.us

LEAP Program email:
leap@msdb.k12.mt.us

Welcome

Welcome to the post high school transition program on the beautiful campus of the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind in Great Falls, Montana! The LEAP Program is designed to assist you in transitioning from high school to the rest of your life. While living in a safe residential space, you will be offered guidance and training in the areas of independent living, employment, and academic planning. Your individual needs will be addressed depending upon whether you are dreaming of college, the world of work, or both!

Participants in the LEAP Program come from all around the great State of Montana. You will join other young people who range in age from 18-21, who come from communities both large and small, and who are deaf/hard-of-hearing or have a visual impairment.

While a participant of the LEAP program, you will work closely with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to ensure a smooth transition upon completion of this program. The LEAP program staff will share information about you and your progress with your current Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Participants will be required to complete a form listing a support person, who will be contacted regarding emergencies, LEAP progress, and anything else deemed necessary by LEAP Coordinators.

We suggest you begin your adventure with the LEAP Program by reading this handbook. It will give you information on what you can expect from the program AND what is to be expected from you!

Table of Contents

Program Handbook	1
Entrance to LEAP	4
Goals of the LEAP Program	4
Participant Expectations	5
Participant Standards of Conduct	5
LEAP Program Components	6
1. Participation	6
2. Individual Goals/Training Sessions	6
3. Community Work Experience & Job Shadows	6
4. Residential Living on Campus	6
a. Payments	6
b. Room: Lease and Keys	6
c. WIFI and Utilities	7
d. Transportation	7
e. Mail	7
f. Meals	7
g. Quiet Hours	7
h. Visitors	7
i. Leaving Campus	8
j. Video Surveillance	8
k. Animals	8
Allegations of Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation	8
Authority to Search	8
Appealing a Disciplinary Action	9
Second Year	9
LEAP Handbook Acknowledgement and Disclaimer	10
LEAP Lease Agreement	11
Term of Lease	11
Rental Payments, Deposits, and Refunds	11
Condition and Maintenance of Rooms	11
Breaks and Holidays	12
Rules for Occupancy	12

Entrance to LEAP

Admittance to the LEAP Program is a process that takes into account several factors. LEAP is a program designed to meet the needs of young men and women who have vision and/or hearing loss and are transitioning from high school to independent living. To be able to provide for and meet the needs of our participants, LEAP applicants should possess the following prerequisite skills:

1. Participants must have qualified as deaf, hearing impaired, and/or visually impaired on an IEP during their school years; they may have been transitioned from an IEP to a 504.
2. Participants must have graduated from high school and be between the ages of 18 and 21.
3. Participants must fill out an application and participate in an interview.
 - a. Participants must score 70% or above on the interview rubric to be admitted.
 - b. If a participant scores between 66% and 70% they may be admitted with stipulations.
4. Participants must independently perform personal hygiene skills such as toileting, bathing, grooming, dressing.
5. Participants must independently demonstrate simple food-management skills such as preparing very simple meals, showing knowledge of safe food handling, and using basic storage/clean-up methods.
6. Participants must be able to demonstrate self-management skills such as getting along with others, safely managing unsupervised and unstructured times, and avoiding interfering with the learning of others.
7. Participants must manage basic health issues such as allergies, minimal first aid, and an understanding of their medications.
8. Participants must be motivated to participate fully in the program and are ultimately responsible for meeting their goals.
9. Participants must expect to live independently in the future.

Goals of the LEAP Program

The goals of the LEAP Program are to provide a safe and productive learning environment in which participants have opportunities to exercise independence, experience individualized training, and foster positive interpersonal relationships. Training is designed to enhance the participant's current skills in managing self, home, food, time, transportation, and money. Decision-making skills and the use of accommodations in the work/education environment are also addressed. Work experiences will be provided based on the interest of each participant. Unstructured and unsupervised time is built into the program to allow participants to learn to balance responsibilities, leisure activities, and interpersonal relationships.

Participant Expectations

Participants in the LEAP Program can expect:

1. To be treated with courtesy.
2. To be given clear information about what services are available and appropriate.
3. To receive training in a safe, supportive environment by professional staff.
4. To be involved in all decision-making which involves your participation.
5. To receive information in an accessible format.
6. To have your LEAP records kept in a secure location and released only to those who are involved in providing a service to you. Your written consent to release your information will be needed to release your records to anyone else.
7. To be able to offer suggestions, ideas, and criticism about your services.

