



STAFFORD
MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



2025-2026 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

If you have difficulty accessing the information in this document because of a disability, please email the Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org.


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Employee Handbook Receipt

Name _____

Campus/Department _____

I hereby acknowledge receipt of a copy of the Stafford MSD 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.

<https://www.staffordmsd.org/employees/human-resources>

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 _____ 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 Human Resources Department if I have questions or concerns or need further explanation.

Signature

Date

If you print this form, please sign and date the receipt, then forward it to the Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org.

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 Human Resources at tahr@staffordmsd.org.

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 [SMSD Board Policy Manual - Policy Online](#).

District Information

Description of the District

In 1977, following a disannexation election, Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD) was created out of the 181-square-mile Fort Bend ISD and Houston ISD. The disannexation was the result of a grass roots movement to return to a small, city-based school system.

After passage of the election creating the district, the City of Stafford spent five years in federal and state courts in the pursuit of creating the school district. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the City of Stafford and the district became a reality. Becoming a municipal school district instead of an independent school district, the school partnered with the city in ways that increased the efficiency of the tax dollar for Stafford residents and businesses.

In the fall of 1982, the elementary school opened to the district’s first 547 students in a leased warehouse. Grades 6-11 were added the following year, bringing the total student enrollment to 1,057. Seniors were added the next year. In 2000, the new Intermediate School was added to the district facilities on Staffordshire, joining Primary, Elementary, Middle, and High Schools.

There are more than 30 home languages spoken by our 3,500 students. Some of these include:

Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Cambodian, Cantonese, Chaochow, Dard, English, Farsi, French, Fukien/Hokkien, Gujarati, Hausa, Hindi, Ibo/Igbo, Japanese, Kanuri, Konkani, Malayalam, Mandarin, Pilipino (Tagalog), Portuguese, Sindhi, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Tigrinya, Tiwa, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yoruba.

The district occupies seven square miles within Fort Bend and Harris Counties with diverse geographic areas that include the communities of Promenade, Kingsway, Dove Country, Stafford Run, Missouri City Estates, Vaccaro Manor, and other neighborhoods.

The Stafford Municipal School District is an independent public educational governmental unit operating under applicable laws, and regulations of the State of Texas. SMSD offers an educational opportunity for students in Early Childhood and grades Pre-K to 12.

A seven-member Board of Trustees, with staggered three-year terms, governs the school district.

Effective September 1, 2003 Texas Education Code 11.303 was put into law and it provided for the City Council to participate jointly with the Board of Trustees for the following actions:

- Hearings and work sessions on the budget and ad valorem tax rate
- Adopting of annual budget and ad valorem tax rates

District Map



Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives

Policy AE

House Bill 3 requires school boards to adopt detailed plans developed by their management teams that achieve goals in two key areas:

- Early childhood literacy and mathematics proficiency (ECLM)
- College, career, and military readiness (CCMR)

Goals, and Objectives

Policy AE, District Improvement Plan

The District Improvement Plan can be found on the district's website at [SMSD Planning & Accountability](#).

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 at-large and serve three-year terms. Board members serve without compensation, must be qualified voters, and must reside in the district. See policy BBB at [Policy Code BBB – Board Members: Elections – SMSD Board Policy Manual - Policy Online](#)

Current board members include:

- Ash Hamirani, President
- Jacqueline Jean-Baptiste, Vice President
- Patricia Soza-Montelongo, Secretary
- Joyce Wilkins, Trustee
- Manuel Hinojosa, Trustee
- Suzette Thompson, Trustee
- Adam Sanchez, Trustee

Although not a Board member, Superintendent of Schools Robert Bostic, Ed.D., prepares the agenda in consultation for the Board President and implements the policies adopted by the Board.

The board usually meets the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. In the event that large attendance is anticipated, the board may meet at Leonard Scarcella Administration Building Board Room. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted on the district website and the Leonard Scarcella Administration Building at least three business days 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

The Board meeting schedule for the 2025-2026 school year can be found online on the school calendar [Board of Education - Stafford Municipal School District](#).

Administration

Robert Bostic, Ed.D.	Superintendent
Dawn Dubose, Ed.D.	Chief of Schools
Kadir Almus, Ed.D.	Chief Academic Officer
Dovran Ovezov	Chief Financial Officer
Vache' Hall	Interim Director of Human Resources
Kenneth Savanah	Director of Athletics
Sergio Hinojosa	Associate Director of Athletics
Shawna Punch	Director of Federal & State Programs
Shuante Norris	Special Education Coordinator
Diana De La Rosa, Ed.D	Bilingual/ESL Coordinator
Danny McDonald	Director of Child Nutrition
Debbie Nordt	Director of Career & Technical Education
Gregory Jerkins	Director of M&O, & Transportation
Lakenya Perry-Allen, Ed.D	STEM Director
Jonathan Davis	Director of Technology
Theresa Almendarez	Business Office Coordinator
	Human Resources Coordinator
Regina Taiwo	PEIMS Coordinator
Kathleen Blanco	Secondary Coordinator
Jennifer Warford	Elementary Coordinator
Lindsey Brewer-Munoz	Coordinator for Library & Media Services
Cherise Roberts	Coordinator of Grants, Partnerships & Community Rel.
Stephanie Jernigan	Instructional Technology Coordinator/Communication
Ginny Liang	STEM Magnet Academy Principal
Karen Grant	STEM Magnet School Assistant Principal
Raymond Root	High School Principal
Jeffery Williams	High School Associate Principal
Silas Garcia	High School Associate Principal
Alfred Black	High School Assistant Principal
Marissa Vanison	Middle School Principal
Donald Riggs	Middle School Assistant Principal
Angel Jordan	Middle School Assistant Principal
Janelle Toussant	Interim Elementary School Principal
Anthony Berkenkamp	Elementary School Assistant Principal
Nevert Blaylock	Elementary School Assistant Principal
Twyla Hynes	Early Childhood Center School Principal
Aisha Atkinson	Early Childhood Center School Assistant Principal
Regina Matthews	Early Childhood Center Day Care Coordinator

School Calendar

[SMSD2025-2026DistrictCalendar22425.pdf](#)



Stafford MSD 2025-2026 Calendar

1633 Staffordshire Road • Stafford, TX 77477 • 281.261.9200 • www.staffordmsd.org

IMPORTANT DATES:

