



# CANNON VALLEY Special Education Cooperative

## Employee Handbook

2023 - 2024

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WELCOME TO  
THE CANNON VALLEY SPECIAL EDUCATION  
COOPERATIVE

Welcome! We are happy to have you as a member of the Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative team! We value our staff members, students, families, and member Cooperative communities, and strive to meet the individual needs of those we serve.

This handbook will briefly clarify some common issues regarding personnel procedures within the Cooperative. This handbook is only valid until amended or replaced by the Cooperative's School Board. The Cooperative reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, or change the language in this handbook, at any time, in whole or in part, and with or without notice, at the School Board's sole discretion. This handbook is not designed to include all of the details of a topic but is intended to be a starting point. You are also encouraged to contact your supervisor or other appropriate employee members if the information you are seeking is not sufficiently addressed in the handbook.

The information in this handbook is a reference. Federal/state/local law, Cooperative policy, and negotiated labor agreements are summarized; however, none of the terms of this handbook create, are intended to create, or can be inferred as creating, any express or implied contractual agreement between the Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative and any employee. Except as provided in any applicable collective bargaining agreement or individual contract, all employment with the Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative is "at will," meaning that either the employee or the Cooperative may terminate the employment relationship, at any time, for any reason or no reason. Refer to legal documents for specifics. This summary of Cooperative processes and procedures supersedes, revokes, and replaces any earlier Cooperative handbook, personnel policies, interpretations, and practices. To the extent that any provision of this handbook conflicts with applicable law, the law controls. To the extent that any provision of this handbook conflicts with a more specific Policy adopted by the Cooperative's School Board, the more specific policy controls.

The term "Cooperative," as used in this handbook, refers to Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative and services provided by this organization.

Respectfully,

Sarah McGuire  
Executive Director

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## **Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative**

The Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative was organized in 2016 under Minnesota Statutes chapter 125A (as amended) to support the needs of the member districts and meet the individual needs of students who require a different level of service to make progress on their Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and objectives.

The Cooperative's School Board is composed of one representative board member from each member district who is appointed by that district's school board. The Board receives advice from committees and through the Member District Superintendent Council.

### **Mission Statement**

The Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative prepares every student to successfully learn and engage in their community.

### **Vision Statement**

The Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative is a model learning community with unique support for every student through collaboration with member districts.

### **School Board and Cooperative Commitments**

Maintain high expectations for social and emotional growth, academic performance and individualized educational opportunities to ensure all students reach their goal.

Engage with community organizations to provide a collaborative and responsive community for all students and families.

Locate and design appropriate learning spaces to serve individual student needs and easily accessible to member districts.

Implement a program that attracts, retains and fosters highly effective and trained professionals; offering staff development opportunities and supporting staff wellness.

Maintain high quality programming to member districts while being fiscally responsible and transparent.

### **Data Practices Advisory**

In accordance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, the Cooperative is required to inform employees of their rights as they pertain to any private information that the Cooperative collects from them. During the course of Cooperative employment, an employee will likely be asked to provide information which is classified by state law as either private or confidential. Private data is information which generally cannot be given to the public but can be given to the subject of the data. Confidential data is information which generally cannot be given to either the public or the subject of the data. Much of the data the Cooperative has about individual employees, however,



is classified as public according to Minnesota Statutes, section 13.43, subdivisions 2 and 3 (as amended). All public data is available for inspection and copying by members of the public, with or without the employee's consent.

Information about employees requested by the Cooperative may be used for the following purposes: (1) to process payroll, including accounting for wages and fringe benefits and to justify any reimbursed expenses; (2) enroll in benefit programs and pension plans; (3) evaluate the employee's job performance, eligibility and abilities; (4) distinguish the employee from other applicants and employees and identify the employee in the correct personnel file; (5) determine the employee's eligibility for employment or promotion, and make employment decisions about the employee's performance; (6) contact the employee or other significant persons in case of an emergency; (7) compile equal opportunity and any affirmative action reports required by applicable law; (8) make decisions regarding the employee's eligibility for sick leave, family and medical leave, parenting leave, and other available leave; (9) make decisions regarding the employee's eligibility for workplace accommodations, including accommodations for disabilities; (10) comply with workers compensation requirements in the event of an injury; and (11) provide information during workplace investigations. Such information may also be used and disclosed for other purposes consistent with applicable law. The information provided by the employee may be used in performance evaluations, determinations regarding merit pay, applications for different employment positions, and other matters which involve a review of the employee's personnel file and past performance.

Unless the employee is told otherwise, the employee is required to provide this information. If the employee refuses to supply the information, the employee may face disciplinary action. Any information which the employee is required to provide cannot be used against the employee in a criminal proceeding. Even if the employee is not required to provide information, it is generally to the employee's best interest to provide it. Without the requested information, the Cooperative may not be able to determine the employee's eligibility for employment opportunities, compute wages, or grant the employee other benefits. The employee's refusal to provide information during an employment investigation may also necessitate that the investigation be completed without his or her input.

