



Exempt Employee Handbook

Special Education Service Agency

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Certified, non-administrative staff may refer to the current SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Hourly staff should refer to the Support Staff Employee Handbook.

1. Introduction

SESA Employee Handbook

This Employee Handbook summarizes various employment related policies and procedures for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA). It also provides SESA employees a road map for some of the major areas of interest covered in stand-alone handbooks / manuals, such as:

- Employee Benefits Program (TRS & PERS)
- SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement
- SESA Disaster Plan
- SESA Library Disaster Plan
- New Employee Orientation Handbook
- SESA Board Policy Reference Manual

The purpose of this handbook is to inform exempt employees of the procedures, supports, and expectations that have been established to assure compliance with law and to make SESA an effective and businesslike organization.

This handbook complements the agency's policies and procedures as adopted by the SESA Board of Directors and the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement. The current SESA Board Policy is available on the Employee Resource Shelf in the SESA Library.

Together, your Board of Director policies, this handbook, and, if applicable, your collective bargaining agreement will describe - for most circumstances - what is expected of you and what you may expect as a certificated staff member of the agency.

No handbook can address all the countless and ever-changing circumstances that are part of your work as a SESA professional. SESA administration and Board agree that for an organization such as SESA, high standards in principles, values, and norms of operation will almost always be more useful than detailed rule making. Though there are some "rules" in this handbook, it does not attempt to anticipate all scenarios and prescribe your responses. More often, you are simply asked to apply sound judgment as an education professional, and to make your decisions and actions harmonious with SESA's mission, values, and organizational culture.

Employee Handbook Updates

The Employee Handbook is maintained on the SESA official website www.sesa.org. The handbook will be reviewed (and updated if necessary) annually at the end of the fiscal year. Employees will receive notification when changes occur to the handbook. It is the employee's responsibility to read and abide by those revisions. An updated hardcopy is available with your administrator

Status of the Handbook

This handbook remains a work in progress. Suggestions for additions, clarifications, or improvements can be directed at any time to the Executive Director or Executive Assistant.

Our Organization

SESA Mission Statement

SESA provides consultation and training to support the unique educational needs of individuals and the Alaskan communities that serve them.

SESA Governance

SESA is governed by a Board of Directors (BOD), whose selection and constitution is described in detail in the Bylaws of the Board within the SESA Board Policy Manual.

The BOD governs SESA by developing policies for the agency and ensuring that the policies are implemented. The BOD selects / hires / appoints an Executive Director to make sure that the policies are implemented in the appropriate manner. The SESA BOD has only one position reporting to it, and that is the Executive Director. All other agency positions of administration, specialists, and support staff report through the agency's hierarchical organizational structure, to the executive director.

The SESA BOD recognizes that the success of the agency relies heavily upon the recruitment and retention of highly trained specialists and the comprehensive delivery of services in order to assist in the provision of special education services to community, infants, children, and young adults.

The BOD believes that in order for educational programs to succeed, there must be an ongoing partnership among specialists, districts, service providers, students, families, and communities so that the educational climate is created that promotes the positive and healthy development of each individual.

SESA Organization

The overall responsibility for SESA is that of its Executive Director, and she/he reports to the SESA BOD. The Executive Director then recruits externally or selects / appoints, hires and / or promotes from the existing SESA staff, the Administrative Staff and the Executive Assistant. Overall, SESA fiscal accountability rests with the Executive Director who may choose to have an in-house Finance Director or out-source this function.

2. Legislation Regarding Employment

Equal Employment Opportunity

All employees and job applicants are guaranteed equality of employment opportunity under state and federal law. Essentially, this means that SESA will not discriminate against any employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, citizenship status, and disability, or past, present, or future status in the uniformed services of the United States in accordance with applicable federal laws. This applies, but is not limited to hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, transfer, compensation, training and leaves of absence. All other personnel policies and practices of SESA, including compensation, benefits, discipline, and safety and health programs, as well as social and recreational activities, will be administered and conducted without regard to an individual's race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or past, present or future status in the uniformed services of the United States in accordance with applicable federal laws.

Harassment at the Workplace (General)

SESA is committed to providing a workplace free of sexual harassment, intimidation, threats, coercion, or discrimination (which includes harassment based on gender, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions) as well as harassment, intimidation, threats, coercion or discrimination based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, or past, present or future status in the uniformed services of the United States in accordance with applicable federal laws.

SESA expects every employee to be treated with fairness, respect, and dignity. Harassment includes slurs and any other offensive remarks, jokes, graphic material, or other verbal, written, or physical conduct that creates an intimidating, offensive, threatening, or hostile environment. Any applicant or employee who feels that he or she is a victim of harassment by any supervisor, management official, other employee, or any other person in connection with their employment at SESA should bring the matter to the immediate attention of their supervisor. Any employee, who is uncomfortable for any reason in bringing such matter to the attention of his/her supervisor, should report the matter to the Executive Director. Any questions about this policy or potential harassment should also be brought to the attention of the same persons. Reported complaints of harassment will promptly be investigated in as confidential a manner as possible. An employee who is determined, after investigation, to have engaged in harassment in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate action. Appropriate action can range from verbal or written warnings up to and including termination, depending on the circumstances.

Sexual Harassment

SESA seeks to maintain a working environment free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of any employee or student of SESA or of any other person associated with SESA is strictly prohibited. Sexual harassment is contrary to the religious and moral tenets of SESA.

Whether or not conduct constitutes sexual harassment will vary depending upon the particular circumstances. Sexual harassment is not limited to physical acts and includes all acts of harassment based upon a person's gender. Behavior that may be experienced as intimidating or offensive, particularly when it recurs or one person has authority over the other, may include actions such as veiled suggestions of sexual activity; offensive comments, jokes, innuendoes, and

other statements of a sexual nature; or the use of risqué jokes, stories, images, or inappropriate electronic communication. Sexual harassment could include inappropriate personal attention given to an employee by a supervisor, any officer or any other person who is in a position to exercise authority over such person.

SESA expressly prohibits any form of retaliation against any person for filing a complaint under this policy or for assisting in complaint investigation

Any person who desires to file a complaint or discuss this policy may contact the SESA Executive Director. If the SESA Executive Director is the offending party, or if the employee is uncomfortable reporting the incident to him / her, or if it would be inappropriate to discuss the matter with him / her, it should be reported to a SESA Administrator not involved in the incident, or directly to the SESA Board President.

3. Hiring Policies

Hiring Process

(i) Staff Participation in Screening and Interviewing

It is the practice of the current administration to invite staff participation in screening, interviewing, and considering program specialist candidates. Program personnel are also invited to assist in the interviewing and consideration of applicants for administrative positions. Your role in the administrative selection process is to assist the Director's appraisal and decision-making by providing your observations, impressions, and comparative assessments of candidates. All final decisions are made by the executive director.

(ii) Screening

The Administrator reviews completed application materials and performs the initial screening of potential specialist applicants. Prospective candidates who appear to have the minimum qualifications or acceptable equivalents are encouraged to complete an application for employment. Candidates who do not advance from the initial screening will be notified.

Candidates advancing from the initial screening by the Administrator are further screened by program staff, when available. Staff that participate in the screening process accept the responsibility to maintain confidentiality. All pre-employment information and all discussions concerning any candidate are confidential.

Screening of initial applicants must be an objective, impartial, and consistent appraisal of each candidate. The first consideration is whether the candidate meets the competency and qualification requirements announced for the position.

The candidate is asked to provide at least three references, including the current or most recent immediate supervisor. Extensive reference and prior employment contacts will be made after the interview, if the candidate is advanced to consideration for hire.

(iii) Interview

Interviews may be conducted in person or by tele/videoconference by a team of program representatives and administrators. At the discretion of the Executive Director, the agency may request that the candidate travel to Anchorage for a face-to-face interview. All decisions regarding an Anchorage interview and the eligibility for reimbursement are made by the Executive Director.

Unless established otherwise, employment interviews and all team discussions are considered confidential, and are not to be discussed with any persons outside the process.

(iv) Selection

After the interview(s) and prior employment reference checks, the administrator will recommend a decision to the Executive Director. The Executive Director is the only person authorized to extend an offer of employment.

If the selected candidate does not accept the position, the interviewing team will reconvene to recommend to the Executive Director whether to offer the position to a second choice or to reopen the vacancy.

(v) Contract Preparation

A verification of records and physician's statement will precede the offer of a contract to the selected candidate. The Executive Director will oversee the preparation of the employment contract and determine placement on the salary schedule.

(vi) Pre-employment Records

Written records from the screening and interview process are retained by administration and are accessible only to administration and members of the interview team. If the candidate is employed, all pre-employment materials will be maintained separately from the individual's personnel file, to maintain confidentiality of the process.

(vii) Discrepancies

If at any time it is discovered that a candidate or employee has provided misleading or false information or has omitted material information when applying for employment, the candidate may be rejected or the employee terminated from employment. All candidates sign a statement including this policy on the employment application.