July 28.....New to Profession/District only (Onboarding)
 July 29-July 31.....Professional Development (Onboarding for new to District)
 Aug. 4.....Non-Contract Day (187/Specialized PD)
 Aug. 5.....Convocation and Campus PD (First Day-Returning Teachers)
 Aug. 6 & 7.....District Professional Development
 Aug. 8 & 11.....Campus Professional Development (Early College/HCC Summer School Ends)
 Aug. 12.....Teacher Prep Day
 Aug. 13.....First Day of School
 Aug. 29.....Early Dismissal- Half Day Flex Day
 Sept. 1.....Labor Day
 Sept. 25.....Early Dismissal-Half Day/District PD Day
 Sept. 26.....Fort Bend County Fair Day
 Oct. 17.....1/2 Day Non-Flex Parent Involvement
 Nov. 7.....Full Day District PD
 Nov. 21.....Early Dismissal- Flex Day
 Nov. 24-28.....Thanksgiving Break
 Dec. 16-18.....Finals- Early Dismissal- SMA, SMS & SHS Only
 Dec. 19.....Early Dismissal: All schools
 Dec. 22-Jan. 5.....Winter Break
 Jan. 6.....1st Day of 2nd Semester- Students & Teachers Return
 Jan. 16.....Early Dismissal- 1/2 Day PD Non-Flex
 Jan. 19.....Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday- District Holiday
 Feb. 6.....Early Dismissal- 1/2 Day Non-Flex
 Feb. 13.....Early Dismissal - 1/2 Day Flex
 Feb. 16.....President's Day
 March 6.....Early Dismissal- 1/2 Flex Day
 March 9-13.....Spring Break
 Apr. 3.....District Holiday
 May 8.....Early Dismissal- 1/2 Day Flex
 May 22.....Early Dismissal- Campus Planning Non-Flex
 May 25.....Memorial Day
 May 26-28.....Finals- Early Dismissal: SMA, SMS & SHS Only
 May 29.....Early Dismissal- Last Day of School
 TBA.....SHS Graduation
 June 3- July 2nd.....HB 3 Additional Days Elementary Summer-STEM Magnet (21 Days)
 June 19.....Juneteenth Holiday
 July 6-17.....Summer Learning Session Stafford HS (9 days)

AUGUST AGOSTO 2025						
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SEPTEMBER SEPTIEMBRE 2025						
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NOVEMBER NOVIEMBRE 2025						
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DECEMBER DICIEMBRE 2025						
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JANUARY ENERO 2026						
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FEBRUARY FEBRERO 2026						
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MARCH MARZO 2026						
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APRIL ABRIL 2026						
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MAY MAYO 2026						
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JUNE JUNIO 2026						
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JULY JULIO 2026						
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12	13*	14*	15*	16*	17*	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Stafford Day Care Closure Dates
 Daycare Summer Closure July 3-11th
 Daycare Summer PD/Workday-August 1
 Daycare PD & Workday Oct. 17, March 16 & June 1

HCC Dates:
 June 1-Early College/HCC Session I Starts
 July 3-Early College/HCC Session I Ends
 July 6-Early College/HCC Session II Starts
 Aug 7-Early College/HCC Session II Ends

- New to SMSD - Teacher Training
- Novice Teacher Training
- District Professional Development - No students
- Teacher Planning & Campus PD - No students
- Teacher Workday - No students
- Holiday - employees and students off
- First Day/Last Day of School
- State Testing
- Early Dismissal: STEM Magnet/Middle/High- 11:30 AM
- Early Dismissal: All Schools SMA/MS/HS- 11:30 AM, ECC/ES- 12 pm Board
- Meeting
- Flex Day
- Non-Flex Day
- End of Grading Cycle

Grading Cycle: 1st Semester- Days 85 2nd Semester- Days 95
 Aug 13 - Sept 25 Jan. 6- Feb. 20
 Sept. 29 - Nov. 6 Feb. 23 - April 10
 Nov. 6 - Dec 19 April 13- May 29

- Teacher Work Days- 187/197 Magnet, Instructional Days- 180 (Due to ASDY)
- All schools- 460 Instructional Minutes Per Day, 1/2 Days 240 Instructional Minutes
- Stafford Early Childhood Center- ECC/Elementary- SES (Instructional Minutes- 79,720)
- Stafford Middle School- SMS/High- SHS (Instructional Minutes- 78,800)
- STEM Magnet School- (Instructional Minutes- 78,400)
- HB 2442 requires 75,600 Instructional Minutes and at least a minimum bank of 840 Instructional Minutes

All Early Dismissal Days- Aug. 29*, Sept. 25, Nov. 21*, Dec. 16-18 (Finals- Secondary Only), Dec. 19*, Jan. 16, Feb. 6, Feb. 13*, March 6*, May 8*, May 22, May 26-28 (Finals- Secondary Only), & May 29.
 *Indicates Teacher Flex Day

Major Testing Dates: Assessment Window Dec. 2-12, 2025 (STAAR HS), April 7-24, 2026 (STAAR + make-up dates), and June 15-26.
 Intervention Days can be used for tutorials, interventions, enrichment, extracurricular activities, or make-up days

School Hours:
 ECC/Elementary 8:00 AM-3:40 PM • Early Release 8:00 AM-12:00 PM
 STEM Magnet/Middle/High Schools 7:30 AM-3:10 PM • Early Release 7:30 AM-11:30 AM

[f](#) @SMSD82 [x](#) @StaffordMSD

Approved by SMSD Board of Trustees: February 10, 2025

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 appropriate department as listed below.

School Directory



Stafford Municipal School District
1633 Staffordshire
Stafford, Texas 77477

Early Childhood Center 281-208-6100 Fax 281-208-6111		
1350 Constitution Ave.		
Principal	6102	Twyla Hynes
Administrative Assistant	6115	Senec Jackson
Assistant Principal	6104	Aisha Atkinson
Receptionist	6100	Caroline Jovel
Registrar/Attendance Clerk	6103	Maria Delarosa
Counselor	6107	Takeya Coleman
Nurse	6106	Brittney Son
Day Care Coordinator	1958	Regina Matthews
Elementary (1-5) 281-261-9229 Fax 281-261-9262		
1250 Constitution Ave.		
Principal (Interim)	9228	Janelle Toussant
Associate Principal		
Administrative Assistant	9206	Melanie Mitchell
Receptionist	9229	Janae Arrez
Assistant Principal (3 rd & 5 th)	9233	Anthony Berkenkamp
Assistant Principal (2 nd & 4 th)	3653	Nevert Blaylock
Administrative Assistant to AP's	9237	Toni Williams
Attendance Clerk (1-5)	6127	Yvonne Robertson
Registrar	6101	Patrice Citizen
Counselor	9284	Dannette Holmes
Social Worker (District-Wide)	9221	Bobbilyn Lyons
Nurse	9223	Michelle Molina
Clinic Aide/ District Contact Tracer	9223	Luz Garcia Schaller
Extended Day Coordinator (979-946-2832)		Michelle Benson
Middle School (6-8) 281-261-9215		
1424 Constitution Ave		
Principal	9201	Marissa Vanison
Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper	9218	Thais-Marie Hudson
Receptionist	9215	Amanda Gallegos
Assistant Principal	9292	Angel Jordan
Assistant Principal	9371	Donald Riggs
Registrar/Attendance Clerk	9264	Nathalie Beltran
Counselor (8 th Grade)	9253	Liza Knight-Mendonca
Counselor (6/7 th Grade)	9205	Trishauna Garrett
Nurse	9340	Adrienne Lewis-Endsley