Federal law permits government agencies to require individuals to provide their social security number for the administration of any tax. Please be aware that when an employee is asked to give his or her social security number on revenue forms, this collection is mandated by law. This information will be shared with the Minnesota Department of Revenue, the Internal Revenue Services, and security tax programs. In most other cases, the disclosure of an employee's social security number is voluntary.

Any information an employee is asked to provide may be shared with individuals within the Cooperative whose job duties reasonably require access, as well as individuals outside of the Cooperative whose duties require access, such as insurance vendors, consultants, attorneys, and retirement plan employees. Information may also be shared with other agencies authorized by law to receive specific data.

If litigation arises, the information may be provided in documents filed with the court which are available to any member of the public. If it is reasonably necessary to discuss the information at a Cooperative School Board meeting, it will be available to members of the public. To the extent that some or all of the information is part of the basis for a final decision on disciplinary action, that information is available to any member of the public.

General Expectations for Employees. In addition to specific duties assigned by supervisors, described in job descriptions, contained in policies, or elsewhere in this handbook, all employees are required to abide by the following:

- 1. Be a team player.** Bring a positive attitude to work every day. Communicate effectively with students and the members of your team. Get to know the responsibilities of all your team members. Whenever possible, attempt to resolve problems closest to the source of the issue, except as otherwise provided in policy or law.
- 2. Serve as a role model in your dress, speech, and actions while representing the Cooperative.** Dress and act appropriately for your role and personal safety. Always use respectful language. Avoid jokes, off-color remarks or attempts at humor that could be considered rude, inappropriate, disruptive or unprofessional. Do not talk about students or employee in a disrespectful or discourteous way.
- 3. All employees are responsible for the supervision of students at all times.**
- 4. Set high expectations for behavior. Know and enforce the requirements of the Cooperative's *Student Handbook*.**
- 5. Maintain confidentiality at all times.** Employees, students, and their families have a right to data privacy under state and federal law. All employees are accountable for what they say and for information they release. Do not speak about a student in front of another student or talk about a student to another employee, family member, or others in or outside school except as permitted or required by law. Respect other employees' confidentiality. If you have any questions regarding whether certain data can be released, do not release the data and, instead, contact the Cooperative's responsible authority designated by the School Board.
- 6. You are a mandatory reporter of suspected maltreatment of minors and vulnerable adults.**
- 7. Maintain your personal and professional boundaries at all times.** Personal information about your life outside of school is not appropriate and may not be appreciated by students. You are part of the school program, and your job is to provide education, support, and guidance to students. Establishing "friendships" with students may create unrealistic expectations and interfere with sustaining appropriate boundaries.
- 8. Maintain a respectful and safe workplace.** Inappropriate comments about race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, disability, other characteristics protected by state or federal law, and other tasteless or improper remarks will not be tolerated. The Cooperative also has anti-Harassment and Violence Policies that is on the Cooperative website. All employees are required to be familiar with, and follow those policies, including reporting known or suspected harassment in a timely manner.
- 9. Be dependable.** Reliable attendance is an essential function of every employee's job. You are expected to report to work on time, adhere to the time periods established by the Cooperative for any breaks, and remain at the assigned workstation throughout the scheduled work period or until released by your superior.
- 10. In emergency situations, all employees are required to follow the Crisis Plan.** Review the plan for your location and know your role and responsibilities in each situation. First and foremost, you are responsible for your students' and your personal safety.
- 11. You are responsible for reading and following all Cooperative policies and procedures.**

If you are unclear about any of these expectations, contact your building supervisor as soon as possible for an explanation.

Again, except as modified in any applicable collective bargaining agreement or other contract, all employment with the Cooperative is "at-will."

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*The Cooperative may develop, maintain and provide copies of an “Employee Handbook” for all employees upon initial hire and subsequently on the Cooperative website ([cannonvalleyspeciald.org](http://cannonvalleyspeciald.org)) which will include procedures and policies. In addition, program calendars, a copy of the current, applicable, Master Agreement, Terms and Conditions of Employment, and other essential employee materials may be provided to new employees and subsequently will be maintained on the Cooperative website.*

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## **Employment**

### **Collective Bargaining Agreements**

Collective Bargaining Agreements established through the formal negotiation process with the exclusive representative of a collective bargaining unit, outline the terms and conditions of employment for positions included in the applicable bargaining unit. Direct your questions about your collective bargaining agreement to your supervisor, bargaining unit representative, or the Cooperative Office. To the extent that this handbook conflicts with the provisions of any collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement controls.

### **Job Classification**

The Cooperative systematically describes and groups jobs to provide equitable compensation, ensure proper relationships between positions, and provide a sound basis for recruitment, selection, and progression. Consequently, it has established a classification plan for all jobs in the Cooperative in which individual positions are grouped into job classes, with each class composed of positions with similar duties, responsibilities, and required qualifications.

