



Handbook for Qualified Personnel

Mental Health Counselor
Occupational Therapy Qualified Personnel
Physical Therapy Qualified Personnel
Qualified Instructor

2025-2026

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Welcome to Southside Special Services of Marion County

Congratulations and good luck with your new position at Southside Special Services of Marion County! We believe our future success will be due in large part to the dedication and hard work of our employees. We are grateful for your team effort and shall count on you to support our continuing school improvement efforts.

This handbook is designed to inform you of our general employment expectations, fringe benefit programs, and employment policies. It is your responsibility to become knowledgeable of this information.

If, after your orientation, you have questions regarding the information in your handbook, or believe you have not received the benefits outlined within, please contact your immediate supervisor.

We hope your employment is rewarding, and we wish you the best of luck in your career with Southside Special Services of Marion County.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Nikki Cahill".

Mrs. Nikki Cahill
Executive Director
Southside Special Services of Marion County

INTRODUCTION

As Qualified Personnel for Southside Special Services (“SSSMC”), you are an integral part of our special education system for students with disabilities from ages 5 through 22 years. This Handbook has been prepared to give you a general overview of the benefits and policies of SSSMC and is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of SSSMC’s policies and procedures. Careful review and familiarization with this Handbook is your responsibility. The contents of this Handbook are for your information and shall not constitute a contract as to employment, employee benefits, or policies. SSSMC reserves the right to change the contents of this Handbook at any time. Please note that all employees are subject to the SSSMC Governing Board Policies and Administrative Guidelines.

An applicant is not considered employed until the applicant has cleared a criminal history background check, completed a pre-employment orientation, and reported for the first scheduled work shift.

The purpose of the SSSMC is to support the provision of appropriate special education and related services for students with disabilities for the four participating school districts. Programs and services are provided in the home school or home school district for most students with special needs. However, there are instances where the unique needs of students require specially designed programs and services. The cooperative works directly with the participating school districts to ensure such programs and services are in place. SSSMC focuses on supporting the needs of all students, staff, parents, schools, and the community as a whole to facilitate a collaborative effort in developing these systems of service delivery.

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Non-Discrimination

SSSMC does not discriminate on the basis of the Protected Classes of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and transgender identity), disability, age, religion, military status, ancestry, genetic information (collectively, “Protected Classes”), or any other legally protected category, in its programs, and activities, including employment opportunities as required by the Indiana Civil Rights Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act, and any other applicable federal, state, or local law.

Anti-Harassment

SSSMC is committed to providing a work environment that is free from harassment. Harassment, whether overt or subtle, or of a sexual nature or otherwise, is a form of employee misconduct that is demeaning to the victim, undermines the integrity of the employment relationship, and contrary to SSSMC’s goal of having employees serve as role models for students. Accordingly, all forms of unlawful harassment are strictly prohibited.

Sexual Harassment has been defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to that conduct is made a term or condition of employment;
- Submission to, or rejection of, that conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the employee; or
- That conduct has the effect of unreasonable interfering with an individual’s work performance or of creating a hostile or offensive work environment.

Examples of sexual harassment include the following:

- *Verbal conduct* of a sexual nature such as talking about sex or sexual feelings, telling sexual jokes or stories, asking personal questions about dating or sexual life, making sexual comments or innuendoes, whistling or making other suggestive sounds, repeatedly asking for dates or other personal attentions;
- *Nonverbal conduct* of a sexual nature such as displaying materials with sexually suggestive words or pictures, making sexual gestures, giving gifts or other items of a sexual or personal nature, staring at a person’s body or clothing, invading a person’s space by standing closer than appropriate under the circumstances; or
- *Physical conduct* of a sexual nature such as touching, kissing, hugging, massaging, brushing up against another person, having sex or attempting to have sexual relations with another person.

Harassment based on an employee’s or applicant’s race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and transgender identity), disability, age, religion, military status, ancestry, genetic information (collectively, “Protected Classes”), listed in the Non-Discrimination Policy above is also prohibited. As with sexual harassment, harassment based on any of these categories may include verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct.

Any incident of sexual or other harassment should promptly be reported to your supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or you believe it would be inappropriate to contact that person, you *must* contact the Human Resources office. You can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal.

Any supervisor who witnesses or reasonably believes harassment has occurred must promptly advise the Human Resources office, who will conduct a timely investigation as outlined below and maintain confidentiality to the fullest extent possible.

Anyone engaging in sexual or other harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Investigation Procedures

It is the policy of the Board to maintain an education and work environment which is free from all forms of harassment based on sex (including sexual orientation and transgender identity), race, color, national origin, religion, disability, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis. This commitment applies to all SSSMC operations, programs, and activities. All students, administrators, teachers, staff, and all other school personnel share responsibility for avoiding, discouraging, and reporting any form of unlawful harassment.