STEM Magnet Academy (3-9) 281-261-9288		
200 Spartan Pride		
Principal	3849	Ginny Liang
Administrative Asst./Bookkeeper	3850	Schelitia Dixon
Assistant Principal	3847	Karen Grant
Receptionist	9288	
Attendance/Registrar	3079	Dina Ayoub
Counselor	3804	Angela Svetlik
Health Clinic Aide	3069	Blanca Benavidez
STEM Specialist (District-Wide)	3846	Tiffany Fondal

High School (9-12) 281-261-9239 Fax 281-261-9347		
100 Spartan Drive		
Principal	9278	Raymond Root
Administrative Assistant	9214	Ruby Carter
Receptionist	9239	Sara Perez
Bookkeeper	9246	Carrie Atily
Assistant Principal	9240	Alfred Black
Associate Principal (QU)	9294	Silas Garcia
Administrative Assistant	9296	Monica Burman
Attendance Clerk	9295	Kenithra Knowles
Registrar	9204	
Counselor (A-Gr)	9272	Grace Landry
Counselor (Gu-Pa)	6129	Shunn Rector
Counselor (Pe-Z)	9217	Veronica Reid
College & Career Readiness Counselor	6105	Narietha Carter-McClinton
Director of Career & Tech. Educ.	9207	Debbie Nordt
Administrative Assistant	9220	Jennifer Wade
Associate Principal (SAEC/QUEST)	9270	Jeffery Williams
Nurse	9226	Yesenia Rios
Athletics		
Fax 281-208-6145		
Director of Athletics	9360	Ken Savannah
Associate Athletic Director	9209	Sergio Hinojosa
Administrative Assistant	6140	Cynthia Guerra
Athletic Trainer (MS)	4010	Sheltonie Dotson
Athletic Trainer (HS)	3191	Briell Boyd

Employment

Equal Employment Opportunity

Policies DAA, DIA

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, Stafford MSD 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 prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. The prohibition against discrimination 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: *Vaché Hall, Interim Director of Human Resources* at tahr@staffordmsd.org. 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: *Vaché Hall, Interim Director of Human Resources* at tahr@staffordmsd.org.

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 at <http://www.staffordmsd.org/careers>.

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).

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 not employed by contract. Employment is not for any specified term and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the district.

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.

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 tahr@staffordmsd.org in a timely manner. Employees licensed by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR) must notify the Human Resources Department when there is action against, or revocation of, their license. Contact the Human Resources department at tahr@staffordmsd.org.

A certified employee's contract may be voided without Chapter 21 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 the Human Resources Department if you have any questions regarding certification or licensure requirements, contact the Human Resources department at tahr@staffordmsd.org.

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 the Human Resources Department by emailing tahr@staffordmsd.org if you have any questions regarding reverification of employment authorization. Failure to verify employment authorization may result in termination.

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. Disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may result if an employee refuses to submit to testing or is found to violate district policy.

Employees Required to Have a Commercial Driver's License. Any employee whose duties require a commercial driver's license (CDL) is subject to alcohol and drug 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 Gregory Jerkins at gregory.jerkins@staffordmsd.org.

Employee's Use of District Vehicles

Policy CNB

Non-school Use. The District prohibits the use of District vehicles for non-school purposes, including personal use. All SMSD vehicles are deployed with global position tracking (GPS) technology. Any effort to tamper with any/all installed technology will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

School-related Use. The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations for requesting, scheduling, and using District vehicles for extracurricular activities, field trips, and other school-related purposes.

Insurance Considerations. If you are driving your own vehicle on school business-related travel, your own insurance is primary. If your vehicle, or someone else's vehicle or property is damaged, or if someone is injured, coverage must be provided by your insurance. Injuries to employees incurred in the course and scope of employment, or in this case, a work-related auto accident, will be covered by workers' compensation. Maintaining a current auto insurance policy is a matter of law, and the district expects that any individual who may be required to drive his/her personal vehicle for District purposes abides by this law.

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 the District's Athletic Trainer prior to the first day of practice for their first sport season. The rules Compliance program can be accessed on the UIL website by website [Rules Compliance Program — The Leaguer — University Interscholastic League \(UIL\)](#).

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 end of open transfer period. 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 Human Resources Department and must be approved by the receiving supervisor.

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 on page 20 for additional information.

ADA Accommodations

Policies DAA, DBB, DIA

The district will provide reasonable accommodations to employees with a disability if the accommodation would allow the individual to perform the essential functions of their job, unless doing so would create an undue hardship. An employee or their supervisor may initiate a request for accommodation by contacting the Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org and identifying an adjustment or change at work that is needed because of a disability. An employee may also submit a written request to HR using the ADA Accommodation Request Form, which is available [Human Resources - SMSD](#).

Upon receiving the reasonable accommodation request, HR or the ADA coordinator will meet with the employee and conduct an informal, interactive discussion to identify an accommodation that will allow the employee to perform the essential functions of the job effectively. The district may request medical information concerning the employee's disability and to assist in determining what accommodation(s) may be available and appropriate. The employee will be responsible for obtaining the information from their health care provider. Medical information received will be confidential and kept separate from the employee's personnel file.

After meeting with the employee and reviewing medical documentation, HR or the ADA coordinator will determine whether the employee is a qualified individual with a disability and develop a reasonable accommodation plan for the employee. Accommodation will be determined on a case-by-case basis. HR or the ADA coordinator will work closely with the employee and supervisor to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided and effective.

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 tahr@staffordmsd.org.

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 Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org 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 Department at 281-261-9200.

Outside Employment and Tutoring

Policy DBD

All 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.

Administrators. An employee (other than employees primarily responsible for in-class instruction) who has significant administrative duties relating to the operation of a school district, including the operation for a campus, program, or other subdivision of the district may not receive financial benefits for performing personal services for any business entity that conducts or solicits business with the district. With exceptions as noted below, administrators are also prohibited from receiving financial benefits for performing personal services for any education business that provides services regarding the curriculum or administration of any school district or financial benefits for performing personal services for other school districts, open enrollment charter schools, and education service centers.

Exceptions apply to an administrator who is not a superintendent, assistant superintendent, or member of a board of managers if the board approves as required by statute. To be approved, services must be performed on the administrator’s personal time. Contact Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org for more information.

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, Stafford MSD 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 at each campus from the campus principal or from the Chief of Schools, Dr. Dawn Dubose at ddubose@staffordmsd.org or extension 9245.

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.

Alternative Certification Program

All new employees (those employed in a position requiring certification) who have enrolled and have been accepted in an Alternative Certification Program (ACP) will have until February 28th of the school year hired with the district, to complete all necessary requirements to become fully certified in the area for which they were hired. Any teachers hired after the February 28th

date will be required to be eligible for a probationary certificate prior to the beginning of school. Failure to complete such requirements will result in the administration recommending to the Board avoidance/termination of contract.

