

Approved by Policy Council: May 16, 2017

Approved by Board of Directors: May 23, 2017

HEAD START COMMUNITY PROGRAM OF MORRIS COUNTY, INC.

Policy on Prevention of Physical or Mental Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Molestation

Head Start Community Program of Morris County, Inc. does not permit actual or threatened acts of physical or mental abuse, sexual abuse, sexual molestation or sexual misconduct (“prohibited conduct”) to occur in the workplace or at any activity sponsored by or related to us. In order to make this “zero-tolerance” policy clear to all employees and volunteers, we have adopted mandatory procedures that employees, volunteers, family members, board members, individuals and victims must follow when they reasonably suspect, learn of or witness prohibited conduct.

Abuse or molestation means each and every actual, threatened or alleged acts of physical or mental abuse, sexual abuse, sexual molestation or sexual misconduct performed by one person or by two or more persons acting together.

Reporting Procedure

All staff members who learn of or have a reasonable suspicion of prohibited conduct must immediately report it to their immediate supervisor or the executive director. If the victim is an adult, abuse or neglect will be reported by the supervisor or executive director to the local or state police or the Adult Protective Services Agency.

Head Start Community Program of Morris County, Inc. and all of its employees are Mandated Reporters under New Jersey law. Therefore, all staff members are required to report any suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect within 24 hours of the incident, or immediately if a child is determined to be in imminent danger. Reports need not include “proof” but are required when there is reasonable cause. All reports made in good faith are protected by law and may not be held against an employee. Employees may seek the guidance of a supervisor before reporting, but supervisor or peer approval is not necessary, and reporting should take place regardless of the opinion of others. However, the executive director must be notified that a report has been made.

Any staff member who knowingly fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect is considered a disorderly person, may be held criminally liable and is subject to a fine up to \$1,000 or up to six months’ imprisonment, or both. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect may also result in disciplinary action including termination.

Management team shall ensure that information regarding how to report is readily and visibly available for staff at all times. All reports of child abuse and neglect must be reported to the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-877-NJ ABUSE (1-877-652-2873). All employees must complete training on Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect upon hire, within two weeks of employment and before working alone in a classroom, and annually thereafter.

Investigation and Follow Up on Allegations of Prohibited Conduct

We take allegations of prohibited conduct seriously. Once an allegation is reported, the appropriate authorities will be contacted. We will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or regulatory agencies. We reserve the right to place the target(s) of the investigation on an involuntary leave of absence or reassignment to responsibilities that do not involve personal contact with individuals or students. To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with our legal obligation to report suspected prohibited to appropriate authorities, we will endeavor to keep the identity (ies) of the target(s) and the alleged victim(s) confidential.

If the investigation substantiates the allegation, our policy provides for disciplinary penalties, including but not limited to termination of the target's relationship with our organization.

Retaliation Prohibited

We prohibit retaliation against anyone, including an employee, volunteer, board member, student or individual, who in good faith reports prohibited conduct. Retaliation against a participant in the investigation is also prohibited. Anyone who retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation of prohibited conduct or intentionally provides false information to that effect will be subject discipline, up to and including termination.

Staff members are bound to follow this policy and are required to read, review and sign off on receipt of this policy annually.

HEAD START COMMUNITY PROGRAM OF MORRIS COUNTY, INC.

**Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policy on Prevention of Physical or Mental Abuse,
Sexual Abuse and Sexual Molestation**

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received and read the Policy on Prevention of Physical or Mental Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Molestation immediately preceding my signature below. I understand that I am bound to follow the policy and understand the consequences in the event that I fail to do so.

Date: _____

Name of Employee: _____

Signature: _____