Participant Standards of Conduct

Participants in the LEAP program are expected to:

1. **Participate in all sessions** on time and with a positive attitude including, but not limited to sessions involving goal setting, guest speakers, Voc Rehab sessions, program activities, instructional activities, work experiences. Failure to participate may result in disciplinary action or dismissal from the LEAP Program.
2. **Follow all rules** outlined in this handbook as well as those rules communicated by the Coordinators. You are expected to possess a level of maturity which allows you to follow basic standards of conduct, as well as all state and federal laws. Failure to follow these rules may result in disciplinary action and/or dismissal from the LEAP Program. Behaviors *a* through *i* will be scored on a 1-3 point system, depending on severity. At 10 points a participant **will be** dismissed from the LEAP Program. Behaviors *j* through *o* will result in **immediate dismissal** from the LEAP Program.
 - a. lack of attendance regarding work experiences and trainings
 - b. untimely payments of any and all monthly expenses
 - c. possession of items considered inappropriate - such as obscene/crass materials
 - d. use of profane language
 - e. hostile conflict with peers, staff
 - f. being in an unsanctioned location
 - g. visitor misconducts or damages
 - h. disrespectful behavior
 - i. disregard of staff instructions
 - j. harassment of any type, including libel/slander
 - k. theft
 - l. vandalism
 - m. use/possession/exhibiting the effects of alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, vaping, illegal drugs
 - n. sexual activity
 - o. possession of a weapon
3. **Dress and grooming standards** should follow those established by LEAP Program and off-campus locations.
4. **Be responsible** for yourself, your possessions, and all program materials.

LEAP Program Components

1. Participation

Each participant is required to fully cooperate in all activities as designated by the Coordinators. Each participant is also required to sign an Individualized Participation Plan which will be created with input from the participant, Voc Rehab counselor, and LEAP Coordinators.

2. Individual Goals/Training Sessions

Participants will establish and work on goals during their time in the LEAP Program. The goals will be based on individual needs decided upon during discussions with the participant, Coordinators, and Voc Rehab Counselors. These goals may include the areas of management of self, home, food, time, money, decision making, accommodations, employment, transportation, academics, leisure, and relationships.

Those participants wanting to attend college or a trade school will be supported with individual goals which may include the areas of seeking assistance from the Student Disability Services Office, meeting with financial aid personnel, touring a campus, registering for classes, and exploring transportation options.

Participants wishing to enter the world of work will pursue goals related to both soft and hard skills required for work experiences. Coordinators will work to provide work experiences based on the interest of the participants.

A transition plan to integrate participants back into their home communities is also an integral part of LEAP.

3. Community Work Experience & Job Shadows

Depending on individual participant needs, off-campus work experiences based on interest will be expected of LEAP participants. Work experiences may be on a rotating basis of approximately eight weeks. Your work experiences may or may not be paid. Staff will be available to assist participants with securing transportation to and from work sites. Participants will be expected to work at least 30 hours a week by the end of February. This is to prepare participants for real life work experience.

4. Residential Living on Campus

a. Payments

Participants' careful use of their money should allow for all deposits, fees, and monthly bills to be paid. Possible sources of money may be SSI and paychecks from work experiences and jobs. This is to simulate real-life living expenses in a safe and supportive environment.

b. Room: Lease and Keys

The LEAP Program is located in Glacier Cottage. Women and men reside in separate wings. You must sign a lease and pay a \$100 deposit. You will be issued a key card for which you must pay a \$5.00 deposit. You will receive these deposits back at the completion of the program if there is no damage to your room or loss of your key. In addition, you will be required to pay rent each month in

the amount of \$100. You will be responsible for the care of your room and your belongings. If needed, you will receive training which will assist you in keeping your room clean and organized.

c. WIFI and Utilities

Your room will have WIFI services. You will be responsible for a monthly internet fee of \$10. Utilities will be \$30 a month. Utilities include water, sewer, electricity, and natural gas.

d. Transportation

Participants with a vehicle will need to factor in their own transportation costs. Participants without a vehicle will need to acquire a bus or paratransit pass. Bus passes are currently \$30 per month. Paratransit passes are purchased in booklets of 21 passes for a total of \$42.

