

West-MEC

Project | SEARCH®

2026-2027 HANDBOOK

WESTERN MARICOPA EDUCATION CENTER GOVERNING BOARD

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Dear Project SEARCH Intern,

Welcome to West-MEC Project SEARCH! Based on your individual skills and employment goals, you have been selected to one of our two program locations, Renaissance Phoenix-Glendale Hotel and Conference Center or Luke Air Force Base. This program year provides you a unique opportunity to learn, grow and develop skills that will assist you in seeking a job at the conclusion of the program. With your hard work and consistent attendance, you will gain competitive, transferable, and marketable skills in a variety of job settings. We look forward to a wonderful program year together.

While you attend Project SEARCH, you are expected to demonstrate respect for fellow interns, Project SEARCH staff, host business staff, and customers. Interns must follow the expectations outlined within the West-MEC Project SEARCH handbook, as well as all host business policies and procedures. All interns and parents/guardians/support persons must sign and date the final acknowledgement page of the handbook and return it to the Project SEARCH instructor by **8/7/26.** All acknowledgements will be retained by the Director of Exceptional Student Services**.**

Shelly Thome
Director of Exceptional Student Services

OUR MISSION

Get trained. Learn skills. Gain employment.

WHAT IS PROJECT SEARCH

Project SEARCH is an international program that prepares individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for success in competitive, integrated employment. Utilizing evidence-based practices, interns engage in a total workplace immersion at our business host sites for a 10-month unpaid internship. Following an evidenced-based curriculum which is focused on employability skills including professional communication, self advocacy, and financial literacy as we prepare interns to transition from the training program into competitive, integrated employment.

Interns complete at least three rotations within their host site, developing employment readiness and engaging in career exploration. Our instructors and employment skills trainers provide the interns with ongoing, individualized skills training, instruction and feedback to not only build readiness for employment, but also to increase intern independence, confidence, and self-esteem. As this is an employment training program, please note that we do not focus on activities of daily living (ADL) for our interns.

ELIGIBILITY FOR PROJECT SEARCH

Individuals with a disability that is a barrier to employment can attend West-MEC Project SEARCH after they have graduated high school and prior to turning 28 years of age. As Project SEARCH is an adult program, there are no attendance boundaries restricting enrollment into the program. Eligible candidates can apply to West-MEC Project SEARCH in their final year of high school, to attend after graduation, or individuals may also apply after graduation.

All applicants must complete the interview process to determine if Project SEARCH is well aligned to their employment goals as well as to determine preparedness for the unique business setting of the program. If selected for the program, individuals will be assigned by the Project SEARCH staff to the host site that best meets their needs for employment related rotations and their skill sets. Interns selected for the Luke Air Force Base location are required to submit to a background check through the Air Force. Interns unable to pass the background check are not permitted on this internship site. DBIDS IDs must be in the possession of interns at the base at all times.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

West-MEC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion or disability in admission to its programs, services, or activities. West-MEC does not discriminate in enrollment or access to any of the programs available. The lack of English skills shall not be a barrier to admission or participation in the district's activities and programs. West-MEC also does not discriminate in its hiring or employment practices.

For information regarding discrimination, grievance or complaint procedures, contact Shelly Thome, Director of Exceptional Student Services, at 623-738-0026 or shelly.thome@west-mec.edu. Procedural safeguards and grievance forms can be found at:
https://www.west-mec.edu/high-school-students/studentparent-resources/student-support-services

CODE OF CONDUCT

West-MEC's Project SEARCH program is immersed in the work environment. Interns are expected to conduct themselves as professional employees at all times. A West-MEC intern demonstrates:

Attendance

- Attends the program every calendar day Monday through Friday
- Arrives on time and remains for the entire program day
- Returns promptly from breaks
- The intern will call the instructor when they are late or absent

Engagement

- The intern will complete three unpaid job rotations at the host business site unless hired into an employment position prior to the end of the program year. **Note:** successful program completion requires the intern complete at least two rotations prior to employment.
- The intern will be an active participant in scheduled employment planning meetings, as well as any scheduled meetings with the instructor, host business staff, parent/guardian/support person and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC).

Respect

- Respects instructor, employment skill trainer, fellow interns, staff, substitutes
- Will follow all rules established by the program, host business, and funding agency
- The intern will maintain appropriate behavior in the workplace without immediate supervision
- Follow instructor's and employment skill trainers directions

Integrity

- The intern entered this program due to a desire to be competitively employed in the community following program completion. Thus, enrollment reflects a commitment to actively pursue competitive employment
- Works at highest professional standard
- Will discuss any concerns or issues with the instructor and/or employment skills trainers
- Will be an active participant and communicate any issues at scheduled meetings

Pride

- Uses professional language
- Dresses appropriately and will wear all required attire
- Adheres to proper grooming and hygiene practices

Additional Professional Expectations

- The interns recognize they are responsible for transportation to the host site, and will learn to use public transportation when available.
- Competitive employment is defined as full or part-time work at minimum wage or higher, with wages and benefits similar to those without disabilities performing the same work, and fully integrated with coworkers without disabilities.
- The intern's expressed goal at the time of the interview was employment in the community, therefore enrollment reflects the understanding of the intern to pursue employment.

- West-MEC interns will abide by all West-MEC board policies. Board policies are available for review online at https://v3.boardpolicyonline.com/b/bl/west_mec.

Intern Cell Phone Use

In order to appropriately engage in the program and host business expectations, interns need daily access to a smart phone. The phone is a work tool for interns. Interns will learn to properly utilize their phone to communicate professionally with program staff, mentors in the host business, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, and future employers. Interns are expected to have their phone in their possession daily and to follow appropriate protocols for professional use of the phone. While at the program site, interns will access social media at the direction of their instructor for educational purposes or on scheduled breaks.

