



NEW DIRECTIONS SCHOOL
Northampton Center for Children and Families
78 Pomeroy Terrace, Northampton, MA 01060
(413) 584-1310 (413) 586-1490 (fax)

August 18, 2023

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and Students at New Directions School:

It is our pleasure to share this handbook with you. The goal of this handbook is to provide you with a framework of the work in which we are involved each day with your child/client.

Included in this handbook are resources that we believe you will find useful. These include the vision and mission statements, grading practices (for academic, effort and conduct grades), a rubric for effort and conduct, homework guidelines, information about the school day, and information about our vocational program. We have also included information about the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (PAC), anti-bullying regulations and processes, physical restraint regulations, equal access regulations, anti-hazing regulations, and our technology policy. This handbook provides you with a minimal summary of each policy. For full access to any of the policies, please see the school website or contact the school office.

Please let me know if you need anything. Your involvement in your child's education is important to us. We look forward to working with you throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Patrick Dineen, M. Ed.

Director of Education

New Directions School
78 Pomeroy Terrace
Northampton, Mass. 01060
at
Cutchins Programs for Children and Families

Parent/Student Handbook for 2023 - 2024



Welcome to New Directions School, which is on the campus of Northampton Center for Children and Families (NCCF). We fall under the parent organization of Cutchins Programs for Children and Families. All of the New Directions staff looks forward to working with you. This handbook contains information that will help you understand our program. Please let us know if you have any questions.



Our Mission

Cultivate curiosity
and
competence
in the classroom and the community.

Our Vision

We are a community of learners, cultivating self-awareness and critical thinking skills. We work to create and advance a trauma informed educational culture. We celebrate each person's individuality and strengths within a collaborative learning environment.

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The Overarching Perspective of New Directions School

Identified Population of students to be served

The New Directions School is run by the Cutchins Program for Children and Families, which operates educational and residential programs in western Massachusetts. Our program is designed to help at-risk students develop self-esteem, gain academic achievement, and become productive members of society. We are a small, specialized facility that serves students ages 8-21. This school is an out-of-district placement for day students and the campus also hosts a residential facility. Not all students living on the campus attend our day school program. Our program combines academic instruction, clinical treatment, and vocational opportunities to create a safe and therapeutic learning environment for students with emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges.

Educational Characteristics

The New Directions School is the educational component of the Cutchins Programs for Children and Families, Northampton Center. The following characteristics describe our work.

- Milieu treatment center providing services for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities
- Predictable and safe educational structure
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Individualized accommodations and modifications
- MAAPS member school
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approved
- Ungraded classrooms – heterogeneous groupings
- Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and MCAS

There are two school buildings – Scott School and Carriage House. Scott School hosts our upper middle school and high school academic classes and many of our electives. Carriage House hosts our two classrooms for younger students – North Group and South Group. North Group is a class of middle school students. South Group is a class of elementary school students. Classrooms are provided with a Support Staff as needed.

Each school building, Scott and Carriage, houses a Support Room that when in use is staffed with Support Room personnel. The personnel use a variety of sensory tools to help students take a break and prepare for re-entry into the learning environment. Scott School has a separate Sensory Room, a Student Work Room, and a Quiet Rooms adjacent to the Support Office. Scott School also has a Sensory and Fitness Center in the gym. On our campus there are swings and a play structure as well as gardens and walking trails. Surrounding our campus, we have access to nature walking trails and a playing field. We are a 5-minute walk to downtown Northampton.

Student Expectations/Procedures

What to bring to school?

It is good to bring a water bottle, healthy snack and extra layer of clothing to school. Students are expected to bring only materials that are safe for school and conducive to learning.

Personal belongings that are brought to school are brought at the student's/family's own risk. The school cannot assume responsibility for items that are lost, damaged, or stolen.

Personal Electronics

No personal electronics, especially cell phones, should be brought to school. If you do, it has to be turned in to staff upon arrival on campus. If you need to use your device, you are expected to come to the Support Room to explain the situation and ask permission to use your device. If there are special circumstances where you might utilize a (non-cell phone) electronic device, a Special Program may be created for you by your team. **If a student brings a personal device to the school, the replacement for that device, if it is lost or stolen is the responsibility of the student/family/guardian.**

Under no circumstances, at any time, shall a personal device be used at New Directions School to access the internet, take photos/videos, or download music.

Disruptive Behavior:

When a student is disruptive, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, if judged a safety risk, leave the building accompanied by a staff member. If the student is considered "out of program" for an extended period of time, the Director of Education or the School Clinical Coordinator and Milieu Coordinator will decide, with staff, how to proceed. In circumstances involving weapons or illegal substances and physical safety of other students, a decision may be made to contact parents and dismiss and suspend the student immediately.

When does the staff determine that a student needs to re-regulate in his/her own home?

If a day student is out of program for an extended period of time and cannot regulate him/herself, the Director of Education in consultation with clinical staff and Milieu Coordinator, may determine that the student needs to go home for the remainder of the day.

Suspensions:

Structures and policies are in place to address behavioral concerns and minimize disruption to the school community. For this reason, suspensions are rare. However, there are circumstances in which a student must be removed from campus to maintain an environment conducive to learning.