Participants will be required to make travel plans for fall, winter, and spring break as the MSDB campus is closed during these breaks. You are responsible for travel to and from campus on breaks. The LEAP Program does not provide transportation for travel to and from campus on breaks for participants.

In the event a participant falls ill with a contagious disease and is bedridden, they will have 24 hours to make arrangements and vacate their room in order to prevent the spread of any illnesses. This responsibility will fall back on the participant and the person they were living with prior to attending the LEAP Program.

e. Mail

You may receive mail at MSDB while you are in the LEAP Program. The address is:

LEAP Program
PARTICIPANT NAME
Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind
3911 Central Avenue
Great Falls, MT 59405

f. Meals

Each wing of Glacier cottage has a kitchen with appliances and basic cooking supplies. Individual as well as group planning, purchasing, and preparation of meals will occur. Training will be provided as needed. Groceries needed for training will be provided as well as some basic staples. Participants will purchase their own groceries.

g. Quiet Hours

Quiet hours will be from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.

h. Visitors

Friends and family may visit you in your room. If your friends are of the opposite gender you will need to remain in the common areas. Visiting hours are at the following times:

- Monday-Thursday: 5 pm - 9 pm
- Friday: 5 pm - 12 am
- Saturday: 9 am - 12 am
- Sunday: 9 am - 11 pm

MSDB students who are 18 years or older may visit you in the common room of each wing, with prior permission from the LEAP Coordinators and Director of Student Life Services.

Rules for visitors:

- Visitors may not stay overnight unless they are family members and then only with permission from the LEAP Coordinators and Director of Student Life Services.
- Visitors must park in the main MSDB parking lot.
- Participants may only have 2 visitors at one time, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- Participants MUST notify LEAP staff of the name and arrival time of the visitor. In addition visitors MUST SIGN IN AND SIGN OUT. This will assist staff should a fire or other disaster occur in the building.
- LEAP participants are responsible for their visitors including any and all misconducts as well as all damages.

i. Leaving Campus

Off-campus trips during the day are allowed as long as you sign in and sign out. You must be back on campus by 12 am unless you have permission from LEAP Coordinators to stay out later. Overnight off-campus stays are allowed after the 2nd month of the program as long as you notify the LEAP Coordinators 24 hours in advance. You are responsible for all costs and transportation arrangements. You must notify a LEAP Coordinator of your departure and return through text message or phone call.

j. Video Surveillance

MSDB campus uses video cameras for safety purposes. The video records are reviewed periodically and may be used as documentation.

k. Animals

Service animals as defined by ADA laws are permitted, however no pets or emotional support animals are allowed to live on the MSDB campus. To understand your rights and responsibilities regarding service animals please refer to ADA Service Animal laws.

*<https://adata.org/guide/service-animals-and-emotional-support-animals>

Allegations of Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

Participants and staff are expected to comply with all laws regarding the protection of adults and minors. An investigation will be conducted immediately upon receiving a report in which any person involved in the LEAP program has alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation by a staff member or other participant. Reports of such behavior should be directed to the LEAP Coordinators or the Superintendent of MSDB.

Authority to Search

LEAP Coordinators, the Superintendent, and the Director of Student Life are authorized to conduct a search or seizure of property on the MSDB campus if there is a reasonable suspicion a search will uncover evidence of a rule violation or a criminal violation. Participants may not hinder or prevent this procedure. This search will occur with a witness and be documented as to date, time, and results. Participants will be present for searches and information/evidence may be turned over to local law enforcement.

Appealing a Disciplinary Action

If you disagree with any disciplinary action you receive while participating in the LEAP Program, you may:

1. Make an appointment to speak formally with the Coordinators.
2. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your meeting with the LEAP Coordinators, you may make an appointment with the Director of Student Life Services. Your concerns should be presented in writing at this meeting.

****Application Exceptions/Late Admit****

Late applications may be considered if there are three or less participants attending the program. The deadline will be by the end of teacher orientation week which is a week prior to program start.

****Second Year****

LEAP is a 9 month program, following a typical school year. A participant may be invited back for a second year if they meet any of the following requirements:

- a. left the program early for any reason
- b. were dismissed from the program
 - i. exceptions to this rule include illegal activity (*j-o*) or belligerent behavior (*e*).
- c. a second year is deemed beneficial by LEAP coordinators, Director of Student Life, and the Superintendent

Stipulations for a second year:

1. Second year participants are only allotted 5 points as they have already participated in the LEAP program and are aware of the expectations and rules.

