



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Leyden Area Special Education Cooperative

Certified Staff (PEL Licensure)

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SECTION 1: WELCOME

As a member of the LASEC community, you serve as a model to our member districts of the values encompassed by LASEC. This handbook is intended to help you understand personnel policies and procedures and carry out the philosophy of LASEC.

The philosophy of LASEC is to serve as a partner with our member districts in providing equal educational opportunities to all students regardless of their physical, intellectual, or emotional needs. LASEC is committed to providing responsive programs and services that will improve the quality of life for students with special needs. As a member of the LASEC team, you are instrumental in creating the opportunities for our member districts to truly meet the needs of their diverse learners. THANK YOU for your support and dedication to LASEC.

SECTION 2: RECOGNITION

2.1 Recognition, Duration and Effect of Handbook

This handbook is intended to provide the LASEC certified staff with information regarding personnel policies and procedures. These personnel policies and procedures are authorized by the LASEC Executive Committee in conjunction with the LASEC administrative district, Mannheim School District 83. The provisions of this handbook are subject to change at the discretion of the Executive Committee in conjunction with the administrative district and shall not be deemed to create contractual rights.

The LASEC Executive Director and Executive Committee reserve the right to alter the provisions of this Handbook at any time. The provisions of the Handbook will be reviewed periodically. In the absence of a policy or procedure, the relevant federal and state laws and/or the direction of the Executive Director will apply. Staff will be notified through the employee portal on the website of any changes. Employees are expected to check the website regularly for updates.

In the absence of, or with delegation by, the Executive Director, the authority of the Executive Director under this handbook may be exercised by the Assistant Director or the Business Manager.

SECTION 3: GENERAL DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND COMPETENCIES

3.1 General Duties, Responsibilities, and Competencies

Individual job descriptions outline the eligibility requirements for a position at LASEC and the specific duties and responsibilities of that assignment. In addition, below are general responsibilities and competencies that are expected of all LASEC employees in every job position.

- An employee is expected to be physically able to perform the responsibilities and duties of his/her job description, with reasonable accommodations where applicable.
- Employees shall protect the confidentiality of student/family information in accordance with the requirements of the Illinois School Student Records Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and all other applicable State and Federal laws regarding the confidentiality rights of students and parents.

- Employee must be competent in the technical aspects of the job. The ability to learn various job functions, to perform them correctly and completely, and to understand why they are necessary and how they affect the cooperative and other staff members.
- Productivity is the ability to function efficiently and purposefully so as to produce the expected volume of useful work in a timely manner.
- Initiative is the capacity to view one's duties broadly rather than narrowly, to be a self-starter, to anticipate problems or needs and be resourceful in handling them, to step forward to address issues without being specifically directed to do so, and to take responsibility for thorough and effective follow-through.
- Commitment is characterized by dedication and a sense of responsibility to co-workers and the cooperative as well as to the job. Committed employees can be relied on to set a good example for co-workers. They consistently fulfill their work schedules, exhibit good work habits and meet deadlines.
- Judgment is the ability to make appropriate decisions given both the situation at hand, the employee's position at LASEC, to exercise discretion where needed, and to correctly establish priorities when performing their duties.
- Teamwork is the capacity to interact and communicate efficiently with co-workers for the common good of the staff and the cooperative. A cooperative, non-competitive and non-judgmental spirit, supportiveness, courtesy, and respect for the feelings, circumstances, and perspectives of others all contribute to teamwork and staff cohesiveness. An ability to adapt to change and a willingness to accept direction and constructive criticism from a supervisor are also expected.

Effective public service and interpersonal contact depends on attitude, demeanor, and appearance, as well as on specific skills. Employees are expected to be responsive, courteous, and helpful to all constituents. Staff must speak and write clearly and grammatically correctly and be clearly understood by others. Staff must listen and read to understand prior to formulating a response. Efficient use of time and promptness for meetings and appointments and treating others with civility and in a manner that affirms their fundamental human worth is expected. A neat personal appearance and dressing appropriately to the position projects a positive image of LASEC to our member districts.

SECTION 4: ABUSE REPORTING

4.1 Child Abuse and Reporting

All employees of LASEC are mandated reporters and are required to orally report (presently within 24 hours) to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) any suspected physical or sexual abuse or suspected neglect of any child with whom they have contact through LASEC. All employees, not less than annually, must participate in a mandated training and a meeting that addresses and reviews the reporting requirements of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. Each employee's attendance at such an annual meeting will be recorded. In addition, all LASEC employees must sign the "Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status" form provided by DCFS on a yearly basis and meet all other DCFS requirements.

The DCFS 24-hour hotline is: 1-800-252-2873.

SECTION 5: NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

5.1 Equal Employment Opportunity/Non-Discrimination

LASEC is strongly committed to providing equal employment opportunities for all employees and applicants. Unless otherwise required or permitted by law, LASEC makes all employment decisions without regard to age, race, color, ancestry, religion, sex, national origin, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, marital status, military status, genetic information, citizenship, gender identity, parental status, ancestry, or other legally protected characteristics or conduct. No person shall be unlawfully discriminated against in recruitment, employment, benefits, compensation, training, promotion, transfer, discipline, termination, and other terms and conditions of employment. LASEC's successful achievement of its commitment to equal employment opportunity for all employees depends on the sincere and conscientious effort of all employees to support this commitment. All employees are expected to comply with the letter and spirit of this equal employment opportunity/non-discrimination provision.

