

Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Policy 2.14 Abuse Awareness and Prevention	Effective: 12/17/24
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ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

POLICY

The Board recognizes and condemns abuse and neglect that affects people with disabilities and their families. The Board must promote abuse awareness and prevention, the building of healthy relationships, a nurturing environment, accountability, and be a protector of health and safety. To this end, this policy is intended to clarify appropriate and inappropriate interactions between employees and children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities, to reduce the risk of abuse by an employee.

Appropriate Physical Interaction	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Side hugs• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs• Pats on the shoulder or back• Handshakes• High-fives and hand slapping• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms• Arms around shoulders• Holding hands• Physical support or other therapy approved by a Physical or Occupational Therapist.• Physical prompting as outlined in the student IEP based on therapy recommendations• Any MANDT approved physical hold or restraint identified in an individual’s behavior support plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full-frontal hugs• Kisses• Showing affection in an isolated area• Lap sitting• Wrestling• Piggyback rides• Tickling• Allowing a student to cling to an employee’s leg• Any type of massage given by or to a student or individual• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the client or the employee• Compliments relating to physique or body development• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas.• Prohibitive practices as outlined by MANDT.

It is understood that certain physical interactions are developmentally appropriate based on the age of the child and/or sensory diet as written in a positive behavior support plan or occupational therapy plan of care.

Employees are prohibited from speaking to children, youth or adults with developmental disabilities in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Employees and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with students or individuals or discuss any of their own sexual activities with students or individuals.

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The Board recognizes that appropriate verbal interactions with children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities includes positive reinforcement, encouragement, praise, and empathetic redirection and/or feedback.

A team approach should be used with children, youth, and adults with disabilities. If the necessity for one-on-one interactions between employees and children, youth, and adults with disabilities arises, the interaction should occur in an unenclosed area and with the knowledge of another employee. Employees are to be encouraged to alert each other when questionable behavior is displayed. All incidents should be reported to management and an incident report should be filed.

The Board has developed a Crisis Communication Plan in the event that a crisis condition exists pertaining to a situation of abuse. The Communications Manager reports directly to the Superintendent and is responsible for the dissemination of information to include media briefings, releases, statements, photos, interviews, letters, staff alerts, or phone calls unless otherwise directed by the Superintendent.

The Crisis Communication Plan is designed to be used in conjunction with all safety procedures and reporting requirements as outlined in Board Policy 2.12 Incidents Adversely Affecting Health and Safety.

The Board will ensure comprehensive hiring practices are in place that include: background checks, mandated abuse registry checks per Board Policy 4.04, and the use of interview questions designed to identify candidates who possess the skills and competencies for the job.

The Board shall provide training to all employees to instill core competencies to be able to assess the needs of people served, determine which needs are unmet, and have strategies to decrease their own personal stress, anxiety, and upset. Central to this training is an understanding of the effects of trauma on people and how employees can build healthy relationships with people served. The Board is committed to not only ensuring abuse awareness and prevention efforts are to be made with its employees, but also with the provider community. This is to be accomplished through the sharing of training, resources, and consultation.

The Board will work in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and the Ohio Department of Education to monitor the services and supports provided by the Board and the provider community to ensure: choices are being offered, independence is promoted, and that all interactions are characterized by dignity and respect.

Historical Resolution Information		Reviewer(s):
Date	Resolution Number	Management Team
12/17/19	12-56-19	
10/26/21	10-38-21	
12/17/24	12-61-24	

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PROCEDURE

1. Filling vacancies involves a comprehensive hiring system facilitated by the Human Resources Department. The hiring procedure is a step-by-step process to identify the Board's needs, recruit and eventually hire the most qualified candidates.
2. The Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities has established core competencies which are the combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes that contribute to enhanced employee performance and ultimately organizational success.
3. Possessing and demonstrating the Board's core competencies align with an employee's ability to build healthy relationships. The Board's core competencies support "emotional Intelligence", which is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships thoughtfully and empathetically.
4. Behavior based interview questions are used during the interview process and are designed to elicit examples of situations where the candidate demonstrated the use of a core competency or is able to verbalize a response that exhibits the application of a core competency.
5. During the interview process, behavior based interview questions are used by the Human Resources representative as well as the Hiring Manager. Ascertaining whether the candidate possesses the Board's core competencies is an important component of the overall hiring process.
6. MANDT and Trauma Informed Care training have been identified as required trainings for all employees. New employees receive training during new employee orientation. Incumbents receive the training as required by the criteria established based upon their job responsibilities. This training is also available to the provider community.
7. The Board's training approach regarding MANDT is based on the specific duties of the job. Please note the grid below identifies the chapters within the MANDT program that specific employee groups receive during training based on their job duties.

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Preschool Teachers, Assistants, Therapy, and Early Intervention Employees, and Transportation Employees	School Aged Teachers, Assistants, and Therapy Employees	All Nursing Employees	Preschool and School Aged Assistant Substitutes and Follow-Along Substitutes	All Other Employees
Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 8	Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, & 9	Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, & 9	Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, & 9	Chapters 1, 2, & 3
Relational & Release Chapters	Relational, Support, Releases, & Restraint Chapters	Relational, Support, Releases, & Restraint Chapters	Relational, Support, Releases, & Restraint Chapters	Relational Chapters

8. In order for employees to understand how trauma affects a person and how to respond to someone who has experienced it, Trauma-Informed Training is provided to all employees of the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities. New employees receive the training during new employee orientation.
9. The Board provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to employees and their dependents. The EAP is a free confidential counseling and assistance service provided to help employees and their family members with all types of personal problems. The Board also offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to the Provider community.

An employee who is concerned about their own personal health and/or safety should always seek assistance. If an employee is concerned about the health and/or safety of an individual or student, they should always seek assistance from their Supervisor.

10. Periodic coaching may be utilized to remind and/or reinforce practices or core competencies identified as the result of this Policy.
11. The Provider Compliance & Support Department is a resource that is available to the provider community to support abuse awareness and prevention efforts.