(viii) Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants

Any invited applicant who has filled out a SESA application but not offered a position will be notified of the Agency decision within ten workdays by the appropriate administrator.

(ix) Teacher Certification

A State of Alaska Type A teacher certificate, or another professional credential which may be designated by the agency to be appropriate to your position, is required for your employment with SESA.

This requirement is not an example of shared responsibility. It is the agency's policy that acquiring and renewing your professional credential is solely your responsibility. Any assistance which the agency may offer or provide in connection with your application for initial or renewed certification should not be construed as relieving you of your independent obligation to meet this prerequisite for employment.

Requirements pertaining to teacher certification and to eligibility for participation in the Alaska Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) are found in statute and regulation, and in the TRS Handbook.

*Note: Due to frequent changes by the State of Alaska, please see the website for the State of Alaska, Department of Education and Early Development, Teacher Certification.

(x) Adjustments to Contracts

The terms of an employment contract sometimes change. For example, the number of contract days may be increased or reduced, the salary placement may change, or the starting or ending dates may change. All changes in contract, as well as all other changes in employment which affect payroll, are made through a Payroll Status Change Form by the Finance Department. This change requires mutual agreement and the approval of both the employee and the Executive Director.

(xi) Promotion and Transfer

Refer to the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement, if applicable, for procedures regarding the internal notice of a new position and the consideration of internal applicants.

Qualified internal applicants for new or vacant specialist positions are given equal opportunity with external candidates. Consideration of qualified internal candidates is based on the candidate's experience and qualifications for the vacancy and the agency's program and service needs rather than on seniority of agency employment. At the discretion of agency administration, a vacancy may be announced and filled internally without external notice or consideration of external candidates.

(xii) Assignment Outside the Program of Hire

On occasion, specialists may be temporarily assigned outside the program or service area in which the specialist has been hired. These have usually occurred in the case of staffing shortages, but they might also occur in the case of student wait lists, referral backlog, or to provide service benefits for clients or cost efficiencies for the agency. Example: A specialist with specific knowledge in behavior supports may be asked to be the provider for a student whose identified disability category is in an area ordinarily served by another program in the agency.

When such assignments are made part of contract days and within the contract calendar specified in your employment contract, they are made within the discretion of the agency to assign its staff.

When such assignments require an increase to the number of contract days in your contract, or if they require work before or after the starting and ending dates shown in your contract as already signed, they are accepted based on mutual agreement by the specialist and the Executive Director.

In either instance, whether specialist duties outside the program of hire are assigned as part of your contract, or you voluntarily accept them with added days or adjusted work calendar, such assignments are particular to the specific needs of the student or client and to your specific knowledge or competencies. They are made on a temporary basis. They do not represent a program transfer.

(xiii) Reduction in Work Force

If the agency intends to reduce or eliminate an occupied specialist position, it will follow the layoff procedures described in the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement. Staff members affected by a position reduction have certain rights for transfer or recall. Refer to SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement language pertaining to layoffs.

(xiv) Orientation of New Staff

Initial orientation of new employees is conducted by administrative, support, and program personnel. The orientation will include the topics listed on an orientation checklist. In addition to using this checklist, the appropriate Program Administrator will provide the employee with study materials to comply with training requirements in Child Abuse Detection and Reporting, Sexual Harassment, and Confidentiality of Information. Wherever possible, these orientations should be completed within two weeks of beginning duty. It is the responsibility of the SESA Administrator to ensure that an orientation is provided to each new employee in assigned programs. (Ask your Administrator to see the New Employee Orientation Handbook)

(xv) Probationary Period

The period of probationary employment for certificated staff has been defined (see the collective bargaining agreement) in a manner that meets two objectives. First, you must work a minimum of 358 days (ten days fewer than the number of work days in two standard contracts) in probationary status with SESA before being eligible for non-probationary (regular) employment. Second, movement from probationary status to regular employee status becomes effective only on the employee's first day of a new contract.

Specialists who satisfactorily complete a total of 358 days in pay status during their first two years of employment would move to non-probationary status at the beginning of their third contract year. Specialists who do not satisfy the requirements for days in pay status during their first two years of employment would not move from probationary status until the beginning of their fourth contract, or later.

In combination, the agency's high minimum standards for experience and training, the performance responsibilities outlined in specialist job descriptions, and the expectations described in this handbook reflect our belief that individuals hired into specialist positions should possess and demonstrate professional standards of competence and performance. In addition to technical knowledge in your specialty area, specialists are expected to show sound judgment, trustworthiness, reliability, and the ability to work productively with colleagues and service recipients. The agency does not accept a responsibility to train, remediate, or advance to regular employee status a probationary employee who is unable or unwilling to meet the minimum standards of performance for which they were hired.

Employment Records

(i) Personnel Records

Personnel record procedures found in the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement is applied to all personnel.

The Executive Assistant maintains three types of records for each employee. The first of these records is a Pre-Employment File containing initial application materials, screening and interview protocols, and telephone reference notes. This file is available only to qualified administrators. This practice protects the privacy of the candidate's references and the program staff who rate the employee during the selection process.

The second file is your official Personnel File, which contains copies of your teacher certification, employment contracts, transcripts, salary placement worksheets, evaluations, and other miscellaneous non-payroll records. Copies of agency-created materials placed in your personnel file are given to you as they are filed. You may review your personnel file in the presence of an agency representative.

The third file consists of medical information, if any. Law requires that employee medical records be separate from the official personnel file, and available only to the employee and administrative personnel with legitimate need to know the contents therein.

(ii) Payroll Records

The finance office maintains separate payroll files for each employee. The separation of payroll files and personnel records ensures that access to information located in personnel files is limited to appropriate administrative personnel. Your payroll file contains information needed for payroll and is subject to audit, such as your travel reimbursements and benefit selections. Certain payroll information may be public, under law. You may review your payroll file upon request. Please direct your request to the Finance Officer.

4. Employment Salaries and Wages

General

All specialist and coordinator salaries must conform to the terms of the SESA-USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement, if applicable.

Payroll

The SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement addresses pay procedures for members of the bargaining unit.

(If applicable, refer to your collective bargaining agreement in addition to this handbook)

Payroll is released on the last workday of each month.

If you begin your work calendar in July or August, you may receive your annual salary in 10, 11, or 12 equal increment payments. This election is offered at the beginning of each contract year, and may not be changed after the first payroll. If you begin your work calendar in September or thereafter, you may elect a number of paychecks as available and appropriate to the term of your employment for that contract year.

All staff must submit monthly timesheets from the SESA database to document contract time, leave usage, non-contract days, etc. The accuracy of signed timesheets is your responsibility. Willful misrepresentations on timesheets are regarded as dishonesty.

If your salary is paid from more than one funding source, you may be required to maintain time and split funding logs from SESA database to account for your salary funding allocations.

Payroll Deductions and Withholdings

In addition to optional selected employee benefit deductions, the following are withheld by law:

- State retirement plan
- Unemployment insurance
- Medicare
- Federal taxes
- Wage garnishments and tax liens

As members of TRS and PERS, SESA employees do not contribute to the retirement or disability portions of the federal Social Security program. Therefore, SESA employment is not creditable toward social security retirement or disability benefits. However, SESA employees do contribute to the Medicare portion of Social Security through payroll deduction.

Payroll Direct Deposits

You may elect electronic deposits of your payroll to any institution accepting such deposits. See the finance office regarding details.

5. Benefits Policy

Insurance Benefits

Employee participation in the agency-sponsored group medical, audiological, vision, and dental insurance is mandatory. Refer to the plan member handbook to determine options and costs for mandatory employee and elective spouse/dependent participation. If applicable, your share of costs for premiums is described in the collective bargaining agreement. Employee costs for premiums may be paid on a pre-tax basis through payroll withholding for an IRS Section 125 Flexible Benefits Plan (see below).

Access to the Employee Assistance Program provided through Magellan Behavioral Health is also available through our health and medical insurance program.

Medical insurance coverage for staff completing a standard contract, and for all returning staff, runs through August. Persons who do not work a standard contract, or who leave employment before completing their contract will receive pro rated coverage corresponding to the pro-rata of the standard contract that was completed.

The agency provides at no cost to employees a group disability insurance plan. This disability insurance plan insures the employee against loss of income from agency employment, per the employment contract effective at the time of disability. See your policy literature for plan rules and terms.

The agency provides group term life insurance at no cost to employees.

Worker's compensation and unemployment insurance are provided as required by law.

The agency maintains a liability insurance policy. This policy primarily insures against the agency's liability that may arise from your actions as an employee. Depending on the circumstances surrounding an incident, and on the details of injury or harm caused another person or entity, and on the details and outcomes of subsequent legal action(s) or settlement agreement(s), the policy may or may not offer individual protection for the employee. For example, if only the specialist, and not the agency, is a named defendant in a legal action or claim, the agency policy most likely would offer no individual liability benefit to the specialist. If you have questions regarding your potential liability as an agency employee, see the Finance Officer.

Information regarding insurance programs and benefits is available from the finance officer.