### **Job Postings**

The Cooperative typically posts Career Opportunities on the Cooperative website and any other location required by any applicable collective bargaining agreement. The postings generally include job location, minimum experience, training requirements, and the closing date for applications. Some postings are labeled as “Internal Only.” Internal-only positions are only open to non-probationary employees who are employed in a regular position. A regular position is a position that continues every year. Employees serving in positions as casual substitutes, temporary assignments, or casual instruction are not considered internal and are not eligible to apply for positions labeled, “Internal Only.”

### **Licenses and Certifications**

Each employee who is required by law or the terms of any applicable job description or contract to be licensed or certified must maintain a current license or certificate with the Cooperative Office. Individuals are required to know the date of expiration of their individual license and/or certification and renew any such license or certification in a timely manner to ensure that the license or certification does not lapse. Failure to maintain a current license or certification may result in discipline, including, but not limited to, suspension and immediate termination of employment. To the extent that any licensure requires continuing education credits (CEUs), it is the responsibility of the licensed employee to obtain any necessary CEUs through the processes and procedures established by the Cooperative’s Continuing Education Committee..

### **Background and Reference Checks**

To ensure that individuals who join the Cooperative are well qualified and that the Cooperative maintains a safe and productive work environment, the Cooperative conducts pre-employment background checks on all applicants who accept an offer of employment, and otherwise as required and/or permitted by Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.03 (as amended).. Background checks may include verification of any information on the applicant’s resume or application form, in addition to the formal criminal background investigation required by Minnesota Statutes Section 123B.03 (as amended). All offers of employment are conditioned on receipt of a background check report that is acceptable to the Cooperative. All background checks are conducted in conformity with the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other applicable state and federal laws, including laws regarding privacy and prohibiting discrimination. Reports are maintained pursuant to applicable law, and are only viewed by Cooperative Office staff involved in the hiring process, and other staff who the Cooperative has determined require access to that data as part of their job duties. All employees are expected to demonstrate exemplary behavior throughout their career with the Cooperative.

## **Separation of Employment and Unrequested Leave**

### **Resignation/Retirement**

In order to be considered “in good standing” at the time of resignation or retirement, If an employee who intends to resign or retire from employment must submit notice in writing, at least fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the employee’s anticipated last day of employment. The written notice must specify the effective date as the last day of employment. It must be submitted to their supervisor in accordance with the provisions of the employee’s collective bargaining agreement, if any, or to the Cooperative’s Executive Director or Human Resources Officer, if the collective bargaining agreement does not specify the manner in which, or the person to whom, the notice must be provided.

### **COBRA Benefits**

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA), as amended, gives employees and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity to continue health insurance coverage under the Cooperative’s health plan, when a “qualifying event” would normally result in the loss of eligibility. Some common qualifying events include resignation, termination of employment, or death of the employee; a reduction to the employee’s hours or a leave of absence; an employee’s divorce or legal separation; and a dependent child no longer meeting eligibility requirements. Employees must notify the Human Resources Director, or designee, of any COBRA qualifying event. To the extent provided under the COBRA, the employee or beneficiary is required to pay the full cost of continuation coverage, including premiums, at the Cooperative’s group rate, plus an administration fee of 2%.

If the employee does not choose continuation coverage within the required time period, group health insurance coverage under the plan will end. Once continuation coverage terminates for any reason, it cannot be reinstated. The COBRA is a complicated legal scheme. The description of benefits contained in this handbook is meant to be a summary, not a complete recitation of eligibility, terms, conditions, or amounts of benefits to any employee, former employee, or beneficiary. Employees should direct all questions to the Cooperative’s Business Department

### **Layoff or Unrequested Leave of Absence (ULA)**

The Cooperative defines an unrequested leave of absence or layoff as an involuntary, non-disciplinary separation from Cooperative service resulting from a lack of available work, a program cutback or other economic necessity. The Cooperative will comply with the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement when conducting an unrequested leave of absence or layoff. To the extent that the position(s) in question are not subject to a collective bargaining agreement, the Cooperative will lay off employees when such action is necessary because of a shortage of work or funds, the abolition of a position, or changes in organization. Except as required by a collective bargaining agreement, the Cooperative may give consideration to the employee’s job performance, abilities, job knowledge, and other applicable criteria when considering which employee(s) to lay off.

### **Exit Interviews for Employees Leaving the Cooperative**

In the event an employee leaves employment, the Cooperative Office may contact the employee to offer the opportunity to complete an exit interview. The exit interview provides employees with an opportunity to offer suggestions as to how we can improve employee working conditions, engagement, and satisfaction. Employees are also invited to request an exit interview by contacting the Cooperative Office.

### **Return of Cooperative Property**

The separating employee must return all Cooperative property at the time of separation, including, but not limited to, name badges, access cards, cell phones, keys, Cooperative purchased curriculum materials, technology, and Cooperative-purchased electronic devices (e.g., cell phone, iPad, or tablet). All records and documents created by the employee in the employee’s role with the Cooperative are the Cooperative’s sole property. All employees must return all such records, including curriculum, student records, personnel records, and other data created in the employee’s capacity as an employee of the Cooperative upon separation from employment.