The Executive Director and Complaint Coordinator(s) are to provide appropriate training to all members of the SSSMC community related to the implementation of this policy and guidelines. All such training is to be age and content appropriate. SSSMC community means students, administrators, teachers, staff, and all other school personnel, including Board members, agents, volunteers, contractors, or other persons subject to the control and supervision of the Board.

The annual publication in the parent and staff handbooks and SSSMC website is to note that the Associate Director and Human Resources Manager are designated as the Anti-Harassment Complaint Coordinator(s) with whom complaints of sexual and other forms of unlawful harassment should be filed.

This policy and guidelines apply to unlawful conduct occurring on school property, or at another location if such conduct occurs during an activity sponsored by the Board. The Board will investigate all allegations of harassment and in those cases where unlawful harassment is confirmed, the Board will take immediate steps to end the harassment.

Individuals who are found to have engaged in unlawful harassment including the following prohibited acts will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

1. Retaliating against a person who has made a report or filed a complaint alleging harassment, or who has participated as a witness in harassment investigation.
2. Filing a malicious or knowingly false report or complaint of harassment.
3. Disregarding, failing to investigate adequately, or delaying investigation of allegations of harassment, when responsibility for reporting and/or investigating harassment charges comprises part of one's supervisory duties.

The Board reserves the right to investigate and resolve a complaint or report of unlawful harassment regardless of whether the SSSMC member or third party alleging the harassment pursues the complaint. All records generated under the terms of these administrative guidelines shall be maintained as confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Initiating a complaint, whether formally or informally, will not adversely affect the complaining individual's employment or participation in educational or extra-curricular programs. SSSMC will respect the privacy of the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the Board's legal obligations.

Both Informal and Formal processes for making a charge of harassment are available including processes for investigating a claim and rendering a decision whether or not the claim was substantiated.

To the extent appropriate and/or legally permitted, confidentiality will be maintained during the investigation process. However, a proper investigation will, in some circumstances, require the disclosure of names and allegations.

Anti-Retaliation/Protection of Whistle Blowers

Retaliation against any employee, or any applicant for employment, who has opposed or complained about any prohibited discriminatory practice or who has participated in any manner in an investigation or other proceeding about a prohibited discriminatory practice is also prohibited.

Employment decisions about an employee, or any applicant for employment, who has filed a charge of discrimination shall not be based on the fact that the person has filed a charge. Employment decisions shall be based only on legitimate business considerations such as performance. Discriminatory verbal or physical conduct should not be directed at any employee, or any applicant for employment, because of any protected activity.

Personnel/Payroll Records

A confidential personnel file is maintained for every employee, and may include the following:

- Job application and resume (if requested)
- Wage/salary information
- Job responsibilities and performance reviews
- Change in employment status
- Acts of commendation
- Disciplinary actions
- Federal and state tax information
- Record of job-related training and development
- Termination information, including an exit interview form

Medical records are maintained in a separate confidential (red folder) in the Human Resources Office.

Under the Access to Public Records Act, certain limited personnel file information may be required to be made available. Employees may review their personnel files by contacting the Human Resources office.

Substitutes

Positions may be filled with a substitute employee in the event a regular employee is ill or is not able to work. Substitutes are considered “as needed” employees and are subject to the *guidelines and procedures* in this Handbook and Board policy. Substitutes are not eligible for benefit programs with the possible exception of health insurance. Time accrued as a substitute does not count as years of service to SSSMC. When a substitute accepts a position, the substitute is acknowledging these conditions and limitations.

Substitute hourly wage is set by the SSSMC and may vary from year to year. Substitutes are subject to a criminal history check prior to employment.

Reassignment and Caseloads

SSSMC reserves the right to decide assignments and caseloads at any time for every employee regardless of years of experience or current placement. Qualified Personnel may submit a written request for transfer consideration to the Executive Director.

Reduction in Force

The Board reserves the right as warranted to eliminate therapy positions and reduce the number of therapy staff when the Board finds that program changes, changes in enrollment, return to duty from leave, closing of schools, territorial changes, or other good cause.

Once the positions to be eliminated are identified by the Board, the therapy staff members to be dismissed shall be identified on the basis of licensure and merit not years of service or seniority.

Employment of Relatives

SSSMC does not prohibit the employment of relatives, but does expect that the family relationship will not negatively affect work performance. An employee shall not be transferred or hired to work in a position where the employee is under the direct supervision of a family member. Family members are defined as persons who are married, persons who have acted in the capacity of a parent during normal parenting years, grandparents, children, grandchildren, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, or any of the above relationships resulting from marriage.