Intern Follow Up Communications

- In order to be accepted into Project SEARCH, interns expressed a goal to achieve employment in the community. Enrollment in the program reflects the interns' acknowledgment of employment as the planned outcome of the program.
- Project SEARCH collects employment outcome information for every participant. As part of placement in the program The Intern agrees to the following:
    - If the intern is not employed by the completion of the program contract year, they will meet and maintain contact with the instructor.
    - After the completion of the program contract year, the intern's case is transferred to Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
    - The intern will participate in follow-up communications related to program evaluation and employment status.
    - Prior to program completion, the intern will provide accurate contact information for follow-up and will respond to inquiries made by the program.

Intern Support Person Agreement

The primary goal of the Project SEARCH program is for interns to build independence in a work environment while acquiring transferable employment skills and hands-on work experience. Participants are not guaranteed a job at the completion of the program; however, program staff and host business partners work with the interns to increase their skills thus enhancing opportunities to acquire and maintain employment.

Experiences shared from program sites across the country demonstrate that it is critical for the following key elements to be in place for the interns to be successful in the program:

Both the intern and their support person (family member, guardian, other) will:

1) Recognize and understand the purpose of the program.
    a. The program is designed to prepare interns for competitive integrated employment.
    b. The program should not be regarded as an additional year of a high school program.

2) Have expectations that are in alignment with those of the program.
    a. Interns are required to act and behave as adults with an emphasis on professionalism.
    b. Primary communication is between the intern and program staff. As appropriate, staff may consult with the intern's designated support person.

c. There will be times when an intern is not directly supervised.

3) Regard employment as the desired next step for the intern.

a. This program is intended for individuals with a goal of part-time (16 hours/week) to full time integrated competitive employment.

b. It is important for the intern's support person to reinforce these expectations.

4) Agree to work with the program staff to promote intern independence and participate in actively pursuing employment opportunities.

a. At home, interns should assume increased responsibility for their basic living needs.

b. Program staff works with interns on job search skills such as interviewing strategies, resumes and cover letter writing, researching positions online, and completing online employment applications.

c. Interns and their support person are expected to continue this work at home and during the weekend.

d. The support person agrees to attend meetings as needed, with a minimum of three meetings throughout the program year.

5) Agree to support consistent daily attendance at the program site.

a. All vacations and travel will be scheduled only during non-instructional days.

b. To the best of the support persons' ability, non-program related appointments will be scheduled outside program hours.

Program staff (instructor, employment skills trainers, and host business personnel) will:

1) Focus efforts to provide each intern with a meaningful training experience.

a. When assigning rotations, emphasis is placed on matching intern strengths and interests. If placement in a chosen department is not possible during a rotation period, staff will make an effort to place the intern in that department during a subsequent rotation as appropriate.

b. The quality training experience and ability to gain transferable skills is the primary consideration driving all program activities.

2) Endeavor to promote independence in the work training environment while acknowledging that interns may require periodic individualized support to be successful as they learn new tasks.

a. Employment skills trainers and the instructor are onsite to ensure that the intern is supported while learning new tasks and acclimating to the work environment.

b. In addition to working with interns to increase their independence in an employment setting, importance is placed on promoting self-sufficiency in other aspects of daily living.

Tuition Fees/Refunds

The West-MEC Project SEARCH Program is a post-high school program and thus no longer a free educational experience for interns. The program has a tuition cost of $24,000 for the program year. The tuition can be paid by the intern/parent/guardian/support person at the start of the program in one payment, or paid on the established payment plan of $2400/month for 10 months. The monthly payments are due to West MEC Project SEARCH on the first day of each month.

Often, interns are in services with Vocational Rehabilitation and the tuition is paid in full by Vocational

Rehabilitation. If an intern does not have Vocational Rehabilitation as a funding source, all program fees are the responsibility of the intern/parent/guardian and lack of payment may result in removal from the program. Refunds are not issued for program tuition.

Empowerment Scholarship (ESA)

If the intern has ESA funds, these funds may be applied to the tuition costs for the program. A 2.5% transaction charge will be incurred by ESA recipients who use Class Wallet for their transactions.

Career Development and Employment Skills Training

Project SEARCH interns will engage in career development and employment skills training through daily participation in the program. The intern will engage in at least three unpaid rotations within the program site, receiving continual feedback from the program staff and mentors. Through these rotations, interns gain skills in a variety of transferable employment skills. Project SEARCH also provides evidence-based curriculum to enhance skills in the areas of financial literacy, professional communication skills, technology, self-advocacy, resume writing and job interview skills.

Job Placement

Project SEARCH is an employment training program with the expectation that interns enter part time or full time competitive integrated employment within the community upon program completion. Our program staff will work with interns throughout the program year to develop resumes and complete mock interviews to prepare for employment opportunities. Our host businesses, Renaissance Hotel and Luke Air Force Base, are not required to hire interns upon program completion. Though West-MEC Project SEARCH consistently experiences 72% or higher employment rates for interns, there is no guarantee of employment. The Project SEARCH staff, interns, parents/guardians/support person, and Vocational Rehabilitation representatives will engage in Employment Planning Meetings throughout the program year to identify potential employment opportunities and support applications to businesses in the community. Parents are not permitted to contact worksite employers or visit their young adult at worksites on their work days.

Transporation

Transportation to and from the program site, to interviews, and for future employment is the responsibility of the intern/family/support person. Project SEARCH encourages interns and families to explore public transportation, ride share, and Vocational Rehabilitation services to support transportation needs.

Intern Departure and Pick-Up Expectations

Intern safety is the highest priority for West-MEC. Therefore, we make every effort to ensure that all interns are adequately supervised while at the program. For that reason, it is important that interns either depart or are picked up at the appointed program start and end time. Interns are only permitted at the program site when Project SEARCH staff is present. Should an intern regularly depart or be picked up late, the parent/guardian/support person will be notified and asked to make arrangements to ensure the intern departs or is picked up on time.

Driving and Parking at Program Sites

Parking at a host business is a privilege, not a right. Interns who drive to the program must adhere to parking procedures of the host business. Not following parking procedures will result in the parking

privilege being discontinued.