Mental Health Training

Policy DMA

All district employees who regularly interact with students are required to complete an evidenced-based mental health training program that is designed to provide instruction regarding the recognition and support of children and youth who experience mental health or substance use issues that may pose a threat to school safety. Employees must provide a certificate of completion to the district that includes the name of the training course, along with supporting documentation confirming that the training meets the requirements of the commissioner rules for mental health training.

Campus staff required to complete the training includes, but is not limited to, teachers, coaches, librarians, instructional coaches, administrators, administrative support personnel, school resource officers, paraprofessionals, substitutes, custodians, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, crossing guards, and district special program liaisons, and supervisors of personnel who regularly interact with students.

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. (See *Overtime Compensation*, page 19.)

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 Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org for more information about the district's pay schedules or their own pay.

Annualized Compensation

Policy DEA

The district pays all salaried employees over 12 months regardless of the number of months employed during the school year. Salaried employees will be paid in equal bimonthly payments.

Paychecks

All professional and salaried employees are paid monthly. Hourly employees are paid semi-monthly. Paychecks will not be released to any person other than the district employee named on the check without the employee's written authorization. Employees are responsible for regularly reviewing the accuracy of their pay statement and should contact the Business Office at payroll@staffordmsd.org if they have any questions.

An employee's payroll statement is available online via Ascender Employee Access at <https://portals20.ascendertx.com/EmployeePortal/login?distid=079910>, and contains detailed information including deductions, withholding information, and the amount of leave accumulated/used. Please contact the Payroll Specialist if you have questions about your earnings statement.

The pay schedule for the 2025-2026 school year follows:

FROM	TO	DATE DUE	PAYDATE
			2025
August 3, 2025	August 16, 2025	August 20, 2025	September 10, 2025
August 17, 2025	August 30, 2025	September 3, 2025	September 25, 2025
August 31, 2025	September 13, 2025	September 17, 2025	October 10, 2025
September 14, 2025	October 4, 2025	October 8, 2025	October 24, 2025
October 5, 2025	October 18, 2025	October 25, 2025	November 10, 2025
October 19, 2025	November 1, 2025	November 5, 2025	November 21, 2025
November 2, 2025	November 22, 2025	November 26, 2025	December 10, 2025
November 23, 2025	November 29, 2025	December 3, 2025	December 19, 2025
			2026
November 30, 2025	December 13, 2025	December 17, 2025	January 9, 2026
December 14, 2025	January 3, 2026	January 7, 2026	January 23, 2026
January 4, 2026	January 17, 2026	January 21, 2026	February 10, 2026
January 18, 2026	January 31, 2026	February 4, 2026	February 25, 2026
February 1, 2026	February 14, 2026	February 18, 2026	March 10, 2026
February 15, 2026	February 28, 2026	March 4, 2026	March 25, 2026
March 1, 2026	March 14, 2026	March 18, 2026	April 10, 2026
March 15, 2026	April 4, 2026	April 8, 2026	April 24, 2026
April 5, 2026	April 18, 2026	April 24, 2026	May 8, 2026
April 19, 2026	May 2, 2026	May 6, 2026	May 25, 2026
May 3, 2026	May 16, 2026	May 20, 2026	June 10, 2026
May 17, 2026	May 30, 2026	June 3, 2026	June 25, 2026
May 31, 2026	June 13, 2026	June 17, 2026	July 10, 2026
June 14, 2026	June 27, 2026	July 8, 2026	July 24, 2026
June 28, 2026	July 18, 2026	July 22, 2026	August 10, 2026
July 19, 2026	August 1, 2026	August 5, 2026	August 25, 2026

Automatic Payroll Deposit

Employees can have their paychecks electronically deposited into a designated account. Processing and activation will take up to one (1) full payroll cycle to activate. Contact the Business Office at payroll@staffordmsd.org for more information about the automatic payroll deposit 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 and donations to SMSD Foundation. Salary deductions are automatically made for unauthorized or unpaid leave.

Overpayments. Employees are not entitled to any funds the district overpays. An overpayment occurs if an employee is paid more than the amount the employee should have been paid under the assigned pay grade and applicable supplemental pay.

If an overpayment is reported in the current fiscal year, a payment plan will be developed to recoup the payment. Generally, an overpayment will be paid in one pay cycle. However, if this creates an undue hardship for the employee, the district has the discretion to develop a plan for regular payroll deductions in the same fiscal year.

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 up to and including termination.

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 12:00 a.m. and ends at 11:59 p.m. Friday.

Nonexempt employees that are paid on a salary basis are paid for the hours set by the normal work schedule. Hours worked beyond the normal schedule up to 40 hours will be paid at a regular rate of pay.

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 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.

Disaster Pay Provisions

Police DEC

Nonexempt, non-contractual employees who are required to work during an emergency closure of the district shall be paid at the rate of one and one-half times their normal rate of pay for all hours worked up to 40 hours per week. Compensation for time worked over 40 hours in a week shall be calculated and paid according to the law.

The Superintendent or designee shall approve payments and ensure accurate time records are kept of actual hours worked during the emergency closure.

Travel Expense Reimbursement

Policy DEE

Before any travel expenses are incurred by an employee, the employee's supervisor, and the Business Office 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.

The District Employee Travel Guidelines can be found online at [Fiscal Responsibility - Stafford Municipal School District](#).

All questions concerning travel reimbursements should be directed to the Business Office at payroll@staffordmsd.org.

Health, Dental, 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

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 the Human Resources department at tahr@staffordmsd.org for more information.

Supplemental Insurance Benefits

Policy CRD

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs such as dental, vision, disability, cancer, accident, group term life and AD&D, individual life, critical illness, gap insurance along with flexible spending accounts, unreimbursed medical FSA, dependent care FSA, health savings accounts, prepaid legal, 457 deferred compensation and 403(b) retirement. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deduction. Employees should contact the Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org 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

The district, in accordance with state law, provides workers' compensation benefits to employees who suffer a work-related illness or are injured on the job. The district has workers' compensation coverage from Creative Risk Funding, effective September 1, 2000.

Benefits help pay for medical treatment and make up for part of the income lost while recovering. Specific benefits are prescribed by law depending on the circumstances of each case.

All work-related accidents or injuries should be reported immediately to Elizabeth Negro at enegron@staffordmsd.org. Employees who are unable to work because of a work-related injury will be notified of their rights and responsibilities under the Texas Labor Code. See *Workers' Compensation Benefits*, page 39 for information on use of paid leave for such absences.

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 Human Resources Department at tahr@staffordmsd.org.

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 TRS 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). Refer to the link below for information on restrictions of employment of retirees in Texas public schools.

[TRS Employment After Retirement](#)

Other Benefit Programs

Voluntary Retirement Plan

The district permits all employees (part-time and full-time) to participate in 403(b), 457(b), and/or other voluntary retirement plans. Please contact our Third-Party Administrator for annuity information, Nic Hauptmann, with TCG, at 512-600-5247; nhauptmann@TCGservices.com.

