



Fort Bliss Child and Youth Services
Employee Handbook
June 2024



You have been provided with this staff handbook to read at the time of employment. If you have any questions regarding the handbook, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification. You will sign that you have received, read, understand, and will comply with the requirements of the staff handbook within one week of commencing work. A copy of the staff handbook is available to you at any time.

Staff should review the handbook periodically and are responsible for understanding and complying with its content.

WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

Welcome to our Child and Youth Service (CYS) team! Whether you are managing a program, a facility, providing direct childcare, cooking, fixing things or keeping our facilities at hospital-grade cleanliness, you are a valued employee and have something worthwhile to contribute.

In October 2007, Army Leadership unveiled the Army Family Covenant, expressing the Army's commitment to providing the Army Family with a quality of life that honors the sacrifices Soldiers and their Families make to protect America's freedom. The Covenant has led to significant improvements, including the standardization and funding of Family Programs and Services, enhanced accessibility and quality of health care, upgraded Soldier and Family Housing, and ensured excellence in schools, youth services, and childcare. Additionally, it has improved recreational facilities and overall Quality of Life, and expanded education and employment opportunities for Family members.

Although the Army Family Covenant name changed to Total Army Strong, Army Leadership is committed to "ensuring excellence in schools, youth services, and childcare." The Army truly believes that the strength of our Soldiers comes from the strength of their Families. Our role in Total Army Strong is to enable soldiers to focus on their mission, confident that their children and youth are receiving excellent care and programming.

We are especially proud that we continue to deliver quality child and youth programs as demonstrated by the fact that our facilities are annually certified by the Department of Defense. Our CDC and SAC Programs have been nationally accredited by external professional organizations which require compliance to exacting program standards.

This handbook was created to help familiarize all employees with procedures, scheduling, routines, and the philosophy of Fort Bliss Child and Youth Services (CYS). As an employee you are expected to become familiar with many aspects of our program, as well as your obligations and rights as a member of our staff. This handbook will assist in informing you of those rights and responsibilities. If you have further questions, please ask.

Mission Statement: Our Mission Is Caring: Child and Youth Services is an integral part of the Army mission. Our programs support the soldier which in turn enhances Army readiness. In other words, a soldier can concentrate on his/her mission knowing that their children and youth are safe and supervised by trained and professional staff while participating in quality developmental programs.

Our Philosophy: Fort Bliss Child and Youth Services is dedicated to offering high-quality, affordable, and convenient care and programs. We are committed to providing a safe, healthy environment with positive and enriching learning experiences, ensuring loving care for all children and youth.

Our Goals and Objectives: Our goal is to meet and exceed our customers' expectations by providing high-quality care and programming that adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Council on Accreditation (CoA), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Installation Management Command (IMCOM), and the Department of Defense (DoD). We are committed to ensuring the safety of our children and giving our customers peace of mind, knowing that their children are well cared for by highly trained staff. Our activities are designed to support children's developmental stages, helping them experience a positive "head start" in their education.

Vision Statement: We envision providing an environment filled with warm, loving care that fosters the holistic development of children and youth. Each day, we care for over 1,300 children and youth, ranging in age from six weeks to eighteen years, during our 74-hour weekly operating period.

Our staff, while typically assigned to specific age groups and programs, are versatile and may be called upon to:

- Work with different age groups within the same program.
- Serve the same age group in a different program.
- Assist in different programs with various age groups.

Staff at our Child Development Centers (CDC), School Age Centers (SAC), and Youth Centers (YC) share Saturday duty to distribute staffing responsibilities fairly and ensure that children and youth see familiar faces throughout the week.

As team members, we uphold the values of respect, caring, responsibility, citizenship, trustworthiness, fairness, and inclusion. We expect our staff to:

- Take initiative to assist whenever needed.
- Show respect for everyone.
- Be courteous and encouraging to colleagues.
- Communicate effectively.
- Consider and understand others' perspectives.
- Be flexible, loving, kind, and genuinely care for children and youth.

Our program focuses on providing developmentally appropriate experiences in a safe, pleasant, and enriching atmosphere. All staff members contribute to teaching social skills, creative and artistic expression, motor skills, responsibility, leadership, and independence.

Please keep in mind that the children and youth you work with have a need for:

- Security
- Love and affection
- Understanding
- A sense of belonging
- Recognition
- Respect
- Their individuality
- New experiences
- New activities that will challenge their interests and abilities
- The ability to direct their own activities
- The opportunity to win approval in activities
- Freedom from fear, wants, and hunger

Your attitude toward children and youth should be warm, fair, calm, tolerant, and patient, fostering a loving and trustful relationship, as we serve our community by being consistently warm, loving, and deeply interested in the well-being of the children and youth in our care.

The Family and MWR CUSTOMER Commitment:

- ✓ Customers will always be respected and treated as individuals who are valued.
- ✓ Customers will receive a prompt and friendly greeting in a professional and courteous manner.
- ✓ Customers will experience aesthetically pleasing facilities.
- ✓ Customers will receive timely, accurate and helpful information.
- ✓ Customers will be offered high quality products and services.
- ✓ Customers will have an opportunity to provide feedback.

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Main Child Development Center (CDC), Logan CDC, Replica CDC, Milam CDC, and East Bliss CDC:

Monday – Friday	0530–1800 *
Saturday (Milam CDC only Quarterly)	1500-2200

*CDC hours may differ from location due to demand and staffing.