Flexible Benefits Plan

The agency sponsors an IRS Section 125 Flexible Benefits Plan for its employees. The costs of operating the Plan are borne by the agency. Because of regulatory complexities and federal reporting requirements, the agency contracts with a benefits administrator to operate the Plan. The benefits administrator helps the agency meet operational requirements, and provides information to staff members upon request.

If you have questions regarding your plan, you may contact Flex-Plan Services:

Website: www.flex-plan.com
Email: claims@flex-plan.com
Toll Free: 866-535-9227 Fax: 425-451-7002

The Flexible Benefits Plan has three components: Day Care Reimbursement, Premium Conversion, and Medical Expense Reimbursement. If eligible to participate, you may enroll in any one or more of the above-mentioned programs. In brief, the day care and medical expense reimbursement programs allow for pre-tax payment of otherwise unreimbursed day care and/or medical expenses through payroll withholding, up to established annual maximums. The Premium Conversion program allows pre-tax payment of employee, spouse, and/or dependent medical insurance premiums through payroll withholding. Participants can rollover \$500 of unused funds from year to year.

IRS Section 125 Flexible Benefits programs are complex. Enrollment occurs once each year. Once enrolled, changes may not occur within the elected plan period unless a qualifying event occurs; e.g., marital status, childbirth/adoption, etc. There are many limitations and rules that apply to the agency and to participating employees. Read the Flexible Benefits Plan information received from the finance office thoroughly before enrolling in any flexible benefits plan. Ask for clarification if any information is unclear.

The plan year for the agency's Flexible Benefits Plan is September 1 through August 31 of each fiscal year. Note the important Flexible Benefits Plan dates and deadlines below (if the date falls on a weekend or holiday, the deadline is the nearest workday preceding the date below):

August 31

This is the last date to incur expenses applicable to the ending plan year. Expenses incurred on or before this date may be submitted for reimbursement up to sixty (60) days after this date. By law, funds remaining in a reimbursement account sixty-one (61) days after the end of the plan year are forfeited by the participant.

This is also the last date to submit enrollment or change forms for the new plan year. If you were previously enrolled in a plan, and do not submit a change form, the law requires the agency to withhold from your payroll the same contributions for the same programs you requested in the previous plan year, whether or not you intend to use the program(s).

September 1

Expenses incurred on or after September 1, but no later than the following August 31, may be applied to the new-year plan.

Last Work Day in September

The first payroll withholding(s) for the new plan year is made from the September paycheck (the last workday in September).

60 days After August 31

The deadline for submitting expenses from the prior plan year is 60 days after the end of the plan year. Expenses must be incurred on or before August 31. Amounts remaining in any reimbursement account after this deadline are forfeited by the participant.

60 Days After Employment Begins

The initial enrollment period in an IRS Section 125 Flexible Benefits Plan is 60 days after employment begins. Failure to enroll means you may not enroll until the beginning of the next plan year, unless a qualifying event (see your Plan Summary) makes you eligible.

6. Leaves Policies and Procedures

Administrative and supervisory employees shall be entitled to those leave provisions provided in the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement unless otherwise specified in individual contract or administrative procedures.

There are several different types of leave available to specialists and coordinators. Each requires a Leave Request form subject to administrative approval. Below is a summary of available leaves:

Leaves

(i) Sick Leave

In cases of employee illness, or in which the employee must attend to an immediate family member, verbal notice is to be given the immediate supervisor. The employee shall complete a Leave Request form upon return to duty.

An employee planning an absence for a medical appointment should submit a Leave Request form at least one day in advance of the scheduled absence. If advance request is not possible, a form should be completed upon return to duty.

For the injury, serious illness, or death of an immediate family member (spouse, children, siblings, parents, mother-in-law, father-in-law, and grandparents) or members of households whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship. This leave shall not exceed ten days.

(ii) Floating Holiday

Floating Holidays, if available per your employee contract, should be scheduled as far in advance as practical and a Leave Request form submitted at least one week prior to the scheduled day.

(iii) Non-Contract Leave

An unpaid, off-duty day that is not counted as part of the employee's contract. Supervisor approval is required.

(iv) Personal Leave

For Hourly/Admin, personal leave should be scheduled as far in advance as practical and a leave request submitted prior to the scheduled day, if possible. For all other staff, personal leave is an unpaid day that will be added to the scheduled contract on a one-for-one basis. Personal days will not normally be taken in conjunction with other scheduled leave or holidays. Requests for personal days will be made as soon as practical.

(v) Legal Leave

Verbal notice of an employee's call to jury duty or court shall be provided to the employee's supervisor in advance. A Leave Request form should be completed upon return to duty, reflecting the amount of time actually absent. Any monies received while in paid leave status should be signed over to the agency.

- (vi) **Professional Leave With Pay**
This leave category applies to leave from assigned duties for the purpose of attending an activity related to the employee's professional development, but for which the agency will provide no reimbursement or funding other than the employee's salary. Days on Professional Leave With Pay are counted as contract days.
- (vii) **Professional Leave With Pay and Stipend**
This leave category is to be used to apply for professional leave under administrative procedures, which may provide an employee stipend in addition to salary. See applicable administrative procedures for current guidelines regarding stipends for professional development.
- (viii) **Assigned Professional Leave**
This category of professional leave is designated for instances in which the employee has been assigned an activity by their supervisor. Full actual costs of participation in an Assigned Professional Leave are to be funded by the agency, unless otherwise mutually agreed.
- (i) **Other – Administrative Leave**
Civic Leave, Leave with out Pay, etc. When using this leave, note in the Explanation area of the Leave Form the category and detail of your expected absence. Bargaining unit staff, see current SESA-USESE Negotiated Agreement for applicable language.

Planned or unplanned absences from work which may not be charged to any Leave above, or which are not part of a change in work schedule as allowed under administrative procedures, will be regarded as Leave Without Pay. Planned absences under Leave Without Pay require advance request and approval. Days on Leave Without Pay are not counted as part of the total days to be worked under the employee's contract. If you have questions regarding leaves, administrative actions, or policies pertaining to leaves, consult with your Administrator.

Workers' Compensation

Workers' Compensation insurance replaces a portion of income loss and pays medical expenses due to job-related injury or illness. This insurance may also provide other benefits, such as retraining if you are unable to return to your position. The rules and procedures for our Workers' Compensation program are available from the finance office and should be requested if any work injury or illness occurs.

Workers' Compensation income replacement benefits and sick leave cannot be received at the same time. Employees are on salary when on sick leave and experience no loss of income. If you are placed on Workers' Compensation coverage and are unable to perform the essential functions of your position, you will be placed on unpaid medical leave. If you require information on Workers' Compensation, please see the finance officer.

Compensation for Overtime

SESA professional staff are exempt employees under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and are thus not eligible for overtime compensation.

7. SESA Employee Conduct

Code of Ethics

SESA employees are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards, to follow agency policies and regulations, and to abide by state and national laws. Employee conduct should enhance the integrity of the agency and the goals of the agency's mission.

Certificated staff is obligated by law to abide by the code of ethics and professional standards adopted by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

Unauthorized Release of Confidential Information

SESA employees shall maintain the confidentiality of all confidential subjects and records until such time as laws, state regulations, and/or bylaws of this agency permit disclosure. Information and records pertaining to executive sessions, negotiations, and student files are not subject to public disclosure.

SESA shall provide training in confidentiality procedures to all new staff, and at least every three years to continuing staff.

Any employee who willfully or carelessly releases or fails to maintain proper control over confidential information about students, school district staff, or any topic properly confined to an executive session shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from agency service.

Depending on the circumstances, the Executive Director or designee may deny the employee further access to any privileged information and shall take any steps necessary to prevent further unauthorized release of such information.

Conflict of Interest

SESA is fully committed to conducting its responsibilities in a manner reflecting the highest degree of integrity and honesty. The success of SESA in conducting its affairs is the sum efforts of each individual – administrator or staff – in executing his or her responsibilities with good judgment and in an ethical manner.

As public employees, SESA staff members are expected to avoid actual and perceived conflicts of interest. Again, principles and values rather than rules are the best tests to apply to potential conflicts of interest. We serve others and we do not use our positions for personal advantage. The perception of conflict is an important consideration, even if it is arguable that an actual conflict does not exist.

Stipends or honorariums are sometimes provided to conference or workshop presenters. It would be a conflict of interest for a specialist to accept compensation for work performed in any job related activity or capacity, for work conducted during SESA work time.

If you are granted paid civic leave to participate in an activity for which you also receive compensation, you should remit the compensation from the activity to the agency, just as with jury pay.

Each Administrator and staff member shall disclose to the Executive Director any potential conflicts of interest. The Executive Director shall disclose personal potential conflicts of interest to the governing Board. All such disclosures shall be reported to the Board or its designated representative(s) who shall determine whether an inappropriate interest exists.

No administrator or staff shall approve his or her own request to pay any company or person in which he or she has a conflict of interest. Except in very unusual circumstances, SESA shall not purchase equipment, materials, goods, and services from an employee, a member of an employee's immediate family, or from a business in which an employee or a member of the employee's immediate family has an ownership interest. If an exception is necessary, written disclosure of the conflict of interest must accompany the expenditure request.