Reimbursement of Unused Local Leave Upon Retirement

DEC (Local)

Effective November 19, 2002, and thereafter, an employee who retires in accordance with the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) guidelines after 20 or more years of service in the district shall be paid for up to 90 workdays of unused local leave as follows:

1. A professional employee shall be paid at the rate of \$60 per day for each day of unused local leave.
2. A paraprofessional or auxiliary employee shall be paid at the rate of 50 percent of the daily wage at the time of retirement, not to exceed \$40 per day, for each day of unused local leave.

The district shall continue to provide this reimbursement in an effort to attract and retain a highly qualified staff.

Employees who elect to be reimbursed for unused local leave upon retirement must notify the business office at payroll@staffordmsd.org in writing at least ten business days prior to their retirement date.

Tuition-Free Attendance

FDA (Local)

Children of a nonresident District or city employee shall be eligible to attend the school district tuition-free.

Attendance and Punctuality

Policies DEC, DECA, DECB

All employees are expected to demonstrate professionalism through regular attendance, punctuality, and adherence to established work schedules. Regular and reliable attendance is an essential job function and critical to the success of SMSD students and operations.

Attendance and Reporting Procedures:

Employees are required to report to work on time each day. If an employee will be absent or tardy, they must notify their immediate supervisor or department administrator before the start of the workday, following campus or departmental procedures regarding who to contact and when.

For contract campus employees:

- **Secondary campuses:** Notify the principal or designated administrator through email by **6:00 a.m.** and enter the absence in the electronic absence management system.
- **Elementary campuses:** Notify the principal or designated administrator through email by **6:30 a.m.** and enter the absence in the system.
When possible, employees should call the evening before if they know they will be absent.

For **non-contract employees**, notification must be made through email to the designated department supervisor **prior to the start of the scheduled workday** or as outlined in departmental procedures.

- **Unreported Absences:**
Failure to communicate an absence for more than **three consecutive workdays** may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Excessive absences, even when reported, may also result in disciplinary action per Stafford MSD policy.
- **Medical Documentation:**
A **doctor's release** is required for absences due to personal or family illness lasting more than **three consecutive workdays**, or as otherwise required for an HR-approved protected leave. Documentation must be submitted to the supervisor or Human Resources prior to returning to work. Stafford MSD reserves the right to verify medical documentation related to an employee's work status.

By adhering to these expectations, SMSD reinforces a culture of accountability, professionalism, and commitment to student success through consistent employee attendance and punctuality.

TimeClock Plus (TCP)

TimeClock Plus (TCP) is the official timekeeping system for Stafford MSD and must be used by all non-exempt employees and their supervisors. Accurate time reporting is essential to ensure compliance with wage and hour laws, proper compensation, and accountability.

- **Daily Timekeeping:**
 - All non-exempt employees are required to clock in and out each day, including clocking in and out for lunch breaks. Any modifications to time entries must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor.
- **Overtime and Approval:**
 - Overtime must be pre-approved by the supervisor before any additional hours are worked. All time worked by non-exempt employees must be accurately recorded and compensated. Supervisors and employees are prohibited from allowing or performing unpaid work ("working off the clock"). Failure to record actual time worked or to obtain approval for overtime may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- **Timekeeping Records:** Employees are responsible for ensuring their time entries:
 - Reflect actual hours worked each day.
 - Are not pre-entered in advance of work.
 - Do not omit or alter time for breaks or non-working periods.

Frontline: Absence Management

Frontline Absence Management is the official system for recording and managing all employee leave and absences. All employees—exempt and non-exempt—are required to submit leave requests and record absences in Frontline in accordance with District policy.

- **Reporting Absences:**
Employees must enter all absences in as soon as the need for leave is known. For planned absences, employees should submit requests in advance for approval by their supervisor. For unplanned absences, employees must notify their supervisor following departmental procedures and enter the absence into Frontline before the start of the workday.
- **Extended Leave:**
Leave requests for three (3) or more consecutive workdays due to illness, personal reasons, or family care must be reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Department. Supporting documentation, such as a doctor's note or other required forms, must be submitted before approval.
- **Coordination and Coverage:**
Employees should coordinate with their supervisor to ensure appropriate coverage during their absence. Supervisors are responsible for verifying absences in Frontline and ensuring substitute requests (if applicable) are processed in a timely manner to avoid disruption to campus or department operations.

Proper use of TimeClock Plus and Frontline Absence Management ensures accurate payroll processing, compliance with employment laws, and accountability for all staff members within Stafford MSD.

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 contact Human Resources at tahr@staffordmsd.org for information about applicable leave benefits, payment of insurance premiums, and requirements for communicating with the district.

Paid leave must be used in half or whole 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 Sick Leave accumulated prior to the 1995-1996 school year.
- State Personal Leave

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 three (3) 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 **three (3) consecutive** 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 leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) 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 FMLA 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-Active Care 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, the district will provide the employee with notice of COBRA rights.

Recording of Leave. Leave used shall be recorded in increments of whole or half workdays, except when an employee is taking intermittent leave under FMLA as indicated above. If an employee is absent in excess of 50 percent of their workday, the absence may be charged as one full workday if approved by the supervisor. If an employee is absent up to 50 percent of their workday, the absence may be charged as one-half workday if approved by the supervisor. Employees shall be charged leave as used even if a substitute is not employed.

Any leave taken for which leave balances are insufficient shall result in a deduction from the employee's paycheck commensurate with the amount of leave taken.

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 seven (7) 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

DEC (Local)

All full-time employees in positions normally requiring 10, 11, or 12 months of service **per school year** shall earn five, six, or seven workdays of local leave per school year, respectively, at a rate of one-half workday for each 18 workdays of employment.

DAYS IN CONTRACT	MONTHS	LEAVE DAYS
180-197	10 months	10 days – five local/five state
198-215	11 months	11 days – six local/five state
216-230	12 months	12 days – seven local/five state

Local leave earned by full-time employees in positions normally requiring 10, 11, or 12 months of service per year shall accumulate without limit.

An employee’s accumulated local leave days shall be forfeited upon any termination of employment with the District and such leave shall not be reinstated upon any subsequent reemployment with the District.

Local leave shall be used under the terms and conditions applicable to state personal leave.

See DEC (LOCAL) and (LEGAL) policies for additional information.

Sick Leave Bank

DEC (Local)

The district shall establish a sick leave bank that employees may join through contribution of local leave.

Leave contributed to the sick leave bank shall be solely for the use of participating employees. An employee who is a member of the bank may request leave from the bank if the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family specified in section DEFINITIONS in DEC (Local) (see below) experiences a catastrophic illness or injury and the employee has exhausted all paid leave (local leave, state personal leave, state sick leave accumulated before the 1995-96 school year, and compensatory time).

If the employee is unable to request leave from the sick leave bank, a member of the employee's immediate family or the employee's supervisor may submit the request.