When do we call police?

Each student has an individualized safety plan, called an ICSP (Individual (Crisis) Safety Plan) that outlines what interventions we will use and when. Staff works with students to support them in making safe choices and de-escalating a situation. Staff works to shift a situation toward one that is safe and helps students to use learned coping strategies. We will only call Crisis/Police if a student is an immediate safety risk to self or other and we are unable to de-escalate the situation. Any variation to this process is determined on a case-by-case basis for a specific safety and treatment reason and is outlined in the student's ICSP. The school maintains ongoing contact with families, guardians, and the full team regarding situations that involve serious situations, e.g., restraints, and police/hospital involvement.

Dress Code

It is expected that attire will support our focus on learning and match the needs associated with the weather. Clothing should not contain references to drug, alcohol, inappropriate or sexual explicit language.

Start and End Times of the School Day

The school day begins at 8:15AM. Day students are dropped off via their school-based transportation or their parents. Students have breakfast in the dining hall and are greeted by their teacher, who walks them back to the school.

For all students the school day ends at 3:03PM each day.

School Attendance

Snow Days

School is in session for residential students on snow days. We follow the cancellation or delayed opening schedule that Northampton Public Schools sets. If day students do come to school on a snow day, we are fully prepared to greet them for a full day of school. Additional days have been added to the school calendar in the event that make-up days are required.

Day Student Attendance

If your child will not be coming into school or will be late, please call the Student Support Center phone x 326. If there are any changes to the scheduled transportation plans for your child, please also call the Student Support Center phone.

The Schedule of the School Day

Elementary and middle school aged groups are in class until 11:55AM, at which time they walk over to the dining hall with their teacher and have lunch with their teacher and peers. After lunch, they have a 20-minute recess. HS students have lunch at 12:15PM and are also joined by their teachers and peers.

Meals are prepared by our kitchen staff and follow all state and federal guidelines for portion and food quality. In order to determine student eligibility for Free and Reduced lunch, all parents/guardians must complete the lunch form provided.

All students are enrolled in elective classes and Physical Education. We have a weekly master schedule that is posted throughout the facility so that students can crosscheck their schedule. All students have a copy of their own individual schedule and that schedule is also sent home to families.

Vocational Program

Our vocational program supports independent living skills and community integration skills. The vocational program can support students in off-grounds internships during the school year or in the summer, when it fits with a student's goals and plan. The vocational program also supports on-grounds internships during our summer program, such as working in our snack bar, on computer skills, on our nature trails and in beautifying our campus.

Our vocational program, or Career Development Education Program, has three levels that students are placed in depending on their age, ability, interest and goals.

- Career Awareness: Students learn about the types of businesses that exist and what might be a job/career that is of interest to each of them; will explore the job market options, and may participate in a career fair.
- Career Exploration: Students will develop life skills, such as creating and maintaining a resume, writing letters of interest to employers, budgeting one's finances, job shadowing, interviewing professionals, and career-related research projects.
- Career Immersion: Students will experience in-depth career immersion, such as enrolling in career-related clubs, internships, and volunteer opportunities.

Therapeutic Groups

We have two school clinicians on staff who run therapeutic skills groups for students throughout the school year. Groups for the high school students are grounded in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy. They focus on learning and practicing DBT skills which consist of Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Interpersonal Effectiveness and Emotion Regulation. These groups are also an opportunity for students to share and process their feelings and

experiences in a supportive environment. At the elementary and middle school level, student focus on a combination of social learning and DBT. Clinicians utilize the Social Thinking curriculum to support students in increasing their social awareness and practicing expected social behaviors. The group provide an opportunity for students to identify feelings and effective coping skills so that they are better able to regulate their behavior. For both the middle school and high school students, our clinicians utilize a variety of therapeutic tools including expressive arts, sensory outlets and open discussion as a means of learning by doing.

Summer Program

We have a 218-day school program. In our summer program, academics are presented through thematic units of study and are co-taught by our six classroom teachers. For the older students, our program is characterized by vocational learning experiences. Many of the older students may be placed in a vocational work site off campus, while others are on campus in vocational work sites such as horticulture, cooking or campus beautification. Older students also spend part of their day in STEM and Humanities classes for both credit recovery opportunities and to help maintain academic skills.

Feedback on Learning

Education and clinical coordinator, and school clinician can be contacted to provide regular feedback on student progress. Teachers are available by email and phone conferencing.

Parents/Guardians can expect to regularly receive both IEP progress notes and report cards.

The IEP Process

When an annual IEP or 3-year re-evaluation is due, your child's district will initiate that process. They will schedule the meeting, working with all participants to schedule a meeting that is responsive to the needs of all individuals on the team. The Director of Education will craft the draft IEP with the teachers at Cutchins, in preparation for the IEP meeting.

You will receive a draft IEP at the meeting (and you can have one earlier if you would like, just let us know and we can send that to you). The team will examine the draft IEP and changes will be made to that document as needed at the meeting.

The IEP is then sent to the district for the signature of the Director of Pupil Personnel Services (or Special Education Director) and the district forwards the document to you for signature.

We work from the signed IEP. The IEP that is developed at the team meeting is not implemented until we receive your signature page from the district.