- Interns are permitted to park on host business premises as a matter of privilege, not of right.
- Host business staff and/or West-MEC Project SEARCH staff may conduct routine patrols of intern parking lots and inspections of the interiors or exteriors of intern automobiles on the property whenever a reasonable suspicion that illegal or unauthorized materials are contained inside the automobiles.
- An intern who fails to provide access to the interior of the car upon request by a host business or program official will be subject to disciplinary action.
- If the intern fails to follow host business and/or program policy and procedure related to use of vehicles, the vehicle may be towed away and stored, at the owner's expense.
- Vehicles can only be parked in the designated intern parking areas.
- Vehicles **must** be driven in a safe and orderly manner entering, exiting, on host business property as well as neighboring business partners' properties.
- Any intern speeding or driving in a reckless manner including excessive acceleration and/or squealing tires will lose parking privileges.
- Vehicles are to be vacated immediately after parking. Hanging out in the parking lot to include sitting in or on vehicles is prohibited during the program day, which includes before/after program and during breaks.
- Passengers are **not** allowed to ride in the back of a pickup truck on host business property.
- Interns are responsible for passengers in their vehicle.
- All occupants of vehicles must wear seat belts.
- Interns are not allowed to park in staff designated or reserved spots.
- Interns must comply with the posted speed limit at the host business.
- West-MEC Project SEARCH, nor host businesses, are not responsible or liable for damages or loss to any vehicle or its contents at any time.
- West-MEC Project SEARCH, nor host businesses are not responsible or liable for injuries to a person resulting from any intern driving and/or parking on or off host business premises.
- Interns are required to comply with the insurance and liability laws governing Motor Vehicles in the state of Arizona. West-MEC Project SEARCH, and host businesses are not responsible in the case of accidents involving an intern or interns using their own vehicles on the host business premises.
- The host business, instructor, or West-MEC Director of Exceptional Student Services, may terminate an intern's driving privileges at any time that he/she feels this action is appropriate. In this instance, the intern must find an alternate parking area or arrange for another form of transportation.
- West-MEC is not responsible for theft or damage to vehicles. Interns are encouraged to lock their vehicles at all times.
- All vehicle violations will result in a conference with the Director.

Service Animals

Pets and other animals are not permitted on West-MEC and host business properties unless the animal is present for an educational purpose by written approval from the Superintendent or Director of Exceptional Student Services or an animal performing the duties of a service animal.

A Service Animal is a dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other mental disability. The service animal must be specifically trained to recognize and to respond to

the disability. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship do not constitute work or tasks.

Annual Notification of Educational Rights, FERPA, and Policy

Each year, program districts are required to notify the intern and legal guardians of their rights under FERPA. West MEC provides notification of educational rights per governing board policy 5-303.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law, which was enacted in order to protect interns' education records at all programs that receive funds under a program of the U. S. Department of Education. This document provides a summary of this law.

Rights of the Intern or Parents

FERPA gives an intern and legal guardians certain rights over the intern's education records until the intern reaches the age of 18 or attends a program beyond the high program level. At that time, the rights are transferred from the parents to the eligible intern, per policy 5-303, unless the parent/support person has obtained legal guardianship of the intern. These rights enable the eligible intern or legal guardians to do the following:

- Inspect and review the intern's education records maintained by the program. If the intern and legal guardians are unable to review the records at the program, they can request copies from the program (and may be charged a fee for them). The program has 45 days to provide records.
- Request that a program correct the intern's records if they believe they are incorrect or misleading. If the program chooses not to update the intern's records, the intern or legal guardian has a right to a formal hearing. If, after the hearing, the District still decides not to modify the intern's records, the legal guardian or intern can include a statement in the records, which contests the information.
- Upon enrollment in Project SEARCH, the intern/parent/legal guardian consent to inclusion in the national Project SEARCH database which collects information specific to the intern, as well as the learning and employment outcomes.

Services for Interns with Disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 504 is civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination against persons with a disability in any program receiving federal financial assistance. An eligible intern under Section 504 is an intern who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment.

Procedural Safeguards and Grievance Procedures

The district has developed procedural safeguards for actions related to the identification and support of interns entitled to Section 504 protections. For questions regarding Section 504 of the District's procedural safeguards, please contact the District's Section 504/ADA Coordinator: Shelly Thome, Director of Exceptional Student Services.

Grievance Procedure

The District has established a grievance procedure for disability discrimination complaints. For questions regarding the District's grievance procedure, or for any other information, please contact the District's Section 504/ADA Coordinator: Shelly Thome, Director of Exceptional Student Services.

Restraints
West-MEC Board Policies prohibit restraints for interns.

Intern Dress
West-MEC interns wear professional attire based on the program site requirements. Intern dress and grooming must promote safety, professionalism, cleanliness and a positive learning environment. Intern dress may not disrupt the educational process or present a hazard to the health or safety of others at the program. Obscene language, symbols or language of sex, drugs, or alcohol are prohibited, along with any items conveying affiliation with criminal gangs. All interns must be in program dress code and cannot wear jewelry, clothing, or any accessories that would interfere with their duties as an intern.

Emergency Contact Information
Emergency contact information is collected at registration time. This information is essential should an intern have an emergency requiring staff to contact parents/guardians.

Immunizations
Arizona law requires immunization documentation for interns to attend West-MEC. Immunization documentation includes either (a) proof of immunization that meets the requirements of Ariz. Admin. Code R-9-6-704, or (b) a certification regarding immunity, a medical exemption certification, or a personal beliefs exemption statement that meets the requirements of Ariz. Admin. Code R-9-6-706.

Medications
When it is necessary for an intern to take medication during program hours, certain guidelines must be met. For both over-the-counter and prescription medications, a medical provider's written order and written permission from the legal guardian must be on file with West-MEC authorizing self-administration (please use the form provided in the handbook). Each bottle of medication must be in the original container and each prescription must be prescribed by a physician specifically for the intern. Medication may not be shared with others. Failure to follow these rules could lead to consequences including suspension or expulsion.