The operations of the sick leave bank are as follows:

1. Membership in the sick leave bank is voluntary;
2. If an employee elects to become a member of the sick leave bank, two local days will be donated (employees do not have an option for less or more days to be donated);
3. Once days are donated, they are permanently removed from an employee's available local leave balance;
4. Days can only be donated within the enrollment period which is the lesser of the first 30 calendar days of employment or the first 30 calendar days after the first contractual work day;
5. Membership in the sick leave bank will automatically renew annually on July 1st unless employee notifies Talent Acquisition/Human Resources Department in writing;
6. Employee requests shall be granted on a first-come, first-serve basis;
7. The Sick Leave Bank Request Form must be completed and submitted to the Talent Acquisition/Human Resources Department
8. The maximum number of days per school year a member employee may receive from the sick leave bank is 30;

9. Number of days granted cannot exceed days available from accumulated sick leave bank;
10. The Superintendent will consider requests for leave from the sick leave bank based on the catastrophic illness or injury; and
11. Talent Acquisition/Human Resources Department shall notify the member employee within five business days if the request has been approved or denied.

Appeal All decisions regarding the sick leave bank may be appealed in accordance with DGBA(LOCAL), beginning with the Superintendent or designee.

Definitions The term “immediate family” shall include:

1. Spouse.
2. 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*.
3. Parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, or other individual who stands *in loco parentis* to the employee.
4. Sibling, stepsibling, sibling-in-law.
5. Grandparent and grandchild.
6. Any person residing in the employee’s household at the time of illness or death.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—General Provisions

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

What is FMLA leave?

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that provides eligible employees with **job-protected leave** for qualifying family and medical reasons.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division (WHD) enforces the FMLA for most employees. Eligible employees can take **up to 12 workweeks** of FMLA leave in a 12-month period for:

- The birth, adoption or foster placement of a child with you,
- Your serious mental or physical health condition that makes you unable to work,
- To care for your spouse, child or parent with a serious mental or physical health condition, and
- Certain qualifying reasons related to the foreign deployment of your spouse, child or parent who is a military servicemember.

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

You have the right to use FMLA leave in **one block of time**. When it is medically necessary or otherwise permitted, you may take FMLA leave **intermittently in separate blocks of time, or on a reduced schedule** by working less hours each day or week. Read Fact Sheet #28M(c) for more information.

FMLA leave is **not paid leave**, but you may choose, or be required by your employer, to use any employer-provided paid leave if your employer’s paid leave policy covers the reason for which you need FMLA leave.

Am I eligible to take FMLA leave?

You are an **eligible employee** if *all* of the following apply:

- You work for a covered employer,
- You have worked for your employer at least 12 months,
- You have at least 1,250 hours of service for your employer during the 12 months before your leave, and
- Your employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of your work location

Airline flight crew employees have different “hours of service” requirements.

You work for a **covered employer** if **one** of the following applies:

- You work for a private employer that had at least 50 employees during at least 20 workweeks in the current or previous calendar year,
- You work for an elementary or public or private secondary school, or

- You work for a public agency, such as a local, state or federal government agency. Most federal employees are covered by Title II of the FMLA, administered by the Office of Personnel Management

How do I request FMLA leave?

Generally, **to request FMLA leave you *must***:

- Follow your employer's normal policies for requesting leave,
- Give notice at least 30 days before your need for FMLA leave, or
- If advance notice is not possible, give notice as soon as possible.

You **do *not* have to share a medical diagnosis** but must provide enough information to your employer so they can determine whether the leave qualifies for FMLA protection. You ***must* also inform your employer if FMLA leave was previously taken** or approved for the same reason when requesting additional leave.

Your **employer *may* request certification** from a health care provider to verify medical leave and may request certification of a qualifying exigency.

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.

State employees may be subject to certain limitations in pursuit of direct lawsuits regarding leave for their own serious health conditions. Most federal and certain congressional employees are also covered by the law but are subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or Congress

What does my employer need to do?

If you are eligible for FMLA leave, your employer ***must***:

- Allow you to take job-protected time off work for a qualifying reason,
- Continue your group health plan coverage while you are on leave on the same basis as if you had not taken leave, and
- Allow you to return to the same job, or a virtually identical job with the same pay, benefits and other working conditions, including shift and location, at the end of your leave.

Your **employer cannot interfere with your FMLA rights** or threaten or punish you for exercising your rights under the law. For example, your employer cannot retaliate against you for requesting FMLA leave or cooperating with a WHD investigation.

After becoming aware that your need for leave is for a reason that may qualify under the FMLA, your **employer must confirm whether you are eligible** or not eligible for FMLA leave. If your employer determines that you are eligible, **your employer must notify you in writing:**

- About your FMLA rights and responsibilities, and
- How much of your requested leave, if any, will be FMLA-protected leave.

Where can I find more information?

Call **1-866-487-9243** or visit dol.gov/fmla to learn more.

If you believe your rights under the FMLA have been violated, you may file a complaint with WHD or file a private lawsuit against your employer in court. **Scan the QR code to learn about our WHD complaint process.**



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 measured backward from the date an employee uses FML.

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. Teachers have the option of not using paid leave during an FML absence for pregnancy or birth or adoption of a child.

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 Leave and Benefits Clerk, Thalia Sandoval, at thalia.sandoval@staffordmsd.org 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, contact the Human Resources Department through email at tahr@staffordmsd.org 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 an assault is a work-related injury and should be immediately reported to supervisor of the injured employee.

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 non-responsible 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

DEC (LOCAL)

On the occasion of a death in an employee's immediate family, the district shall grant up to three consecutive days of bereavement leave (to be taken within seven calendar days after the date of death) to be taken with no loss of pay. One of the days must be the day of the funeral or adjacent to the day of the funeral. There shall be no accumulation of unused bereavement leave.

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. An employee shall be granted leave with pay and without loss of paid leave for absences due to compliance with a valid subpoena under the following circumstances:

- The employee, who is not a party to the litigation, is ordered to appear in a legal proceeding pursuant to a lawfully issued subpoena, in accordance with law. [See DEC(LEGAL)]
- The employee is a defendant in a lawsuit based on actions taken in the course and scope of his or her employment, and the employee is requested by the district's legal counsel to participate in activities and proceedings related to the defense of the lawsuit.
- The employee is not a party to a lawsuit involving the district but is otherwise requested by the district's legal counsel to provide information, assistance, or testimony in connection with litigation involving the district.

An employee who is a party to non-district litigation or legal proceedings and is absent due to activities and/or proceedings related to the litigation or legal proceedings may use available state or local personal leave for the absence.

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 their immediate supervisor, Human Resources and the Payroll Specialist. 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 Leave and Benefits Clerk, Thalia Sandoval, at thalia.sandoval@staffordmsd.org for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

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. Recognition and appreciation activities also include the following.