When you come to a team meeting, we will ask you for your concerns. Please feel free to come prepared to share that information. We will also develop a five-year vision as a team. Please also feel free to come prepared to speak to your vision.

The Academic Curriculum

We follow the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. These documents can be found on line at Massachusetts DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) or by going to <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>.

We use the approved DESE graphic organizers to support students in the completion of writing assignments across all subject areas. This strengthens their writing skills/products and prepares them for taking the MCAS assessment.

Grading Practices

Academic Course Grades

All academic courses and Physical Education receive a letter grade. Elective classes are graded pass/fail. Grades are based on in-class participation, work product, and homework. In this work, we aim to keep students informed about their grades throughout the semester. It is not that we give grades, but that students earn grades.

In the upper grade classes, credits are equivalent to a public high school, allowing for the transfer of credits toward the attainment of a high school diploma.

We work closely with public schools to map out the course requirements for each academic year. We work with the public high school to coordinate the classes in which students are enrolled throughout their high school career, to insure that your child is working toward meeting all graduation requirements from his/her/their sending public school district. Grades are sent to the public high school for the fall semester, spring semester, and summer semester. Sending districts create a transcript and monitor the work toward the attainment of a high school diploma. We keep families and students informed of this work through the high school years.

Our report cards reflect a content grade and a grade for effort and conduct (see rubric which follows).

Grading Procedure:

- Grades are based on effort, participation, and attendance
 - Excused absences do not count against the student so long as they are intermittent enough to maintain course integrity and so long as work is made up. Excused absences are due to sickness, hospitalization, medical appointment, therapy)
 - Parents are urged to provide a written or electronic notice detailing an upcoming excused absence.
- If we become concerned about a student's ability to pass a class, we inform the parent/guardian/district and the student, and collectively we craft a plan, making adjustments toward a path of passing the class.

RUBRIC for Effort and Conduct Scores

Effort Rubric

4	I worked on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to continue working on the task even when difficulties arose or a solution was not immediately evident. I viewed difficulties that arose as opportunities to strengthen my understanding.
3	I worked on the task until it was completed. I pushed myself to continue working on the task even when difficulties arose or a solution was not immediately evident.
2	I put some effort into the task, but I stopped working when difficulties arose.
1	I put very little or no effort into the task

Conduct Rubric

4	I use expected voice volume and language for a school setting. I listen to others when they speak and do not interrupt. I follow directions. I respect others' space and avoid making others uncomfortable. I work collaboratively. No warning or Timeouts for conduct
3	I usually.... • use expected voice volume and language for a school setting. • listen to others when they speak and do not interrupt. • follow directions. • respect others' space and avoid making others uncomfortable. • work collaboratively. I received warning or was Timed Out but was able to return to class and participate for the majority of the class
2	I sometimes.... • use expected voice volume and language for a school setting. • listen to others when they speak and do not interrupt. • follow directions. • respect others' space and avoid making others uncomfortable. • work collaboratively. I needed numerous warning and Time Outs I was sent to support and missed 50% of class due to my behavior
1	It is very difficult for me to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use expected voice volume and language for a school setting. • listen to others when they speak and do not interrupt. • follow directions. • respect others' space and avoid making others uncomfortable. • work collaboratively <p>My Behavior lead to me being out of class for about 75% of the class period</p> |
|--|---|

Homework Guidelines

Optional assignments as extra credit for struggling students to complete at home or during free periods in school are offered on an individual basis.

Family and Team Communication

Family/Guardian communication is an integral component to our program. What is communicated depends on the individual student and his/her/their treatment needs and goals. Communication comes from teachers, clinicians and our Director of Education.

Most of our students have many other adult supports, like their school district, Continuum Team, DMH or DCF workers, Educational Advocates or other outside therapists. We communicate regularly with outside team members.

MCAS Testing

All students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 are required to participate in MCAS testing. All parents/guardians will receive a letter documenting the MCAS dates and subjects that are pertinent to his/her/their student.

Grade 3, 4, 6 and 7 students participate in ELA (English Language Arts) and math MCAS assessments. Grades 5 and 8 complete ELA, Math and STE (Science, Technology and Engineering) assessments. These assessments typically occur during the months of April and May.

Students in Grade 10 participate in ELA and Math MCAS. High School students are required to complete a Science MCAS and that can happen in 9th or 10th grade (or later, though that is not advisable because if re-takes are needed, timing can become challenging). High School students participate in re-takes if they do not attain a passing grade, which is required in order to attain a HS diploma.

DESE has a full section devoted to MCAS. You can access all of this information through the home page at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>

Senior Year Expectations

When you complete your high school requirements while at New Directions, you can expect some senior year acknowledgements. At New Directions School, you will participate in a senior field trip and a senior graduation ceremony. You are also entitled to participate in the Senior Year activities hosted by your sending school district, such as walking at the graduation ceremony, attending the prom, or receiving the yearbook. Your school district liaison can help you learn more about this.