Bliss and Milam School Age Centers (SAC):

Monday – Friday	0530-0830 and 1430-1800
Saturday (Milam SAC only Quarterly)	1500-2200
Summer	0530-1800

Middle School and Teen programs at the Replica & Milam Youth Activity Centers:

Monday – Thursday	1500-1900
Friday	1500-2000
Saturday	1300-2000
<i>Summer/Intercession</i>	
<i>Monday- Friday</i>	<i>0800-1300 For Camp Fee Rate</i>
<i>Monday-Thursday</i>	<i>1300-1900 (Open Rec)</i>
<i>Friday</i>	<i>1300-2000 (Open Rec)</i>

Parents are our partners:

- Take time to communicate with our parents and actively listen to their concerns and requests.
- Whenever possible, accommodate their requests.
- If a request is inappropriate or impossible to fulfill, refer them to the program director and explain why their request cannot be met.
- Direct all concerns to the next line supervisor or director.

Visitors and tours: We encourage parents and guests to visit, observe, and allow us to showcase our programs. Our open-door policy means parents can visit at any time without an appointment. Please welcome these guests as you would in your own home. When someone enters your room, approach and greet them, ensuring they are an authorized visitor. If they remain in your room, make sure they sign in and out. Always keep your children in sight when interacting with visitors by positioning yourself appropriately.

Enriching Our Programs with Volunteers: By incorporating Red Cross Volunteers, high school and college students, daycare aides-in-training, nursing students, Foster Grandparents, and other volunteers, CYS has significantly enriched its programs. These volunteers provide children and youth with additional love and individual attention, which is essential for healthy development. If you are assigned to work with any of these "helpers," please be gracious and supportive. Our program relies on their assistance to thrive.

These volunteers need to be trained to work with children using appropriate developmental practices, and they learn from your guidance. After three months of volunteering, they may take CPR and First Aid courses. Volunteers also complete the background check process and have specific training requirements when they are regularly scheduled.

Volunteers must never be counted in the ratio or left alone with the children. They can be used to augment your ratio especially in high-risk activities like swimming.

There are many people/agencies who assist CYS in being the best program it can be but the person who is the most important to our success is you. Your response or lack of response at any given time will leave a lasting impression on others, especially our children.

Special Openings: Special openings are staffed by Child and Youth Program Assistants (CYPAs) from all programs, often on short notice. These may occur at a Child Development Center (CDC) or a Kids On Site (KOS) facility. A KOS facility can be set up wherever needed, such as a deployment center, bowling center, church, club, or Family Readiness Center (FRC). CYS supports Soldier and Family Readiness Groups (SFRGs), deployment and redeployment flights, as well as unit and command functions as required.

Emergency Program Coverage: Fort Bliss may experience THREAT CONDITIONS (THREATCONS), ALERTS, and DEPLOYMENTS. A recall roster is maintained, and based on the emergency and threat level, your CYS coordinator or director will notify you accordingly. In an emergency, we may request your assistance in covering other centers and programs, which could involve conducting a KOS, driving a vehicle, or manning telephones. Information will be provided on a need-to-know basis, so it is crucial to update your contact information with your director whenever it changes. The CYS program is a Mission Essential program, and you are expected to report to your assigned work site or remain at work until your supervisor dismisses you, regardless of weather or road conditions.

Emergency closing: In the event of a major incident which necessitates closing a facility, children will be transported to either a primary or secondary location. See your Mobilization and Contingency Plan for primary and secondary locations for your facility. However, because every emergency is different, these are subject to change.

Name Tags: To help keep our children safe and make it easy for parents to identify us, everyone needs to wear a name tag with their first and last name. This helps ensure only CYS staff are in the facility. If you forget your name tag, please see your director or assistant director to get a duplicate before starting work. Thank you for helping us create a safe and welcoming environment for our families!

Line of Sight Supervision (LOSS): To ensure safety and clarity, individuals working under LOSS must be easily identifiable with distinctive clothing or badges visible from all angles. Until your background check is completed with favorable results, you will need to wear a red uniform, provided by your director. This uniform indicates that you should always be accompanied by another caregiver or be visible on an operating video surveillance system when with children.

Customer Service and Operational Excellence: Our commitment to customer service and operational excellence is the cornerstone of our success. We strive to provide an exceptional experience for every customer, ensuring their needs are met with efficiency, courtesy, and professionalism. By continuously improving our processes and training our staff to uphold the highest standards, we create a seamless and enjoyable experience. Operational excellence allows us to deliver consistent, high-quality services, while our focus on customer service ensures that each interaction is positive and personalized. Together, these principles foster trust and satisfaction, making our organization a leader in the industry.

Staff Work Requirements and Work Ethics: As a CYS employee, you are expected to prioritize your responsibilities and duties with us. Your primary focus during scheduled duty times should be on CYS-related activities. Outside employment or education must not interfere with your obligations here, and you must be present unless on approved leave. If you engage in activities related to another job or education while performing your duties at CYS, it may result in corrective action. You may hold another job alongside your role at CYS and you are encouraged to attend school, but you must notify your supervisor. The hours of your other obligations should not conflict with your agreed-upon schedule at CYS.

Confidentiality: At CYS, we value and respect the privacy of children, youth, parents, and co-workers. As a direct service organization, you will come across confidential information about our clients and their families. It is crucial that you exercise discretion and refrain from discussing staff, children, or parents with anyone outside the necessary personnel. Only share child or family information with individuals who have a legitimate need to know. Under no circumstances should program, staff, or customer information be shared on social media unless officially approved by authorized personnel, including photographs.

Whistleblower Protections: CYS is committed to maintaining a transparent and accountable workplace where ethical conduct is paramount. We encourage all employees to report any suspected misconduct, fraud, or illegal activities without fear of retaliation. Whistleblowers who come forward with concerns or information in good faith will be protected from any adverse actions. Reports can be made through appropriate channels provided in our policies and procedures, ensuring confidentiality to the extent possible while conducting thorough investigations. We value your commitment to upholding our standards of integrity and trust, and we assure you that your concerns will be taken seriously and handled with utmost seriousness and confidentiality.