- All medication must be approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Information on dosage, side effects, and contraindications of any medication or medicinal like substance, e.g., homeopathic and herbal remedies, must be readily available from a professionally acknowledged resource (Physician' Desk Reference or other U.S. published drug reference book, FDA or USP website, etc.)
- In cases of life-saving medication when time is of the essence, particularly asthma inhalers and self-injectable epinephrine, interns may be allowed to carry and self-administer such medication on host site grounds and/or at program functions with proper authorization.
- Such situations require a release form signed by the healthcare provider, the parent/legal guardian, and the intern.
- Interns who have obtained permission for self-administration as set forth above must take extraordinary precautions to keep the medication secure, and must not, under any circumstances, make available, provide, or give the medication to another person. The intern must immediately report the theft or loss of any medication brought to the program site.
- **Important note**: West-MEC Project SEARCH and host sites do not have medical staff on site. All emergencies will result in the program staff calling 911 emergency services.

Seizure Management and Treatment Plans

The parent/legal guardian of an intern who has a seizure disorder and who is enrolled with the District must submit to the District a copy of a seizure management and treatment plan, developed by the parent/legal guardian and intern's physician responsible for the intern's seizure treatment, for program staff to use if the intern suffers a seizure at the program. The plan must be submitted to and reviewed by the District before or at the beginning of the program year, when the intern enrolls (if enrollment occurs after the start of the program year) or as soon as possible following a diagnosis of the intern's seizure disorder.

Seizure Management and treatment plans must:

1. Outline procedures recommended by the physician responsible for the intern's seizure treatment to manage an active seizure if the intern suffers a seizure at the program;
2. Outline health care services available at the program that may help the intern manage their seizure disorder at the program; and
3. Be signed by the intern's parent/legal guardian and the physician responsible for the intern's seizure treatment.

The Director of Exceptional Student Services is responsible for reviewing seizure management and treatment plans.

Immunity

District staff are immune from civil liability with respect to all decisions made and actions taken that are based on good faith implementation of a seizure management and treatment plan submitted pursuant to this section, including an action or failure to act in administering a medication, assisting with self-administration or otherwise providing for the care of an intern under a seizure management and treatment plan submitted for the intern under this section, except in cases of gross negligence, willful misconduct or intentional wrongdoing.

Communicable Diseases

The Superintendent shall develop procedures for notifying the county or local health department if District personnel become aware of the presence of listed diseases in accordance with Ariz. Admin. Code R9-6-201 through 207. Staff will be trained in appropriate responses for potentially infectious fluids. Interns are not to touch blood or body fluids and should seek adults for assistance.

West-MEC

Authorization for Self-Carry and Self-Administration of Medication

_____	_____	_____
Intern Name	Intern Date of Birth	Parent/Legal Guardian Name
_____	_____	_____
West-MEC Campus	West-MEC Program	Parent/Legal Guardian Phone Number

School guidelines and Arizona State law permits a responsible, trained intern to carry and/or self-administer medication on his/her person for immediate use in life-threatening situations of asthma, severe (anaphylactic) allergic reactions, and diabetes. If you choose to allow your student to carry and/or self-administer the medications listed on this form, the attending school, school district, and its personnel are exempt from liability in accordance with the law.

What medications, including prescribed and over-the counter, will your student be bringing on to their West-MEC Campus? (Examples: Inhaler, EpiPen, Advil, cough drops)

List medications:

_____

 West-MEC Campus administration and 911 must be notified **immediately** if anaphylactic medication (Epinephrine) or low blood sugar medication (Glucagon) is used by student

 West-MEC Campus administration must be notified if **no or minimal** improvement is noted after using asthma medication

 All medication must be labeled in the original prescription container

 The student shall keep the emergency medication in the same location in purse/backpack daily. The student will inform the instructor, as well as a peer in the class, as to the location of the emergency medication in the event it must be accessed on student's behalf

 The student may not share his/her medication with any other persons. Improper use of medication, including sharing with another student, will result in disciplinary action, possibly revoking the ability to self-carry medication

I have read the above and as legal parent/guardian of student, am authorizing my child to possess and self administer the above medication(s). By signing, I acknowledge that the school and school district personnel are exempt from liability. I further acknowledge that my child has the training and skill necessary to self-administer the above medication and will comply with all policies and procedures related to the medication. This authorization must be completed annually while my student is enrolled in a West-MEC program.

_____	_____	_____
Parent Printed Name	Parent Signature	Date

Project SEARCH Attendance Policy

Interns are expected to treat Project SEARCH like a job, attending daily and on time. We, and our host businesses, consider regular attendance and punctuality to be essential functions of every person's role. If the intern is sick, unable to attend, or will be late to the program, the intern (not parent or guardian) must text their Project SEARCH instructor at least 1 hour prior to the start of the program day.

Project SEARCH utilizes an accountability process through a point system to monitor the attendance patterns of interns. Please see the chart below.

Infraction	Definition	Point Deduction
Tardy/Early Departure	Arrive more than 7 minutes late or depart more than 7 minutes early from the program.	-.50 points
Excused Absence	Missing more than two hours of the program due to unforeseen circumstances reported to and verified by the instructor (e.g.: illness, injury, bereavement)	-1.0 points
Unexcused Absence	Missing more than two hours of a scheduled shift without a timely approved excuse	-2.0 points
No Call/ No Show	Missing an entire shift without any notice. Each consecutive No Call/No Show after the first will be treated as a separate occurrence.	-3.0 points

Accrual of points in the program year will result in the corresponding disciplinary actions shown below:

- 3 points, Verbal warning
- 5 points, Written warning
- 8 points, Intern, guardian, VR conference
- 10 points, Final warning
- 12 points, May result in termination from the program

Extenuating circumstances will be individually evaluated.

Calendar

West-MEC Project SEARCH provides interns and families with the program calendar. It is the responsibility of the intern and families to schedule vacations and other events outside of program days and hours to minimize absence from the program.