5.2 Harassment and Other Abusive Behavior

It is the policy of LASEC to provide an educational and employment environment free from harassment, or other abusive behavior. Accordingly, employees are prohibited from harassment and other abusive behavior on LASEC or the property of a LASEC member school district when conducting LASEC business, or anywhere and at any time if the conduct affects any member of the LASEC community or the community of a LASEC member school district in a manner that substantially disrupts the educational environment, invades the rights of others, and/or creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive working or learning environment. Employees who engage in such behavior should expect disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

For purposes of this policy, "harassment" means unwelcome conduct (whether verbal, physical, visual) or communications based upon or derisive of a person's age, race, color, ancestry, religion, sex, national origin, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, marital status, military status, genetic information, citizenship, gender identity, parental status, ancestry, or other legally protected characteristics or conduct, where the unwelcome conduct or communication affects tangible job or educational benefits, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or educational performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment.

The following are examples of conduct that constitutes harassment, but this list should not be considered exhaustive:

- (1) uninvited or unwelcome joking, teasing, taunting, or other remarks or conduct, including practical jokes, foul or obscene language or gestures, or displays of inappropriate printed or visual material (including but not limited to pornography), where such conduct degrades an individual or group of individuals based on any legally protected characteristic or conduct.
- (2) explicit sexual propositions or physical contact, such as groping, patting, pinching, or brushing against another's body; uninvited or unwelcome letters, telephone calls or displays of material of a sexual nature; or
- (3) uninvited or unwelcome deliberate touching, sexually suggestive looks or comments, inquiries into sexual lifestyle, or pressure for sexual favors or dates.

Sexual Harassment Prohibited

The prohibition of discrimination based on sex includes sexual harassment. Sexual harassment prohibited by this policy includes verbal or physical conduct, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other improper verbal or physical conduct, or communications constituting sexual harassment as defined and otherwise prohibited by State and federal law.

No LASEC employee shall engage in or be subjected to any behavior constituting unwelcome sexual advances, nor request any sexual favors or otherwise engage in any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. The terms intimidating, hostile, or offensive include, but are not limited to, conduct which has the effect of humiliation, embarrassment or discomfort. The assessment and determination of an incident of harassment under this policy will be made by taking into consideration all relevant information and circumstances.

5.3 Discipline and Addressing Improper Conduct

Addressing Improper Conduct

Employees are expected and encouraged to promptly report information regarding violations of 5.1 or 5.2 above. Individuals may choose to report to a person of the individual's same gender. An employee is expected to file any complaints hereunder as soon as possible, in order for LASEC to address the problem and to allow reasonable time to investigate the circumstance while known and potential witnesses are available. No retaliation or adverse work consequence will occur due to an employee making a report of harassment in good faith.

Aggrieved employees, if they feel comfortable doing so, should directly express their objection that the conduct is unwelcome to the person engaging in the harassing conduct or communication and inform him or her that the behavior should stop.

An employee may report incidents of harassment, including confidential reports, to the employee's supervisor or directly to the LASEC Executive Director as the designated Complaint Official. The Executive Director can also help the employee with any report and the filing of a formal complaint. Complaints may also be made to the alternate Complaint Official, LASEC Executive Committee Chairperson, designated hereunder. If the Executive Committee Chairperson is believed to have violated this policy, a complaint may also be submitted to any member of the LASEC Executive Committee. Any complaint received hereunder will be handled pursuant to LASEC's Uniform Grievance Procedure.

Supervisors who receive any such complaints must promptly forward them to the Executive Director. A supervisor who fails to promptly forward a report or complaint may be disciplined, up to and including discharge.

Nondiscrimination Coordinator:

Name: Mr. Kevin Wolf, Executive Director

Address: 10401 W. Grand Avenue Franklin Park, IL 60131

Phone: 847-455-3143

Email: kwolf@lasecfp.org

Designated Complaint Official:

Name: Mr. Kevin Wolf, LASEC Executive Director
Address: 10401 Grand Ave, Franklin Park, IL 60131
Telephone: (847) 455-3143
Email: kwolf@lasecfp.org

Alternate Complaint Official (if feasible, of opposite gender as other official):

Name: Mr. Mike Maguire, Executive Committee Chairperson
Address: 10401 Grand Ave, Franklin Park, IL 60131
Telephone: (708) 867-5822
Email: mmaguire@urs86.org

The LASEC Executive Director is directed to take reasonable steps to inform and educate employees about this policy, including the posting in the workplace of the basic requirements hereunder.

Reports to Outside Agencies:

While LASEC will attempt to investigate and address allegations of harassment in the workplace, an employee has the right to file formal charges with the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) and/or the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Complaints of retaliation following the filing of a harassment complaint can also be filed with either of the above agencies. Presently, a charge must be filed with the EEOC within 300 days of the incident, but the aggrieved employee must check with the EEOC to confirm filing deadlines. Presently, a charge must be filed with the Illinois Department of Human rights (IDHR) within 180 days of the incident, but the aggrieved employee must check with the IDHR to confirm filing deadlines.

The Illinois Department of Human Rights may be contacted as follows:

CHICAGO (312) 814-6200
TDD (312) 263-1579

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission can be contacted as follows:

CHICAGO (312) 353-2713
- or - (800) 669-3362
TDD (800) 800-3302

The Executive Director can answer any other questions regarding ADA compliance and reasonable accommodations. Persons who believe LASEC or any LASEC employee has violated this reasonable accommodation provision should report the conduct to the Executive Director or, if the Executive Director is believed to have violated this policy, another member of the Executive Committee, as soon as possible.

Discipline

Any violation of 5.1 or 5.2 above can lead to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension without pay and dismissal. Similarly, a determination that a person has intentionally made a false charge of sexual harassment against another person can result in such discipline. Any subject of sexual harassment should promptly inform the harasser to cease such conduct and/or promptly report such conduct under this policy.

SECTION 6: LEAVES

6.1 Sick Leave

Full-time staff shall be entitled to twelve (12) days of sick leave per year. A staff member who uses four (4) or less sick leave days in a school term shall be provided two (2) additional sick leave days for the next school term. Sick and personal days for part-time staff members shall be prorated for FTE.