Criminal History Check

All employees are required to submit to a criminal history check prior to the initial date of employment. The criminal history check includes searches of federal or state criminal history databases, as well federal or state sex offender registries. Employees are required to pay any fees associated with the criminal history check and may be required to provide a set of fingerprints. Employees are required to submit to an additional criminal history check after every five-year period of employment and to pay any associated fees. Failure to answer honestly questions asked in relation to a criminal history check is grounds for discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

Conflict of Interest

Under the Indiana Criminal Conflict of Interest statute (Ind. Code § 35-44-1-3), employees are required to declare a conflict of interest if they have a spouse who works with SSSMC or if the employee, the employee's spouse, or the employee's dependent(s) receives any financial benefit as a result of doing business with SSSMC. Conflict of interest forms are available at the Human Resources office.

Outside Employment

It is expected that a full-time employee's responsibilities with the school district take priority over any outside employment activity. The employee's position with SSSMC, either full-time or part-time, may be jeopardized if outside employment has a negative impact on job performance with SSSMC.

Outside Activities

Consistent with Board Policy, staff members need to be cognizant of the potential conflict of offering tutoring or remedial services for students on their current caseload or classroom assignment. Staff are required to provide written notification to the Executive Director or designee prior to engaging in tutorial or remedial services for any students on their current caseload or classroom assignment after school hours or during any calendar breaks, including summer term. (Refer to AG 4231)

Professional Development Opportunities

The Board encourages and offers opportunities for support staff members to develop increased awareness, knowledge, and skills through participation in training sessions beyond that which they may attain through the performance of their assigned duties. Prior to attending a conference, workshop or professional development activity, either within the district or off-site, the staff members(s) must receive approval to attend the event by completing the SSSMC Professional Development form available on the SSSMC website.

Social Media/Education Technology

Staff members shall not access social media for personal use on the SSSMC network and shall access social media for educational use only. The Board does not sanction any use of Education Technology that is not authorized by or conducted strictly in compliance with this policy and its accompanying guidelines. Users who disregard this policy and its accompanying guidelines may have their use privileges suspended or revoked and disciplinary action taken against them.

Staff Use of Personal Communication Devices

Employees may carry PCDs/cellphones with them while at work including while operating SSSMC equipment subject to the following restrictions (Refer to AG 7530.02):

- A. Excessive use of a PCD/cellphone for personal business during work hours is considered outside the employee's scope of employment.
- B. Employees are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their personally-owned PCDs.
- C. The Governing Board assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, or damage to, or misuse or unauthorized use of, personally-owned PCDs brought onto its property, or the unauthorized use of such devices.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

General Employment Expectations

Many factors are considered when SSSMC selects a new employee. One of the primary considerations is the ability to get along with co-workers and supervisors, and the ability to project a positive image to our students, parents, and the community.

The following employment rules and procedures represent our general employment expectations. More specific rules and procedures will be discussed with you by your supervisor and will vary depending on your work assignment, location, and job description.

General Employment Rules

It is the employees' responsibility to maintain a valid license/permit and ensure it is on file in the Human Resources office. Failure to do so will jeopardize your continued employment with SSSMC. Employees are to work every scheduled workday, unless you have a personal illness, are approved for a personal business leave day, a death in your family, or other excused absence.

- Do your job to the best of your ability.
- Work as a "Team Player" with all school personnel.
- Follow SSSMC employment policies and procedures printed in this handbook.
- Maintain professional and appropriate relationships with your co-workers at all times

Employees are expected to timely file their leave day sheets, mileage claims, and payroll claim forms. These documents are submitted to the appropriate supervisor for signature.

Performance Evaluation

The performance of Qualified Personnel shall be assessed at least annually pursuant to procedures and an instrument approved by the Governing Board.

Access Card and Fee for Replacement

For the purposes of building access and security SSSMC-issued Access Cards/identification (ID) badges are to be worn by all employees at all times during the work day as a condition of employment with the following expectations:

- A. Each employee is solely responsible for the safe-keeping of his/her ID badge.
- B. Any lost ID badges are to be immediately reported by the employee to the HR office.
- C. The cost for replacement of an ID badge is \$10 payable by a Money Order drafted to SSSMC.
- D. The employee is to deliver the Money Order to the HR office to obtain a replacement ID badge.
- E. Employees are to return his/her ID badge to the HR office upon termination of employment for any reason.
- F. Consultants, substitutes, temporary employees, and all other non-employees may be issued an access card on a case-by case basis at the discretion of the Human Resources manager.