Communication and Professional Conduct: Effective communication is fundamental to our workplace environment, promoting collaboration, comprehension, and operational efficiency. It involves not just transmitting information but also active listening, clarity in messaging, and receptiveness to feedback. At CYS, we prioritize transparent and respectful communication among colleagues, supervisors, and clients alike. We encourage active participation in discussions, sharing of ideas, and constructive expression of concerns to foster a culture built on trust and teamwork. By embracing clear communication channels, we empower our staff to collectively pursue our organizational objectives, driving innovation and success.

In our CYS program, maintaining a professional and respectful demeanor is essential. Offensive language or jokes that disparage cultures, races, or genders have no place here, as they can harm relationships and disrupt our mission. It is crucial to be mindful of how we communicate with children, youth, and colleagues, ensuring our tone and volume are appropriate and considerate of others' feelings.

Creating a positive work environment involves avoiding gossip and conflict in front of children and youth. If issues arise with a colleague, we encourage resolving them privately and respectfully outside of work hours. Arguments in the presence of children or youth are unacceptable. Staff are encouraged to seek guidance from program supervisors or directors if needed, fostering supportive and professional relationships among team members and with program participants.

To maintain professionalism and protect the privacy of our program participants, staff are reminded not to contact or interact with children or youth outside of official program activities, including through personal social networking sites or accounts. We understand the close-knit nature of military communities and the potential for overlapping relationships. It is important to address any program-related issues through official channels and to notify your director of any personal relationships that may affect your work. This ensures that our interactions uphold the standards of integrity and respect we strive for at CYS.

Dress Standards: Professionalism is integral to the image projected by the Fort Bliss Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR) to our patrons. Employees at CYS play a significant role in exemplifying appropriate attire for children and youth, contributing to a positive program environment. Therefore, CYS employees are expected to adhere to the following dress and appearance guidelines: maintain neat and clean attire and grooming while on duty, refrain from displaying excessive body piercings or sexually explicit or profane tattoos, and ensure clothing is free of holes or frayed material.

Employees may adopt contemporary apparel and grooming styles that do not compromise health, safety, or the favorable image of CYS programs. Undergarments must be worn and not visible apart from t-shirts. The way we present ourselves—including our appearance and personal hygiene—affects parents' perceptions of how well we care for their children and youth.

Footwear should support active engagement with children and youth, both indoors and outdoors, while ensuring their safety and well-being. Staff must wear covered, non-slip shoes at all times. For safety reasons, open-toed, sling-backs, and sandals are prohibited. Employees unable to wear covered shoes due to medical reasons must provide a doctor's statement, and the director will assist in accommodating their needs through appropriate procedures.

Hand and Fingernail Hygiene: Due to the vulnerability of children's immune systems and to minimize the spread of illness in our care environment, it is mandatory to maintain short, trimmed nails and adhere to posted handwashing protocols. For our purposes, "short" means that nails should not be visible when looking at the palm of the hand.

If you are assigned to work in the kitchen, wearing nail polish or nail decorations is prohibited as they can pose a contamination risk. This policy is crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of the children in our care.

Telephone and Smart Watch Usage: Telephone and smart watch usage guidelines are in place to ensure professionalism and minimize disruptions during duty hours. Personal calls should not be made or received while on duty. Outside of duty hours, staff may use the phone in designated areas such as the staff lounge or offices, or their personal cell phones for calls and message checks.

During classroom or program duty hours, cell phones must remain turned off to maintain focus and attention on child/youth supervision and activities. If you receive a non-emergency phone call while on duty, the administrative support assistant will take a message. In cases of emergency or urgency, the call will be transferred to you in your designated activity area, with coverage provided by another staff member.

Telephone calls should only be made from room to room when necessary to check ratios or verify the well-being of a child/youth. Administrative support staff should avoid calling activity areas unless essential, as it can disrupt CYPA's engagement with children/youth. This policy ensures a conducive environment for both staff productivity and the safety of those under our care.

Staff Parking: Staff parking at CYS is located in the slots furthest from the building, with prime parking spaces reserved for our patrons. This safety measure reduces the risk of children crossing streets or moving behind vehicles and enhances their safety as they arrive and depart from our facilities. Your cooperation in using designated staff parking ensures a secure environment for everyone under our care.

Recycling: Fort Bliss is committed to sustainability, and recycling plays a crucial role in our environmental efforts. We recycle paper, cardboard, aluminum, and appropriate plastics (designated as 1 and 2). Recycling containers are conveniently placed in all programs for easy disposal of recyclable items. Please contribute to our recycling initiative by properly disposing of recyclable materials in these designated containers. Your participation supports our commitment to environmental stewardship and contributes to a cleaner and healthier community for all.

Annual Physicals and Health Requirements: As part of our commitment to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for staff and program participants, annual physicals are mandatory for all CYS employees. These physicals include but are not limited to tuberculosis (TB) screening, medical clearances, comprehensive examinations, and vaccinations such as the annual flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine. Ensuring up-to-date health assessments and vaccinations not only safeguards the well-being of our team but also aligns with our mission to provide a secure and healthy environment for children and youth in our care. Employees are required to comply with these health requirements to maintain the highest standards of health and safety within our programs.

Personal Medication Policy: If you require medication during work hours, it must be stored securely away from classrooms and common areas, and never kept in pockets where it could accidentally fall out. This applies to all types of medication and vitamins/supplements. Tranquilizers must not be taken while on duty under any circumstances. It is crucial to ensure that all medications are kept entirely out of children's reach at all times. Medication should never be taken in the presence of children.

If you have emergency medication, it is essential to inform the director and your coworkers of its location and the circumstances under which it should be administered. This policy ensures the safety and well-being of both staff and children under our care.