Sick leave shall be interpreted to mean personal illness, doctor or medical appointments for self or immediate family, quarantine at home, or serious illness or death in the immediate family or household, or birth, adoption, or placement for adoption.

- Immediate family or household are defined as parents, spouse, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, grandchildren, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, step-child, step-parent, domestic partners or members of the immediate household.
- A certificate from a physician licensed to practice medicine and surgery in all of its branches will be required, as a basis for pay and to return to work after an absence of three or more days for personal illness, or as may be deemed necessary in other cases.
- In addition, a doctor's verification of illness may also be required for a sick day preceding or following a holiday or when absenteeism is excessive.
- Unused sick leave shall accumulate annually to the maximum amount allowed by law.
- No cash payment will be given for unused sick leave days, except as provided in Section 11.1.

Any employee using sick leave shall be required to email the Executive Director by 8:00a.m. on the date of the absence as well as an email to the Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Director & Business Manager to report the absence. Time off must also be immediately entered into the attendance system unless emergency circumstances have arisen.

6.2 Personal Business Days

LASEC shall grant two (2) days annually as personal business days to a maximum accumulation of five (5) days, except that these days may not be used consecutively without the approval of the Executive Director.

A request for use of a personal business day shall be made to the Executive Director, via entry into Skyward, at least three (3) days in advance except in an emergency situation where notification is not possible. Personal business days shall not be used for the purpose of extending a holiday, vacation, or weekend except at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Personal business days shall not be granted during the first five (5) or last ten (10) days of the school term except with prior approval at the discretion of the Executive Director.

- The Executive Director reserves the right to limit the number of requests for the use of personal business.
- Personal leave may not be used when the employee's absence would create an undue hardship.

If at the close of the school term, an employee has five (5) accumulated personal business days, two of these days will be added to the accumulated sick leave for the following year. If an employee is retiring at the end of the school term, all unused personal business days shall be added to the employee's accumulated unused sick leave account.

No cash payment shall be given for personal days.

6.3 Bereavement and use of Sick Leave for Bereavement

An employee is allowed absence up to three (3) days without deduction from accumulated sick leave or personal business days or any loss of wages due to death in the immediate family.

Two additional days may be deducted from accumulated sick leave. Immediate family shall include parents, spouse, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, grandchildren, parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, step-child, domestic partners, step-parent or members of the immediate household.

Sick leave of one (1) day shall be allowed for attendance at the funeral or wake of other family members or close personal friends, with explanation of the relationship to the Executive Director, up to a maximum of three (3) wakes or funerals per school year.

6.4 Observance of Religious Holidays

A staff member may use a combination of sick leave and personal days according to the discretion of the Executive Director. The limit will generally be two (2) days.

6.5 Jury Duty and Witness Leave

Employees called to serve as jurors or subpoenaed to appear before legal and quasi-legal review panels as witnesses shall receive leave as required under law. Employees will receive full regular compensation for qualified jury and witness leave only if it is in a proceeding not adverse to LASEC up to a maximum of 60 days. Any jury duty pay or witness fees for the first 60 days shall be submitted to LASEC. Any transportation-related or food-allowance reimbursements may be retained by the employee. For more information regarding such leave, contact the Executive Director.

6.6 Military Leave/Family Military Leave

LASEC will provide unpaid military leave to the fullest extent required by law for employees who require time off work in order to satisfy certain military commitments. Unless otherwise required by law, LASEC will also provide up to 15 days of unpaid family military leave for eligible employees who are the spouses or parents of a person called to state or federal military service lasting longer than thirty days. Contact the Executive Director for more information about eligibility requirements for military and family military leave.

An employee using military or family military leave may choose to use or not use any accrued vacation time during the leave.

An employee must give at least 14 days' notice of intended date upon which the leave will commence if leave will consist of 5 or more consecutive work days. LASEC may require certification from proper military officials.

In any instance where the necessity for leave arises from any qualifying exigency due to a spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee being on active duty in the Armed Forces is foreseeable, whether because the spouse, son, daughter or parent is on active duty, or because of notification of an impending call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation, the employee shall provide such notice to the Executive Director of LASEC as is reasonable and practical.

6.7 Domestic Violence Leave

Under certain circumstances, employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence or have a family or household member who is a victim of domestic or sexual violence may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period to address those issues. Please contact the Executive Director for more information, including notice and certification requirements.

6.8 Unpaid Leave

The following provisions shall apply to all unpaid leaves:

- Except as otherwise approved by the LASEC Executive Committee, LASEC shall not provide any pay or paid fringe benefits during the time a staff member is on leave. If a staff member desires to continue the medical coverage, the staff member shall notify the Executive Director and pay the entire monthly premium cost each month, thirty (30) days in advance. Failure to pay each month on a timely basis will result in the cancellation of this benefit option.
- A staff member on an unpaid leave must make written application to the Executive Director between January 1st and March 1st to be eligible to return at the beginning of the next school year. Failure to make written application for reinstatement by March 1st automatically serves as a resignation from LASEC.
- A staff member on leave, upon returning to LASEC, will maintain their accumulated sick leave, accumulated personal business days, seniority credit and salary level, but shall not advance while on leave. If the staff member has served more than one-half of the days in the school term, as determined by the official school calendar, at the time the leave began, that fractional part of the year will be considered one full year of credit. If a fractional part of the credit had been granted previously, then the fractional parts will be added to determine full year equivalents.

6.9 Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave

A staff member who is unable to work due to a disability caused or contributed to by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions may utilize available sick leave for such absences in the same manner as may be used generally for other sickness or disability. In the event a staff member selects this option, a staff member shall return to work when medically able to do so.

Staff members may apply for voluntary maternity/paternity/adoption leave under the provisions of 6.8 above and/or FMLA leave under the provisions of 6.10 below.