Lost identification badges without SSSMC/RLC building access *or those damaged by a student* will be replaced at no cost.

Safety Commitment

The health and safety of our employees is our priority. The following are important general safety reminders in the work place:

- Maintain your work areas - keep clean and organized
- Wear suitable shoes
- Watch footing to avoid slips, trips, and falls
- Keep doorways clear of debris and materials
- No Horseplay
- No Smoking/vaping on school grounds
- Know emergency phone numbers
- Know how to report an emergency
- Employees should be aware of the violent behavior of some of the students and use caution when interacting with them
- Back injuries are painful. You should know your limitations, get help when lifting. Use proper positioning- keep your back straight, lift with your legs, and carry the load close to your body. Never twist your back while lifting or carrying a load.
- Wipe up spilled fluids immediately
- Know how to report a fire in your location, know the locations of the fire extinguishers, and know the proper evacuation procedures
- Correct or immediately report unsafe conditions to your supervisor

District Dress Code

The work dress and appearance of all employees makes an impression on the community and reflects on SSSMC. All employees should, therefore, maintain their work dress and appearance in a business casual, professional

manner that is consistent with SSSMC's goals, including providing a positive example for students. Qualified Personnel is expected to abide by and follow the dress code of the member school district where they are assigned.

Examples of appropriate professional dress would include mid-length skirts, capris, slacks, khaki pants, jeans (with minimal holes), collared shirts, blouses, or t-shirts.

Examples of work dress and appearance that is **not** appropriate includes the following:

- Shirts with hoods
- Yoga pants or tights (These may only be worn with tops, such as a tunic or sweater that cover the back side.)
- Sweat pants
- Rubber and beach flip-flops, slides, crocs
- Tank or spaghetti strap tops
- Low-cut tops
- Shorts (unless administration has given prior approval for field trips and/or field day)
- T-shirts with profanity, depicting violence, alcohol, or drugs

SSSMC reserves the right to determine at its discretion whether an employee's work dress and appearance is appropriate, including body art and piercings (facial). Clear or flesh spacers are allowed to fill piercings.

Weapons and Safety

Although employees may store weapons and ammunition in locked vehicles located on school property during work hours, SSSMC and the RISE Learning Center are Gun Free Zones.

Tobacco

All SSSMC facilities and campuses, including the RISE Learning Center, are smoke-free. Employees may not smoke/vape or use tobacco products in school buildings, on school property, or in vehicles on school property.

Prohibited Conduct

SSSMC has certain rules of conduct that must be followed if work is to be performed in an efficient and orderly way. Violations of any of the following rules may, in the discretion of SSSMC, result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. The following rules are not intended to be all-inclusive and are subject to change at SSSMC's discretion.

Actions Toward SSSMC:

- Improper use of SSSMC equipment for personal use or business (i.e. telephones, computers, maintenance equipment, etc.)
- Unauthorized and/or Improper use of the SSSMC/RLC building facility – See the Facility Usage Guidelines and (Refer to AG 7510)
- Failure to implement an order from an administrator within the time allotted.
- Theft of school and/or any personal property.
- Theft, fraud, or misrepresentation of facts related to the employee's status as an employee or in the course of the performance of the employee's duties. Insubordination (including, but not limited to, refusal to do work or to accept and follow directions from supervisors).
- Withholding services or engaging in actions with other employees in order to attempt to influence a decision of the Executive Director or Superintendents' Governing Board.
- Violation of the Board policy on the use of computer resources.

- Possession, use, and/or discharge of any weapons on the premises.

Actions Toward Others:

- Failing to protect confidential information including personally identifiable information about a student or former student in violation of the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act. (Refer to AG 8330)
- Making an untrue or deceptive statement in an internal investigation conducted by the Executive Director or designee.
- Stealing or misusing the property of another person including use of information protected by a copyright.
- Harassment of another employee or student as prohibited by Board policy.
- Deliberately restricting the work of others.
- Physical violence or actions or words that could reasonably be expected to provoke physical violence.
- Injuring or attempting to injure a person.
- Committing acts that endanger or injure one or more persons. (Refer to AG 7420)
- Abuse or neglect of a child.
- Improper relationship with a school student.
- Damaging or attempting to damage the real or personal property of another person.