Withdrawls

Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) must contact the West-MEC Director of Exceptional Student Services to withdraw their intern from the program. Unsuccessful completion may have an impact on future support through Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Thus, a meeting between West-MEC Project SEARCH staff, parent/guardian, intern, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is required prior to withdrawal. Refunds are not issued for withdrawals.

Discipline Policy

West-MEC Project SEARCH is fully immersed in the host business. Disciplinary consequences for behaviors will be in alignment with both West-MEC and host business policies.

Law Enforcement

West-MEC may notify appropriate law enforcement agencies of violations of the law.

Intern Discipline Rules

Each intern is expected to respect the rights of others. Interns who violate the rights of others, or who violate rules and regulations of the district or host business are subject to appropriate disciplinary measures designed to correct their own misconduct.

Title IX Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Federal Education Amendments Acts protects interns from discrimination based on gender in education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. The District does not discriminate on the basis of gender and is required by Title IX not to discriminate in such a manner. The District adheres to all conditions established by Title IX by recognizing the right of every intern who attends program in the District to do so without the fear of sexual harassment.

The District will respond promptly when any intern has informed a West-MEC employee of harassment from another intern or program staff. Upon receipt of notice of sexual harassment, the District shall notify interns, parents or legal guardians of the intern, including how to report or file a formal complaint of sexual harassment, and how the District shall respond. The District is committed to investigating each formal complaint submitted and to taking appropriate action on all confirmed violations of policy. The District shall follow grievance procedures that provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints from interns. The District shall, to the extent reasonably feasible, keep confidential the identity of any individual who has made a report or filed a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

Title IX sexual harassment complaints may include violations covered by Arizona's mandatory reporting statue, A.R.S. §13-3620. This policy can also be found on the West-MEC District website. The complaints need to be directed/ sent to the West-MEC's Title IX Coordinator – Cathey Mayes (cathey.mayes@west-mec.org) at the Human Resources office of the Western Maricopa Education Center.

Intern Freedom of Speech

Interns enjoy certain rights protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and as outlined by applicable state law. The rights of interns under the First Amendment are applied in light of the special characteristics of the program environment. The Governing Board reserves any and all right to determine the manner of speech and expression that are appropriate for the program environment. The District and Board recognize that interns enjoy the freedom of speech. However, the free speech rights of interns are not unlimited and are subject to certain restrictions.

In certain circumstances, the District and/or Board reserve the right to regulate intern speech that may be considered vulgar, lewd, plainly offensive, speech that promotes drug use, or illegal activities. In addition, the District and/or Board reserve the right to regulate speech that materially disrupts the host site or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others.

Intern Religious Expression

The District does not discriminate against an intern on the basis of a religious viewpoint or religious expression. Additionally, an intern shall neither be rewarded nor penalized on the basis of religious content or a religious viewpoint if such a viewpoint is expressed at the program that requires an intern to express the intern's viewpoint. Interns may pray or engage in religious activities or religious expression before, during, and/or after the program day in the same manner and to the same extent that interns may engage in nonreligious activities or expression. Interns may wear clothing, accessories and jewelry that display religious messages or religious symbols in the same manner and to the same extent that other types of clothing, accessories and jewelry that display messages or symbols are permitted. All interns must be in program uniforms and cannot wear jewelry, clothing, or any accessories that would interfere with work.

Per Board Policy 5-301, the District shall not require any person to participate in prayer or in any other religious activity or violate the constitutional rights of any person.

Hazing

There shall be no hazing, solicitation to engage in hazing**,** or aiding and abetting another who is engaged in hazing of any person enrolled, accepted for or promoted to enrollment, or intending to enroll or be promoted to District programs within twelve (12) calendar months. For purposes of this policy a person as specified above shall be considered an "intern" until graduation, transfer, promotion or withdrawal from the District program.

"Hazing" means any intentional, knowing or reckless act committed by an intern, whether individually or in concert with other persons, against another intern, and in which both of the following apply:

- The act was committed in connection with an initiation into, an affiliation with, or the maintenance of membership in any organization that is affiliated with an education institution.
- The act contributes to a substantial risk of potential physical injury, mental harm or degradation, or causes physical injury, mental harm or personal degradation.

It is no defense to a violation of this policy if the victim consented or acquiesced to hazing. In accord with statute, violations of this policy do not include either of the following:

- Customary athletic events, contests or competitions that are sponsored by an educational institution.
- Any activity or conduct that furthers the goals of a legitimate educational curriculum, a legitimate extracurricular program, or a legitimate military training program.

All interns, teachers and staff shall take reasonable measures within the scope of their individual authority to prevent violations of this policy. All violations of this policy shall be treated in accord with

the appropriate procedures and penalties provided for in District policies related to the conduct and discipline of interns.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

It is the right of every intern to be educated in a positive, safe, caring and respectful learning environment. The program environment inclusive of these traits maximizes intern achievement, fosters intern personal growth, and helps interns build a sense of community that promotes positive participation as members of society.

Harassment, intimidation, and bullying are prohibited on program grounds and property, and through the use of electronic technology and electronic communication on district computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists. Harassment means any unwelcome conduct by one intern toward another intern on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability and that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive so as to effectively deny a person equal access to the District's education program or activity.

Intimidation means any behavior by one intern toward another intern intended to induce fear of physical or emotional harm.

Bullying means any aggressive behavior by one intern toward another intern that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times. Bullying may inflict physical, psychological, social, or educational harm or distress on a targeted intern. It is not bullying when:

- Interns of similar age, strength, and size quarrel or fight with each other.
- An intern provokes another into a verbal or physical confrontation.
- An intern acts aggressively toward another intern in the absence of an imbalance of power.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is, but not limited to, any act of bullying committed by use of electronic technology or electronic communication devices, including telephonic devices, social networking and other internet communications, on school computers, networks, forums and mailing lists, or other District-owned property, and by means of an individual's personal electronic media and equipment if it substantially interferes with the educational environment. Support services are available to students who have experienced bullying or harassment. Please contact West-MEC Director of Exceptional Student Services.