### **Workplace Security**

## Cooperative Issued Name Badges

Employees are required to wear the name badge provided by the Cooperative at all times when they are at work or representing the Cooperative. It must be worn in a visible spot on the upper portion of the employee's body at all times while working. It is the employee's responsibility to follow these rules and to maintain the name badge in good condition.

The Cooperative issued name badge is an important part of an employee's work attire. It allows students, parents/guardians, co-workers, vendors, and the general public to know the identity of an employee. An important part of providing a secure environment for our students is to ensure that everyone who enters our schools is identified.

The Cooperative will replace badges on a periodic cycle at no cost to the employee. However, if an employee needs a replacement name badge prior to the scheduled replacement date, the employee should contact the Cooperative Office to obtain a new name badge. The employee will be charged \$5 for a replacement badge outside of a reissue cycle.

## Building Access

### Keyless Entry (electronic keys and keycards)

All of our buildings have a keyless entry system. If an electronic key card is misplaced or lost, the employee is required to notify their supervisor immediately in order to ensure that the key card is deactivated and a new key card can be issued.

### Keys (physical keys)

Some staff members may be issued a physical key for area specific area or areas of one or more Cooperative buildings. All staff members are expected to keep this key with them at all times. In addition, staff are prohibited from:

- Having keys duplicated
- Leaving keys on/in desks or shelves
- Allowing students to use any staff member's keys

## Protocol for receiving visitors at the building

Visitors are required to check in with the main office/reception area at each site and sign the visitor log. Visitors may include other Cooperative employees, parents of Cooperative students, and members of the public. Visitors must wear a Cooperative issued name badge or visitor badge. In most cases, we ask that the building employee who is responsible for the visit escort the visitor to the meeting area. Following the appointment, employees are required to escort the visitor back to the main office/reception area.

Note: If an employee encounters an individual who has not checked in, is not wearing a required Cooperative badge, and/or is not escorted by a Cooperative employee, if required, the employee shall immediately escort the individual to the front office and check in with the site administrative assistant, regardless of whether or not that employee is responsible for the visit. Any employee who encounters an individual that is not an employee and has not checked in, and does not escort that person to the front office to check in, may be subject to discipline, including, but not limited to, termination of employment, consistent with the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement or contract.

## Protocol for securing building at the end of the day

The last office employee person leaving the program site each day will ensure the following are accomplished:

1. All lights are turned off
2. Copy machines are turned off
3. All exits are secured

In addition, all doors at all program sites will be locked at all times. You must take your key fob with you to regain entrance to the building.

### Student Teacher

The Cooperative supports the opportunity to have student teachers and we want to make the experience a positive one for all. All student teaching opportunities must be approved by the Executive Director.

### Employee Lockers/Desks

Employees may be given a locker or desk that is able to be locked/secured during work hours to store personal items in. Lockers and desks are the property of the Cooperative and are subject to inspection and search by the Cooperative, with or without notice, with or without cause, and at any time. Please see the section on “Search of Employees’ Desks and Offices” for additional information.

## Workplace Health & Safety

### Job Safety

The Cooperative is committed to developing and maintaining safe working environments. Employees must observe general safety rules, remove hazards in the workplace, and immediately report unsafe conditions to the appropriate supervisor, consistent with Cooperative policy. It is very important for all employees to follow safety guidelines to avoid injuries on the job. The following is a list of safety protocols all employees are required to follow:

- Know the locations of exits, fire extinguishers, alarms, Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), and first aid materials at the worksite.
- Seek information or training from the appropriate person when required to operate any equipment or handle any type of chemical.
- Do not attempt to lift or carry an object that is too heavy to handle safely.
- Report any known or suspected safety hazards to a supervisor.
- Be aware of the surroundings and wear appropriate apparel for current weather conditions and work environment.
- Report to a supervisor any information received from others that could impact the health and safety of others.
- Report to a supervisor any information received regarding an individual who may be considering harming himself/herself or others.

### Workers’ Compensation/Reporting Accidents and Injuries

The Cooperative is covered under statutory state workers’ compensation laws. Workers’ compensation benefits are provided to protect employees in the event of a work-related injury or illness resulting in the need for an employee to receive medical care and/or to take time off from work due to the medical condition. In order to avoid possible delays in processing workers’ compensation claims, employees must report all work-related injuries immediately.

Any employee sustaining an injury as part of fulfilling a job responsibility shall immediately report the accident or injury to the building supervisor or Cooperative nurse. The call to the Worker’s Comp Nurse’s Line must be completed within the day of the injury. The Cooperative wants to ensure the injured employee is well and safe prior to returning to their job responsibilities.

Employees who need medical treatment will have an appointment scheduled with a provider by the Nurse’s Line. Call 911 in an emergency. The employee must return a “workability report” filled out by the attending physician to the Cooperative Office as soon as possible and prior to returning to work.

Employees are encouraged to report unsafe conditions to the Cooperative Office before the unsafe condition results in an injury.

## Fragrances

Fragrances can be triggers for individuals with asthma or sensitivity to chemicals (cologne, perfume, hair spray, nail polish, etc.). We encourage all staff to be mindful when wearing fragrances at work. Employees working with one or more specific student(s) or in specific program(s) may receive additional instruction and direction regarding fragrances and allergy triggers at work.