- Teacher-of-the-Year awards
- Rookie Teacher-of-the-Year awards
- Administrator-of-the-Year award
- District Employee of the Year
- Support Staff Employee of the Year awards
- Service awards
- #CommittedtoSMSD recognition at school board meetings
- Retiree awards

District Communications

Throughout the school year, the district 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. They include the following:

- Community Update emails from the Communications Liaison, Stephanie Jernigan
- #CommittedtoSMSD Twitter
- Stafford MSD Facebook page
- Stafford MSD STEM social media platforms
- Instagram
- SMSD Parent Square
- PeachJar Flyers

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 and can be found within the District Board Policy Online Manual at the link below:

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DGBA\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DGBA(LOCAL).pdf)

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 up to and including termination.
- 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.
- 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, up to and 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. See *Reports to the Texas Education Agency*, page 72 for additional information.

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

- (vi) 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.

Employee Dress Code

Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD) employees shall exemplify the highest standards of professional appearance to project a professional image for both the employees and the District. To convey an atmosphere of respect and professionalism, personnel shall be well-groomed and appropriately dressed. Employee dress and grooming must be clean, neat, appropriate for their assignments, and in accordance with any additional standards established by their immediate supervisor(s).

Inappropriate attire includes any item that causes a distraction to other employees or students, or creates an unsafe environment. Examples include, but are not limited to: low-cut blouses, see-through tops, clothing that exposes the navel, short dresses, unusual hair colorings, visible tattoos, nose rings, and other pierced body parts (except ears). Shoes must have proper soles and be appropriate for assigned job responsibilities.

The personal appearance of SMSD employees affects both the respect held by those outside the District and the respect employees have for themselves and one another. Therefore, it is important to communicate that some environments require a specific standard of dress, and the acceptance of such standards is essential in projecting a professional persona. These standards apply to all school days, including staff development days, whether on or off campus (e.g., ESC Region 4 or HCDE). Specific job assignments or campus activities may require deviations from these standards as approved by the appropriate supervisor.

With the express permission of the principal, attire may vary from the norm on special days (e.g., fundraisers, theme/team days, or other special events) to foster a climate of school spirit. Participation is encouraged, and notices for such days will be posted and communicated in advance.

Certain job assignments or campus activities may necessitate alternate forms of dress. Employees in roles such as automotive mechanics, agriculture, or life skills may be permitted to wear jeans daily, provided prior approval is obtained from the supervisor.

Employee identification badges must be worn while in main instructional buildings or when around students (including physical education, athletics, transportation, etc.), as long as the badge does not create a safety hazard.

The Superintendent or designee reserves the right to provide notice to 11 and 12-month employees on alternate dress standards during the summer.

These standards will be communicated in the following manner:

- In the Employee Handbook
- During staff development at the beginning of the school year
- Via direct communication from the Superintendent or designee

Final Authority

District and campus administrators will have final authority on all matters concerning interpretation of the employee dress and grooming standards. Matters concerning appearance and dress not specifically covered in this summary shall be within the discretion of administrators.

Any items not addressed above or any exceptions from these standards require approval from your supervisor. The dress and grooming standards outlined above, as applicable, are subject to the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act and related legal requirements.

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 up to and including termination.

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 can be found within the District's Board Policy Online Manual at the link below:

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DIA\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DIA(LOCAL).pdf)

Harassment of Students

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

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. See *Reporting Suspected Child Abuse*, page 39 and *Bullying*, page 61 for additional information.

Procedures for reporting and investigating harassment of students can be found within the District's Board Policy Online Manual at the links below:

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DHB\(LEGAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DHB(LEGAL).pdf)

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=FFH\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=FFH(LOCAL).pdf)

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Policies DG, FFG, 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, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), or appropriate state agency (e.g., state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering the facility) within 24 hours after the employee has reasonable cause to believe that the child has been abused or neglected. Law enforcement agency includes the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), a municipal police department, a county sheriff's office, or a county constable's office and does not include the district police.

A person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child (including a teacher) is required to report alleged abuse or neglect to DFPS even if a report is made to law enforcement.

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 DFPS can be made using the Texas Abuse Hotline (<https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx> or 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, a 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 through the campus counselor's offices or the Chief of Schools, Dr. Dawn DuBose ddubose@staffordmsd.org. 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. Abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined to include any sexual conduct harmful to a child’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offense of continuous sexual abuse of a young child or disabled individual, indecency with a child, improper relationship between an educator and a student, sexual assault, or encouraging a child to engage in sexual conduct, 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*.

Reports to Texas Education Agency

Policies DF, DHB, DHC

The conduct of an employee must be reported to 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
- Engaged in inappropriate communication with a student or minor
- Failed to maintain appropriate boundaries with a student or minor

For a certified employee the conduct below must also be reported:

- 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).

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.
- Artificial intelligence (AI) should only be used as a support tool to improve student outcomes, not to replace the decisions made by teachers or students

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

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/or legal action. Employees with

questions about computer use and data management can contact the Director of Technology, Jonathan Davis jonathan.davis@staffordmsd.org.

Digital Citizenship

District technology users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of digital citizenship. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Remain polite;
- Use appropriate language; swearing, vulgarity, ethnic or racial slurs, in appropriate jokes or cartoons, and any other inflammatory language is prohibited;
- Revealing personal addresses or phone numbers of the user or others is prohibited; and
- Using the network in such a way that would disrupt the use of the network by other users is prohibited.

Vandalism

Any malicious attempt to harm or destroy District equipment or materials, data of another user of the District's system, or any of the agencies or other networks that are connected to the Internet is prohibited. Deliberate attempts to degrade or disrupt system performance are violations of district policy and administrative procedures and may constitute criminal activity under applicable state and federal laws. This such prohibited activity includes, but is not limited to, uploading or creating computer viruses.

Vandalism, as defined above, may result in employee discipline, up to and including termination of employment, the cancellation of system use privileges and will require restitution for costs associated with system restoration, hardware, or software costs.

Social Media

The Stafford Municipal School District has a great deal to brag about, and this is, in part, why the District created social media accounts, such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (Formerly know as Twitter). Everything we post to social media (and Communications, in general) is geared toward building the SMSD Brand.

The guidelines below are intended to serve legitimate policy goals including, for example, promoting the mission and values of the school and protecting the school's confidential information. Failure to abide by these policies may result in employee discipline, up to and including, termination of employment. Employees are reminded that they are also subject to other requirements related to the use of school networks and school internet, some of which are included in this handbook. The guidelines here are meant to augment those policies/procedures, not replace them.

The Social Media accounts are administrated through the District’s Marketing/Communications office; however, subject to the rules and requirements below, other representatives of the District may be authorized to post to the District’s social media accounts.

- All rules of conduct in the Employee Handbook and District Board Policy apply while using the District’s technology resources.
- Authorized employees must undergo a brief training provided by the District’s Marketing/Communications Office (20-30 minutes).
- Every post must be 100% aligned to the educational goals and objectives of Stafford MSD.
- Posts must be positive, informative and whenever possible, both positive and informative.
- Avoid controversial topics or controversies (political, social, etc.).
- Remember that every comment, “like” or re-tweet made is directly related to Stafford MSD or public education. You represent the district—not your personal interests—when using the SMSD Social Media.
- Be sensitive to linking to content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement of its content.
- Transmission of any material in violation of any federal or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by trade secret. Use for commercial activities, product advertisement, or political lobbying is also prohibited.
- If you are unsure whether material is confidential or proprietary, assume that it might be, and ask for permission before disclosing it.
- Remember that you are not authorized to operate as agents of the District, legally bind the District, or act on behalf of the District in issues pertaining to public/ media relations, position statements, contractual agreements, legal engagements, etc.