Monitoring Software

The West-MEC District reserves the right to monitor the use of district computers, telecommunications systems, network resources, and electronic communications. Interns should understand that the use of district technology, including email, electronic folders, and other digital systems, is not private and may be reviewed by authorized school personnel at any time. If necessary, files or communications may be removed or deleted. Monitoring software is enabled 24/7; however, the timeframe in which West-MEC staff review content varies which may result in a delayed response from the District regarding concerning content.

Interns are expected to use district technology resources in a responsible, professional, and school-appropriate manner, and to follow all District Acceptable Use guidelines when using district devices, systems, or networks. Intern email accounts, electronic folders, and related digital resources are to be used only for West-MEC educational and learning purposes.

Maintaining, accessing, sending, or sharing material or communications that are not school appropriate may result in disciplinary action. Consequences may include administrative conferences, loss of technology privileges, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the nature and severity of the violation.

Video Surveillance Notification

To promote a safe environment, all West-MEC Project SEARCH host business sites may have video surveillance cameras in operation twenty-four hours a day. The systems survey both interior and exterior portions of the buildings, including parking lots.

Intern Discipline Guidelines

Note: As Project SEARCH programs occur fully in a host business site, the instructor and Director of Exceptional Student Services will align disciplinary consequences with those of the host site. Project SEARCH will exercise discretion and reserve the right to implement discipline responses outlined in the West-MEC Student Handbook located at https://www.west-mec.edu/high-school-students/studentparent-resources/student-formsdocuments The Director of Exceptional Student Services is the highest level of appeal for a suspension of ten days or fewer. Should significant or repeated behavior at a program site occur, the intern may be removed from the program until a meeting of the program staff, Vocational Rehabilitation, legal guardian/support person, and intern establish expected behavior to return to the program.

Parent Liability

Under Arizona law, upon complaint of the Governing Board, the parents of minors or who are under legal guardianship of the parent, who cut, deface or otherwise damage any program property shall be liable for all damages caused by their young adults. See A.R.S. § 15-842

Threat Assessments

Threat assessments are not a disciplinary consequence; however, the program administrator may convene the Threat Assessment Team. Every instance of threatening behavior to self or others will be treated seriously and examined thoroughly in determining whether a threat exists under the Threat Assessment process. According to the outcome of the threat assessment, a safety plan, academic and/or a behavioral contract may be developed; victims may be notified, and disciplinary consequences may be assigned as described above.

Due Process

Interns in the district have certain rights. They also have the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others. If an intern fails to do this, disciplinary action will follow. In disciplinary cases, each intern is entitled to due process. This means interns:

- Must be informed of accusations against them.
- Must have the opportunity to accept or deny the accusations.
- Must have explained to them the factual basis for the accusations.
- Must have a chance to present an alternative factual position if the accusation is denied.
- All discipline referrals submitted to the program administration will begin with a conference with the intern. If an intern requests to have a parent(s)/legal guardian(s) contacted, the program will make reasonable efforts to contact the parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

In the case of suspensions/expulsions, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be notified of consequences by a personal phone call accompanied by a written referral form. If attempts to notify parent(s)/legal

guardian(s) by telephone are unsuccessful, parents/legal guardians will be notified by written referral form only.

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) involvement is an important part of the discipline at all levels.

Referral
Interns will be referred to the Director of Exceptional Student Services for violations outlined in the West-MEC Handbook and when their disruptive behavior interrupts the educational process.

Readmission
If an intern has been asked to leave the program, the individual can reapply for a future program year through the completion of the customary application and enrollment process.

Interrogation, Search, Arrest
District officials may question interns regarding matters related to the program without limitation. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) will be contacted if an intern is then subject to discipline for a serious offense. An intern may decline at any time to be interviewed by an administrator.

Searches
District officials have the right to search and seize property, including program property temporarily assigned to interns, when there is reason to believe that some material or matter detrimental to the health, safety and welfare of the intern exists.
Items provided by the district such as lockers, desks, storage areas, etc. or personal items are provided as a convenience to the intern, but remain the property of the program, and are subject to its control and supervision. Interns have no reasonable expectation of privacy, and the aforementioned may be inspected at any time with or without reason, or with or without notice, by program personnel.
Personal searches may be conducted by a district/program official when there is reasonable suspicion that a particular intern is in possession of contraband, materials or items, which present an immediate danger of physical harm or illness. The searches will be conducted out of the presence of other interns and in a private room with a second adult of the same sex as intern.

Searches of the intern shall be limited to the following:
- Searches of the pockets, shoes and socks of the intern, jackets, etc.
- Any object in the intern's possession such as a purse, backpack or briefcase.

District officials are authorized to conduct a search when on program grounds, in a vehicle owned, leased or otherwise used by the district or program, or at a program activity, when there is reasonable suspicion that the search will result in the discovery of any of the following:
- "Contraband" includes all substances or materials prohibited by district/program policy or state law including, but not limited to, drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcoholic beverages, and/or,
- Any material or item which presents an imminent danger of physical harm or illness, and/or, When the owner of the automobile is other than the person in possession of the automobile, the owner will be notified that a search has taken place. Contraband materials as identified in the introduction above may be seized when found in the course of a search.

Any such items seized may be:
- Offered as evidence in any suspension or expulsion proceeding if they are tagged for identification at the time seized.

- Turned over to law enforcement officers or destroyed.

Search Warrants
If a search warrant is served, district/program officials shall not interfere with searches by law enforcement officers who have duly processed search warrants. Every reasonable effort should be made to cooperate with law enforcement officers.

Police Interview Notification
When a peace officer seeks to interview an intern on program grounds, program staff will make reasonable attempts to notify the intern's parent/legal guardian before the interview occurs. However, district staff will not impede a peace officer from performing the peace officer's duties. Peace officers have the right of immediate access to an intern when making an arrest, serving a subpoena, or serving or executing warrants (including search warrants). In such circumstances, advance notification and an opportunity for the parent/legal guardian to attend an interview may not be proper or possible.