Caring for Your Own Child/Youth: If you need to enroll your child or youth in our program, they must be registered and signed into the Child and Youth Management System (CYMS) as well as on the sign-in sheets. Payment for care is required in advance, and employee discounts are available; details will be provided during enrollment. Please review the Parent Handbook to understand your responsibilities.

To maintain a balanced environment, you generally will not work in the same area as your child or youth. We recognize that sharing a family member's attention can be challenging for children and youth. If it becomes difficult for your child or youth to be in the same center where you work, arrangements can be made for either you or your child/youth to transfer to another program or room within our facilities. Our goal is to ensure the best possible experience for both staff and program participants.

Sequence of leadership/Chain of command:

FULL-TIME CYPA/Supervisory Program Specialist
Assistant Director
Program Director
Child/Youth Administrator
Child, Youth & School Services Coordinator
Director of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR)

Staff Work Schedules: Work schedules are typically prepared and posted two weeks in advance, but due to the nature of our operations, they may change with short notice. Therefore, any requests for time off (such as doctor's appointments) must be submitted in writing to management before the schedule is finalized.

Your schedule will list the specific classroom, age group, or section where you are assigned. However, you may be asked to work in other areas during your scheduled or non-scheduled times. Here are some examples of different scheduling situations:

- **Definite Time to Report:** Indicates the time you should be in your designated area ready to start work.
- **On Call (OC):** Designates CYPA staff who may be called in with short notice to cover shifts.
- **Opening and Closing Shifts:** Entry-level staff will typically not be scheduled to open or close rooms except when necessary.
- **Rotating Schedules:** Staff may rotate between morning and afternoon shifts.
- **Weekend and Special Openings:** Everyone participates in rotating duty for weekend and special openings.

Scheduling is based on operational needs, considering program hours and the number of children and youth present. Only full-time and part-time employees are guaranteed hours of work, while flex employees and those on call provide essential hourly care services and respond to fluctuations. Flex employees are generally assured two hours of work when called in but are not guaranteed specific hours. Scheduling for full-time and part-time employees is determined by position, title, and appointment status, with most part-time roles ensuring a minimum of 20 hours per week. Please note that shifts may occasionally change with minimal notice due to unforeseen circumstances.

Punctuality and Absences: If you anticipate running late or are unable to work for any reason, it is crucial to notify the director or assistant director immediately. Leaving a message at the front desk is generally not sufficient. Additionally, ensure you contact the full-time CYP or Supervisory Program Specialist for your section. This proactive communication allows for effective decision-making and ensures continuity of operations.

Delaying your notification until your scheduled start time creates challenges for the team. If you arrive late without prior communication and arrangements have been made to cover your shift, you may be reassigned to another area or your shift may be cancelled altogether. Timely communication helps maintain smooth operations and supports the well-being of our staff and the children/youth we serve.

Meal Breaks: Ensuring continuous supervision of children and youth is paramount. You must not leave children or youth unattended at any time for a meal break. Meals should not be consumed in activity areas. Family-style dining with the children is meant for role modeling proper table etiquette by sampling their portion and should not substitute for your own mealtime.

Authorization for meal periods will be given by the Lead CYPA, Supervisory Program Specialist, or the designated person in charge of your activity area. Please wait for the designated cover staff to arrive before departing for your break. Typically, only one employee per activity area will be permitted to take a break at any one time.

Breaks are generally scheduled every 4 hours and may be taken in the staff lounge, which is equipped with amenities such as a refrigerator, microwave, table, and chairs. Additionally, there are various restaurants and fast-food options nearby. If your shift exceeds 6 hours, you are entitled to an unpaid lunch break lasting 30 minutes to an hour. Remember, consuming food, chewing gum, or drinking soda or coffee in front of children or youth is considered inappropriate and should be avoided.

Signing In and Pay Periods: Staff assigned to most CYS facilities will receive an employee number for use with the facility's time clock. In facilities without a time clock, you must sign in and out on the appropriate timesheets or use an electronic application provided for this purpose. It is your responsibility to clock in and out accurately, including for scheduled shifts, meal breaks, and when your shift concludes. The sign-in sheet covers a two-week period, and electronic timesheets can be accessed and completed via a cellphone or computer application.

The two-week pay period for Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) employees begins on Thursday morning and concludes on Wednesday evening. Record your daily hours and total them for each week. Ensure accuracy and provide remarks as necessary on your timesheet. The director, assistant director, and administrative support assistant will review your sign-in/out sheet for accuracy and enter or verify information in the time and attendance system. Any falsification of timesheets will result in disciplinary action, including potential termination.

While some banks may credit accounts early, actual pay periods end on the following schedule:

- Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF): Every other Wednesday

You can access all Leave and Earning Statements (LES) and W2 forms via the My Pay website at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>. This ensures easy access to your financial documents for personal records and tax purposes.

Leave Policy: Only full-time and part-time employees are eligible for paid sick and annual leave, although all employees may require time off for illness, personal business, time-off awards, or vacations. Flex employees do not receive pay for leave unless it is a time-off award. All leave requests must be submitted to your supervisor using an SF 71 Leave Request Form at least two weeks in advance. In case of an unplanned absence, this form must be submitted and signed prior to completing your timecard.

Ensure you have earned the number of hours requested for leave. Leave requests exceeding two weeks must be approved in advance by your supervisor, especially if leaving the country. Requesting advance leave beyond available accruals is not guaranteed except in certain emergencies, which must be repaid through accrued time or cash reimbursement.

Regular full-time or part-time employees have the right to take annual leave, subject to supervisor approval and scheduling considerations. Only one employee per area/room should be on leave at a time; coordinate leave requests with your coworkers. Request annual leave well in advance to allow for proper scheduling and operational needs.