6.10 Family Leave (FMLA)

Family and Medical Leave

Leave Description

Eligible employees may take up to a total of 12 work weeks of leave during the designated 12-month period for any one or more of the following reasons:

- the birth of the employee's son or daughter, and to care for the newborn child;
- the placement with the employee of a son or daughter for adoption or foster care, and to care for the newly placed child;
- to care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition; and

- because of a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of his or her job.
- because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the spouse, or a son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation.

An eligible employee is any employee who has been employed by LASEC for at least 12 months (need not be consecutive) and for at least 1250 hours of actual service during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave.

The 12-month period in which the 12-workweek leave entitlement occurs shall be a rolling 12-month period measured backward from the date an employee uses any FMLA leave. Thus, each time an employee takes FMLA leave, the remaining leave entitlement would be any balance of the 12 work weeks which has not been used during the immediately preceding 12 months.

An eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin of a covered service member shall be entitled to a total of 26 workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for the service member, provided such leave shall only be available during a single 12-month period, and during this single 12-month period the eligible employee shall only be entitled to a combined total of 26 workweeks of leave, inclusive of any other entitled leave.

Additional information is contained in Appendix B, which is a publication of the United States Department of Labor.

The determination as to whether or not a condition is a “serious health condition” as that term is defined in the Family and Medical Leave Act and the federal regulations promulgated thereunder shall be made by LASEC on a case-by-case basis.

Family or medical leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. Leave may not be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule because of the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care, unless the mother or the child has a serious health condition. Leave may not be taken in increments of less than four hours. Employees needing intermittent leave or leave on a reduced leave schedule must attempt to schedule the leave so as not to disrupt the LASEC operations. Certification of the medical necessity of intermittent leave or leave on a reduced leave schedule may be required.

Health insurance shall be maintained for the duration of the 12 workweeks of leave for those employees with coverage under LASEC’s plan. Employees on leave must make timely payment of any employee portion of the medical insurance premium or coverage may be terminated.

Employees failing to return to work after expiration of family or medical leave may be responsible for reimbursement of LASEC’s share of health insurance premiums to the District for any period of unpaid leave.

Employees must provide sufficient notice of the need for FMLA leave and must explain the reasons for the needed leave. A request for family or medical leave should be made at least 30 days in advance, where the need for the leave is foreseeable. Such requests should be made to the Executive Director. When unforeseen events occur that require family or medical leave, employees must give notice to the Superintendent as soon as practical, but not later than two (2) days after the employee learns of the need for leave.

Requests for family or medical leave or for extensions of such leave must be substantiated by medical certification. A form for such certification will be provided to the employee. An employee on family and medical leave shall report any changes in their original return to work date to the Executive Director as soon as they become aware of the anticipated schedule modification.

When medical leave was granted due to an employee's own serious health condition, the employee must obtain and present, at the employee's expense, certification from the employee's health care provider that the employee is able to resume work at the time the employee seeks reinstatement. Second and third opinions with respect to any medical certification may be required by LASEC at its expense. The health care provider for any such second or third opinions shall be designated by LASEC.

Eligible employees who have any accrued paid sick, vacation, family or personal leave are required to substitute and use concurrently all such available paid leave as part of the 12 work weeks of FMLA leave when the leave is occasioned by the birth of a child, placement of a child for adoption or foster care, or to care for a spouse, child or parent who has a serious health condition. Eligible employees who have any accrued paid sick, vacation, family, personal or medical or sick leave are required to substitute all such paid leave as part of the 12 work weeks of FMLA leave when the leave is occasioned by their own serious health condition or the serious health condition of the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent. Employees may not substitute accrued paid sick leave when the reason for the leave does not qualify for the use of paid sick leave under LASEC's sick leave policy. Upon exhaustion of all qualifying accrued paid leave that is substituted for FMLA leave; any remaining portion of FMLA leave shall be unpaid.

Vacation and sick days do not continue to accrue during family or medical leave. Holiday pay will be provided if the holiday falls within the period of the employee's substituted paid leave. Otherwise, no holiday pay will be paid during family or medical leave.

Employees taking family or medical leave shall be restored to their previous position or to an equivalent position in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act, provided the employee would otherwise be employed at the conclusion of the leave if the employee had not taken the leave.

6.11 General Leave of Absence

LASEC may grant a general leave of absence for tenured staff members. A staff member who makes this request agrees to the following provisions in addition to those listed for unpaid leaves in 6.8 above:

- (1) The general leave of absence will be without pay.
- (2) Application must be made in writing by February 1, to be assured of consideration for a general leave of absence for the next school year.
- (3) The leave shall not exceed one year from the start of the next school year.
- (4) No more than two (2) leaves will be granted for any school year. The decision of the Executive Director to approve or not to approve a request for a general leave of absence shall not be precedential in future requests for leaves.

6.12: Notification of Accumulated leave

Each staff member can review on a rolling basis in the attendance system, the number of accumulated sick leave days, personal business days, and vacations days (12-month employees) at the start of the current school term.

SECTION 7: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

7.1: Electronic Communications

LASEC's electronic network is a part of the network of LASEC's Administrative District, Mannheim School District 83. The two networks are to be considered a single network (the "Network") for purposes of use by LASEC employees. Use of the Network by LASEC employees is subject to Mannheim's Acceptable Use Policy ("AUP"), a copy of which is accessible at Appendix A. Each LASEC employee must comply with the Mannheim AUP and the following general requirements:

- The Network is to be used only for LASEC business, with only rare use for personal purposes in family or other emergency situations or as authorized by the Executive Director.
- Personal use of the Network must be kept to a minimum, both in terms of amount of time per use and frequency of use. Employee use of the network may be monitored, both as to time and frequency of use, and as to the content of communications and internet sites visited.
- Employee use of the internet on personal devices for personal purposes during working time must be very limited with use only through the employee's personal accounts and addresses.
- Internet sites visited, and any communications, even if through the employee's personal accounts and addresses, must be suitable for LASEC's educational environment and not contribute to harassment or discrimination of any kind.