Parent/legal guardian notification will not be provided when:

- Any alleged criminal conduct involves a parent/legal guardian.
- Advance notification creates an unreasonable risk to personal or public safety.
- The investigating peace officer expressly prohibits such notification.

Except in instances where parent/legal guardian notification is not required as set forth above district staff may inform the intern that the intern may consult with their parent/legal guardian prior to being interviewed.

If the parent/legal guardian is unavailable to attend the interview, program staff may request to attend the interview if permitted by the peace officer. Program staff attending a peace officer interview will not question the intern during the interview.

Arrests
When a peace officer enters a business providing a warrant or subpoena or expressing intent to take an intern into custody, the business shall request the peace officer establish proper identification. The business staff shall cooperate with the officer in locating the intern within the program.
District officials may respond to parental or legal guardian inquiries about the arrest or may, if necessary, explain the relinquishment of custody by the program and the location of the intern, if known, upon contact by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

Reporting Abuse
Per state law, and Governing Board policy, district employees and certain volunteers who reasonably believe that an intern has been the victim of neglect, abuse, and/or non-accidental injury, or sexual offenses must report suspected activity to Department of Child Safety (DCS)/Adult Protective Services (APS) and local law enforcement agencies. Where a parent or guardian is the alleged abuser, district personnel are not to notify parent or guardian. DCS, APS, and law enforcement agencies are responsible for notification. Should the alleged perpetrator be other than a member of the child's family, volunteer and program personnel shall follow reasonable notification procedures.
Individuals required to report reasonable suspected abuse are protected by state law from civil or criminal liability.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY/ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES INTERVIEW

When a Department of Child Safety ("DCS") /Adult Protective Services (“APS”) case worker seeks to interview an intern on program grounds, staff will notify the Director of Exceptional Student Services. Staff will request the DCS/APS caseworker complete the "Form for Signature of Interviewing Case Worker." Staff will collect and retain the completed "Form for Signature of Interviewing Case Worker." Staff will not impede a DCS/APS caseworker from performing the DCS/APS case worker's duties. Staff shall notify an intern's parent/legal guardian when a DCS case worker seeks to interview an intern unless:

1. The offense was allegedly committed by the intern's parent or legal guardian or

2. The offense was already reported to the police or DCS/APS and the investigator has determined that notifying the parent/legal guardian would impede the investigation.

Department of Child Safety/Adult Protective Services Custody of Intern

If the DCS/APS caseworker intends to take custody of the intern or otherwise remove the intern from the program site, Staff will request the DCS/APS caseworker complete the "Form for Intern Custody by Case Worker." Staff will collect and retain the completed "Form for Intern Custody by Case Worker".

Custody

In cases where custody/visitation affects the program, the staff shall follow the most recent court order on file with the district. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent, or parents having joint custody, to provide the district with the most recent court order.

Computer, Telecommunication and Network Resource Policies

The following guidelines and policies apply to:

- Interns who use computers belonging to the West-MEC Program District.
- Interns who access network resources available through the West-MEC Program District/Host Business
- Interns who bring personal electronic devices to West-MEC/Host Business sites.

Acceptable Use Policy and Procedures

Internet access and email are available to interns and teachers in West-MEC. WEST-MEC believes the Internet offers vast, diverse, and unique resources to both interns and teachers. Our goal in providing this service is to promote educational excellence in the program by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, communication and educating interns about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms, cyber bullying awareness, and response. If a parent/guardian wishes to prohibit their intern from the use of technology and the Internet, he/she may see the Director of Exceptional Student Services to opt out. Opting out of technology use will have a significant impact on the intern’s ability to access curriculum, assignments, e-books and communicate with Vocational Rehabilitation and future employers.

While our intent is to make Internet access available to further educational goals and objectives, interns may find ways to access other materials as well. We believe that the benefits to interns from access to the Internet, in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration, exceed any disadvantages; but ultimately, parents and guardians of interns are responsible for setting

and conveying the standards that their intern should follow when using media and information sources.

To that end, the Western Maricopa Education Center (West-MEC) Governing Board has adopted the following policy:

Acceptable Use – Each user must:
Use Electronic Information Systems (EIS) to support personal educational objectives consistent with the educational goals and objectives of West-MEC.

- Agree not to submit, publish, display or retrieve any defamatory, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive or illegal material.
- Immediately inform their teacher if inappropriate information is mistakenly accessed.
- Abide by all copyright and trademark laws and regulations.
- Not reveal home addresses, personal phone numbers or personally identifiable data unless authorized to do so by designated program authorities.
- Understand that electronic mail or direct electronic communication is not private and may be read and monitored by program-employed persons.
- Not use the EIS in any way that would disrupt the use of the EIS by others.
- Not use the EIS for commercial or financial gain, political lobbying, or fraud.
- Follow the district's code of conduct.
- Not attempt to harm, modify, add or destroy software or hardware nor interfere with system security.
- Understand that inappropriate use may result in cancellation of permission to use the EIS and appropriate disciplinary action up to and including expulsion for interns.
- Publish information/intern work only on WEST-MEC servers or district approved web hosting vendors.
- Users placing information on the Internet using the district's EIS are publishing information on behalf of the district.
- Be responsible for the appropriate storage and backup of their data.
- Use of EIS for information collection purposes (online surveys, email, etc.) must follow existing district policies and have appropriate administrative approval.

In addition, acceptable use for district employees is extended to include requirements to:

- Maintain supervision of interns using the EIS.
- Agree to directly log on and supervise the account activity when allowing others to use district accounts.
- Take responsibility for assigned personal and district accounts, including password protection.
- Take all responsible precautions, including password maintenance and file and directory protection measures, to prevent the use of personal and district accounts and files by unauthorized persons.