Employee Actions:

- Failure to notify the supervisor when absent.
- Abuse of sick leave or personal business day privileges.
- Falsifying time sheets.
- Unauthorized or excessive absences as further specified in Leave Policies below.
- Violation of the drug-free workplace policy.
- Smoking/vaping or using tobacco products on SSSMC premises.
- Using, drinking, or possessing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances on the job, or reporting to work under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or controlled substances. (Refer to AG 4122)
- Sleeping on the job.
- Inattention to or neglect of assigned duties.
- Employees are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their personally-owned cellphone (Refer to AG 7530). Excessive cellular phone use during working hours is prohibited.
- With the exception of prior Administration approval, children of staff members are not allowed in the SSSMC/RLC building during business hours. (Refer to AG 4120)
- Any other reason not considered to be in the best interest of the SSSMC

Self-Reporting Of Arrest, Filing Of Charges, Or Conviction

During the course of his/her employment with SSSMC, each employee shall be required to report his/her arrest or the filing of criminal charges against the employee and conviction of criminal charges to the Executive Director within two (2) business days of the occurrence. The Executive Director shall obtain a review of each reported arrest and/or conviction and shall recommend appropriate action to the Board considering the risk to members of the SSSMC community presented by the continued employment of the convicted employee. Failure to self-report within two (2) business days may lead to a recommendation of termination for insubordination.

Pest Control and Use of Pesticides

While pesticides protect students and staff members from pests that may be found in the school and its surrounding grounds, under some circumstances the insecticides may pose a hazard.

The RISE Learning Center Administrative Assistant serves as the contact person for information regarding this policy to ensure that parents and staff members are informed annually of SSSMC's pest control policy. (Refer to AG 8432)

Environmental Health and Safety Issues

As required by Board policy, the Executive Director has appointed the Operations Supervisor (Jim Grass) as the Coordinator for Indoor Air Quality (IAQ). The IAQ Coordinator is to serve as the lead contact person for matters related to indoor air quality in the facilities operated by SSSMC.

Facility Use

An employee/sponsor for an event/activity must complete the Application for Facility Use for School-Organization Sponsored Event/Activity form and submit it to the RISE Learning Center Administrative Assistant for approval. The employee/sponsor will receive an email from the RLC Admin Assistant with approval for use of the facility. The event will be placed on the school master calendar and the room will be reserved. The employee/sponsor must log on to the e-HelpDesk ticket system and under the Facilities tab to request room set-up arrangements, including room diagram.

Discipline Procedures

In the event it is necessary to take disciplinary action, your immediate supervisor and/or the Human Resources Manager may use the following procedure:

- Step 1. Discussion with your supervisor (verbal warning);
- Step 2. Written warning;
- Step 3. Final warning/Suspension;
- Step 4. Termination.

The main purpose of having a disciplinary procedure is to give a valued employee an opportunity to correct and improve improper conduct, poor job performance, or other similar deficiencies. In some instances, suspension or termination without prior warning may be imposed. SSSMC reserves the right to suspend or terminate any employee without prior notice, and without utilizing the procedure outlined above.

Renewal/Refusal to Renew Service Agreement

Written notice of renewal or refusal to renew shall be provided to the employee by April 30 of the year of service agreement expiration. If notice is not given by SSSMC by April 30 of the year of service agreement expiration, the service agreement shall continue only for the following school year. Before the service agreement is terminated the employee will be given an opportunity for a conference with the Executive Director or designee.

Termination/Dismissal/Resignation

SSSMC requests that any employee who wishes to resign give at least fourteen (14) calendar days advance notice. Such notice is considered a courtesy to SSSMC, but is not required. This request should not be construed as creating a contract as to employment. As stated above, all non-certified employees of SSSMC are at-will employees. Accordingly, all such employees may terminate their employment or be terminated by SSSMC at any time, for any reason.

Recommendation for dismissal may be made to the Executive Director and/or appropriate administrator.
(Human Resources)

The notification of dismissal will be provided to the Superintendents' Governing Board by the Executive Director or designee.

Retirement

Employee's intent to retire should be submitted in writing to the Human Resources office at least 30 days prior to their last scheduled work day in order to allow for the completion of necessary paperwork on behalf of the retiree.

ABSENCE AND LEAVE POLICIES

Reporting Absences

Employees are required to report absences by text to **their supervisor and complete the Google Absent Form** by 6:30am on the morning of the absence.

Paid Leave Days

Consistent with the current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), Qualified Personnel shall be granted fifteen (15) paid leave days per year. No more than three (3) consecutive paid leave days are permitted without providing medical documentation. A Qualified Personnel may not use paid leave days for the purpose of extending the break including but not limited to fall, winter, spring, or summer break. Any unused paid leave days shall be rolled over into the Qualified Personnel's accumulated paid leave days at the end of each school year. Additional paid leave days will be granted at the discretion of the Board or as required by state law.