SECTION 8: EMPLOYMENT

8.1 Dress for Success

Research reveals that clothing worn by employees affects the work, attitude, and discipline of students in educational environments. Dress code follows four main professional traits: 1) respect; 2) credibility; 3) acceptance; and 4) authority. Employees should use these four traits as assets in relating to students, peers, administrators, parents and the community. If a LASEC district has a dress policy that is more restricting than this section, the restrictions and parameters of that policy will apply to LASEC staff when they are working in that building.

Jeans are NOT to be worn. For events (such as outdoor education or indoor office cleaning) where an employee feels jeans are appropriate, the employee is expected to discuss the event with his/her building principal, supervisor, or Executive Director. The above list is not all-inclusive. If a LASEC administrator deems that a staff member is not appropriately or professionally attired for performance of duties within an educational environment, he/she reserves the right to discuss the matter with that individual and require that the offending inappropriate attire not be worn.

8.2 Modesty and Grooming

Modesty and grooming are important factors contributing to professional dress for schools and educational organizations. LASEC staff members are expected to dress professionally for work and are expected to wear neat and clean clothing that is appropriate for the work in which they will be participating. Staff may not wear clothing that is distracting to students or to other staff members, or clothing that is disruptive to the work environment. This includes, but is not limited to, extremes in dress and behavior (ripped pants, clothing that shows excessive skin); or any clothing, jewelry, accessories, or body art with any type of inappropriate slogan, artwork, profanity, vulgarity, violence, or drug/alcohol

related depictions, frayed, holey, or shredded clothing (faded) visible undergarments, inappropriate skirt lengths, sweatpants and shorts, nursing scrubs, shower or beach style shoes.

8.3 Work Day

A typical work week and work day for certified staff members shall be Monday through Friday. For payroll purposes the work week is Monday through Sunday. Hours and breaks, if any, may vary based on staff assignment and responsibilities and will be determined by the Executive Director.

On occasion, it may be required for staff to work early morning, late afternoon or evening hours to meet the needs of their job assignment. This may include parent teacher conferences, parent and family events, and other responsibilities as assigned. Certified staff work a 7 ½ hour typical day based on their school of assignment for that school day. The start and stop time should match the school of assignment.

All staff must work at their assigned buildings or LASEC office. No staff are permitted to work from home in lieu of being at a school or the LASEC office without the permission of the Executive Director.

8.4 Notification of Assignment

The staff shall be assigned to particular school buildings, programs or districts by the LASEC Executive Director based on the District needs and staff qualification. Assignments may be changed at any time at the discretion and direction of the Executive Director.

8.5 Work Calendar

Certified staff will receive a LASEC calendar indicating the beginning/end of the school year and dates of closure for holidays and breaks. For employees where 50% or more of their assignment is in one district the employee shall follow that district's calendar, exclusive of the 10 administrative days assigned. This includes breaks, holidays, etc. For employees assigned to more than one location the base calendar will be the district where 50% of the assignment is located, when that is not possible, calendars will be balanced based on the start/end dates of the assigned districts inclusive of holiday and break considerations to afford maximum support to the assigned districts.

Staff will start on the first day of the LASEC calendar and thereafter follow the calendar of the member district to which the staff member is assigned as provided above or as provided by the Executive Director.

All staff must work at their assigned buildings or LASEC office. No staff are permitted to work from home in lieu of being at a school or the LASEC office without the permission of the Executive Director.

8.6 Attendance

Attendance absences are recorded in Skyward in 15-minute increments. Procedures for recording will be provided by the Executive Director.

8.7 Emergency Closings

In the event the LASEC office is closed due to weather or safety hazard or unforeseen circumstances, LASEC will make a reasonable effort to notify employees of the closing. If the administration has decided that it is necessary to have selected staff work for some reason, the supervisor will make arrangements accordingly. If it becomes necessary to close a building during the working day, the LASEC Executive Director will determine whether to release employees affected without loss of pay or make other work

arrangements. Please make sure you provided your current emergency contact information. In addition, monitor the LASEC website/email for notifications.

8.8 Use of Materials

Use of LASEC materials is for the benefit of LASEC and its partner districts. Staff may not use computers, protocols, testing materials, software, curriculum, office supplies and other LASEC property, for personal use or personal gain.

8.9 Personnel Files

Unless prohibited or otherwise provided by law, all materials developed and maintained by administrative and supervisory personnel which are to be used in situations pertaining to staff observation, discipline, evaluation, competency, or effectiveness shall be placed in the staff members' official personnel file, which is maintained at the LASEC office, and a copy of such materials shall be given to the staff member.

Staff members shall have the right to review and copy the contents of their own official personnel file, in accordance with, and to the extent provided by, law. Such review shall be during normal office business hours and in the presence of an employee of LASEC designated by the Executive Director. The staff member shall make an appointment with the Executive Director or designees for such a review. The staff member shall have a right to attach a rebuttal and/or explanation to the material placed in his/her official personnel file.

8.10 GCN Training

All staff are required to complete their assigned GCN modules for the school term by the dates established at the start of the school term. Additional modules may be assigned during the course of the year.

8.11 Recruitment

To qualify for a position with LASEC, a prospective employee must be physically and mentally able to perform the essential functions of the job category and specific job description with or without reasonable accommodation.

8.12 Job Categories and Compensation

Initial salary is determined by the LASEC Executive Director. Compensation will be fixed annually each year by the LASEC Executive Committee. Job descriptions with specific position duties and responsibilities will be given to each employee and will be a part of his/her personnel file.