## Employee Right to Know Act

The Employee Right to Know Act requires the Cooperative, as the employer, to evaluate workplaces for the presence of hazardous substances, harmful physical agents, and to provide training for those employees who may be exposed to any harmful substances in the workplace. Written information regarding harmful substances is available in each Cooperative building. If an employee is concerned about a hazard in the work area or would like additional information, they can contact the Cooperative's Maintenance Technician.

## Required Training

School Board Policies and procedures are in place for the purpose of assuring a safe working environment for employees. Depending on the training content, some training is required annually whereas other training may be required only once or on a different schedule, as determined by the School Board or required by applicable law.

## Communicable Diseases

The Cooperative will provide guidance for dealing with work situations involving employees who have life-threatening and communicable diseases including, but not limited to:

- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection
- HIV-related illness as defined by Minnesota statutes
- Any other life-threatening and communicable disease

The Cooperative does not discriminate against qualified individuals with life-threatening and communicable diseases in any terms or conditions of employment.

## Indoor Air Quality

The Cooperative's Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Management Plan includes procedures for maintaining good air quality in our buildings. If you have an air quality concern, contact the Cooperative Office for a form to complete. Upon receipt of the form, the Cooperative will conduct an initial investigation and take appropriate action, including, but not limited to, contacting the building owners to seek redress of any situation.

## Integrated Pesticide Management

The Minnesota Parent's Right-to-Know Act (Minn. Stat. §121A.30, as amended) requires that schools inform parents/guardians and employees if they apply certain pesticides on school property. Specifically, the law requires schools that apply these pesticides to maintain a schedule of applications. The schedule of pesticide applications is available for review at each school office where pesticides are applied to school property. Employees should contact their site leader or their supervisor to find out how to view the application schedule or to be notified of any applications on days other than those specified (excluding emergency applications).

## Student Injuries and Illness

If a student reports that he or she is ill or if any employee has reason to believe that a student is ill, employees are required to ensure that the student is seen by the building supervisor and/or Cooperative nurse immediately. Only the building supervisor or Cooperative nurse can authorize a student to be sent home.

If a student reports that he or she has been injured or if an employee has reason to believe that a student has been injured, employees are required to ensure that the student is seen by the building supervisor and/or Cooperative nurse immediately. The Student Injury Form must be completed by the witness of the injury or person attending to the student. The form must be given to the building supervisor or Cooperative nurse as soon as

possible, but before the end of the school day the injury occurred. The building supervisor will provide the Cooperative nurse with the completed form.

If the injury happens at the end of the school day and/or the end of the employee's duty time, the employee must notify their supervisor and stay with the student until additional help arrives. Do not send a student home until the Cooperative nurse or building supervisor has screened the student and/or the student's parents/guardians have been contacted and provided authorization for the student to be transported home in accordance with School Board policy.

#### Animals at Work

The Cooperative does not permit employees to bring animals to work, except for service animals, consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable law. .

#### Children at Work

Employees are not permitted to bring their children or other individuals under their care to work. All employees are required to make arrangements for the care of their children, dependents, and other individuals under their care, during any time the employee is on duty. Related national events such as "Take Our Daughters/Sons to Work Day" are not recognized by the Cooperative

#### Response to Student Behavior

Employees are required to comply with all Cooperative policies and procedures, applicable law, and the provisions of students' Individualized Education Program (IEP), behavior plan, and other educational planning documents when responding to student behavior. Employees are required to use clear verbal and/or visual directives to manage student behavior and to follow building protocols for response to behavioral situations. Employees are prohibited from inflicting corporal punishment or causing corporal punishment to be inflicted upon a student to reform unacceptable conduct or as a penalty for unacceptable conduct. Employees may only use restraint and seclusion of students as authorized by law and Cooperative policy and procedure. All restraint and seclusion of students must meet the requirements of applicable law and Cooperative policy and procedure.

Any Cooperative employee or agent who witnesses or is involved in a potential corporal punishment incident, or other conduct that may constitute maltreatment of a student must immediately notify their supervisor or executive director. (See School Board policy #414 – Mandated Reporting of children and Vulnerable Adults.)

At all times, employees are expected to avoid situations that may place them in danger and to call for help when, or if, a situation begins to escalate out of control. Any employee who is aware of a threat of violence must notify their supervisor immediately.

#### Emergency Procedures

Each building has emergency procedures detailing what to do in the event of a fire, severe weather, criminal threat, and other events requiring quick and decisive actions. Building administrators must provide employees with emergency procedures. In addition to complying with building emergency procedures, employees are required to know where emergency medical equipment is located in the event of a life-threatening medical emergency. Employees must check with their supervisor if the employee is unsure of the location of emergency medical equipment.

### **Workplace Expectations**

#### Job Responsibilities

The position an employee fills has specific responsibilities for which the employee is expected to perform. It is important that employees understand those responsibilities. All employees must make sure they are clear about the functions they are required to perform in their position.