Family Illness Leave Days

A Qualified Personnel may use, from his/her available accumulated paid leave days, a maximum of ten (10) days per year as family illness. These days will be subtracted from the Qualified Personnel's accumulated paid leave. All requests for such leave must be in writing and the Qualified Personnel must specify his/her relationship to the family member for whom the family illness day is being requested and given to the supervisor. Immediate family in this section includes any relative or dependent living within the household of the employee. Also included are the employee's spouse, child, father, mother, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother, sister, brother's spouse, sister's spouse, grandparent, and grandchild, whether or not such individual is living within or outside the household of the employee. All employees are required to report absences to Administrative Assistant as soon as possible or by 6:30am on the work day to allow for securing a substitute employee, where applicable. The employee shall indicate the use of a family illness day on their timesheet.

If an employee does not have any accumulated paid leave days and has exhausted FMLA leave (or FMLA leave is otherwise unavailable), the employee may make a written request to the Executive Director or designee for unpaid family illness leave days. The Executive Director or designee shall have the discretion to grant or deny such requests.

Child rearing/Adoption Leave

Child-rearing/Adoption Leave will be defined as follows:

- A. Child-rearing/Adoption Leave utilizes the employee's available paid leave days.

- B. Child-rearing/Adoption Leave commences the day following the birth or placement of the employee's child and continues for six (6) weeks. During this 6-week period, the Qualified Personnel employee may use available paid leave days and/or utilize the 10-day paid Child-rearing/Adoption Leave benefit described in paragraph C below. Any changes to the commencement date must be approved by the Executive Director of SSSMC upon submitting a formal written request.
- C. The Child-rearing/Adoption benefit consists of ten (10) consecutive paid days, which shall not be charged against an employee's available paid leave. This benefit must be used by the employee during the 6-week period described in paragraph B above.
- D. The employee granted such a leave will be returned to the same assignment or one which is comparable and equal in benefits as determined by the administration.

Funeral Leave Days

Funeral leave shall be granted for death in the immediate family beginning on the day of death and for a period not to exceed five (5) work days to be taken within 30 days of the day of death. Immediate family in this section shall mean an employee's spouse/domestic partner, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, sibling, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent by marriage, aunt (relative or by marriage), uncle (relative or by marriage), niece (relative or by marriage), nephew (relative or by marriage), cousin (relative or by marriage), step parent, step child, and a relative or legal dependent living with the employee.

Funeral leave for the death of a relative by marriage beyond those listed above, including the employee's children's grandparents shall be granted not to exceed two (2) days. The employee shall indicate the use of a funeral leave day on their timesheet.

It is understood that in the event of a death during any vacation break, employees will be given funeral days within thirty (30) days from the day of the death not days when school is back in session.

Funeral leave will be granted without loss of compensation and will not be charged against sick leave. These days do not accumulate from year to year and employees shall have no right to receive payment for any such days upon separation of employment for any reason, whether voluntary resignation, involuntary termination, or otherwise.

Under extenuating circumstances, arrangements for additional funeral leave days may be approved upon written request to the Executive Director or designee. These days will be deducted from available sick day balance.

FMLA Leave Days

SSSMC will comply with the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act and corresponding federal regulations. The following is a general overview of SSSMC's FMLA leave policy. For further information, contact the Human Resources office. In the event of a conflict between SSSMC's FMLA leave policy and the FMLA, the latter controls.

To be eligible for FMLA leave an employee must have worked for SSSMC for at least 12 months and have worked at least 1,250 hours (7 hours daily x 180 working days) during the 12 months prior to the start of the FMLA leave. These are to be actual hours worked less leave days. An employee is eligible for up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period for the following reasons and with the appropriate documentation:

- For the birth of the employee's child and to care for such child.
- For the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care.

- To care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition.
- Because of the employee's own serious health condition.
- Any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, child, or parent is a covered military member on covered activity duty.
- An employee eligible for FMLA leave must exhaust all accumulated sick and personal business days concurrently with unpaid FMLA leave.

There is a 12-week limit for benefit coverage after which the employee is responsible for 100% (COBRA) payment of all benefits.

In addition, eligible employees are entitled 26 workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness who is the spouse, child, parent, or next of kin of the employee.

It is the employee's responsibility to provide notification if FMLA is needed. The twelve (12) month period measured forward from the date the staff member's first FMLA leave begins (i.e., the "leave year" is specific to each individual staff member).

Forms for requesting FMLA are in the appendix of this handbook and are also available from the Human Resources office.