Sexting

The Texas Legislature has directed the Texas School Safety Center, in consultation with the office of the attorney general, to develop programs that inform students, parents/guardians and staff about the possible legal and other consequences of sharing visual material depicting a minor engaged in sexual conduct (also known as “sexting”). The programs must include the connections between bullying, cyber bullying, harassment and sexting. The Texas School Safety Center has developed such a program, called “Before You Text”. It can be found at <http://beforeyoutext.com>. We encourage all middle and high school students and their parents/guardians to view the program.

Personal Use of Electronic Communications

Policy CQ, CY, 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, X, 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, mealtimes, 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 district and campus trademarks, including names, logos, mascots, and symbols or other copyrighted material on social media or in texts 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.
- Only a teacher, trainer, or other employee who has an extracurricular duty may use text messaging, and then only to communicate with students who participate in the extracurricular activity over which the employee has responsibility. An employee who communicates with a student using text messaging shall comply with the following protocol:
 - The employee shall include at least one of the student's parents or guardians as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and parent receive the same message;
 - The employee shall include his or her immediate supervisor as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and supervisor receive the same message; or
 - For each text message addressed to one or more students, the employee shall send a copy of the text message to the employee's district email address.
- 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 employee shall not communicate directly with any student between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 5:30 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, text messaging, instant messaging, 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 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.

Public Information on Private Devices

Policy DH, GB

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

All employees are 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 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.

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

The superintendent is required to report the misconduct or criminal history of an employee to TEA. Information about misconduct or allegations of misconduct of an employee obtained by a means other than the criminal history clearinghouse will be reported to TEA. Refer to Policies DHB(LEGAL) and DHC(LEGAL) for timelines and conduct that will result in reporting.

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

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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

Stafford MSD 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 can be found within the District's Board Policy Online Manual at the link below:

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DH\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=DH(LOCAL).pdf)

Tobacco and Nicotine Products and E-Cigarette Use

Policies DH, FNCD, GKA

State law prohibits smoking, using tobacco, or e-cigarettes on all district-owned property and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities, on or off school property. 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.

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.

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

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 and policy relating to the 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 and security of its employees, students, and visitors. The safety and security program includes written guidelines and procedures for responding to emergencies and activities to help reduce the frequency of accidents and injuries. See Emergencies on page 53 for additional information.

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 Chief of Schools, Dr. Dwan DuBose at ddubose@staffordmsd.org or Chief Financial Officer, Dovran Ovezov at dovran.ovezov@staffordmsd.org.

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 a School Resource Officer (ext. 9282, 9283, or 9343) 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 Maintenance & Operations Department and the front office of all campuses 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 on the campus in the front 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

Policy EB

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. Employees, parents and community members can receive information concerning school closures by email or text message by signing up for the HCDE service at www.SafeSchoolAlerts.org. 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:

Radio Stations:

KTRH – 740 AM

Television Stations:

KPRC	Channel 2
KHOU	Channel 11
KTRK	Channel 13
KRIV	Channel 26

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 Business Office 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 Purchasing Specialist (ext. 9252) for additional information on purchasing procedures.

For more information on purchasing procedures, employees can access the Business Office webpage at <https://www.staffordmsd.org/departments/fiscal-responsibility>.

Name and Address Changes

It is important that employment records be kept up to date. Employees are required to review their personal information at least twice a year—July and December are recommended—through the Ascender Employee Portal. Any changes or corrections to personal information, including name, home address, contact number, marital status, emergency contact, or beneficiary, must be promptly reported to the Human Resources Department.

A Personal Information Change Form is available by contacting the Human Resources Department and must be completed to process any updates to employee records.

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 the Human Resources department. 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 Maintenance & Operations department is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact Maintenance & Operations department at 281-208-6148 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 superintendent or other persons designated by the board of trustees, which includes the Director of 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 of the following:

- Certain misconduct, abuse, unlawful act
- Involvement or solicitation of a romantic relationship with a student or minor
- Solicitation or engaging in sexual conduct with a student or minor
- Inappropriate communications with a student or minor
- Failure to maintain appropriate boundaries with a student or minor
- Possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance
- 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 superintendent is required to report such conduct to SBEC.

Noncontract Employees. Noncontract employees may resign their position at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the Human Resources department 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 or director is required to notify the superintendent of a noncertified employee's resignation or termination within seven business days for any of the following:

- Alleged incident of misconduct of abuse or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor,
- Was involved in or solicited a romantic relationship with a student or minor
- Engaged in inappropriate communications with a student or minor
- Failed to maintain appropriate boundaries with a student or minor

The superintendent is required to report such conduct to SBEC.

Dismissal or Nonrenewal of Contract Employees

Policies DF Series, DHB, DP

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 reporting requirements for termination of a contract are the same as those listed above in Resignations/Contract Employees.

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 within the District's Board Policy Manual at the link below:

<https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Section/485?filter=D>

Dismissal of Noncontract Employees

Policies DHC, 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, sex, 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.

The reporting requirements for termination of a noncertified employee are the same as those listed above in Resignations/Noncontract Employees.

Discharge of Convicted Employees

Policy DF

The district shall discharge any employee who has been convicted of a felony under Title 5 Penal Code or convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for the following:

- An offense requiring the registration as a sex offender
- Improper relationship between an educator and a student
- Sale, distribution, or display of harmful materials to a minor
- Public indecency
- A felony offense involving school property

If the Title 5, Penal Code 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 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, books, property, including intellectual property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment.

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, Stafford MSD 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 *Dr. Dawn Dubose*, the district Title IX coordinator for students. Questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability should be directed to *Shawna Punch* the district ADA/Section 504 coordinator for students. 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, FFAF

Only designated employees may administer prescription medication, nonprescription medication, and herbal or dietary supplements to students. Exceptions apply to the administration of medication for respiratory distress, medication for anaphylaxis (e.g., EpiPen®), opioid antagonists, and medication for diabetes management, if the medication is 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.

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 campus administration. The district's policy includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students and is reprinted can be found within the District's Board Policy Online Manual at the link below:

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=FFI\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/485?filename=FFI(LOCAL).pdf)

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.

Questions

Please contact your supervisor or appropriate administrator if you have any questions about district policy, procedures, etc. All district procedural manuals can be accessed online or can be viewed in the respective campus or department office. Before you sign the Employee Handbook receipt form, please review all applicable information and ask appropriate questions.

On behalf of the Board and Central Administration, thank you for being part of the Stafford MSD family!

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