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# Dixie District Schools Child Abuse/Sexual Abuse Prevention Plan

Dixie District Schools takes the prevention of child abuse very seriously. Dixie District Schools understands that child abuse and inappropriate contact of children is a pervasive problem throughout the United States that must be managed in a pro-active manner if we are to protect those in our care. Our leadership have enacted the following plan to manage our programs and minimize the potential for an abuse incident to occur. If an allegation does occur we will pro-actively work with the authorities and the family to respond in a prompt and empathetic manner.

Dixie District Schools believes the following policies are vital to the protection of children in our programs and thus they will be shared with and applied to all staff, including volunteers.

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## 1.0 Hiring Practices and Screening

- 1.1 **Applications** – All prospective staff members will complete a Dixie District Schools application to work or volunteer that includes questions about criminal offenses.
- 1.2 **Criminal record checks** – Dixie District Schools will conduct a search for criminal activity by any prospective staff member. This search may be through law enforcement agencies or through entities that provide such service and may include: examining local, county, state records throughout the entire country; and searching various registered sex offender lists. Applicants who are returning staff will receive a new check.

Dixie District Schools is strongly committed to protecting its members and the children in their care from all harm. However, a conviction does not automatically generate a rejection of the application – all cases are individually evaluated.

- 1.3 **Reference checks** – Dixie District Schools will contact references for all prospective staff. Past employers will be asked if the person is eligible for rehire. Written references will be accepted only with verbal verification by Dixie District Schools. If the written reference did not address the questions normally asked, those questions will be asked during the telephone contact.
- 1.4 **File documentation** – All applications and Criminal Record Checks are maintained in the Dixie District Schools Human Resources department.
- 1.5 **Program volunteers** – Volunteers are staff members, even if they receive no remuneration. The procedures for their utilization include an application and criminal record check. Records (or copies thereof) will be kept in the HR office.

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## 2.0 Training and Education

- 2.1 **Code of Conduct** – Staff members will sign and date a copy of the school/workplace Code of Conduct (or a similar document adapted by the District prior to performing any work duties. The code of conduct will be maintained in the personnel file.

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- 2.2 **Child abuse prevention training** – All staff members that work with children will participate in the child abuse prevention training that includes training on sexual abusers **within 60 days of hire**. All staff members working directly with children will undergo a review of the training on an annual basis.
- 2.3 **Electronic communication policy** – **Dixie District Schools** has adopted the electronic communication policy. The purpose of this policy is to eliminate the potential for outside contact with youthful program participants via electronic means. Dixie District Schools understands that certain communication is needed as part of program operation; the policy addresses how and when it can occur.
- 2.4 **Follow-up training** – **Dixie District Schools** requires that all staff working with children participate in an annual review of the abuse prevention training. The school district may perform additional training with staff on identification and prevention of child abuse throughout the year.

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### 3.0 Staff Expectations

- 3.1 **Reporting of suspicious behavior and/or violations of the Code of Conduct** – **Dixie District Schools employees** are mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse to the jurisdiction having authority. Each cost center's staff will report to their supervisor any indication of or warning signs concerning abuse involving a child and any instances of staff violating the Code of Conduct. School/Office staff who identify suspicious behavior or a violation of policy by a fellow staff person should report the event to their supervisor immediately.
- 3.2 **Being alone with children** – At no time should any district/school staff be in a situation where they are alone with a child or children and cannot be observed by others. The school district will make every attempt to design and structure its programs to eliminate the potential for a staff member to be in a one-on-one situation.
- 3.3 **Hugging and touching of children** – Appropriate physical contact is important in the emotional development of all children and children at different developmental levels will need differing degrees of physical contact. Therefore, district/school staff members should not perform frontal hugs of children – hugs should be from the side. The staff member should get down to the child's physical level when possible. District/School staff should not touch children in any body location that would be covered by a bathing suit. Staff members should not pick-up school-aged children (to reduce potential for both abuse allegations and physical injury) and should not allow children to sit on their laps.

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### 4.0 Program Operation

- 4.1 **Transportation** – **District** ratios and supervision standards apply during transportation. Staff will spread themselves out in the vehicle and maintain their focus on the children while transportation is occurring. If the children being transported are of multiple age groups, they should be seated by age group, with older children positioned to the rear

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of the vehicle. Boys and girls generally should not be seated together; children with known relational challenges should also not be placed together. If larger capacity buses are used, staff should monitor behavior by walking through the aisle on a frequent but irregular basis.

- 4.2 **Field trips** – The risks to children change when they are off-site. In order to protect them from predators who may be at fieldtrip locations the following standards will be enacted
- 4.2.1 The ratio of students to staff will be reduced when programs go off-site. The appropriate ratio will be determined based on age of the children and the field trip activity and location.
  - 4.2.2 Staff will check all bathrooms immediately prior to use by the children and will be in the restroom (if not single stall) when being used by a child.
  - 4.2.3 Picking up of children while on field trips should only be allowed if prearranged and recipient should be required to show proof of ID and sign a receipt for the child.
- 4.3 **Special needs participants** – Special needs program participants are, indeed, more at risk than others and need to be more closely supervised to prevent peer-to-peer abuse and the staff supervising them needs to be more closely supervised to prevent a predator from taking advantage of their impairment to abuse them.
- Special needs volunteers or staff also need better supervision. While the staff member or volunteer may well appear to be an adult, their psychological state may have been arrested at the age of 13 or 14. If so, they will likely be attracted to children of that age, or less, and they will have the urges and impulse control of a child of that age.
- 4.4 **Parent expectations around children** – Parents are expected to use decent language and act in a positive manner. Parents who talk in a sexual manner, perform sexual gestures, sexual acts, or attempt inappropriate contact with a child will be asked to leave the premises and the police may be contacted, if warranted. No use of cameras or cell phones is allowed by members in the bathroom/locker room areas. NOTE: Parent records can be run automatically against child abuse and sex offender registries for each state, if your district software vendor has such capability.

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## 5.0 Parental Education

- 5.1 **Dixie District Schools child protection policy** – The school will make available its child protection policy to parents.
- 5.2 **Contact information for violation of policies** – The school district will provide contacts that parents can call in case of concern.

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## 6.0 Responding to an allegation

- 6.1 **Reporting suspicious behavior to a supervisor** – All staff members have received specific training concerning the requirement to report violations of school district

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policies immediately to their supervisor. If the supervisor does not effectively respond, the staff members have been trained to notify the next level supervisor. Dixie District Schools staff are expected to observe other staff members' behaviors, including that of supervisors, and to report any suspicions to that supervisor.

- 6.2 **Mandated reporter** – All Dixie District Schools staff members are mandated reporters with regard to child abuse. Any evidence of potential child abuse or observation of inappropriate contact by a parent, staff member or other child will be reported to Department of Children and Families. (1-800-955-8771)
- 6.3 **Suspension of staff or youthful offender** – Any district staff member who is alleged to have abused a child will be suspended with pay pending the outcome of an investigation by the school district and appropriate authorities. If the allegation is substantiated, the staff member will be terminated. If the allegation is against a program participant, s/he will be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation. Depending on the severity of the incident the participant maybe terminated from the program.
- 6.4 **Incident investigation** – The school district will perform an investigation following any allegation of child abuse by a staff member or a participant in a program.
- 6.5 **Record retention** – Following an allegation against a staff member, their personnel file will be sealed and locked in a secure location. The file will have no items removed or added. It will only be moved from the locked location at the direction of the leadership of the school district.