Accessibility Notice: In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) (as amended), the Cooperative will provide qualified individuals with a disability a reasonable workplace accommodation to allow them to perform the essential functions of their job, unless doing so causes an undue hardship to the Cooperative. Contact the Human Resources Director with any questions or requests for accommodation.



## Work Hours and Breaks

All employees are required to be at their work location and ready to begin the day at their designated start time. A failure to be at work on time may result in employee discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment. Except as required by a collective bargaining agreement, the duration of hours and specific times of the employee's workday are determined by the Executive Director.

Employees who must leave the site during the scheduled workday are required to obtain approval from their supervisor, follow Cooperative protocols for absences, and check out in the building office on the check-out form. Employees are able to leave the building during their duty-free lunch time by signing out of the building. If an employee is needing to leave during a prep period, approval from the building supervisor is required.

Cooperative Office Hours: 7:30 – 4:00

Building Hours: 7:30 – 4:00

Administration and Administrative Assistant: 7:30 – 4:00

Licensed Staff: 7:30 – 3:30

Educational Assistants: Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 8:00 – 3:30; Tuesday, Thursday: 7:30 – 3:30

If any employee wishes to flex start and end times, they must complete a Flex Hours Form and gain approval from the building supervisor and Executive Director before flexing any time. Employees may only flex by fifteen (15) minutes and any adjustment to an employee's start or end time must not affect student programming.

If an employee needs to flex start and end times for a one-time circumstance, they must gain approval from the building supervisor and complete an Absence Form documenting the flexed time.

## Problem Solving and Resolving Issues

Employees will not always agree on philosophy, teaching methods, or personality. Our differences make our program stronger. All employees are required to conduct themselves professionally and treat each other, as well as students, parents, and community members with respect while acting in their capacity as a Cooperative employee.

Except as required or authorized by policy, including the Cooperative's anti-harassment and discrimination policies, employees must attempt to problem solve and resolve issues/concerns with individual staff members independently. Should an issue/concern continue, the employee must problem solve with the building supervisor. Should an issue/concern continue without a resolution, the employee must problem solve with the Executive Director.

## Break and Rest Periods

### Hourly Staff

Rules regarding work breaks are governed by state law as well as collective bargaining agreement language and School Board policies/practices. Minnesota law requires employers to provide sufficient time to use a restroom and eat meals. If the work break is less than twenty (20) minutes in duration, it must be counted as work time. Time to use a restroom (up to a maximum of a 15-minute break) must be provided within each four (4) consecutive hours of work. A meal break (usually a 30-minute break) must be given to employees who work eight (8) or more consecutive hours.

Following is an overview of Cooperative work break protocols in effect at the time this handbook was written:

- Full-time, eight (8) hour employees will receive two (2) paid 15-minute breaks and an unpaid 30-minute meal break. These shifts total 8.5 hours.
- Employees working six (6), but fewer than eight (8), consecutive hours receive (2) paid 15-minute breaks and an unpaid 30-minute meal break.
- Employees working fewer than four (4) consecutive hours are not entitled to a break, although supervisors may allow employees to take a short break if needed.

Supervisors and employees can mutually agree to waive the 30-minute meal break depending on program or site needs, however the reason must be for the purposes of programming and/or coverage in the classroom and employees must be compensated anytime the lunch period is missed. This should not be a common or consistent practice.

The paid breaks (15-minute breaks) cannot be waived by the supervisor. The employee may not waive the scheduled time of the break. The employee and supervisor can mutually agree upon a new scheduled break.

An employee shall not be compensated additional wages or time off for not taking a scheduled paid break. Employees are required to use these breaks as intended. Neither the lunch period nor the rest break(s) may be used to account for an employee's late arrival or early departure or to cover time off for other purposes—for example, rest breaks may not be used to extend a meal period, and rest breaks may not be combined to allow one, half-hour long break. Employees are not allowed to skip the lunch period or rest break(s) in order to leave work early or come to work late.

#### Salaried (non-hourly) Administrative Staff

All salaried employees should work with the Executive Director to define the workday and break periods.

#### Teacher Preparation Time

Teachers are expected to remain on site during their preparation time. This requirement may be waived if approved by the building supervisor and the teacher signs out in the office.

### Job Performance

#### Probationary Periods

The probationary period for a Cooperative employee serves as a working test or trial phase. An employee must complete this period satisfactorily to gain regular or continuing contract status following appointment. The probationary period is in accordance with the employee's Collective Bargaining Agreement, statute, and/or Cooperative Board policy.

#### Performance Appraisal

Licensed employees will generally be provided with one (1) or more performance revaluations each year, consistent with applicable law and Cooperative policy and practice. Other staff members may receive one (1) or more performance evaluations each year depending on the employee's employee group. Employees may also receive a performance appraisal when an employee's job performance has changed significantly and warrants review. At a minimum, all employees can generally expect to engage in the performance appraisal process periodically throughout their employment. Questions about the performance appraisal process can be directed to the employee's supervisor or The Executive Director.