Sick leave is granted based on medical necessity. When requesting time off for medical appointments, the duration should correspond to the appointment's duration. Immediate notification and completion of the SF 71 form are required for medical appointments. For illnesses lasting three or more days, a doctor's note is required for NAF employees, and may be requested by the director for any illness-related absence. Advance sick leave requires proper documentation and approval through the CYS coordinator to DFMWR.

Mental Health Breaks: It is your responsibility to monitor your interactions with children and youth. If you feel overwhelmed or in need of a break, request a mental health break. Likewise, if you observe a coworker struggling with a child or reaching their limit, intervene and communicate the need for a break to management. We all have a responsibility to support each other, the children and youth, their families, and ourselves in maintaining a positive and productive environment.

Wellness Programs: At DFWMR-CYS, we prioritize the well-being of our staff through comprehensive wellness programs designed to support physical, mental, and emotional health. Our wellness initiatives aim to promote a healthy work-life balance and foster a positive work environment. These programs may include access to fitness facilities or classes, health screenings, workshops on nutrition and stress management, and initiatives promoting mindfulness and mental health awareness.

We encourage all staff members to actively participate in these programs as part of their commitment to personal and professional wellness. By investing in our staff's well-being, we enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and overall morale within our organization. Together, we strive to create a workplace where everyone can thrive and contribute their best.

On the Job Injuries: If you or another person sustains an injury while on duty, obtaining immediate medical attention is crucial. It is imperative to report any work-related injury promptly to the director and your immediate supervisor. Proper documentation must be completed accurately and promptly following the incident. Timely reporting is essential for validating any claims related to

the injury. Delayed reporting may impact your eligibility for coverage, so please do not hesitate to report any injuries as soon as they occur. This ensures that necessary steps can be taken swiftly to address the injury and provide appropriate support.

Corrective or Disciplinary Action: At CYS, we uphold fair and consistent disciplinary measures to promptly address issues and maintain high standards of conduct and performance outlined in our policies. Employees are expected to meet these standards, and failure to do so may result in corrective or disciplinary action. Depending on the severity and recurrence of the issue, actions may include verbal warnings, written reprimands, suspension with or without pay, or termination. Our approach emphasizes support and guidance to help employees improve and succeed whenever possible. Our goal is to uphold workplace integrity while fostering growth and accountability. Examples of issues that may lead to corrective action include inefficient job performance, excessive absenteeism, disobedience of supervisor's instructions, and violations of safety or confidentiality rules. Disciplinary actions are tailored to each situation, aiming to maintain a productive and respectful work environment for all staff and stakeholders involved.

Grievances, Complaints, Recommendations, Concerns: You have the right and responsibility to voice complaints, concerns, or recommendations regarding the program or staff without fear of retaliation. We encourage resolving issues at the appropriate level of leadership within the organization. Ideally, most situations can be resolved directly between those involved; however, if resolution is not achieved, please involve the program director. It's important to address all concerns through the established Sequence of Leadership to maintain the integrity and reputation of CYS within the community.

While discussing problems or grievances outside of this Sequence can harm the program's image, you are empowered to express concerns at the level you deem appropriate. If necessary, escalate issues to the next higher level within the organization. Allegations of discrimination based on race, age, color, religion, sex, disability, or national origin should be directed to the EEO Office for appropriate handling.

In compliance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability is prohibited. To file a complaint of discrimination, please contact USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA ensures equal opportunity as a provider and employer.

Professional Development and Training Requirements: Training is integral to our commitment to fostering employee development and success at CYS. We believe in investing in our team's skills and knowledge to enhance individual performance and contribute to our organization's overall achievements. Our comprehensive training programs are designed to equip employees with the tools, resources, and expertise necessary to excel in their roles. From initial onboarding sessions that familiarize new hires with our culture and procedures to ongoing professional development opportunities that keep our workforce ahead of industry trends, we prioritize continuous learning.

Through a blend of hands-on experience, workshops, seminars, and online resources, we empower our employees to grow both personally and professionally, unlocking their full potential. By cultivating a culture of learning and skill enhancement, we ensure that our team remains adaptable, innovative, and well-prepared to tackle current and future challenges.

During your orientation, you will be paired with a Training and Curriculum Specialist (TACS) and a site mentor who, alongside your supervisor, will craft an Individual Development Plan (IDP) tailored to your career goals. IDPs are time-sensitive and can influence your annual performance evaluation.

Training commences from day one of your employment. Your mentor and first-line supervisor will guide you through an orientation and hands-on training program specific to your role. Working in collaboration with the TACS, they will assign relevant readings, discuss your position description, outline career development opportunities, and establish performance standards and ratings. Additionally, a schedule of mandatory workshops and trainings will be provided.

We coordinate on-post and off-post community training opportunities to ensure you can benefit from various workshops. CYS covers all registration and workshop fees for community workshops to which you are assigned and registered. Paid training hours are contingent upon your assignments, and attendees may be required to facilitate group training based on the knowledge acquired. This reinforces your learning and supports your team's success.

Working with children and youth in our programs is demanding, and we deeply appreciate your dedication in this unique environment. If you have specific training interests, please communicate them to your training specialist. Whenever feasible, we will endeavor to support your pursuit of relevant training opportunities.

Performance Evaluation: Performance evaluations are integral to our commitment to fostering growth, acknowledging achievements, and ensuring accountability within our organization. These assessments are conducted regularly to provide employees with constructive feedback on their performance, strengths, and areas for development. They serve as a platform for open communication between employees and supervisors, facilitating goal setting and career advancement discussions.