Activities shall not be entered into which may be knowingly detrimental to the interests of SESA.

Responsibilities shall be conducted in a manner reflecting the highest degree of integrity and honesty consistent with the SESA Employee Handbook, BOD Policies and civil laws.

Political Activities of Employees

The Board of Directors believes that agency employees have an obligation to prevent the improper use of agency time, materials, or facilities for political campaign purposes. The Executive Director or designee shall regulate political activities on agency property.

The Board of Directors respects the right of agency employees to engage in political activities on their own time. When engaging in political activities, employees shall make it clear that they are acting as individuals and not as representatives of the agency.

Exposure Control Plan for Blood-borne Pathogens

The Executive Director or designee shall meet state and federal standards for dealing with blood-borne pathogens and other potentially infectious materials in the workplace.

8. Performance Expectations and Recognitions

Professional Growth

Professional growth of certificated staff is a responsibility shared between the agency and each specialist. The agency promotes and supports your professional development by providing stipends to defray the cost of professional growth activities, by making a generous amount of paid leave available for growth activities, and by providing for staff leadership and input in setting priorities for staff in-service during In-house non-travel weeks.

Many specialists also apply their airline frequent flyer miles, accrued through agency travel, to professional development activities.

(i) Professional Development Stipends

The agency uses the term “Professional Development Stipend” to refer to funding assistance for individual professional development. This funding is made available on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursements require receipted or documented expenses for approved costs or activities. The term stipend does not denote a disbursement of discretionary funds.

Each fiscal year agency budget includes an allocation for professional development stipends. The amount of the stipend varies from year to year, depending on available revenues.

Professional development stipends may be used to defray actual costs of approved development activities. All non-probationary staff have equal access to each year’s designated stipend. Probationary staff members are allocated a reduced stipend for approved requests, and may be assigned specific professional development activities at agency cost. Stipends may not be carried over from one program year to another and may not be transferred between staff members. Materials acquired in professional development activities (manuals, handbooks, presentation handouts, etc.) become the property of the agency, and should be made available for cataloguing into the library.

Stipends may also be used for approved expenses for materials related to your professional development. Materials such as books, curriculum materials, software, etc. clearly related to increasing knowledge pertaining to your work as a specialist may be approvable.

Advance approval of materials purchased through professional development stipends must be obtained from your administrator. A Check Request form may be used for such requests, with attachments as needed to describe the material(s) and cost, and their application to your professional development.

Materials purchased as above become the property of the agency, but may be housed at the specialist desk until no longer needed or employment ends. The agency also retains ownership of materials provided as part of professional development conferences or training. Upon acquisition, materials purchased or received in a workshop/conference

should be checked in as an agency purchase and catalogued through the library, unless otherwise approved by the Program Administrator.

Professional development materials and procedures are distinct from program materials and procedures to acquire program materials. If a desired acquisition would benefit or be used by a program as a whole, and is not focused primarily on an individual's professional development interest, the usual procedures applicable to purchasing program materials would apply. Program administrators will make such determinations, based on discussions with specialists.

In addition to staff-initiated professional development, you may be assigned activities, which may be paid in full by the agency.

(ii) Professional Development Leave

As indicated on the Leave Request form, there are three types of professional development leave: (1) "With Stipend" to defray costs; (2) "Without Stipend"; and (3) "Assigned Professional Development."

You may apply for Professional Development Leave With Stipend if stipend funds are available to help defray costs of your activity. The stipend is intended to assist with costs and not to reimburse for all expenses. It is likely the stipend will be depleted before the available number of days has been used. If you are unsure of how much money is left in your stipend account, check with the finance officer.

Professional Leave Without Stipend may be requested if there are no stipend funds available, if you want to reserve them for another expense, or if there is no expense for the activity.

Note that the above professional leave categories are paid leaves when the activities, including related travel, occur on standard workdays within your contract year. If the requested activity (including related travel) occurs in the evening, on a weekend, or outside your annual work calendar, the stipend may be applied but the time for travel and attendance will not be considered paid leave time.

Assigned Professional Development Leave is used for activities required by the agency or your administrator. These may be individual, group, or agency-wide activities. Assigned days do not count toward the ten-day annual maximum for regular (non-probationary) staff, but they do count as contract days, even when the activities, including travel, occur on weekend days. Costs for Assigned Professional Development may be paid by the agency.

Professional Development Leave policies for probationary staff differ somewhat from the above. The number of professional development leave days available to probationary staff is reduced, as is the amount of the stipend.

Performance Reviews

Non-probationary staff will participate in at least one annual performance review to be completed no later than thirty days before the end of the contract year. Probationary staff will participate in a minimum of two performance reviews during each year of probationary status.

Since on-going development is important for all personnel, an area of performance may be identified for future professional development. This area does not necessarily have to be an area of weakness, but rather might be one of particular interest or potential.

USESE representatives and agency administrators have an informal, collaborative process through which evaluative feedback from staff has been gathered and given to administration. In this process, administrators have made themselves available to specialist representatives for confidential face-to-face meetings.

9. Terminations / Separations Policies and Procedures

Employer Initiated Termination / Separation

(i) General

The agency reserves the right to release a new employee at any time within the initial probationary period, if in its sole discretion, the Agency finds that the person fails to meet standards of SESA. Non-probationary certificated personnel shall not be deprived of their position during the program year except when cause for the dismissal can be shown.

(ii) Reduction in Force

When it becomes necessary to lay off employees because of budgetary limitations, program restructuring, program elimination, a function is deemed not to be critical, or other reasons, it is the policy of this agency that the criticality of the function and length of service be considered. If a position to be eliminated and the person filling that position are of equal competence and have more seniority than a person in another comparable position, the person with less seniority will be laid off. All recommendations for a reduction in force must be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director.

Employee Initiated Termination / Separation

(i) General

When an employee intends to resign or not renew a contract that is offered, the official notification of this action should be made in writing two weeks in advance of the effective date, or in compliance with timeframe requirements outlined in a contract to the appropriate administrative officer. As a courtesy, additional notification may be made by the employee to the supervisor. The agency will appreciate receiving such official notification as early as possible to permit an orderly transition for the employee and the employer, with minimal impact on the agency.

If a certificated employee leaves the employ of the agency during the contract year without obtaining acceptance of his/her resignation, or leaves before the effective date of the resignation, monetary compensation of \$1,500 may be assessed and/or the Executive Director or designee may report this fact, with supporting evidence, to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

(ii) Declination of Renewal Contract

Normally, an employee serving under a contract will receive a renewal contract approximately two months in advance if the agency intends to continue the position with the incumbent. Such contract requires a signature within thirty days, or the contract may be withdrawn at the pleasure of the agency. If a contract is not received and signed within that period, the agency will assume that the employee is not interested in renewing the contract, and may contact the incumbent indicating the anticipated termination of employment at the close of the current contract

(iii) Retirement

When an employee anticipates entering retirement, she/he is encouraged to make early contact with the State of Alaska TRS or PERS Office.

Exit Conference

When leaving the employ of SESA for any reason the employee is expected to schedule an exit conference with the Executive Director. At this conference, arrangements will be made and confirmed to assure an orderly transition for both the advantage of the employee as well as the agency.

10. Work Policies

Work Standards

(i) Contract Days

The standard number of contract days for salaries shown on the SESA - USESE certified salary schedule is 184 days. The number of contract days for your position is shown on your employment contract.

(ii) Work Calendar

The Fiscal Year Calendar is set by the SESA Executive Director each work year. The Standard Work Calendar applies to most specialists who are employed under standard 184-day contracts. The Standard Calendar is developed with starting and ending dates that allow for 184 contract days, ten unpaid non-contract days, and agency closure days.

Non-standard Work Calendars are individual work calendars with starting and/or ending dates that differ from those established for Standard Work Calendars, or in which the days to be worked are non-standard. Non-standard Work Calendars are subject to administrative approval, and should be developed not later than the end of the first month worked each contract year. Refer to Article 24 of the SESA - USESE negotiated agreement for more information on this topic.

(iii) Work Time

It is the intent of the agency to balance the needs and interests of the agency and its personnel, while also meeting the requirements of the Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

The standard office work schedule for full-time staff is 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday. This schedule constitutes a 37.5-hour workweek. These are the hours most school districts attempt to contact you or expect contact from specialists, and are the hours other SESA personnel are available to support your work.

Though the FLSA does provide that exempt personnel who work a “short day” will not lose pay for hours not worked, it does not relieve exempt personnel from employer expectations or requirements for a standard workday or standard workweek. A pattern of late arrivals or early departures would not meet the requirement for a normal (regular) workweek of 37.5 hours.

Time spent traveling is generally considered part of your FLSA-exempt contract day, regardless of the hour of travel or length of day. There is no necessary or direct connection between an extended day traveling or at site and a shorter subsequent day in Anchorage, for two reasons: 1) such a correlation would effectively recognize more than one day of contract credit for a single calendar day, and 2) it would probably violate your exempt status under the FLSA, by crediting hours worked, rather than days worked.