LEAP Handbook Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

I _____, have received, read, understood, and agree to comply with the LEAP Handbook and all the information presented. I have been given an opportunity to ask any questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of my questions.

_____ I understand that the program has the right to change the handbook at any time, and will give me notice of changes made.

_____ I also understand that any delay or failure by the program to enforce any rule or procedure in the handbook does not constitute a waiver on behalf of the program or affect the right of the program to enforce such rule or procedure in the future.

The most up-to-date handbook will be used.

_____ If I have any questions about the content of this handbook, I will contact the Coordinators of the program.

Questions addressed:

I agree to comply with ALL the rules, policies, and procedures set forth in the LEAP Handbook.

Participant's Signature: _____

Print Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Coordinators: _____

LEAP Lease Agreement

This lease agreement is made and entered into on _____ (date) and is between the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) and _____, a participant in the Living Employment Academic Planning (LEAP) Program.

The participant agrees to abide by the following terms and conditions of this lease.

Term of Lease

This lease agreement shall begin on the date stated above and shall terminate when the participant leaves LEAP either by graduating, withdrawing, or being dismissed from the program.

Rental Payments, Deposits, and Refunds

1. **_____ Key Deposit.** Upon signing the lease, the participant will make a \$5 key deposit, which will be returned when all keys are checked in. The participant will be given a key card to Glacier Cottage located at 3911 Central Avenue, Great Falls, MT 59405.
 - a. Participants must report the loss of a key or key card to LEAP Coordinators, immediately.
 - b. Another \$5 key deposit will be necessary to receive a second key.

2. **_____ Monthly Rental.** A \$100 deposit is due upon entry into the LEAP Program, this deposit will be returned if all areas of checkout are satisfactory. Participant is required to pay a monthly rent of \$100 by the 1st of the month. After the 5th day of the month, participant must pay a \$25 late fee and pay \$5 per day thereafter until the rent and late fees are paid in full.

3. **_____ Refund of Monthly Payments.** Upon successful completion of the program, participants will receive 80% of their monthly utilities and rent back. Successful completion includes final payments of any bills incurred during the participant's stay as well as an adequate rating on the final Room Inspection List. *Other amounts may be returned depending on superintendent discretion.*

4. **_____ Dismissal from LEAP.** In the event a participant is dismissed from the program, the participant forfeits all deposits and monthly fees.

5. **_____ Monthly Utility and Internet Fees.** A utilities fee of \$30.00 and an internet fee of \$10 are the participant's responsibility.

Condition and Maintenance of Rooms

1. Other than regular wear and tear, the participant is required to maintain the apartment and its furnishings in the same condition as when participant moved into the room.
2. Participant is responsible for paying MSDB for property damage that occurs during the time participant lives in the room.
3. If a maintenance need arises in the room, the participant will notify the LEAP staff. Participant realizes LEAP Coordinators and members of the maintenance staff may need to access the room when the participant is not present.

Breaks and Holidays

Participant will not be allowed to reside in the room during any time MSDB is closed. MSDB will inform participant of the exact dates of designated breaks. During these times, the room will be locked and secured by MSDB and participant may not have access.

Rules for Occupancy.

1. LEAP Coordinators may conduct random room checks, with or without participant permission, to ensure a clean and safe living environment.
2. When leaving and returning to the room overnight or for the weekend, participant must contact a LEAP Coordinator.
3. No alcohol, tobacco, tobacco product, drug, or substance prohibited by law is allowed on the MSDB campus.
4. Sexual relations are strictly prohibited on campus.
5. Candles and incense may not be burned in the rooms.
6. Mini fridges are not allowed in rooms.
7. Participant is responsible for ensuring their visitors follow all campus rules.
8. Participant is responsible for following all rules on campus, including those contained in the LEAP Program Handbook. Failure to abide by the rules may result in dismissal from the room and the program.

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the terms of this lease.

Printed Name of LEAP Participant

Date

Signature of LEAP Participant

Date

Entered into on behalf of the LEAP Program at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

Signature, LEAP Coordinators

Date