The Therapeutic Components of New Directions School

Clinicians

All students are assigned a clinician who is accessible on an as needed basis. Students will also attend different types of groups to help learn DBT, sensory modulation, social learning, and a variety of other skills that will help the student meet his/her/their treatment goals. For some students, a weekly check-in at a predetermined time may be schedule if that better fits their needs. Clinicians also facilitate weekly skills group that support students in learning DBT skills as well as social skills. Clinicians are also the main points of contact to help aid and assess in crisis situations or moments of dysregulation.

Other Staff

In addition to the teachers and your clinician, there are a variety of other types of staff that you may work with during your stay with us. We have a nurse, occupational therapists, school staff, and administrative staff.

Activities

Since we are located so close to downtown Northampton, we often go out into the community where there are many fun things to do! We also have sensory spaces and a gym. We go on field trips to local events, and there are lots of places to go for walks and hikes with staff. Whether you like to swing, ride bikes, make crafts, draw, sing, play an instrument, dance, garden, play sports, or cook, there are a variety of activities you can do here that might be of interest to you! Be sure to share what your special talents and interests are with staff.

Getting to Know You (in this case, the student)

We want to get to know you and find out how we can be of help. Please take a moment to complete our safety tool so that we can learn more about you (shared with you upon intake). We want to help you learn more about what is hard for you (triggers) and what helps (skills). We hope to help you build upon your skills while you are here.

Our Value System

At New Directions School we work together as a caring community made up of students and staff, helping one another to:

1. Build upon your strengths and learn new skills
2. Identify and express your emotions
3. Build your self-esteem and self-confidence

4. Learn how to get along better with people
5. Become more competent and responsible

Our primary form of treatment is called Dialectical Behavior Therapy, also known as DBT. We use DBT to help teach new skills such as, mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

Additionally, students start each day by completing a check-in sheet which helps increase awareness of feelings and vulnerability factors. They then engage in mindfulness exercises in their homeroom before transitioning into the structure of the school day. At the end of the day, they have the opportunity to reflect on their actions and process any challenges that may have arisen throughout the day.

At New Directions School we have basic values, which are fundamental principles, which help to define how all members of the community behave. Our values come from the DBT concept of a hierarchy for examining behavior. These values are:

1. Safety– we act in a manner that is safe
2. Responsibility and Focus on Treatment– we take responsibility for our own treatment, education, and for helping others with theirs.
3. Quality of Life -we strive to make the most we can of our lives.

New Directions School practices DBT's core skill of mindfulness on a regular basis, to help practice being in the moment, and fully participating in the moment without judgment.

We also strive to take time to be mindful of our choices and decisions. As a community, we work hard to share with others how we are doing in a healthy way, what some of our choices and decisions are, and the benefits and/or consequences experienced as a result. There are a variety of group meetings where we share how we are doing and the wisdom of what we are learning with the community.

Values System Rules

Safety:

No matter what, **SAFETY** is the number one priority. All aspects of programming can be effected when any student acts in an unsafe manner. The following acts fall in the category of SAFETY violations:

1. Physical aggression – injuring or intent to injure
2. Self-abuse
3. Sexual misconduct
4. Fire setting

Any student who engages in safety interfering behavior will be removed from the group and work with staff until they are regulated and showing they are safe to be with other students. After a Value Violation that interfered with safety the student will be limited to only essential aspects of the program (e.g., off grounds trips are not an option) until they have completed *resolve* and *repair work*. To resolve one must complete all resolution work and minimally complete a behavior chain of the event(s). Repair work involves active efforts towards repairing relationships affected by **the** unsafe behavior(s).

Responsibility & Focus on Treatment:

The following are actions that demonstrate the lack of taking personal responsibility for working on treatment goals.

1. Running away
2. Unexcused absence
3. Treatment targets – A student may Struggle with an issue that results in Quality of life Value Violations and the Students Treatment Team will determine it should be treated as a Treatment Target which result in more focused Resolve and Repair work particular issue that may result in this behavior becoming a Treatment target

When a student engages in **treatment interfering behavior** they are suspended from all non-essential aspects of the program until they have resolved and repaired their behavior. To resolve, youth must complete all resolution work and minimally DBT behavior chain of event(s).

Quality of Life

When students make **poor life choices** it interferes with quality of life, and these behaviors can lead to consequences in society and if they become a pattern will result in their quality of life being negatively impacted

The following behaviors constitute a violation of this type:

1. Destruction of property
2. Stealing
3. Substance abuse
4. Sexual misbehavior
5. Aggression – verbal or physical without intent to injure others
6. Endangering behavior
7. Out of supervision for Running Away Running away 15-30 minutes
8. Endangering with fire
9. Out of program for over 30 minutes

A student who has engaged in **Inappropriate life choices** will be suspended from all non-essential aspects of the program. Again, to resolve, the youth must complete all resolution work and a DBT behavior chain of the event(s).

Time Out & Time Away.

New Directions School views time away from the group in two categories: voluntary (taking space & voluntary time out) and involuntary (time out & separated from the group due to inappropriate behavior or safety concern).