However, SESA administration understands the rigors of site travel and remote service delivery, and may exercise administrative discretion by approving occasional less than full workdays, recognizing that requests for short days may be made due to travel fatigue.

We believe such approvals are allowable under the FLSA and the collective bargaining agreement because they are not based on any connection between extended days and shorter days, they are occasional and subject to administrative approval, and are not part of a pattern for either the individual or group.

There are provisions for adjustments to the standard work schedule, but these adjustments would still need to meet the normal 37.5-hour per week requirement. A long-term adjusted schedule requires an approved flex schedule.

A general expectation: keep your administrator “in the know” about your work plans and communicate both your routine schedule and variances from that schedule. You also should keep your program team in mind when adjusting your schedule.

(iv) Late Arrival

If you know you will arrive more than thirty minutes after your regular arrival time, you should notify the office in advance. Please call the main office number (907) 334-1300 and leave a message in the general voicemail box. Follow up with email, if possible, to your direct supervisor and the program assistants.

This late arrival policy should not be interpreted that an FLSA-exempt specialist has discretion to regularly arrive up to thirty minutes after the beginning of the standard work day (or approved flex-schedule arrival time), or regularly leave up to thirty minutes prior to the end of the standard work day (or approved flex-schedule departure time).

(v) Absences

(vi) Planned Absence

A leave request should be submitted for approval for any planned use of non-contract, personal, or sick time. Once approved, you will be provided a copy of the approval and the agency leave calendar will be updated.

(vii) Unexpected Absence

If you are requesting an unexpected sick, personal, or non-contract day, call the agency main number (907) 334-1300 and leave a message on the general voicemail box as soon as possible. This assures that administration is informed of your absence. You must complete and submit a leave request when you return to the office.

(viii) Flexibility Guidelines

It is expected that specialists will work at the office when not on travel status and will be available during the conventional workday. Exceptions should be occasional and arranged through the supervisor in advance. A request for a special schedule should be based upon a specific reason, outcome or benefit. The supervisor should deny a request for exceptions to the standard work schedule if agency or program needs outweigh individual convenience or benefit, or if granting the request goes against the expectation that staff members will generally be available at the office when not on agency travel.

(ix) Guidelines for Severe Weather Conditions

Dealing with adverse conditions is a part of living in Alaska. SESA employees routinely make preparations and adjustments to meet their obligations during periods of poor weather. However, there are times when travel may not be safe even from home to office. See the Section XIV in this Handbook section “Office Health and Safety” for guidelines during severe weather or natural disaster.

(x) Controlled Substances

The Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 requires SESA to notify and post the following statement:

All SESA employees should be aware that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited on the premises and while you are working for the agency off the premises. Violation of this prohibition could result in one of the following: (1) immediate termination, (2) disciplinary action, (3) a requirement to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a Federal, State, or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.

As a condition of employment, SESA employees will sign and date the Drug Free Workplace form.

(xi) Non-Smoking Policy

Smoking is not permitted in the SESA offices.

(xii) Alcohol Policy

It is the policy of the agency that transportation of alcoholic beverages by agency staff while on business related travel is prohibited.

Whether working in the field or in Anchorage, working or reporting for work under the influence is a violation of agency policy.

(xiii) Personal Appearance

When in the office or otherwise on duty we represent the agency and public education.

The agency asks that employees wear clothing or ornamentation that does not interfere with our ability to work effectively with our colleagues or the public. Clothing should be clean, well fitted (cover the midriff without pulling on the garment, etc.), neat, and free from tears and excessive wrinkles. Hair should be clean and neat; artificially colored hair should be predominately a normal hair color. Ornamental body piercings worn while on agency business are discouraged. Visible tattoos should not be offensive, e.g., contain sexual words or images, ethnic or gender caricatures, epithets, etc.

A clean and well-groomed appearance when on duty is important at all times. We are asked to wear clean, well-kept, “business casual” attire in the office. “Business casual”

attire may include suitable pants, casual footwear, sweaters, polo shirts, etc. Clothing with the embroidered SESA logo is considered “business casual” in our office.

On “dress down” Fridays the agency relaxes its expectation for business casual attire. On the final workday of each week “weekend casual” attire, such as clean, unstained, intact blue jeans, T-shirts, sweat shirts, etc., are commonly worn.

Travel

(i) General

The frequency and duration of travel to school sites must be sufficient to meet at least three important objectives: (1) establish with local staff the professional credibility and influence of the specialist so he or she is seen as an expert resource and a collaborator, (2) provide effective and thorough technical assistance and consultation while onsite, and (3) give the specialist a depth of knowledge about the referred student, and about the local program and its personnel, needed to design and sustain effective distance supports.

Independent and sufficient travel is thus established as an essential function of your position, and frequency, duration, and sufficiency of travel is a fundamental consideration in annual reviews for both probationary and non-probationary personnel.

On occasion, specialists may become incapacitated for travel but capable of work in the office, per a physician statement. In such cases, the agency’s practice is to provide an interim period of relief from travel requirements, during which the specialist and the Executive Director agree upon work to be performed in the office.

Such an arrangement, however, is short-term, typically for no more than two to four weeks (sequential or cumulative), after which the Executive Director will notify the specialist that travel must be resumed. If the specialist remains incapacitated from performing the essential function of travel, the specialist may apply for paid (sick leave) or unpaid leave as available, apply for disability benefits, or resign their position.

Where specialists may not be acutely incapacitated for travel, but the frequency and duration of travel falls chronically below agency and program expectations, administration will discuss its concerns with the specialist and attempt to support the resumption of travel to agency and program standards.

(ii) Travel Status

Travel Status refers to the period of time during which you are eligible for expense reimbursement and per diem allowance in connection with agency approved travel from and to Anchorage. Travel Status ordinarily begins two hours before the scheduled departure of your outbound flight, or if driving, upon leaving your office or home. Travel Status ordinarily ends when your flight lands. Adjustments to travel status times as above may be made by the Executive Director.

Periods of non-travel status, personal time during agency-approved travel, must be arranged in advance. Such time would be excluded from the protections and benefits of

travel status. Your request for reimbursement (trip report) must then clearly show the times you were in, and not in, agency travel status.

(iii) Travel Time

Time spent traveling is generally considered part of your FLSA-exempt contract day, regardless of the hour of travel or length of day. There is no necessary or direct connection between an extended day traveling or on site, and a shorter subsequent day in Anchorage for two reasons: (1) such a correlation would effectively recognize more than one day of contract credit for a single calendar day, and (2) it would probably violate your exempt status under the FLSA, by crediting hours worked, rather than days worked.

However, SESA administration understands the rigors of site travel and remote service delivery, and may exercise administrative discretion by approving occasional less than full workdays, recognizing that requests for short days may be made due to travel fatigue. We believe such approvals are allowable under the FLSA and the collective bargaining agreement because they are not based on any connection between extended days and shorter days, they are occasional and subject to administrative approval, and are not part of a pattern for either the individual or group.

SESA policies allow circumstances under which weekend travel time may be entered on your timesheet for credit toward your contract. These would always require administrative approval.

(iv) Travel Scheduling

Scheduling of travel is generally determined by the specialist, subject to approval by the program administrator.

Considerations for travel scheduling should include:

- a. The agency priority on providing supports to rural and rural/remote clients
- b. Prioritization of district service needs
- c. Availability of the student
- d. Availability of district staff
- e. Weather/travel conditions

Scheduling travel is an area of professional practice in which you should apply principles of stewardship and high standards of professional accountability.

When planning a trip, using the SESA database electronically prepares a Travel Itinerary on the FileMaker Pro file server for administrative approval. Experience has taught us that submitting this form approximately two weeks prior to travel is generally a good balance between submitting too far ahead of time (causing a high cancellation rate and unused tickets) and submitting too late (which may increase cost of ticket, and not allow enough time for the processing). The travel arranger will make all arrangements. You will receive a ticket packet and confirmations for housing, etc., prior to departure.

Occasionally, specialists may cancel an itinerary already entered in the database. Please do not re-use canceled itineraries, even for the purpose of rescheduling the same trip as canceled. Instead, complete a new itinerary form.

Once committed, site travel should not be cancelled lightly. The number and cost of cancelled trips has increased noticeably over the past two years. The frequency and reasons for cancellations of scheduled trips will be a point of emphasis in meetings between the Program Administrator and the specialist.

Specialists who accept a voluntary “bump” on return to Anchorage or who otherwise extend their stay for personal reasons do so with the understanding that they are no longer in either travel or pay status. Any added expenses or liabilities incurred due to a voluntary bump or extension of stay will be considered personal liabilities and expenses.

(v) Calling Home

SESA employees who are traveling can check out a cell phone before they leave for their trip. A satellite phone is also available for checkout when traveling to areas that may not have cell phone coverage.