Our evaluation process is designed to be fair, objective, and transparent, aligned with our organizational values, goals, and your specific performance standards. By evaluating performance against established criteria and expectations, we aim to recognize excellence and address any performance issues promptly and constructively. Ultimately, performance evaluations offer both employees and supervisors an opportunity to review past accomplishments, identify areas for improvement, and strategize for ongoing success.

You will undergo quarterly evaluations to assess the quality of your work performance. Additionally, an annual written evaluation will be submitted to the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center to document your progress and contributions. These evaluations are pivotal in guiding your professional development and ensuring alignment with organizational goals.

Area Evaluation and Environmental Rating: You play a critical role in maintaining the quality of care within your assigned areas. It is your responsibility to consistently assess the condition of your room, equipment, and the behavior of the children/youth under your care, as well as the overall effectiveness of your program. Our program utilizes the Environmental Rating Scale across all facilities to aid you in these evaluations. Additionally, periodic assessments will be conducted by the director, CYS coordinator, and various local and Army inspection teams. These evaluations are essential for ensuring that our standards of care and safety are consistently met and upheld to the highest standards.

Accountability and Sign-in/Sign-out Procedures: Ensuring the safety and well-being of every child under our care is our top priority at CYS. We maintain strict accountability measures through meticulous sign-in and sign-out procedures, supplemented by identification checks to verify authorized guardians. These protocols are crucial for tracking the location of children at all times. We enforce supervision ratios rigorously to guarantee adequate oversight, and we continually train our staff in best practices for child supervision. Clear communication with parents and guardians is fundamental, covering our policies, emergency protocols, and pickup procedures. By upholding a culture of accountability and transparency, we create a secure environment where children can thrive, and parents can trust in our commitment to their safety. It is imperative that your sign-in/out sheets accurately reflect the number of children in your care, and that classroom rosters match the automated CYMS system at the front desk.

Parents must bring/pick up their child/youth directly from the assigned area and sign them in/out with a staff member. You are responsible for ensuring parents correctly mark their child/youth on the area attendance sheet, which must be readily accessible and accompany the group during all activities, including outdoor play, field trips, and emergency drills. Please do not allow a parent to drop off or pick up a child/youth without verification from you or another staff member in your area.

Fire drills and emergency evacuations: Fire drills and emergency evacuations are fundamental to maintaining safety in our CYS facilities. Conducted regularly and meticulously, these drills ensure that children, youth, and staff are well-prepared to respond calmly and effectively in any emergency situation. Our procedures include detailed instructions on evacuation routes, designated meeting points, and the assignment of responsible staff to assist during evacuations. We prioritize remaining calm and orderly while swiftly and safely evacuating all individuals. Additionally, we educate children on fire safety, empowering them to recognize hazards and respond appropriately. Through consistent practice and reinforcement, we aim to instill confidence and readiness in both children and staff, ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone under our care.

Fire drills are conducted monthly for all children and youth in the program, with additional drills conducted upon enrollment of new children aged 3 and older, and for new staff members. It is crucial to follow these procedures as if they were a real emergency scenario. If presented with a fire scenario by an inspector, take immediate action without delay. Fire alarm pull stations are located by all exit doors, and fire extinguishers are strategically placed throughout the buildings—familiarize yourself with their locations and usage.

In the event of an actual emergency requiring evacuation, you will be alerted by the director or designated staff via the fire alarm, sprinkler system, or both. If you detect fire or smoke, pull the fire alarm immediately; do not pull it if you smell gas—instead, use a "silent" method to evacuate. Your priority is the safe evacuation of children and youth from their assigned areas. Evacuate promptly and gather outside in the fenced play area, or farther if necessary to avoid smoke or flames.

Organize children into appropriate groups and cross-check with the daily attendance sheets. Report any missing children, youth, or assigned adults to the director or fire officer immediately. Staff not assigned to children will assist in evacuating infants and toddlers. During evacuation, parents should not remove children—clear communication with parents is essential to ensure a coordinated and safe evacuation process.

Once the "all clear" signal is given, return to the facility in small, orderly groups through the same exit used for evacuation. Upon returning to your area, verify that all children are accounted for against the daily attendance sheets. This disciplined approach to fire drills and emergencies ensures a secure environment where safety remains our top priority.

Children and Youth with Special Needs: Children and youth with special needs are an integral part of our community at CYS. We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment where every child, regardless of ability, feels valued, respected, and supported. Understanding the unique strengths and challenges of each child, we provide personalized care and programming tailored to meet their diverse needs. Our staff undergo specialized training to better comprehend and accommodate these needs, ensuring that every child receives the necessary attention and assistance to thrive. We collaborate closely with parents, guardians, and external professionals to develop individualized plans that encompass adaptations to our curriculum, facilities, and activities. By promoting empathy, acceptance, and teamwork, we cultivate a nurturing environment where every child can learn, grow, and achieve their full potential.

Our programs welcome children and youth with special needs or disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Before admission, parents will consult with the Army Public Health Nurse, and if necessary, participate in the Multi-disciplinary Inclusion Team (MIAT). The MIAT determines the most suitable placement for the child or youth, ensuring it supports their development without compromising the care of other children in our programs. Generally, no child is excluded from participating in CYS programs, and we have a robust process in place to provide reasonable accommodations as needed.

Children, Youth, and Staff with Gender or Sexuality Diversity (LGTQI+): Supporting transgender children, youth, and staff is a fundamental aspect of our commitment to diversity and inclusivity at CYS. We acknowledge and respect each individual's gender identity, striving to create a secure and affirming environment where they can thrive authentically. Our staff receive specialized training to better understand the unique experiences and needs of transgender children and youth, ensuring they feel supported and respected throughout their journey of self-discovery. We prioritize the use of inclusive language, provide access to gender-neutral facilities, and implement policies that affirm gender identity, including using preferred names and pronouns. We collaborate closely with parents and guardians to offer comprehensive support and resources, including access to affirming healthcare services and community organizations. By nurturing a culture of acceptance, empathy, and support, we empower transgender children, youth, and staff to embrace their identities confidently and proudly. Our goal is to ensure they feel valued and celebrated for who they are.