### Professionalism

All employees are required to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner at all times when acting in their capacity as a Cooperative employee. The following employee groups each have a specific code of ethics:

- Teachers (Minnesota Rule 8710.2100) (as amended)
- Administrators (Minnesota Rule 3512.5200) (as amended)

Violations of standards of professional conduct may be grounds for discipline, up to and including immediate discharge of employment.

#### School Board Policies and Cooperative Procedures

An employee's work and activities in the Cooperative are governed by official School Board policies which have been developed and adopted by the School Board. Current School Board policies are generally available on the Cooperative website. In addition, Cooperative administration has developed procedures to implement these policies, and to provide more information concerning Cooperative expectations and practices. All employees are

required to familiarize themselves, and comply, with these School Board policies and procedures at all times. All employees are required to review the employee handbook annually.

#### Annual Requirements:

- All employees are required to confirm that they have reviewed and will abide by School Board policy and procedure #524 – Internet Use.
- Certain key policies employees are required to know and abide by can be found in Appendix A of this handbook. Employees, however, are required to be familiar with and follow all Cooperative policies and procedures, regardless of whether the specific policy or procedure appears in this handbook.

#### Collaboration

Providing a quality education for students and a positive work experience for employees requires collaboration between all employees in the Cooperative. Collaboration is demonstrated by showing respect, cooperation, and leadership at all times. Serving as an effective member of a collaborative team is critical to meeting performance expectations.

#### Representing our Cooperative

All Cooperative employee represent the Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative. The impression and statements made by employees can influence people’s perception of our Cooperative. Employees are placed in a position of trust by families and community members and are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will not reflect negatively on the Cooperative or our employees, while acting as a Cooperative employee.

Employees must be diligent about not sharing or posting in social media any information that may be protected by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act or other applicable law. Similarly, employees should never (with the exception of a relative) engage with students via personal social media.

#### Attire and Grooming

It is important for all employees to display a professional image while at work by being appropriately attired. Employees are expected to present a well-groomed, professional appearance and to practice good personal hygiene, limit fragrances, and wear clothing that is suitable for the assignment.

The dress and appearance of Cooperative employees has a direct reflection on the professionalism of the Cooperative’s services. Employees are required to exhibit a professional image to students, parents, and the community in order to support a positive educational environment. In addition, Cooperative employees must always consider that their employment places them in the position of role models for students. Accordingly, employees are expected to dress in a professional manner that is:

1. Reflective of an employee’s position as a role model within the Cooperative;
2. Conducive to the employees’ tasks and/or environment; and
3. Clean and safe.

#### Guidelines for Professional Dress

The following guidelines serve to support employees and clarify the Cooperative’s expectations regarding professional dress. The following guidelines are the Cooperative’s minimum requirements and do not constitute an exhaustive list. Cooperatives may develop more restrictive guidelines for their campus, to which Cooperative employees are expected to adhere; however, Cooperative employees are not excused from compliance with this policy by any less restrictive guidelines imposed by individual Cooperatives.

Employees are expected to dress in a practical and professional manner. Clothing shall be neat (e.g., no holes or tears, not excessively wrinkled, etc.). All dresses, skirts, rompers, and jumpers must be an appropriate length to allow for standing and sitting and public.

#### Appropriate dress

- Suits, Pant Suits, Sport Coats
- Dress slacks, pants, khakis

- Denim jeans
- Dress shirt with or without a tie
- Dresses, skirts, rompers and jumpers (no more than 3 inches above the knee)
- Blouses, shirts, sweaters, or pullovers
- T-shirts or sweatshirts meeting the criteria for appropriate dress
- Any type of business shoe, tennis shoe, or sandal other than flip flops

### Inappropriate Dress

Except as described herein, the following items are considered inappropriate for the office environment for all employees:

- Jerseys
- Garments revealing the shoulders, including halter tops, tank tops, tube tops, muscle shirts, strapless tops, tops with spaghetti straps, or tops with straps less than 2 inches wide (unless worn under a jacket, blouse, dress, or sweater). However, a sleeveless blouse that meets all of the other criteria for appropriate dress may be acceptable
- Flip flops or plastic shoes
- Athletic wear (sweatpants, sweat suits, workout clothes)
- Shorts, miniskirts, skorts
- Body-hugging clothes including leggings, yoga pants, stirrups, and spandex garments (unless worn under a skirt, dress, or other item that meets all of the other criteria for appropriate dress may be acceptable)
- Garments revealing the midriff or undergarments
- Dirty, ripped, wrinkled, or stained clothing
- Transparent or tight garments
- Clothing with advertisements or logos larger than 2" (other than logos for the Cooperative or a Cooperative member to which the employee is providing service)
- Any clothing that is overly revealing or provocative
- Any clothing or visible tattoos with images or wording that are offensive or derogatory

### Exceptions

- Employees are required to wear any appropriate safety equipment for their assigned tasks, including, but not limited to, safety glasses and steel toed shoes.
- Physical Education instructors may wear exercise pants, sweatpants, sweatshirts, shorts, tennis shoes, and other athletic clothing while teaching Physical Education or supervising specific physical education related activities.
- Certain duties may have other specific dress requirements (e.g., lab coats, smocks, coveralls).
- The Executive Director or designee may provide for casual dress on certain days, at his or her sole discretion.