(vi) Health and Safety During Travel

If you are new to traveling in rural/remote Alaska, consult your colleagues and administrator for suggestions as to appropriate clothing, preferred air taxi services, preferred housing accommodations, and other local considerations relating to your health and safety.

If flying conditions appear unsafe or for some other reason you have safety concerns, it is expected that you may delay or make other arrangements for completing your trip.

Information on TB and hepatitis, as well as information on other communicable disease in Alaska, is available on the Employee Resource Shelf. This information will also be made available during the annual Blood-Borne Pathogens training. The State of Alaska Division of Public Health posts health related information on its web site, and the Section of Epidemiology web site <http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/> is where public alerts are posted. The web site <http://www.hepnet.com/> has comprehensive information on the various types of hepatitis, and their prevention and treatment. The agency Executive Assistant will notify specialists via email regarding information of interest.

TB screening is provided by the agency at no cost to the employee during the first in-house meeting of the year. If for some reason a staff person who comes in contact with students or young children is unable to participate at that time, or if you are exposed after the annual screening, you may arrange a tine test by working with the Executive Assistant. The cost of the tine test will be reimbursed by the agency.

Please note SESA does not reimburse for the hepatitis A and B vaccination series. These vaccination series are reimbursable under your medical insurance plan.

Seasonal flu shots are also available during the fall in-house, and paid by the agency.

The agency also provides Air Passenger Safety training periodically. These full day workshops must be scheduled on Saturdays because the trainers are volunteers. Agency staff will be notified by the Executive Assistant when these trainings are scheduled. Specialists attending an Air Passenger Safety workshop may record the Saturday of training as a contract day on their timesheet for the month.

(vii) Travel Request and Reimbursements

Travel advances are provided prior to the first day of travel each contract year. These funds are provided to cover field costs of travel.

After each trip, complete the reimbursement portion of the Itinerary/Reimbursement in the SESA database, then print, sign, and attach all receipts and boarding passes. Submit to your Administrator for approval.

If your expenses have not been reimbursed and an upcoming trip would cause you financial burden, (travel expenses exceeding \$2000 travel advance) please give the Finance Office enough notice to prepare a special reimbursement before your travel.

The Finance Office will arrange for electronic deposits of your travel reimbursements, just as with payrolls.

You must repay the entire travel advance at the end of the contract year in accordance with the procedures in the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement.

(viii) Meal Allowances

A per diem rate for meals is stipulated in the negotiated agreement. This allowance covers expenses for meals while on travel status. No receipts are needed for per diem claims; however, you must be in travel status during the timeframes set out in the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Please note that in state and out of state per diem rates are not the same. Out of state per diem rates vary with location, reflecting federal reimbursement policies. Information for out-of-state per diem is available at: www.gsa.gov

(ix) Hotels and Lodging

Reimbursements will be made for actual necessary hotel or other lodging costs. In commercial lodging, use your travel advance funds or a personal credit card to pay your costs. Retain payment receipts for reimbursement.

Often there is no lodging other than the home of teachers. The rule of thumb in these cases is to first determine if there are district payment policies that you and the teacher are expected to follow.

If there is no district policy and you stay with a staff person, SESA procedure is to pay your host up to a maximum of \$50 per night. Ask your host to sign a receipt for the amount received for lodging and include their social security number. This receipt is necessary to meet agency audit and IRS obligations.

Policies requiring adequate receipts for your disbursements of agency funds serve to protect you. They also help the agency meet our Board's expectation that SESA follows best practices in meeting audit requirements in accounting for our expenditures of public funds.

Costs of food taken on site for your personal consumption, including added transport costs, are covered by your per diem allowance and should not be claimed as an additional travel expense.

(x) Expenses with No Receipts

Receipts for travel expenses should always be obtained, and submitted with your claim for reimbursement. However, reasonable amounts spent on certain un-receipted travel expenses may be reimbursed at the discretion of the Executive Director, in exceptional circumstances.

(xi) Airline Tickets

Round trip tickets to and from your final destination are obtained by the agency when possible. Some regions do not have scheduled air service available on airline reservation and ticketing systems. In these cases, you may have to arrange and pay for the ticket after you arrive at the regional hub community.

Inform the travel arranger of any unused tickets/flights. S/he will rebook using the ticket value when you submit an itinerary at a later date. If any change(s) to an itinerary or a re-issuance of a ticket results in a partial fare refund or any other benefit, such benefit accrues to the agency and not to the individual.

(xii) Cancellations

Airlines and hotel reservations are guaranteed with an agency credit card. Un-canceled reservations are charged to the agency in full even if you do not use the room. If your travel plans change while in the office before travel occurs, contact your supervisor and work with the travel arranger. If onsite: (1) contact the airlines and hotel/vendor directly and (2) notify the administrator and travel arranger of the change for both airline and hotel reservations.

(xiii) Use of Rental Cars

Rental cars must be approved in advance on a travel itinerary request. Current agency insurance coverage provides auto liability and physical damage protection. You should decline the optional waivers and insurance coverage available when renting a vehicle.

(xiv) Use of Private Vehicles

State insurance laws do not allow the agency to purchase property damage insurance in connection with privately owned vehicles. This means that if you use your personal vehicle on the job, your personal automobile insurance will be your only protection for damage to your own vehicle, or against property damage claims from other persons. Therefore, the agency will not require that you use a personal vehicle for job-related travel.

However, as a matter of convenience or preference, some specialists choose to use their personal vehicle for job-related travel. Such uses fall into two categories: local travel (within Anchorage city limits), and non-local travel (outside Anchorage city limits).

If you choose to use your personal vehicle for agency business within Anchorage boundaries, you should enter your mileage in the appropriate section in the SESA Database for approval. The rate for mileage reimbursement is equal to the IRS limit at the time of reimbursement. Parking expenses for meetings in Anchorage are reimbursed. If one has been provided, attach the receipt to your travel reimbursement form. Mileage between home and the office is not reimbursed.

Use of personal vehicles for travel on agency business outside Anchorage requires pre-travel administrative approval, regardless of the means of transportation. The agency strongly urges you to use commercial transportation, including rental cars, for travel outside Anchorage. Uses of commercial transport, in this case a rental car rather than your personal car, greatly reduces your potential liability in the event of personal injury or property damage.

Using personal vehicles to transport persons other than agency employees creates potential liability for both you and the agency. Therefore, it is agency policy that when using a personal vehicle for job-related purposes, you should not transport anyone who is not also a SESA employee.

(xv) Tickets, Fines, and Other Charges

Any fines, towing, and redemption charges or other costs resulting from traffic citations, improper or overtime parking, lost parking lot tickets, etc., are personal expenses. Any unpaid tickets, including added handling fees, which result from the rental of a vehicle and which are subsequently billed to the agency must be reimbursed to the agency. Amounts owing at the end of your contract will be deducted from your final payroll.

(xvi) Travel Between the Office and Airport

When traveling to and from the airport and the office in your personal vehicle, you may be reimbursed for the actual mileage and for airport parking while out of town. A receipt for the parking expense is required.

When traveling between the airport and the office in a taxi, you may be reimbursed for the expense as shown on the receipt submitted with your claim.

(xvii) Travel Between Home and the Airport

Federal law establishes that employment-related travel to and from your home and the airport is equivalent to driving from your home to your office. The employer is therefore not required to reimburse expenses or compensate time for such travel. SESA administration currently takes a more liberal position on this matter. Current policies regarding expenses for reaching the airport from home are:

- a. When traveling between your home and the airport in your personal vehicle, you may be reimbursed for the lesser of (1) your actual mileage or (2) the mileage between the office and the airport. You may also be reimbursed for parking at the airport when a receipt is submitted for payment.
- b. When traveling between your home and the airport by taxi, you may be reimbursed for (1) the actual expense as receipted, not to exceed \$20.00, or (2) the cost of mileage and parking had you driven your personal vehicle as above, whichever is less.
- c. Please note that these policies in connection with travel between home or office and the airport are exceptions to the Travel Status policies discussed previously.

(xviii) Travel Mileage Benefits

As specified in the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement, mileage incentives and similar passenger benefits which result from approved agency travel will accrue to the private use of the individual employee.

(xix) Personal Travel

If you wish to schedule personal travel in conjunction with agency travel in such a manner that the costs of the business and personal portions of your trip are blended, you must discuss your plans with your administrator before making commitments for any portion of your planned travel. Usually, travel arrangements for combination business and personal travel will be made through the agency travel arranger. However, your administrator may allow for personal travel arranging, if there is clear understanding as to the allocation of costs and the times on agency travel status. The dates and locations of personal travel combined with business travel must be identified on the itinerary. Added costs, if any, must be paid directly to the agency. Specialists who arrange personal travel in conjunction with business travel do so with the understanding that they have voluntarily removed themselves from agency protections and benefits during the personal portion of the travel.

Lead Team

The Lead Team is composed of staff from program, administrative, and support areas of the agency. Most members of the Agency Lead Team serve as team leaders for their respective program teams.