8.13 Physical Fitness/Examinations

LASEC requires employees to be physically and mentally fit to perform duties assigned in their job description. Evidence of a physical examination by a licensed physician, or proof of a scheduled appointment, must be furnished prior to an employee's start date. The employee also must furnish prior to his/her start date, evidence of a Mantoux or PPD skin test or chest x-ray. Both the physical and TB test must have been taken not more than 90 days prior to the date of employment.

LASEC may from time to time require an examination of an employee's physical or mental fitness to perform the job. The employee may choose a physician from a list provided by LASEC. The cost of the examination will be borne by LASEC.

8.14 Confidentiality

LASEC expects all employees to respect and maintain the confidentiality of information about staff, schools, students, and their families. Unless authorized, employees must not share confidential information in any setting or with anyone who is not on the student's IEP team. Personnel must inform their LASEC supervisor immediately if pressured by anyone to share confidential student information or if confidential information is released, even inadvertently.

8.15 Reduction in Force

Reductions in force shall be conducted in accordance with Section 24-12 of the School Code.

8.16 Pay Periods

All eligible employees are paid on the 7th and 21st of each month. When such dates fall on weekends or holidays, paychecks are distributed on the last working day preceding the weekend or holiday. Ten-month employees have the option of being paid on either a 10-month schedule or a 12-month schedule commencing on August 21st. Employees make the choice to be paid on a 10-month schedule, such choice is irrevocable for one school term. Employees will have an opportunity to return to a 12-month pay schedule prior to the first pay period of the next year. If no change is indicated, the original election will remain in effect.

8.17 Bloodborne Pathogens

LASEC operates under policies protecting the rights of students and staff members who are infected by HIV/AIDS or who may be exposed to bloodborne pathogens. Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that are present in human blood that can cause disease in humans. In accordance with the Illinois Department of Labor's regulation regarding bloodborne pathogens and in order to minimize the spread of infection from bloodborne pathogens, LASEC has developed an exposure control plan for bloodborne pathogens, provides annual in-service training to staff members, observes the universal precautions, and provides the Hepatitis B vaccine free of charge to those employees who are occupationally exposed. Training for all new employees is required and will be conducted prior to initial assignment to tasks where exposure may occur. Annual refresher training is required and will be provided for all employees within one year of previous training.

8.18 Disciplinary Procedure

Any staff member engaged in conduct or neglect which is detrimental to the best interests of LASEC is subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, oral or written directives and reprimand, suspension with or without pay, and termination of employment. The Executive Director may suspend without pay for up to, and including, ten work days and the Executive Board may suspend without pay for up to, and including, thirty work days. Nothing in this section restricts the Executive Director from temporarily reassigning a staff member with pay pending completion of the disciplinary process. Cause is not required for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, unless otherwise provided by law.

Suspension without pay and/or termination of employment shall be preceded by:

1. Written notice of the proposed disciplinary action, including a summary of the basis for the action, the opportunity for a conference with the Executive Director or the Executive Committee prior to final action and the opportunity for assistance by a representative.
2. The staff member's request for the assistance of a representative at the conference and during any other related disciplinary proceedings will be honored, but the unavailability of a representative will not be cause to delay the conference beyond the start of the LASEC business day after notice is given to the staff member.

Oral reprimands will take place in a private setting and not in the presence of students, parents, or other non-administrative employees unless the staff member refuses to address the matter in a private setting as requested by the Executive Director. The staff member may request a follow up conference with the Executive Director after a written and/or oral reprimand has been issued. Written notification that the staff member will be represented by a representative must be given to the Executive Director at least four work days in advance of the scheduled conference with the Executive Director.

All disciplinary conferences with the Executive Director or the Executive Board will be held at a date and time set by the Executive Director after attempted consultation with the staff member and the representative, if any.

8.19 Driving Personal Vehicles During the Work Day

LASEC employees, who use personal vehicles to drive between schools or from the LASEC administrative center to other locations in the course of their work-related duties and responsibilities, must be in compliance with the Illinois Vehicle Code pertaining to driver's licenses and mandatory insurance.

8.20 Work Related Injuries

In case of an injury arising in the course of employment, the involved employee must immediately notify his/her administrative supervisor and make every effort to file a written report with the Executive Director or designee as soon as possible after the injury. An employee who suffers a work-related injury may be entitled to workers' compensation payments, including temporary total disability (TTD) payments. The TTD payments are calculated under state guidelines and are approximately two-thirds of the employee's salary rate.

Unless otherwise requested by the employee and approved by the Executive Director, if an employee receives TTD payments, one-third of a sick day will be deducted from the employee's total unused accrued sick days for each day off work for which the employee receives TTD payments from LASEC's insurer. This will result in the employee receiving the TTD payment of approximately two-thirds salary and one-third of a sick day payment from LASEC for each day for which TTD payments are received while accrued sick days remain available. TTD payments are currently not taxable income to the employee and are payable by LASEC's workers' compensation insurance carrier directly to the employee.

Sick day payments are taxable income to the employee and are subject to normal payroll withholdings. The Family and Medical Leave Act, and other laws, may also govern the employee's entitlement to benefits while an employee is receiving workers' compensation benefits.

8.21 Mileage

Mileage shall be reimbursed at the current IRS rate using the distance which is the shortest route to the event, either from home or from the LASEC office. Mileage must be submitted in a timely manner, not to exceed 2 months. Tolls on the Illinois Tollway System will be reimbursed at the I-Pass Transponder rate.

SECTION 9: EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS

Licensed staff will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements set forth in Article 24A of the Illinois School Code and the LASEC Evaluation Plan.

SECTION 10: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10.1 Conference/Workshop Attendance

As members of a professional learning community, committed to lifelong learning, LASEC will seek to hire and retain staff members that are dedicated to ongoing development of their skills and updating their knowledge. All staff members are encouraged to attend conferences, workshops and seminars relating to the individual's area of licensure. Staff members requesting time for conferences, workshops, or seminars must submit a conference approval form to the Assistant Director at least ten (10) days prior to the said date of absence. If approval is granted by the Assistant Director or designee, the employee shall work with the Assistant Director or their educational support personnel to register and pay for the conference. Mileage shall be reimbursed at the current IRS rate using the distance which is the shortest route to the event-either from home or from the LASEC office.