Voluntary Taking Space

Staff may encourage children to take some space when they observe a child that seems agitated. Besides averting a potential escalation, we work hard to also prevent the child from associating "Taking Space" with "Being in trouble," or "Being punished." Taking space is a way to calm down, re-group and pause enough to think before you act. It allows students to remove themselves from the group momentarily, check-in with an adult or use a skill, and return to class. Students can "take space" in a variety of places such as the stairway, or a foyer if the judgement is that a student just needs a minute or two to regulate or the support rooms if the student need more space and time away from the classroom. At times when staffing is available this could also include going outside the building and engaging in a regulated activity that has been identified on that students ICMP. A voluntary request for space is given with permission from an adult and is often done in 5 minute increments, with extensions possible when working with the Support Staff

Time Outs:

Voluntarily taking space is encouraged but at times students will be given a TO or Time-Out an inability to focus or for disrupting the learning environment Time-out is used as a response to disruptive behavior for example, swearing, climbing on furniture/buildings, bullying, being provocative in actions or words, ignoring staff prompts to start or stop doing something, yelling, basically behavior that is preventing others from learning.

Time Away from the Group:

Students need to be observable when taking space. Staff are required to be actively supervising the student(s) at all times. Staff need to remain nearby and available to students who are taking space.

If a student has been separated from the group due to safety concern, staff are required to contact the Education Director or their designee to obtain approval prior to the 30-minute mark and every 30 minutes thereafter if the student continues to remain escalated/unsafe to return to the group. This will be documented in the student support log kept by support staff members. As soon as the student is emotionally ready to return to the group and safety is no longer a concern the student must be returned to their group. The student cannot be separated from the group based on a specific amount of time. If approval for continued escalated behavior are sought, clinical staff will make a determination if a mobile crisis assessment or an assessment at the emergency department is necessary

Categories

Given the values of the program, a student can be classified as being in one of the following programs:

1. On Protocol Status: the student has broken the value system in some way and is involved in resolving /repairing that issue and building trust.
2. Off Protocol Status: the student is working on his/her/their treatment goals and can participate in all aspects of the program and has earned some additional privileges, which are outlined below.
3. Honors Status: The student has had no Value violations and is averaging a B grade in all academic subjects and passing elective classes

The Implementation of this Therapeutic Work

The Cutchins Program for Children & Families has 40 years of providing care to children and families struggling with the effects of trauma and mental illness in a sanctuary of safety and love.

As a therapeutic school setting, we have the flexibility and experience to create individualized plans for each student and to set up an environment that helps young people thrive. This is an on-going process done in collaboration with caregivers and the extended treatment team to establish helpful structures. Additionally, we encourage youth to develop their own insights and strategies through Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) skills groups and regular skills training by milieu staff. We also value integration of Occupational Therapy services and sensory interventions throughout our school and residential programming. At the core of our work is an emphasis on the importance of developing safe and healthy relationships, both within and beyond our program.

The Integration of Academics and Therapeutic Work

Points:

For Students interested in gaining honors status and Honor Reward trips they have the option of carrying an individual point sheet each day. At the conclusion of each class, your teacher marks you points for that class. Your points contribute to your eligibility of Friday afternoon activities and your eligibility for Honors Status.

The rubric for Effort and Conduct Scores that make up most of your point sheet is shown above in the “Grading” Section of this document. This rubric is used for points on a daily basis and for documenting effort/conduct scores on report cards.

Resolve and Repair Work:

We understand that there are many paths to learning from and processing difficult experiences or behaviors. One means to do this in our school structure is through resolve and repair work.

Resolve work needs to be completed after a student engages in a behavior that is a violation of our values and earns the student consequences. Resolve work can be completed with a support staff, teacher, or clinician. This can take many forms but often involves either a written or verbal behavior chain. Sometimes resolve work can happen at the time of an incident, but more often will take place later in the day, when the student is in a more regulated state. The school has built in a Resolve and repair class at the end of the day which takes the place of an elective class if the Student has earned a Value Violation and has not resolved it before this time frame arrives at the end of the school day

Repair work is doing some sort of act of good will in an effort to figuratively or literally rebuild something, like a loss of trust in a relationship or a broken piece of property. At times it is expected or helpful for a student to engage in repair work after being involved in a behavior that hurt a relationship, the community, or campus property.

Policies and Procedures

For a copy of any/all of our school policies, please send a request to the Administrative Assistant at the school. If you would like to review our Policy and Procedures Manual, please make an appointment with the Administrative Assistant to review that manual.

603 CMR 28.00. Massachusetts Special Education Regulations

This resource on the DESE website provides us all with a shared understanding of the regulations that guide our work. Extensive information on the referral and evaluation process, the team process and the development of the IEP, placement and service options, parent involvement, the dispute resolution process and approval of public or private day and residential placements, and school district responsibility can be found at the DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) website at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr28.html>

Annual Parent/Guardian Signatures

The school notifies parents/guardians annually to attain signatures for the following documentation.

- Policies and procedures are available for review and/or to request a copy (done with the Student/Parent Handbook, the sign off sheet for parent's having received the handbook is documentation of this requirement).
- Notification on curriculum involving human sexual education or human sexuality issues pursuant to the Parental Notification Law M.G.G. c. 71, section 32A and that is maintained in the student records (specific form is used for this).
- Notification to parents regarding Behavior Support Policy and Procedures (via the Student/Parent Handbook, the sign off sheet for parent's having received the handbook is documentation of this requirement).
- Notification to parents regarding policies and procedures on Physical Restraints (via the Student/Parent Handbook, and with the signature page that the parent has received the handbook)
- Annual notification to parents regarding policies and procedures on Bullying Prevention and Intervention plan (via the Student/Parent Handbook, access to this document on the webpage, and with the signature page that the parent has received the handbook).