11. Information Access and Ownership

Office Operations

(i) Correspondence and Documents

Agency correspondence should be professional in content and appearance. All of our documents and letters should conform to agency style as established by the Executive Assistant, unless modified to meet needs of the consumer. Our program support staff is required to review agency letterhead reports, correspondence, proposals, etc., for format consistency and accuracy. After you have composed a document, electronically transmit it to your assigned program assistant for finalization. The prepared document will be returned to you for final approval and signature. After your approval and signature, it should be returned to your program assistant for copying, filing, and mailing.

(ii) Master Filing System

When a student or district file is established, the program assistant for the specialist assigned to that service recipient must ensure all documents are accurately filed in their designated sections and are in compliance with state and agency requirements. All student files must be stored in designated master filing cabinets. Sign and place the “Out Card” in each file when a file is removed from the master file. Line through your signature when you return the file. Master files must never leave the SESA premises.

If copies of documents in the master file are needed for travel or deskwork a working photocopy file may be created by your assigned program assistant. All confidentiality requirements for such files are applicable to copies. When the file copy is no longer needed, it should be given to your program assistant for disposal.

(iii) Student Database

A database of students referred to SESA programs is maintained by the program assistants. The upkeep and accuracy of this database is essential. Please follow procedures within your program to be sure information is provided to your program assistant in a timely manner for entering into the database.

Communication Procedures

(iv) Incoming Calls

Most incoming calls to the main line are answered and transferred by the program assistants. If a call is transferred to you and you do not answer at your workstation, the call is sent to your voicemail. It is our policy that a caller will not be told an absent specialist’s location or cell phone number; the caller will simply be informed that the specialist is unavailable.

Incoming personal calls take your time and the time of the program assistant who answers, transfers, and pages these calls. On an agency-wide level, the amount of time required to respond to incoming personal calls can be significant. Please keep the number of such calls you receive within reason.

(v) Outgoing Calls

As with incoming personal calls, use sound judgment with respect to the amount of time engaged in outgoing personal phone calls during the business day.

To place a long distance business call from the office, you must enter:

9 + 1 + area code + phone number. After the phone number is entered you will hear a flat tone – at this time, enter the two-digit long distance code that was assigned to you by the Executive Assistant at the beginning of your employment.

Personal long distance calls, whether from the office or during agency travel, must be charged to your personal calling card number or home telephone number. The only exception is if you are traveling and a change in your travel schedule affects your itinerary or time of return. In such cases, you may call the agency using the toll free number.

You may occasionally be asked to review the charges on the agency phone bill in order to identify whether personal calls have been charged. Reimbursement must be made to the agency for personal phone calls.

(vi) Fax

The fax machine may be used to send business and occasional personal faxes. If sending a long distance personal fax, the agency must be reimbursed for long distance toll charges.

- a. Retain the transmittal page printed after the fax is sent
- b. Sign your name and write “personal fax” on the transmittal page
- c. Submit the transmittal page to the finance office
- d. Finance personnel will cross-reference the transmittal page and phone bill and give the transmittal form with the amount due to the Executive Assistant
- e. The Executive Assistant will notify you of the amount due and will receipt your reimbursement upon payment
- f. When dialing long distance enter 1 + area code + phone number (ex. 1-907-123-4567)
- g. When dialing locally, simply enter the phone number (ex. 123-4567)

(vii) Electronic-Mail (E-Mail)

Electronic mail systems are provided to agency staff for the purpose of professional communication. All agency electronic mail systems are owned by the agency and are intended for the purpose of conducting official agency business only. Agency electronic mail systems are not intended for personal use by employees of the agency and employees should have no expectation of privacy when using electronic mail systems.

The agency retains the right, consistent with law, to review, use, monitor, store, print, and disclose all information sent over the agency electronic mail systems, without the knowledge or consent of the employee.

Employees must exercise caution and good judgment in the use of the e-mail system. Electronic mail messages can be retrieved even if they are deleted, and statements made in electronic mail communications can form the basis of various legal claims against the individual author or the agency.

a. Appropriate Use

- i. Users of agency e-mail are responsible for their appropriate use.
- ii. All illegal and improper uses, including but not limited to pornography, obscenity, harassment, solicitation, gambling, and violating copyright or intellectual property rights are prohibited.
- iii. Use of the e-mail system for which the agency will incur an expense without the expressed permission of a supervisor is prohibited.
- iv. Electronic messages are not for private or confidential matters. Because there is no guarantee of privacy or confidentiality, other avenues of communication should be used for such matters.
- v. Except for directory information, student records will be transmitted by electronic mail only by secure methods set forth by agency procedures under the direction of the Executive Director.
- vi. Except as otherwise provided in this policy, agency employees are prohibited from accessing another employee's electronic mail without the expressed consent of the employee, Executive Director, or designee.

b. Violations

- i. Agency employees will be subject to disciplinary action for violation of this policy and regulation.

Office Materials and Equipment

(i) Office Supplies

Many office supplies are available in the workroom. If you cannot locate needed materials, check your program assistant to see if it is available.

Office supplies are ordered twice a month. To request an order of supplies, contact the program assistant who is in charge of ordering supplies.

(ii) Professional Materials

Professional materials are materials used in program services. Professional materials are requested through your supervisor.

(iii) Personal Expenditures

On occasion it may be necessary to purchase supplies or materials with personal funds. To receive reimbursement for this type of expenditure, the purchase should be pre-approved by an administrator. Submit a check request with your receipt(s) to your Administrator.

(iv) Personal Use of Equipment and Supplies

SESA is an instrumentality of the State of Alaska. Our equipment and supplies have been purchased with state and federal funds. Agency equipment, materials, and supplies are

therefore treated as state property. Alaska law treats personal use of state property as an ethical violation. In addition to ethical concerns, personal use of agency materials or equipment incurs other liabilities on the user and the agency. As public employees, we should not use public property for purposes other than agency work.

This rule will be administered, however, to allow traditional and incidental uses of agency property, up to certain limits. Traditional and incidental uses may include receiving and placing occasional personal telephone calls, faxes, and e-mail transmittals, use of agency postage equipment (with reimbursement for personal postage), and use of agency provided workstations and equipment for occasional personal activities.

Personal use of equipment other than the sort listed in the examples above will always require advance administrative approval. Persons removing agency equipment for personal use without advance approval may be subject to disciplinary action.

Any use of materials and equipment that is not in connection with your responsibilities as an education specialist, or is not for an agency authorized activity, would probably be regarded as personal in nature, even when the activity or use may be related to your profession. Examples might include providing independent consultations or presentations, developing materials, or performing other work as an individual, rather than as an agency staff member or representative. If you are considering such activities, please ask your Program Administrator in advance for guidance specific to your plans for use of agency equipment and supplies.

Agency Ownership of Created Materials

All work products created using agency materials are considered agency property, with all rights of ownership accruing to the agency. This would apply even if the time you spent in creating the materials falls outside your standard workday or workweek. It is appropriate for specialists who develop materials to receive authorship credit, but the affiliation of the author(s) with the agency should also be cited, for example on cover sheets or article citations. Your personal ownership of work products can only be assured where your work occurs outside the normal work day and work week (ideally, outside your annual work calendar), and where you use no agency equipment or supplies to create your work product.

SESA Conference Rooms

SESA staff members wishing to reserve use of the Board or ATV Rooms should make arrangements with the program assistant responsible for placing reservations on the Board or ATV Room Calendar.

Use of Agency Equipment and Facilities by Non-SESA Organizations

Use of SESA equipment and facilities by organizations, including those in which you participate, must be arranged in advance through the Executive Assistant. Reservations by outside agencies for the conference room are made with the Program Assistant after approval by the Executive Assistant. In general, the agency will attempt to cooperate with requests from appropriate groups. However, reasonable fees may be required and the request may be denied if it conflicts with agency needs or is not commensurate with the agency's purposes.

Software

SESA observes copyright law for software. The SESA librarian provides information on copyright law and the use of copyrighted materials to staff upon request. SESA staff unfamiliar with copyright laws and copyright infringement should contact the librarian for information.

Unsupervised installation of software on agency computers can degrade computer performance or create software conflicts. Employees should not install applications on agency computers without the review and recommendation of their administrator.

12. Fiscal Policies and Procedures

Fraudulent Financial Activities: Policy and Procedure

(v) Policy Statement and Principles

This policy is established to protect the assets and interests of SESA, to increase overall fraud awareness, and to ensure a coordinated approach toward resolution of financial fraud. SESA must identify and promptly investigate all instances and allegations of fraudulent activities regarding agency funds, documents, and equipment involving staff, students, vendors, or other parties. Good business practice dictates that suspected embezzlement, misappropriation, or other fiscal irregularities be promptly identified and investigated. We believe that it is everyone's responsibility to report any possible fraudulent activity.

All persons found to have committed fraud relevant to SESA financial affairs shall be subject to punitive action by SESA and investigation by law enforcement agencies when warranted. Fraud in any form will not be tolerated. This policy applies to all SESA employees.