LASEC is proud to support our career educators during unpaid days or breaks by paying for approved conference registration and expenses. In return, LASEC staff can reciprocate this benefit of attending opportunities for professional development by providing their time without additional compensation. Exceptions to this policy may be approved, at the discretion of the Executive Director, if the staff member is attending training required as part of a grant project, or long-term initiative approved by the LASEC Executive Committee.

10.2 Tuition Reimbursement

LASEC will provide tuition reimbursement to full-time staff members under the following conditions:

1. The course is pre-approved in writing by the Executive Director or designee. Oral pre-approval, with subsequent written confirmation, may be allowed in extenuating circumstances.
2. The course is graduate level from an accredited university or college.
3. The course is relevant to the staff member's area of assignment or is part of a master's or doctoral degree program in education.
4. A grade equivalent to a "B" or better is earned.
5. An official transcript is received by the Executive Director no later than September 30th for reimbursement in October, or by January 31st for reimbursement in February.
6. Reimbursement will not exceed a maximum reimbursement of twelve (12) credit hours per staff member per school year at \$145 per credit hours, or a rate approved by the LASEC Executive Committee.
7. Hours applied to a dissertation will not exceed a total of 15 hours.

A staff member who resigns within one school year following the school year in which tuition reimbursement is received shall repay to LASEC the full amount of tuition reimbursement received. This requirement does not apply to a staff member who is given the option of resigning in lieu of termination.

10.3 Maintenance of Licensure

It is solely the responsibility of the license holder to renew and register his or her license in a timely manner and prevent it from lapsing.

SECTION 11: BENEFITS/RETIREMENT/COMPENSATION

11.1 Retirement Utilization of Accumulated Sick Leave

The Teacher Retirement System of the State of Illinois allows a TRS employee to use up to 340 days of accumulated sick leave for the purchase of additional retirement credits provided no compensation has been received for those days. A full-time certified staff member may elect upon retirement either of the following options: (1) to use the accumulated days for TRS service credit and receive no compensation, or (2) to receive \$18.00 per day terminal pay for days not used for TRS service credit. If any employee elects to receive a payment of unused accumulated sick leave, the amount will be converted to a lump sum and paid after the employee's final day of employment and the employee's receipt of his or her final paycheck for regular earnings.

11.2 Retirement planning Program for Licensed Staff

Staff members who meet the eligibility requirements set forth in this Section 11.2 and who provide the notice as described below will receive as a retirement bonus a salary increase of six percent (6%) applied to their scheduled salary amount due from LASEC in the school year prior to the school year in which they gave their notice of retirement (the base year). The staff member may give one (1), two (2) or three (3) years of notice, provided that the staff member is eligible to do so and further provided that the notice is received by June 1st prior to the start of the first year for which the employee is to receive the 6% bonus in order for any retirement incentive to be effective for the following school year. This retirement bonus is limited to those staff members who, on the date they have elected to retire, are or will be able to retire without penalty, contribution or added charges under applicable law. To be eligible for this benefit, the staff member must: (1) be eligible to receive a retirement annuity without discount under applicable law on or before their noticed retirement date; and (2) have served as a teacher in LASEC for 15 or more years, including the last 5 consecutive years prior to the date selected for retirement. No retirement benefit under this Section 11.2 shall be available to any staff member whose retirement requires the payment of any penalty, contribution or additional charge by LASEC. An eligible staff member who elects any benefit under this Section must submit to the Executive Director a written notice of irrevocable (except by mutual agreement of the staff member and the Executive Board) resignation from employment due to retirement, effective at the end of the notice period. The written notice must be submitted according to the timelines herein. No payment under this Section will result in any TRS penalty, contribution or additional charge to LASEC. If any such penalty, contribution or additional charge is or may be assessed, LASEC may adjust any employee's salary retroactively, or take any other action it deems necessary, to avoid such cost.

Any staff member who submits notice of retirement and begins receiving, or is scheduled to receive, one or more six percent (6%) salary increases shall not receive any other additional compensation from LASEC regardless of any additional activities the staff member may choose to perform, notwithstanding any

other provision of this Handbook. Compensation increases of such staff members are capped at six percent (6%) in any of the three (3) years prior to retirement, so that LASEC may avoid any related penalties, contributions or additional charges. No staff member will receive more than 3 years of retirement incentive pay.

Salary increases provided for under this paragraph are conditional on the staff member satisfactorily performing all required duties and assigned supplemental activities that were compensated in the base year used to calculate the six percent (6%) increases. If during any year in which a staff member would otherwise be entitled to receive six percent (6%) retirement increases, the staff member declines to perform any assigned supplemental activity that was compensated in the base year or the staff member is removed from any such activity for cause, the staff member's compensation shall be reduced proportionally.

11.3 Limitations on Compensation Increases

- (1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Handbook, a full-time certified staff member who is within three (3) years of being eligible for retirement shall not receive more than a total of 6% increase in his/her TRS creditable salary for any school year.
- (2) A full-time certified staff member who is within three (3) years of being eligible for retirement may avoid the aforementioned limit by submitting an affidavit stating that he/she will not retire within three (3) years.
- (3) A full-time certified staff member shall provide the Executive Director with information indicating the number of years of creditable TRS service and sick leave from other districts, no later than January 1 of the school year in which he/she is within three (3) years of being eligible to retire.

11.4 Resignation and Retirement

An employee is requested to provide notice of a resignation or retirement no less than 60 days prior to the end of the school year. A resignation notice cannot be revoked once approved by the Executive Committee.

