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Professionalism – And Working Remotely Expectations

PROFESSIONALISM

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: All staff are expected to read and abide by the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) Code of Ethical Conduct. Each employee will receive a copy at orientation. Additional copies are available – see Code of Ethical Conduct.

Work Schedule: All staff will maintain a work schedule that meets the needs of the program's delivery of services to children and families.

Meetings: All staff will attend and participate in center site meetings on a regular basis. Staff serves on program committees, as positions are available.

Training: All staff will participate in opportunities for professional growth by attending pre-service and in-service training relating to job role and team functioning. All staff seek information about the group of children and families being served and stay informed about new developments in the field of Head Start/ECEAP professions.

Evaluations: All staff engages in continuous self-evaluation to improve performance and identify areas of need for increased professional growth.

Staff uses the supervision and evaluation cycles as a method of increasing their effectiveness and that of the program. Supervisory staff receives training and guidance in completing the evaluation process (purpose, standards of performance, feedback and resources). Evaluations are monitored by a Director to ensure consistency, quality and follow up. All evaluations are submitted to the Director of Human Resources. Annual evaluations are due by June 1 of each year. New employees will be evaluated on or before ninety (90) calendar days from date of employment. Current employees in a new job role will be evaluated within one hundred and twenty (120) calendar days in their new job role.

Staff will evaluate their skills and those needed to perform job role using OESD Employee Self Evaluation rubric. Staff will work to enhance their skills through: identifying training needed, participating in training offered by the program, seeking and sharing information with other staff, reading material regarding issues within the job role, attending workshops or courses to enhance skills.

Program Philosophy: Staff will be able to describe the Head Start/ECEAP program philosophy and its goals to parents, staff and the community.

Confidentiality: Staff will maintain confidentiality regarding personal information about families and staff, sharing only with Head Start/ECEAP staff on a need-to-know basis. Information to others is only made available with written parent permission.

Professional Boundaries: Staff will maintain professional boundaries with enrolled children and families. As representatives of Head Start/ECEAP, staff will not baby-sit enrolled children outside of work, have enrolled children visit or spend the night, will not transport families, will responsibly use social media, and will seek guidance from a direct supervisor when situations arise that could question professional boundaries. Including enrolled children and families in staff members' private lives fringes upon a break of professional boundaries. Staff members or parents may discuss this further with their supervisor or Director.

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PROFESSIONALISM – WORKING REMOTELY

Work Schedule: All staff are expected to work their contractual hours each day. Adjustments to a staff member's daily work schedule will be discussed with the staff member's supervisor and Program Manager/Director. Alternative work schedules will be considered in order to meet the diverse needs of families and in consideration of personal constraints a staff member may have as a result of working remotely. Regardless of the work schedule, all staff are required to work their contractual hours, must be present for all agency scheduled meetings/trainings, and maintain an accurate Outlook calendar reflecting job responsibilities throughout the day (this calendar must be shared with direct supervisor and must be kept up to date). It is the understanding of all (and part of our job descriptions) that we will need to break away from the idea of a "normal" working schedule; adjustments to our days will be made in order to meet the diverse needs of families.

Remember you are a working professional which means creating a work space dedicated to your role, demonstrating remote work etiquette, being prepared for your work day, and implementing strategies that support you successfully engaging in your work responsibilities.

Technology: All staff are provided the technology needed in order to be successful when working remotely. Appropriate use of technology is expected. Access to stable and reliable internet is necessary. Should staff have concerns regarding internet accessibility they will be provided an alternative work location for all or some of their work week (this could include Givens Community Center and OESD 114) which will then be their required work location.

Work Site Locations: All staff are expected to work remotely unless alternative work site location accommodations have been made with the staff members supervisor and Manager/Director. **No staff will be accessing sites without approval from supervisors; this includes school buildings, community buildings, and OESD 114.**

Virtual Communication: Studies prove that in situations in which the words don't match the tone or facial expression:
- only 7 percent of what people "hear" is the spoken word
- 38 percent of what people take away from an interaction comes from tone of voice, and
- 55 percent comes from body language and facial expressions.

Since the majority of messages comes through body language and facial expressions, the lack of visual cues while working remotely may cause miscommunications. A confused expression, an uncomfortable shifting in a seat, or fidgeting fingers make it clear that something is amiss in an in-person meeting. But those go unnoticed in a virtual meeting. So it's important that team members learn people's preferences, adapt communication style, think critically about messages and how they are delivered, and demonstrate respect and consideration.