Child abuse: Child abuse is a serious concern that is handled with utmost priority at CYS. Our commitment is to foster a safe and nurturing environment where children can thrive without fear of harm. We maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, and verbal mistreatment. To uphold this standard, our staff undergo rigorous training to recognize signs of abuse and neglect and are mandated reporters, legally obligated to promptly report any suspicions to the appropriate authorities.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of every child in our care, including thorough background checks for all staff and volunteers. We encourage open communication with both children and parents, offering a supportive and confidential platform for reporting any concerns. By collaborating closely with families and community resources, we are

dedicated to preventing and addressing child abuse to safeguard the health and safety of all children entrusted to us.

It's important to note that child abuse can occur in various settings, including program environments. At CYS, we maintain an Open Door Policy, allowing parents unrestricted access to their children and enabling them to observe activities via video screens without prior notice. This transparency helps minimize the risk of abuse. Recognizing the different forms of abuse and neglect is crucial, and we take proactive measures to prevent such incidents within our programs.

If you observe behavior by another staff member that you suspect to be abusive or neglectful, it is your responsibility to report it. Failure to report suspected abuse is against the law and compromises the safety of the children under our care. Procedures for handling suspected cases of abuse or neglect involve reporting your concerns to the Fort Bliss Reporting Point of Contact (RPOC), the Military Police (MP), the Texas Child Abuse Hotline at 800-252-5400, and your chain of command. Reporting ensures immediate action and protection for the child involved.

Accidents and injuries: Accidents, injuries, and health screenings are handled with utmost care at CYS to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children and staff. Prior to accepting children into our care, they are screened for signs of illness or injury. If an injury is observed, we promptly inquire with the parent about what happened and provide necessary first aid. Documentation of the injury and the parent's account is crucial for our records.

To safeguard the health of everyone in our facility, we enforce a strict policy regarding the admission of ill children. Children displaying symptoms such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, persistent cough, rash, or contagious conditions are not accepted until they are symptom-free, without fever-reducing medication, or have a doctor's clearance. This policy is essential to prevent the spread of illness among children and staff. Upon noticing signs of illness in a child, our management team is notified immediately for further assessment, including temperature checks.

If a child shows symptoms like elevated temperature, rash, vomiting, or other signs of illness, a manager will contact the parent to arrange pickup. In cases where immediate pickup is not possible, the child may be placed in an isolation area until the parent arrives. Minor symptoms or changes in behavior are monitored closely, and parents are informed at pickup time.

All incidents and injuries within our program are documented using an accident/incident report. This report, completed by the CYPA involved and signed by management, ensures that parents are notified promptly and accurately about any incidents. Copies of the report are kept in the child's registration file, available for parental review upon request. Timely completion of these forms is essential to maintain transparency and protect both staff and the program.

In cases where an incident or injury is not witnessed directly, or if there are uncertainties about how it occurred, video surveillance footage is reviewed for clarification. Accuracy in reporting is crucial to match the incident details precisely.

Our commitment to safety extends to accident prevention through rigorous adherence to safety protocols, regular facility and equipment inspections, and staff training in first aid and CPR. We promote safe behavior through ongoing supervision and guidance, ensuring a secure environment for children to learn, play, and grow. Open communication with parents is encouraged to uphold our shared responsibility in maintaining a safe environment at all times.

Activities and Playgrounds: Activities at each program are thoughtfully designed to foster the holistic development of children and youth in our care. We believe these activities play a crucial role in their emotional, social, mental, and physical growth, especially considering the extended hours many participants spend with us each day. Our goal is to enrich their experiences by offering a secure, stable, and stimulating environment. As a valued staff member, you will actively contribute to creating and implementing this enriching curriculum. Your engagement with children, parents, and volunteers is pivotal in ensuring that our programs not only meet but exceed expectations in providing developmental opportunities.

The playground is an integral part of our developmental approach, serving as an extension of our structured programs. Ensuring playground safety is paramount to us at CYS. Before children are allowed to play, rigorous safety checks are conducted to inspect equipment for any potential hazards or damage. We maintain strict supervision ratios appropriate for each age group to ensure continuous oversight and safety during outdoor play. Our trained staff actively supervise children, intervene proactively to prevent accidents, and encourage positive social interactions among peers. Adherence to playground rules, such as using equipment correctly and respecting others' space, is consistently encouraged.

In situations where weather conditions pose risks to safety, such as active precipitation, extreme temperatures, or hazardous environmental conditions, outdoor play may be temporarily suspended. During such times, alternative indoor activities are provided to maintain engagement and ensure the children's safety. Despite these precautions, the daily outdoor time, weather permitting, remains a fundamental part of our program, allowing children and youth to benefit from fresh air and physical activity.

Supervision across playgrounds, fields, courts, and skateparks demands constant vigilance due to the range of equipment and potential accident scenarios. Staff are trained to monitor different sections of play areas to prevent incidents like running behind swing sets or inappropriate use of equipment. Engaging with children and youth during playtime is emphasized over passive observation, ensuring that interactions are positive and enriching. Structured activities and free play are both incorporated into playground periods to promote gross motor skills and social interaction, aligning seamlessly with indoor curriculum goals. This holistic approach underscores our commitment to providing a safe, supportive, and enjoyable environment where children can thrive both indoors and outdoors.

Communication with children and youth: Communicating effectively with children and youth is a skill that involves adapting to their age, developmental stage, and individual needs. When interacting with young children, it is important to use simple language, speak clearly and at their pace, and maintain eye contact to ensure comprehension. Asking open-ended questions and actively listening to their responses encourages them to express themselves and enhances their communication skills. Offering praise and encouragement reinforces positive behaviors and nurtures their self-confidence.