SECTION 12: GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

12.1 Employment Issues

The following procedure is to be used to address employment-related problems between supervisors/administrators and employees, including problems regarding evaluation, written reprimands, hiring practices, work hours, salary, and working conditions addressed in this Handbook. Excluded are problems regarding suspension or dismissal or which are covered by the Uniform Grievance Procedure. The term "days" as used in this procedure means days on which the LASEC office is open for business with the public. An employee's failure to present or appeal a grievance within the times provided below bars further processing. Failure of a supervisor or the Executive Director to respond within the times provided below permits the employee to move to the next step.

12.1.1 Step One: Problem-Solving

The employee should talk to the supervisor/administrator within five days of the occurrence of a problem to explain the problem. The supervisor/administrator should address the problem within two working days of notification of the problem to answer questions and attempt to solve the problem. If the problem

is not resolved at this level and the employee wishes to pursue a formal grievance, the employee must proceed to Step Two.

12.1.2 Step Two: Written Complaint

If the employee is not satisfied after Step One or fails to pursue Step One, the employee may submit to the supervisor/administrator a written grievance within ten days of the date of occurrence of the problem. The grievance must be in writing and describe the grievance in detail and all applicable provisions of this Handbook. The supervisor will attempt to confer with the employee within three days after receipt of the grievance, and give a written response within five days after conferring with the employee. If the grievance is still not resolved, the employee may proceed to Step Three.

12.1.3. Step Three: The Executive Director

If the employee is not satisfied after Step Two, the employee may appeal to the Executive Director within five days of the date of the supervisor's response at Step Two. The appeal must be in writing and include a copy of the grievance and the reasons for the appeal. The Executive Director will hold a meeting with the employee within five days of receipt of the appeal and give a written response within five days of the date of the meeting.

12.1.4 Step Four: The Executive Committee

If the employee is not satisfied after Step Three, the employee may file an appeal with the Executive Committee. The appeal must be filed in writing with both the Chairperson of the Executive Committee and the Executive Director within five days of the date of the receipt of the decision of the Executive Director and state the reasons for the appeal. The employee will have the opportunity to directly address the Executive Committee in Closed Session at one of the next two regularly scheduled Executive Committee meetings as determined by the Chairperson. Within thirty-five days of the day the grievance is heard by the Executive Committee, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee shall issue a written decision on behalf of the Executive Committee to the employee. The decision of the Executive Committee will be final.

12.2 Uniform Complaint Procedure

An employee should notify the Executive Director of LASEC (or such alternate person as is specifically designated by the Executive Committee of the Joint Agreement herein below) if s/he believes that the Cooperative, its employees, officials or agents have engaged in unlawful discrimination or have violated his or her rights guaranteed by the State or Federal Constitution, State or Federal statute, or other legal right, including:

1. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans with Disabilities Act;
2. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act or Illinois Human Rights Act;
3. Equal Employment Opportunities Act, Equal Pay Act of 1963 or Illinois Equal Pay Act of 2003;
4. Age Discrimination in Employment Act;
5. Illinois Whistleblower Act;
6. Complaints of Sexual Harassment, Harassment or Other Abusive Behavior.

Such complaints should be discussed with the Executive Director of LASEC, who will assess whether it is possible or appropriate to address and resolve the complaint without any further procedures hereunder. For complaints of harassment, such process may include taking proper action to investigate and promptly

address any improper conduct, including the implementation of any appropriate discipline. If the problem is not resolved or if a formal complaint is requested or deemed appropriate, a written complaint can be filed hereunder and the Executive Director will act in good faith to address the complaint promptly and fairly. This procedure shall not affect, nor be affected by, other remedies such person may have under the law.

Any timelines hereunder may be extended by the Executive Director as s/he finds appropriate. As used in this policy, “school business days” means those days when the Cooperative’s central administrative office is open for public business.

i. Filing a Complaint

A written complaint can be filed with the Executive Director for the Cooperative. The Executive Director will assist the person with such filing, as may be needed. If the person attempting to file a complaint wishes to file with a person of the same gender, the Cooperative will designate an appropriate alternate Grievance Manager of such gender. The Executive Director can request at any time that a complaint be put in writing, or arrange a meeting with an employee as determined necessary by the Executive Director.

ii. Processing a Complaint

The Executive Director will conduct an investigation as may be appropriate to the complaint. The complaint, and information gathered pursuant to the complaint, will be kept confidential except as needed to complete the investigation, resolve the complaint, comply with applicable law or otherwise properly inform and receive feedback from the officials or persons necessary to a resolution of the complaint. The timelines related to the complaint process are as follows:

- a. Within 30 business days of the filing of a complaint, the Executive Director will complete a written response setting forth his or her findings and provide such report to the LASEC Executive Committee. The time will be extended if necessary to conduct an accurate and thorough investigation. The Executive Director will keep the Executive Committee informed of all written complaints.
- b. At its next regular meeting after receiving the Executive Director’s response, the LASEC Executive Committee shall review the response and make a decision regarding such response. The Executive Committee shall affirm, reverse, or amend the response or require the Executive Director to take certain further actions or request additional information.
- c. Within 10 business days of the Executive Committee’s decision on the Executive Director’s response, the LASEC Executive Committee will transmit a written copy of its final decision to the complainant and to the Executive Director.

This complaint procedure shall not be construed to create any independent right to any specific remedy or to an Executive Committee hearing. The Executive Director will make good - faith attempts to follow this procedure, in a timely fashion. The nature and extent of each investigation will be dependent upon the specific facts of each case.

Complaint(s) are to be brought to the attention of the Executive Director. If for some reason that is not feasible, the alternate person with whom the complaint can be raised will be:

Name: Monica Potempa, LASEC Assistant Executive Director:
Address: 10401 Grand Ave, Franklin Park, IL 60131
Telephone: (847) 455-3143
Email: mpotempa@lasecfp.org