Anti-Bullying Regulations

The regulations on anti-bullying can be found in 603 CMR 49.
(<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr49.html?section=all>)

Bullying is the severe and repeated use by one or more students or staff members of written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or exclusion (*defined as repeated*

omission, ignoring, and an unwelcoming environment), or any combination thereof, directed at another student that has the effect of:

- (a) causing physical or emotional harm,
- (b) placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property,
- (c) creating a hostile environment at school for **another person**,
- (d) infringing on the rights of **another person** at school, or
- (e) materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

A student, staff person, parent/guardian who believes bullying has occurred, is asked to report this immediately. This can be done verbally, in writing or anonymously (though disciplinary actions cannot be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report). The allegation will be promptly and thoroughly investigated to determine all aspects of the reported incident(s). A written report will be shared with the parent of the target and the aggressor (if a bullying situation is determined). Plans will be put into place to avoid and/or deal with retaliation. Social Learning and DBT strategies are an integral part of our culture and will be the tools used for supporting growth in the social/emotional realm.

You may access New Directions' Bullying Prevention Policy at our website – www.cutchins.org – or contact the school and we will send you the document electronically or by mail.

Anti-Hazing Regulations

New Directions School strictly prohibits hazing in all forms. Any student who is involved in hazing will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Hazing also is a crime under Massachusetts law.

MGL 269, sections 17-19, applies to our secondary school students. As a part of this regulation, annually at the start of the school year, we distribute copies of the anti-hazing law to all students enrolled full time. For a full review of the law, please go to the following website:

http://s-p.mit.edu/government/house_docs/docs/MA_Hazing_Law.pdf

Each fall, or when a high school aged student enters our program, we review our anti-hazing policy with him/her. Please contact the school if you would like us to send you the document electronically or by mail.

Complaints and Procedures

Policy on Registering Complaints and Grievances - Parents and Students

There are procedures for registering complaints in place for both parents and students at New Directions School.

In the orientation packet that parents receive prior to their child's admission to New Directions School, is an "Important People to Know at the Center" information sheet and a client's rights letter. Both of these documents outline information relevant to complaint procedures.

The "Important People to Know at the Center" sheet provides the program phone number and identifies Mr. John Robert and Ms. Michelle Otis as the contacts for Educational concerns.

The client's rights letter outlines the official complaint procedures. For the school portion of the program, the process is to bring the complaint to the attention of either Dr. Tina Champagne, Chief Executive Officer or Mr. John Robert, Director of Education. The person who received the complaint will be responsible for investigating the complaint and if necessary, consulting with the Program Quality Assurances Services Unit at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to resolve the complaint. Parents are informed in the client's rights letter that if they are dissatisfied with the resolution of a complaint, they may appeal the decision to the Department of Education or the local district attorney. If additional information is needed about the right to appeal decisions, New Directions School will provide this information.

Students have a process to register complaints using concern sheets. A concern sheet for school related issues can be addressed to Tina Champagne or Mr. John Robert. On the concern sheet, the student indicates if they would like a response. The person who receives the concern sheet will investigate the complaint and if indicated, will respond orally or in writing.

The student is informed about the concern sheet complaint resolution process in their orientation to New Directions School.

The following persons are contacts who are responsible for correct implementation of policies.

- Dr. Tina Champagne, Chief Executive Officer
- Patrick Dineen, Director of Education
- Robert McCallum, Educational Milieu Coordinator

CLIENT'S RIGHTS LETTER

Dear Students, Families and/or Guardians:

During your stay at the Northampton Center for Children and Families, we will be making every effort to provide you with the best possible care and treatment. We assume that you will do your best to join us in these efforts.

If, at any time, you believe that you have been treated dangerously, illegally or inhumanely, you have the right to make an official complaint. You also have a right to file an official complaint regarding your education and care or to file a complaint alleging discrimination based on legally protected categories (e.g., race, color, sex, gender identify, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability and homelessness). To make an official complaint, you need to write your complaint with as much detail as possible (any staff member will give you as much assistance as you need). The written complaint should then be given to me. We will then consider, and if appropriate, investigate your complaint, and make a determination of what actions ought to be taken.

If the complaint regards a matter that occurred in the residential (non-school) part of our program, the Program follows the Complaint Investigation Procedure developed by the Department of Mental Health. In accordance with regulation 104 C:MR 24.05 (4)(a), the complainant is notified, in writing, of the decision and intended action to be taken within five

working days of the investigation report being presented to the person in charge of the investigation. The complainant has a right to obtain a copy of the investigation report. They also have five working days from the time of receipt of the letter to file a request for reconsideration. The complainant also has the right to appeal the decision of the Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health at the Department of Mental Health.

If the complaint regards a matter that occurred in the school portion of our program, the Program will investigate the complaint in accordance with the Department of Education requirements.