As children mature, conversations become more intricate, and it becomes essential to respect their viewpoints, validate their emotions, and foster open dialogue. Engaging in meaningful discussions about their interests, experiences, and concerns strengthens the connection between adults and youth. Patience, non-judgmental support, and creating a safe environment are crucial in helping them feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings openly.

Fundamental to effective communication with children and youth are active listening, empathy, and respect. By demonstrating genuine interest, providing guidance, and being attentive to their needs,

adults can build trust and cultivate positive relationships. These interactions are pivotal in their social and emotional growth, empowering them to navigate challenges, make informed decisions, and thrive within their communities.

In our evolving world, fostering a sense of responsibility and self-respect is as essential as acquiring knowledge. Encouraging children and youth to make decisions, understand consequences, and develop independence reinforces their sense of value and recognition. Providing opportunities for learning, nurturing curiosity, and respecting their opinions and values, even when different from our own, are integral to supporting their growth and development.

Transportation of children: Transporting children and youth is a critical responsibility that requires utmost care and adherence to safety protocols. Whether it's for field trips, outings, or daily transportation to and from our facilities, the safety and well-being of every child are our top priorities. All staff involved in transporting children must undergo thorough training in safe driving practices, including defensive driving techniques and vehicle safety checks. It is imperative to ensure that all vehicles used for transportation are properly maintained, equipped with appropriate safety restraints, and compliant with local regulations. Staff members must conduct regular inspections of vehicles before each trip to verify safety features and functionality. During transportation, staff should maintain constant supervision, ensure seat belts are properly secured, and monitor children to prevent any unsafe behaviors. By prioritizing safety and vigilance during transportation, we create a secure environment where children can travel with confidence and peace of mind.

Discipline and guidance: Discipline and guidance are fundamental in maintaining a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment for children and youth at CYS. We view discipline as a method of teaching and guiding rather than punishment. Our approach emphasizes positive reinforcement, setting clear expectations, and maintaining consistent boundaries. By creating a supportive atmosphere, we help children and youth understand the reasons behind rules and consequences, empowering them to make responsible choices. When addressing behavior issues, we prioritize open communication, active listening, and empathy to grasp the root causes of behaviors. We employ various strategies such as redirection, modeling appropriate behavior, and conflict resolution techniques to support their social and emotional development. Our aim is to foster self-discipline, empathy, and respect, equipping children and youth with the skills needed to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally in our programs..

Goals for children and youth:

- Foster a desire to make positive choices and behave appropriately.
- Encourage increasing independence in expressing and managing their desires.
- Support the development of problem-solving skills.
- Promote rational thinking and the ability to consider consequences before acting.
- Help children and youth focus on their strengths and capabilities rather than limitations.

Self-development goals for children and youth include:

- Cultivating self-control.
- Building self-reliance.
- Nurturing self-esteem.
- Instilling a sense of responsibility.
- Encouraging cooperation.

- Fostering independence and mastery.

Behavior guidelines:

- YES BEHAVIOR: Encourage and support behaviors that are positive and appropriate. Emphasize these as much as possible to foster cooperation.
- TOLERATED BEHAVIOR: Allow flexibility for learning and during stressful times, while gently guiding towards more constructive actions.
- NO BEHAVIOR: Intervene immediately to stop behaviors that cannot be tolerated. These instances should be minimal to create an environment conducive to cooperation.

Suggestions for managing child behavior:

- Promptly intervene in physical conflicts between children or youth, providing comfort to anyone who has been hurt.
- Redirect children and youth towards more constructive activities whenever possible.
- Use nonverbal methods such as gentle guidance and redirection as initial steps in discipline.
- Reserve removal from the situation ("time out") as a last resort for disruptive behavior.
- Maintain eye contact and speak calmly and respectfully when addressing children and youth.
- Set clear and achievable behavior expectations while maintaining authority.
- Reinforce positive behavior with compliments and encouragement to foster cooperation.
- Utilize "I messages" to communicate expectations and needs clearly and positively.
- Prohibit any form of verbal abuse, ridicule, embarrassment, or sarcasm towards children and youth.
- Strictly prohibit any form of abusive physical punishment, such as spanking or slapping, ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all.

These guidelines and strategies aim to promote a supportive and respectful atmosphere where children and youth can develop socially, emotionally, and behaviorally in a positive and nurturing environment.

CYS Opportunities – World Wide! The CYS CEAT (Child and Youth Services Career Exploration and Advancement Track) program offers valuable opportunities for career development and growth within our organization. Through CEAT, employees gain transferable skills and experiences that can be applied across various roles within Child and Youth Services. This program not only supports professional advancement but also equips staff with the necessary training and qualifications to succeed in different positions. Whether seeking advancement within a specific program area or transitioning to a new role, CEAT fosters a supportive environment where employees can explore new career pathways and contribute meaningfully to our mission of providing exceptional care and enrichment to children and youth.

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS: If you have any questions that have not been addressed in this handbook, please discuss them with your FULL-TIME CYP/Supervisory Program Specialist or program director.

If you have suggestions to enhance this staff handbook, please share them with your program director.

Please sign the acknowledgment statement on the following page and return it to your director.

We trust you will have a rewarding and fulfilling experience working with us at Fort Bliss Child and Youth Services.

Staff Handbook Statement of Understanding

I have read and understand this staff handbook. I agree to adhere to the established procedures outlined in the staff handbook. I agree to discuss with my director any policies I don't understand or agree with, for further clarification or guidance. I am aware that not following established procedures will result in disciplinary action.

NAME _____
DATE _____