3 Main Methods of Virtual Communication:
1. Email
2. Phone/Conference Call
3. Video Call/Meeting

Email

- Email Tone - When you don't have the ability to meet in person, typed words carry more weight. Make sure you're balancing a certain amount of warmth with clear, candid messaging.
- Hone your writing skills - Improve your writing and editing. Writing forces us to formulate our ideas in a better way because it allows you to think through your ideas and you can always go back and edit the beginning of your email.
- Be consistent, clear and concise - Consistency means people know how and when you're going to communicate and what kinds of messages you'll provide. A clear message is simple and sticks to the facts. Being concise means not wasting words. Eliminate any redundant words/phrases.
- Focus on the message that is received - The best communicators focus more energy on how they get their message received. This means focusing more on the other person, and less on yourself. This will always get you better results.
- Assume good intentions - and nothing else. When you can't see someone's face, you may be tempted to make assumptions about what your partner in communication is really thinking. So assume your partner shares your positive intent and then confirm your clear understanding of everything, and take your time to do so.

Phone/Conference Call

In addition to the tips covered in Virtual Meetings, use these tips for conference calls:
- Don't keep attendance a secret. It is important for everyone on the phone to know who else is on the phone.
- Say your name before proceeding with your comment/question unless you are confident that your voice is familiar to all.
- Turn up the volume to ensure everyone can hear you clearly. Get close to the microphone when you speak.
- Ask those who are quiet what they are thinking to keep them actively participating.

Virtual Meetings (Video and Phone)

Remember That You Are a Working Professional
- Demonstrate good home office etiquette by making sure you look presentable and alert during video calls.
- Be mindful of your body language and facial expressions. If you have an early morning video meeting, ensure you are fully awake before appearing on camera.
- Be mindful that your outfit is appropriate; dress for the job.
- Don't eat during the meeting; this is very distracting during a meeting.
- Don't waste others' time. Keeping others waiting for you to join a meeting disrupts everyone's schedule.

Tips:
- Keep meetings as short as possible. By keeping the meeting time to a minimum you will help avoid the tendency of participants to multi-task. Attention spans are not quite as long in virtual meetings.
- Make intentions clear. Clearly state the reason for the meeting or meeting goals.
- Provide participants with an agenda, when possible. This will help keep participants focused and engaged.

- Begin with an introduction of participants, when necessary.
- Speak clearly and concisely. Muffled microphones or poor speakers can make it difficult to make out what is said. Avoid talking too fast.
- Avoid interruptions. If you are conferencing from home, ask your family to be quite and not interrupt you. If you have an animal with the potential to create noise, put them in a place where they cannot be heard. Close windows, turn off the television or stereo.
- Use the mute feature when you are not speaking so background noise is not a distraction for others.
- Keep your camera on, unless you are stepping away to use the restroom or other brief personal matters. Connect with your supervisor for video connection challenges (technological or other).
- Think before you speak, recognizing that others do not have the benefit of your body language and other non-verbal cues, and the tone of your voice can cause misinterpretation.
- Prior to your calls or virtual meetings, check your equipment and learn how to operate new software or tools.
- Listen and summarize. Listen closely and paraphrase to reflect key points, ask questions to clarify the message and speaker's intent.
- Create "white space" when leading the meeting. Instead of speaking for most of the meeting, give others time to contribute. Ask open-ended questions to draw others out and wait for their replies. White space gives people time to think creatively.
- Do not participate in side-bar chit-chat (texting or private chat). It deceases meeting efficiency and interrupts others who are trying to listen.
- Pause for questions. Participants may find it difficult to ask questions for clarification without feeling they are interrupting. Pause on occasion for someone to interject or ask questions. In video meetings, se the hand icons or chat boxes for people to seek clarification without interrupting.
- Communicate that everyone will have an opportunity to speak to minimize interruptions. Without non-verbal cues, there is a tendency for the loudest person to seize the floor. Some interruptions are attempts to take control of the meeting, others result from a person's concern over not having their point heard.
- Don't multi-task. It's hard to resist doing something else (read or send emails, mute the speaker and talk with someone else) while in a virtual meeting. Being distracted can cause you to miss crucial information, which is the purpose of the meeting.
- Take notes. Without visual cues our minds can wander. Taking notes while listening hopes to maintain focus.
- Get virtual assistance, if you are facilitating/leading. Bring in someone to listen, take notes, take cues about how your message is being received and capture key points for you.
- Ask questions to ensure your message was conveyed successfully.
- Consider context. Your co-worker could be having a bad day, going through a rough patch, is burnt out, or just feeling off. Not knowing their context could cause misunderstandings. Tool: add a quick "check-in / check-out" update before and after a meeting to encourage people to share in a manner that is high-level.

Summary: don't let social distancing let you feel disconnected at work. Get creative with how you stay in touch and make it fun doing things like scheduled virtual coffee break or lunches together.