Unacceptable Uses – Each user must not:

- Users may not connect or install any computer hardware, hardware components or software, which is their own personal property to and/or in the District's EIS without the prior approval of the District Information Technology Department.
- Users shall not post information that could cause damage or pose a danger of disruption to the operations of the EIS or the District.
- Users shall not access the network for any non-educational purposes.

- Users will not gain or attempt to gain unauthorized access to the files of others, or vandalize the data or files of another user.
- Users will not download and use games, files, documents, music, or software for non-educational purposes. (i.e., Shockwave games/animations, audio and other visual files.)
- Users will not possess any data, which may be considered a violation of these regulations, in paper, magnetic (disk), or any other form.
- Users will not display name or photo to personally identify an individual without receiving written permission.
- Users will not reveal full name, address, phone number, or personal email without permission from an adult.
- Users shall not plagiarize works that are found on the Internet or any other electronic resource.
- Users will not harass, insult, attack others or use obscene language in written communications.
- Users will not post anonymous messages.
- Users may not use free web-based email, messaging, video conferencing, or chat services without written permission from WEST-MEC Information Technology.

Resource Limitations:

- Activities that are deemed by the network supervisor to cause unreasonable demand on network capacity or disruption of system operation are prohibited.
- Users shall subscribe only to high quality discussion groups or mailing lists that are relevant to their education or career development.
- Users shall not use the District's EIS for commercial purposes or financial gain. This includes the creation, development and offering of goods or services for sale, and the unauthorized purchase of goods or services. District approved purchases will be made following District approved procedures.
- The District's portable information systems and educational technology resources such as notebook computers, peripherals, and/or companion devices, will be at the program sites during program hours.

Personal Responsibility:

- I will report any misuse of the EIS to the administration or system administrator.
- I understand that many services and products are available for a fee and acknowledge my personal responsibility for any expenses incurred without District authorization.
- I understand that when I am logged on to District computers or electronic devices, that I am ultimately responsible for any activity that occurs on the computer or electronic device under my log-in.

Privileges and Responsibilities:

The use of West-MEC computers, telecommunication and network resources is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked at any time. Violations of this privilege may result in disciplinary action under the guidelines and through the authority of the Governing Board and its policies. The West-MEC District reserves the right to monitor the use of district computers, telecommunications and network resources. In particular, electronic mail or direct electronic communication is not private and may be read and monitored by program personnel. Should it become necessary, files may be deleted. The West-MEC District is not responsible for any service interruptions, changes or consequences resulting from system use, even if these arise from circumstances under the control of the district.
The West-MEC Program District may make rules, as needed, for the operation of the system.

Network Etiquette:
I am expected to abide by the generally acceptable rules of network etiquette. Therefore, I will:

- Be polite and use appropriate language. I will not send, or encourage others to send, abusive messages.
- Respect privacy. I will not reveal any home addresses, personal phone numbers, or personally identifiable information.
- Avoid disruptions. I will not use the EIS in any way that would disrupt the use of the systems by others.

Observe the following considerations:

- Be brief.
- Strive to use correct spelling and make messages easy to understand.
- Use short and descriptive titles for articles.
- Post only to known groups or persons.

Services:
West-MEC specifically denies any responsibility for the accuracy of information. While West-MEC will make an effort to ensure access to proper materials, the user has the ultimate responsibility for how the EIS is used and bears the risk of reliance on the information obtained.

Media Release Form
By agreeing to the intern handbook, I/We hereby grant Western Maricopa Education Center (West-MEC) program district #402 and its host sites, permission to use the video, photographic and/or audio representation, as well as name and likeness, for use in the district's video productions, media releases, publications, website(s), multimedia presentations, electronic communications, and social media networks. I/we also give permission to allow interviews and/or photographs to be conducted by district-authorized media. Families who do not wish to allow any of the above may complete a media release form provided by the campus office.

Parent/Guardian/Intern Contact
West-MEC at its discretion, communicates with and contacts parents/guardians/interns using any current means of communication directly related to the intern's enrollment in the program including: telephone, email, automatic telephone dialing equipment, prerecorded voice messages and text messages, regardless of whether the individual will incur any costs to receive or respond to any such communication.

INTERN CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES
Interns may file complaints alleging unlawful discrimination or harassment based upon a protected class category pursuant to the following Governing Board policies:

Policy 1-201: Equal Educational Opportunity and Non-Discrimination (Interns)
Policy 1-203: Equal Opportunity - Prohibited Sex Discrimination (Title IX)

West-MEC

INTERN CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES
COMPLAINT FORM

(To be filed with a program administrator or the administrator's immediate supervisor, or a program staff member who will forward this form to the program administrator or the administrator's immediate supervisor) *Additional pages may be attached if more space is needed.*

Please Print:

Name_____Date_____

Address_____

Telephone_____ Another phone where you can be reached_____

During the hours of_____

E-mail address_____

I wish to complain against:

Name of person, program (department), program, or activity_____

Address_____

Specify your complaint by stating the problem as you see it. Describe the incident, the participants, the background to the incident, and any attempts you have made to solve the problem. *Be sure to note all relevant dates, times, and places.*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If there is anyone who could provide more information regarding this, please list name(s), address (es), and telephone number(s).

Name /Address/ Telephone Number

_____

_____

_____

The projected solution

Indicate what you think can and should be done to solve the problem. Be as specific as possible.

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

I certify that this information is correct to the best of my knowledge.

_____ _____

Signature of Complainant Date Signed

_____ _____

Administrator or professional staff member receiving initial complaint Date initial complaint received

INTERN AND PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN/SUPPORT PERSON ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Incoming interns and their support person should carefully consider the elements outlined in the handbook. By signing this agreement, all parties agree that they have received access to the

handbook and understand that the intern is responsible for the outlined expectations. It is also understood that if the intern does not follow listed program expectations, the intern may be removed from the program.

Intern Name Printed:_____

Intern Signature:_____

Date Signed: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian/Support Person Printed Name:_____

Parent/Legal Guardian/Support Person Signature:_____

Date Signed: _____