(vi) Scope and Definition of Fraud

Fraud generally involves a willful or deliberate act with the intention of obtaining an unauthorized benefit, such as money or property, by deception or other unethical means. All fraudulent acts are included under this policy, including such things as:

- a. Embezzlement, misappropriation or other financial irregularities.
- b. Improprieties in the handling or reporting of money or financial transactions.
- c. Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, inventory, or any other asset (including furniture, fixtures or equipment).
- d. Authorizing or receiving payment for goods not received or services not performed or receiving or authorizing payments for hours not worked.

Reporting Procedure

Anyone who believes fraud has occurred should report the incident to the Executive Director.

SESA will not tolerate any retaliatory actions against any employee or constituent for making a good faith report about potential misconduct.

13. Employee Concerns

Harassment

Harassment, including sexual harassment, violates basic standards of conduct at SESA and is prohibited by law. Any employee who engages in any of the acts or behaviors described below, is subject to disciplinary action.

Harassment is any verbal, physical, or visual conduct of a racial, ethnic, sexual, or other nature, which in the employee's opinion and as verified by impartial investigation impairs his or her ability to perform their job.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct:

- is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment;
- is used as a basis for employment decisions; or,
- has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance or creating an otherwise offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment of or by any employee or others shall not be tolerated. The Board of Directors considers sexual harassment to be a major offense that may result in disciplinary action or dismissal of the offending employee.

An employee who feels that he/she is being harassed is encouraged to report such incident to the immediate supervisor of the accused employee, whether within the agency or service delivery site, without fear of reprisal. The Executive Director shall be informed of all such complaints and will assist in the investigation and resolution of complaints. An employee making a complaint of sexual harassment shall not be required to resolve the complaint directly with the offending person.

Unwelcome sexual advances, unwanted auditory and visual exposure to sexually explicit subject matter, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to the conduct is made either an explicit or implicit condition of employment, status, or promotion.
- Submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting the harassed employee.
- The harassment substantially interferes with an employee's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.
- Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct is the basis for any decision affecting benefits, services, honors, programs or other available activities.

Responsibilities for prevention and correction of harassment conditions are shared between the employer and the employee. The employer is responsible for exercising reasonable care to prevent harassment by providing training, by disseminating sound policies, by being watchful and proactive where possible harassment conditions may exist, and by providing impartial and

timely responses to concerns and reports from employees. Employees are responsible for setting a climate of interpersonal professionalism, for becoming informed as to what constitutes harassment of various types, and for taking advantage of the responses and remedies which are available. Persons who feel they have been sexually or otherwise harassed, or who have been subjected to behaviors or conditions prohibited by law must report such incidents. Reports should be made to the Executive Director, or in the absence of the director, a designee, unless the director is a person against whom an allegation is being made. In that event, or if you are not satisfied with the response to a report which already has been made to the director, you should file a written report directly with the president of the SESA Board of Directors.

Persons filing reports will be protected from reprisal.

If applicable, SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement grievance procedures are available for such complaints, as are other remedies provided by law.

The agency will respond to reports of harassment by conducting a confidential investigation to establish facts needed to make a formal determination as to whether harassment has occurred. This investigation will be timely and will be conducted by the Executive Director or designee.

Within ten days of completing the confidential investigation, director or designee will provide the individual(s) alleging harassment and the individual(s) accused of harassment a written summary of findings and a formal determination as to whether harassment has occurred, and if so of what type. Lastly, this report will describe in detail the agency responses to the determination.

The Executive Director may at his/her discretion offer an alternative dispute resolution procedure, such as mediation, an enforceable agreement, arbitration, etc., to the party alleging harassment, either as a voluntary option in lieu of a formal investigation and determination, or as part of the agency's response to a determination of harassment. Such options may include the assistance of an agency-provided outside party acceptable to the complainant, the alleged harasser, and the agency. Acceptance of an alternative resolution in lieu of investigation and determination is wholly the discretion of the party alleging harassment.

A component of any alternative resolution should be the stipulation of the period of time during which, if the complainant becomes unsatisfied as to the outcome, the process of investigation and determination regarding the original complaint will be renewed.

Grievances

A detailed grievance procedure is provided in the SESA - USESE Collective Bargaining Agreement, which provides a framework within which employees may work towards solving problems as they arise and to guarantee fair treatment to all concerned. Employees shall initially attempt to resolve grievance potential problems at the lowest level through informal and free communications. The Union may participate in such communications if requested by the Agency and/or the grievant.

14. Office Safety Policies and Procedures

Office Health and Safety

The agency may provide training in CPR and First Aid, based on availability of funds.

General advice pertaining to health and safety include:

- a. When lifting objects that may weigh over 30 pounds, or if you have a history of injury, ask for help.
- b. If asked for assistance by a co-worker, provide it or help obtain it in a manner that encourages the person to ask again, if needed.
- c. Use good body mechanics when sitting, lifting, and transferring.
- d. Follow the personalized recommendations made by the ergonomic consultant, if one has been obtained.
- e. If you observe a safety hazard, such as an extension cord underfoot, materials stacked precariously, etc., correct it or report it to an administrator.
- f. If using the long stepladder, have two "spotters" to steady the ladder. Never stand on tables, desks, or on chairs that fold, swivel, or roll.
- g. Report all job-related injuries and illnesses as soon as possible, regardless of severity, to the Executive Assistant and to your administrator. This is a required and important responsibility. Law requires that all job-related incidents be reported, regardless of whether it appears they will result in expense or lost time. Report of Occupational Injury or Illness forms are available.
- h. Familiarize yourself with all exits.

Office Security Precautions

Several security precautions have been established for the office:

- a. Report suspicious or threatening activity to the police.
- b. Use 911 if your safety or property is threatened.
- c. In non-emergency situations, call APD at 786-8900. This is an unpublished APD dispatch number. If the dispatcher indicates no one will come reasonably quickly and you feel it is unsafe to leave the building, consider these options:
 - i. Wait for a while. Watch for the departure of the person(s) in question.
 - ii. Call a SESA administrator: Patrick 602-8856

Severe Weather Guidelines

Severe weather, power outages, etc., can make traveling to the office unsafe. Refer to the following guidelines to help decide the best course of action in extreme conditions:

- a. Use available information to determine if conditions allow travel to work with reasonable safety. Make your own observations -- listen to road and news reports or call others in different locations around town to decide if you can travel with reasonable safety. This determination is left to your best judgment. You are not expected to come to the office if you are unable to access thoroughfares or if you conclude travel would pose an unreasonable risk to your safety. Call the office and leave a message on the agency voice mail. If you are able to get to the office later in the day you may work a partial day. In that event, you could request the portion of the day not worked to be paid leave or approved release time, as available. If you do

- not report for any portion of the day, you may request the entire day as a paid or unpaid leave day, as available.
- b. If you decide to report to work but expect your arrival to be delayed more than 30 minutes, leave a message at the office prior to departure. If you become unexpectedly delayed en route to the office, notify your administrator upon arrival.
 - c. Administrators will consider individual circumstances for late arrivals or missed time due to weather and road conditions. In general, latitude will be given when conditions warrant.
 - d. Delays due to factors within your reasonable anticipation and control, or which are part of a pattern of late arrivals or absences, fall outside these guidelines.
 - e. In the event of extreme conditions, the Executive Director may announce a conditional office closure. A conditional office closure might be announced in the event of an earthquake, major volcano eruption, extreme weather conditions, or if the office becomes unsafe for occupancy. Announcement of such a closure will be made by telephone calls to staff using the SESA Phone Tree. If a conditional office closure is announced, employees will be considered on temporary paid leave until the office is re-opened, another work location is arranged, or until the Board of Directors directs otherwise.
 - i. Remind 101
 1. SESA uses a program called Remind 101 to send text message alerts from the Executive Director in emergency situations. In an event of an office closure, you will receive a text message in addition to a call through the phone tree. Remind 101 is a send only format that is meant to get a message out quickly and efficiently. If you need to communicate with the your supervisor you will need to use your email or telephone.

Catastrophic Event Guidelines

If a catastrophic event prevents both communications and travel, you are of course expected to attend to your personal and family safety and the security of your property. After these are secure, try to contact an administrator or another agency employee if you are able, so that others will know how you are doing. Questions regarding work will be addressed as conditions subsequently improve.

The agency disaster plan is available on the Employee Resource Shelf in the library. You should familiarize yourself with the general features of this plan, which has been developed to guide your board and administrators in the event of various disaster scenarios.

Hazardous Materials: Employee Right-to-Know Laws

In the interests of SESA employees and others in the office, SESA shall comply with the requirements of the Federal Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) to the fullest extent possible. Any known variations from the HCS shall be reported to the Executive Director or any Administrator for information and possible resolution. Contact the Executive Director for additional detail regarding this policy.

- It is expected you will willingly follow work related directions of the executive designee when your supervisor is away from the office on agency business.
- It is expected that you will maintain a workspace that is clean, organized, and conducive to the image of a public professional agency.

This policy document is given to you to help ensure your success in your position and the agency in its mission. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, or any questions regarding the expectations of you as an employee of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), please contact me at any time for clarification.