If you are dissatisfied with the determination we make and the actions we take, you have the right to appeal to the following parties: The Department of Mental Health, (if the complaint regards a matter in the residential part of our program), the local District Attorney (if you believe your complaint is based upon an illegal circumstance, or the Department of Education if a complaint regarding a matter of the school part of our program. Should you ever file a complaint with us, we will give you more specific information on your appeal rights and procedures.

We certainly hope that there will never be occasion for you to find the need to implement this process. However, we do want you to be informed of your rights to have serious matters addressed thoroughly.

Sincerely,
Dr. Tina Champagne
Chief Executive Officer

Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Audit

The CPR Audit (Coordinated Program Review) occurs every six years, and there is a mid-cycle review every three years within that 6-year cycle. A letter will be mailed/mailed to all parents/guardians when a program review is scheduled. During this audit, DESE will evaluate the school on specific criteria. You can see our most recent report on our website or at DESE at the following link: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/>

English Learners (ELs)

DESE also provides us all with extensive guidance on what is expected in the education of our ELs. This guidance includes identification, assessment, placement and reclassification of ELLs. It defines the components of SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) Programs. And it requires that all parents have access to documents associated with their child's educational program through the translation of these documents into his/her/their native language.

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/>

The sending school district will alert New Directions School of the need for these translations and we ask that you also reach out to us to request this service.

If an interpreter is needed at a team meeting, the sending district will coordinate this service with you so that your needs are fully met.

The program affirms its willingness to accept ELs into its program. ELs are afforded equal opportunities to access and participate in the program's services, activities and other benefits afforded to all other students. If required and agreed to, EL students will receive instruction in SEI or a different research-based English learner program that meets the requirements of the law, from a trained and qualified teacher. The EL student may also receive instruction in English by a licensed ESL teacher.

Emergency Evacuation Plans

Advance planning for emergencies and disasters is essential to provide for the safety of students and staff; it also strengthens the morale of all concerned to know that plans exist and that students and staff have been trained in carrying out the plans. The Program Director and Director of Education will develop and maintain plans that meet the requirements of state law for preparedness in case of fire, civil emergencies, and natural disasters. The Director of Education shall develop, in consultation with school nurses, school physicians, staff, local police, fire, and emergency personnel, an Emergency Medical Response Plan for the school. Each Plan shall include the following points.

1. A method of establishing a rapid communications system linking all parts of the school campus, including outdoor facilities, to local Emergency Medical Services along with protocols to clarify when EMS and other emergency contacts will be called.
2. In case of emergencies, the Director of Education will notify the Program Director, and the Executive Director, who will notify the remaining members of senior leadership and Board of Directors.
3. A determination of EMS response times to any location on the campus.
4. A list of relevant contacts with telephone numbers and a protocol indicating when each person shall be called, including names of experts to help with post-event support.
5. A method to efficiently direct EMS personnel to any location on campus, including the location of available rescue equipment.
6. Safety precautions to prevent injuries in classrooms and on the school campus.
7. A method of providing access to training in CPR and first aid for teachers, support staff, and other school staff.
8. In the event the school possesses Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), the location of all available AEDs, whether the location is fixed or portable, and a list of personnel trained in its use. New Directions location of the AED is in the Scott Building Support room.

The Director of Education shall annually review the response sequence with local police and fire officials. The Director of Education will meet all requirements for conducting fire drills and Emergency Response drills (at least twice per year) drills give students practice in moving with

orderly dispatch to designated areas under emergency conditions and allow staff to practice carrying out their assigned responsibilities for building evacuation.

FIRE DRILLS

To ensure that students and staff realize the importance of preparing for emergency action in case of fire, all employees and students shall be instructed in regard to their conduct during a fire drill. Personnel shall conform to these procedures which are based on state regulations:

1. The Director of Education shall formulate a plan for the protection and evacuation of all persons in the event of fire which shall include alternate means of egress for all persons.
2. The Director of Education shall see that each class instructor or supervisor receives proper instructions in the fire drill procedure for the room or area in which that person carries out his/her duties before assuming such duties.
3. Students shall be advised of the fire drill procedure and shall take part in a fire drill in conjunction with the fire department periodically throughout the school year.

Further, an up-to-date list of any children with mobility challenges shall be maintained and responsibility for their evacuation assigned to specific school personnel.

File: EBCB Legal Ref.: Massachusetts Department of Safety Regulations, Chapter 148, Sec. G-L, #16

Equal Access Regulations

Massachusetts General Law: MGL Chapter 76, Section 5-

Our program provides all student with equal access to services, facilities, and benefits, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness.

The policy for our school reads as follows:

New Directions School and Cutchins Programs for Children and Families does not exclude participation in any aspect of the program on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness.

New Directions School does not sponsor any clubs, sports, or intermural activities. If there were any such activities, New Directions School would ensure that communications regarding those activities would be translated into languages representative of the student and family populations.