Unpaid Leave of Absence

SSSMC does not routinely grant unpaid leave of absence. However, we realize that there will be some exceptions, such as extended illness, that require special consideration. All available paid leave days, as well as any unpaid leave days under FMLA, must be used before an employee may request additional unpaid leave. SSSMC may grant an unpaid personal leave of absence on an individual basis, ***as submitted in writing to the Executive Director or designee***. The decision to grant an unpaid leave of absence will be based on the length of requested leave, the length of service, the employee's past job performance, and the overall operational needs of SSSMC. However, absences in excess of 30 work days could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Scheduled Holidays

Employees will **not** work nor get paid for the following days:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| • Labor Day | • Winter Break (including Christmas and New Year's) |
| • Fall Break | • Martin Luther King Day (unless snow make-up day) |
| • Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day | • Presidents Day (unless snow make-up day) |
| • Thanksgiving Day | • Spring Break |
| • Friday after Thanksgiving Day | • Memorial Day |

Court Duty

SSSMC encourages classified staff to fulfill their civic duty to serve on jury duty or when under court order to appear as a trial witness. Regular compensation will be paid for the days served on jury duty or as a trial witness. Staff will be allowed to keep any stipend and or mileage payment from the court. It is the employee's responsibility to notify the employee's immediate supervisor of court duty as soon as practicable. It is also the employee's responsibility to secure from the court and deliver to the Human Resources office verification of the court duty.

Election Day Poll Worker

Employees who work at the polls on Election Day must use a personal business leave day to do so. Employees should request this day at least five (5) working days in advance.

Subpoenas

Employees who receive subpoenas for reasons related to school business should notify their immediate supervisor as soon as practicable. Employees who attend court for such subpoenas will be compensated in a manner consistent with the Court Duty policy above.

Employees who receive subpoenas to appear in court for reasons other than school-related business should contact their immediate supervisor. An employee may submit the absence as personal business leave or the employee, with approval of the immediate supervisor, may schedule time(s) to make up the hours required for court appearance, or the supervisor may determine that the employee's absence will be recorded as "lost time" with no compensation. The employee is to provide a note from the court indicating the hours that the employee was required to be at the court proceeding.

Snow Days

Employees under this handbook do not work when school corporations call for the closure of public schools. Employees will follow the school corporation calendar and are expected to be present for the snow make up day as scheduled.

Shortened School Days

For two-hour delays, employees are expected to report to work fifteen (15) minutes prior to the arrival of students and will receive a full day pay.

In cases of early release of students, e.g. due to weather, employees must remain on duty until regular dismissal time in order to be paid for a full day.

WAGE POLICIES

Salaries

The Board adopts salary schedules annually effective the beginning of the first full payroll period after July 1st of each year.

Payment of Salary

Employees who have elected to receive 24 equal pays during the school year will be paid monthly on the 5th and 20th (including summer break).

Payroll Deductions

Payroll deductions will be withheld for Federal Withholding Tax, State Adjusted Gross Income Tax, Social Security and Medicare, County Option Tax according to law, and Public Employees Retirement Fund (PERF), as well as any voluntary payments and contributions listed in the Benefits section of this Handbook.

Direct Deposit

All employees shall participate in the Direct Deposit Program. The Board will direct all net wages to the account(s) of all employees to any qualified financial institution recognized for direct deposit by the corporation's originating bank.

BENEFITS

Introduction to Benefits

The following descriptions of our benefits are for the current school year, are not considered legal plan descriptions, are not a contract to provide benefits, and do not contain all the details under each benefit. SSSMC cannot guarantee the status of any benefit package or employees subject to this Handbook beyond the current school year. Be sure to read the detailed information provided to you about your benefits to understand the extent of coverage and exclusions under each individual plan.

Employees must work 30 hours per week to be eligible for health and dental benefits. Your cost for these plans may change from year to year. In addition, the waiting periods for participation in these plans vary from plan to plan. See the Human Resources Manager for more details on each of these plans. In the event of a conflict between the following descriptions and the plan description or applicable law, the plan description or applicable law controls.

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) a Variable Hour Team Member (employees who work less than 30 hours per week and/or substitutes) is considered Variable Hour if, at their start date, it cannot be determined he/she will reasonably be expected to work, on average, at least 30 hours per week during the determination period because the employee's hours are variable or otherwise uncertain. A determination period is a 12-month measurement period starting with the first of the month following the date of hire, initially, and annually therefore from November 1 to October 31 of each year. If, after the determination period, it is calculated that the Variable Hour Employee worked an average of 30 hours per week, the employee and/or substitute will be eligible for the medical benefits for 12 months, as long as he/she continues to be employed during that 12 months. At the end of that 12 months, the hours worked per week during the subsequent determination period will again be reevaluated.

Worker's Compensation

All employees are covered by worker's compensation insurance at no cost to the employee. If an employee is injured while on duty and the injury resulted from an accident arising out of his/her job assignment, the employee is eligible for benefits from worker's compensation insurance. The benefit will typically pay medical bills, related medical expenses, and lost wages.