Locker/Desk/Computer – Searches of Students –

Students may be issued lockers, without private combinations, desks, etc. at the opening of school or thereafter. Students should have no expectation of privacy in their school lockers, desks, computers, etc. Lockers, desks, and computers are for the use of students but remain the property of the New Directions School, Cutchins Programs for Children and Families. Students are advised that school administrators may inspect their locker, desk, computer, etc., without notice to ensure safety, in adherence to federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

The legality of a search of a student, his/her clothing and/or possessions depends simply on the reasonableness, under all circumstances, of the search (According to *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* 469 U.S. 325 1985). The search by a school official is "justified at its inception" when there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence that a student or students has violated or is violating the laws or rules of the school." Secondly, that "such a search will be permissible in its scope when the measures adopted are reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction." (USSC)

Medical Forms

Annually, parent(s)/guardian(s) are contacted by the nurse serving the program to attain signatures on the following documents. These forms are housed in the nurse's files.

- Emergency medical treatment
- Administration of medications

Photographs and Videos

Due to the nature of the school program and a residential mental health facility on campus, students taking photos and videos is PROHIBITED and strictly enforced. Students found to be taking photos or video within the school environment, on the Cutchins Programs for Children and Families, Inc, grounds, or during off grounds events will be subject to discipline up to placement termination.

Physical Restraint Regulations

New Directions School restraint policy is in compliance with all Department of Elementary and Secondary Education laws, policies, procedures and reporting requirements. All staff members are trained and tested by certified trainers in a 12 Hour De-Escalation Training taken from Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI), Non-Abusive Psychological & Physical Interventions (NAPPI) and DBT Skills. All staff also attends a 4-hour restraint and documentation training on the safe, proper, and approved restraint methods. We are committed to the ongoing process of finding new and innovative ways to reduce or eliminate the need for restraint.

All restraints that occur in New Directions School are documented on a restraint form and are in alignment with our restraint policy. For all Physical Interventions our internal restraint form is completed and reviewed by the School Clinical Coordinator, Milieu Coordinator and Director of Education. For each restraint that occurs in the program, a review of the restraint is conducted by

a member of the management team Procedures are in place to further investigate any allegations of abuse or neglect and all complaints and concerns are investigated and communicated with supporting agencies.

When a restraint occurs, the parent/guardian, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), school district and other team members are informed via email and this is followed by documentation in writing. For a full copy of the policy, please contact us with that request.

Progress Reports

Progress reports regarding a student's attainment toward the goals on the signed IEP are completed at the same time that report cards are disseminated. This task is completed quarterly – November, January, April, and June. Progress reports are sent out from New Directions School to the sending school district and to the parent/guardian.

SPED PAC

New Directions School hosts a SPED Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Information about meetings will be shared with parents/guardians.

A resource guide on SPED PAC can be found at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/pac/>

Technology Policy New Directions School Student Policy

Personal Technological Devices:

No personal electronics, **especially cell phones**, should be brought to school. If you do, it has to be turned in to staff upon arrival on campus. If you need to use your device, you are expected to come to the Support Room to explain the situation and ask permission to use your device. If there are special circumstances where you might utilize a (non-cell phone) electronic device, a Special Program may be created for you by your team. **If a student brings a personal device to the school, the replacement for that device, if it is lost or stolen is the responsibility of the student/family/guardian.**

Under no circumstances, at any time, shall a device be used at New Directions School to access the internet, take photos/videos, or download music.

Accessing the Internet on School Computers:

While at New Directions School, access to certain content while on the internet is expressly prohibited. If a student is found to be accessing inappropriate or restricted content the school may impose consequences that might include limiting student access to technology.

Terminations

When a student is terminated from the New Directions School in emergency circumstances, the sending school must first be informed of the decision and assume responsibility for that child (i.e., finds an alternative placement). No student will be terminated until the sending district and the private school placement can work collaboratively. The sending school district may request that termination be delayed for up to two calendar weeks so that an emergency Team meeting may be held or so that appropriate discussions take place and arrangements made. When a mutual agreement is made between the New Directions School and the sending public school, the termination may be delayed for longer than two calendar weeks.

In emergency situations when a student presents a clear and present threat of health and safety to him/herself or others, New Directions School will notify the Department of Education through the use of a Form 2, via the security portal.

For planned terminations, New Directions School will work on discharge and transition plans in conjunction with the sending school. The public school will call an IEP meeting and provide notice of this meeting to all appropriate parties, with ten (10) days of advance notice of the intended date of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to make a clear termination plan that shall be implemented in no less than thirty (30) days unless all parties agree to an earlier/later termination date.

These regulations are required under 603 CMR 28.09(12)(b).

Index

Anti-Bullying, 19
Anti-Hazing, 20
Attendance, 7
Complaints and Grievances, 20
Coordinated Program Review, 22
Curriculum, 10
Dress Code, 7
Emergency Evacuation Plans, 23
English Learners, 22
Equal Access, 24
Expectations, 6
Fire Drills, 24
Grading, 10
Homework, 12
IEP Process, 9
MCAS, 12
Medical, 25
Points, 18
Policies and Procedures, 19
Progress Reports, 26
Resolve and Repair Work, 18
Physical Restraint Regulations, 25
Rubric: (Effort and Conduct), 11
Schedule, 8
Searches of Students, 25
Senior Year, 14
Snow Days, 7
SPED PAC, 26
STAFF DIRECTORY, 4
Summer Program, 9
Technology Policy, 26
Terminations, 27
Therapeutic Component, 14
Time Out and Time Away, 16
Value System, 15
Vocational Program, 8