In order to receive benefits from this insurance, an employee must submit a completed Injury Report Form within twenty-four (24) hours of the injury. Forms are available from the employee's immediate supervisor or the Human Resources office. **It is important that an employee report any on-the-job injury, no matter how minor, as a failure to do so may result in forfeiture of the employee's rights to benefits.**

An employee should take great care in completing the Injury Report Form, a copy of which is included in the Appendix. Complete information must be provided for The Employee Section, The Time and Place Section, and The Incident Information Section. The unsigned report should be given to the Human Resources office who will sign the report and forward to the insurance company.

Scheduled follow up visits with the health care provider must be kept and documented. Documentation should be sent to the Human Resources office. Failure to comply with the appropriate follow up visits and reporting could result in the claim being closed and the employee assuming the costs for the medical services.

In the event an employee is required to be absent due to an injury sustained as a result of an assault and/or battery, or accident in the course of employment while properly discharging his/her duties, the absence shall not be charged against the employee's sick/personal leave. If the injury is determined to be compensable under workers' compensation laws, the employee is to receive the equivalent of a full day's pay for all eligible work days. The employee's workers' compensation check(s) will be mailed directly to the HR office to be copied for payroll adjustment purposes. The HR office will contact the employee to pick up his/her check. The employee will keep the workers' compensation check(s) and be paid the remaining daily balance for the eligible work days on the SSSMC payroll schedule.

Health and Dental Insurance

Employees may participate in health insurance and dental insurance programs offered by the Board to support staff employees. The Human Resources Manager notifies all new employees of health care options through the Health Insurance Market Place and the Hoosier School Benefit Trust at time of employment.

Coverage for eligible new employees shall be effective on the first day of the month following 30 days of employment as long as the application is received within the first 30 days of employment.

Term Life Insurance

The Superintendents' Governing Board will pay the entire yearly premium less one dollar (\$1.00) which the employee is required to pay. The term life insurance coverage is \$50,000 with Accidental Death and Dismemberment. New employees have 30 days to enroll after employment.

Short Term Disability

The Superintendents' Governing Board provides payroll deductions for a program of income protection insurance. Participation in the program selected by the employer is an individual decision and a financial responsibility of the employee.

Long Term Disability

The Superintendents' Governing Board provides payroll deductions for a program of income protection insurance. Participation in the program is the individual decision and a financial responsibility of the employee. The Plan will be selected by the Hoosier School Benefit Trust.

Tax Deferred Annuities

The Board provides payroll deductions for employees who wish to participate in a tax deferred annuity program. Those who wish to participate must enroll with an approved company. Enrollment applications must be received by January 1st or June 15th each year. Anyone who wishes to adjust tax deferred contributions, transfer, or change companies must notify the business office by January 1st or June 15th each year.

Retirement Pension Program

Full time support staff employees (30 hours or more per week) are included under the provisions governing the Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF). This retirement program pays a benefit to employees over and above Social Security benefits when the employee reaches retirement age. The employee contributes 3% of his/her gross earnings to this program and the Superintendents' Governing Board contributes an amount based upon total cost experience.

Acknowledgement

Review and initial Items 1 – 6 and sign at the bottom

- _____ 1. I am aware that a full copy of the 2025-2026 Qualified Employee Handbook for Southside Special Services of Marion County is available to me at the website www.riselearningcenter.org.
- _____ 2. I have received an outline of handbook updates for the 2025-2026 school year.
- _____ 3. I have had an opportunity to have my questions answered with regard to the Handbook and agree to abide by the policies and procedures during my employment.
- _____ 4. I acknowledge that my job description may include involvement in health care services, basic life support, and other services that may require me to place my hands on a student for therapeutic or sanitary purposes.
- _____ 5. I understand that my employment is “at will,” which means my employment may *be terminated at any time for any reason, with or without cause and with or without notice at the option of either myself or SSSMC*.
- _____ 6. I have read and agree to abide by the SSSMC Safety Commitment outlined in this handbook.

Any variation, limitation, or modification of the right to terminate my employment at any time for any reason, with or without cause or with or without notice, must be set forth in a written agreement and signed by BOTH the SSSMC Executive Director or designee AND the employee.

This Handbook may not be used as a basis for a claim against the school system or its agents, officers, or employees in the event my employment is terminated.

In the event there is any confusion or doubt as to the provisions of this Handbook, I agree that I will seek clarification of these policies and procedures from either my immediate supervisor or the Human Resources office.

PRINT EMPLOYEE NAME: _____

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

SSSMC REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____