### Relationships with Students

Employees are expected to exercise good judgment and professionalism in all interpersonal relationships with students. Employees must understand that all employees of the Cooperative are considered educators of students, regardless of their position within the organization. As such, employees have an inherent position of authority and influence over students and should act accordingly. Employees are expected to maintain professional ethics and boundaries in all interactions, including interactions on social media. Employees shall

not exchange personal email or phone numbers with students, or interact with students on social media or via text message.

### Documentation

Intentional inaccuracies on official Cooperative documents or electronic reporting systems, such as work time entry, leave entry, job applications, and student records are prohibited. Falsification of any official record, including, but not limited to, time entry, leave entry, and job applications, may result in discipline, up to and including immediate termination,

Employees are prohibited from accessing or modifying their own children's records.

### Confidentiality

All information created, collected, maintained, and disseminated by Cooperative employees in connection with the performance of their job duties is considered government data pursuant to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA). Most of the information obtained as the result of employment with the Cooperative is considered private under the MGDPA or the disclosure of such data is otherwise limited by the MGDPA. In addition, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the maintenance and disclosure of student education records. All Cooperative employees are responsible for complying with the MGDPA and the FERPA, as well as other applicable laws governing data privacy, at all times. Consistent with the MGDPA and the FERPA, only Cooperative staff with a legitimate work-related reason to access data or be informed of particular information may be made aware of the information. Disclosing non-public data or student records to another staff member who is not authorized to access such data or information for the sake of curiosity, gossip, or other reasons not directly related to work duties is prohibited and may result in discipline, up to and including immediate termination.

### Communications

#### Website

The Cooperative maintains a website at [www.cannonvalleyspeciald.org](http://www.cannonvalleyspeciald.org). The website contains a wide variety of information about the Cooperative, our programs, employment policies, telephone numbers, upcoming events, and staff forms. Employees should familiarize themselves with the Cooperative website and refer to it in order to obtain necessary information.

Staff information and forms are accessible on through the Staff Portal, found on the bottom of the website page. The password to gain access to those pages is the Cooperative phone number. Staff must not share this password with persons outside of the Cooperative.

#### Email

As an employee of the Cooperative, you may have access to the Cooperative email system. Please refer to the policies section of this handbook for related policies and procedures regarding use of the Cooperative network/Drive. Employees with email access must review their messages as frequently during the day as their schedule allows and are expected to reply in a timely manner. For purposes of this policy, the term "timely manner" generally means as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours, unless the email is received on a Friday, the day before a holiday, or the day before an employee is otherwise not at work due to an approved leave, in which case a response is considered timely if the employee responds by the end of the next business day following the employee's return to work. It is generally a good practice to use the "out of office" feature in the email system when you will be gone for an extended period of time.

The Cooperative has defined the following protocols for employees to follow when sending a message from a Cooperative email account:

- Use a clear subject line that tells the reader if he or she needs to take action (e.g., "REQ: read and respond with edits") or if the email is for their information only (e.g., "FYI: conferences rescheduled to Monday").
- Start the message with the purpose so that the reader can quickly understand the essence of the message and whether or not s/he needs to do anything.

- When using the blind carbon copy (BCC) function to send an email to multiple individuals, start the message with a description of who is receiving the message.
- Be mindful when using the Reply All function. Is it something that the entire group needs to receive?
- Before sending an email to multiple sites or groups of employees, the sender may request a colleague to review the communication for clarity.
- Before sending an email, ensure the information contained does not violate the MGDPA, the FERPA, or other applicable law. This includes carefully reviewing the recipient's email address to ensure that the correspondence is sent to the correct person and ensuring that each member of a group email is permitted to receive the data or information in question under applicable law.
- Use headings and bullets to visually cue the reader to important elements.
- Choose the default clear/white background instead of using wallpaper. Use fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman to improve legibility.
- Use a standard signature including our mission statement, and refrain from adding other types of inspirational statements or quotes.
- Whenever possible, e-mail chains should be limited to a single topic, and a new e-mail should be sent if there is a separate topic that requires discussion among the same individuals. This practice assists the Cooperative with maintaining data in compliance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.
- Administration may provide additional guidance on email communication with parents/guardians.
- Individual staff members may create groups for their email (ex: middle school team). Contact Technology for assistance.
- Emails containing reference to drugs, alcohol, or sexual content are prohibited. This includes e-mails pertaining to non-intoxicating or edible cannabinoids.
- Emails to promote products an employee is selling are prohibited. (Staff may place items, brochures, invitations, or ordering materials in the staff lounge.)
- All emails must be professional, respectful, and legible.
- Email messages must not violate any applicable Cooperative policy, including, but not limited to, the Cooperative's policies prohibiting harassment, discrimination, and violence.

Employees must be mindful of the fact that e-mails sent, received, or maintained within the Cooperative's e-mail system are "data" for purposes of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and may be released in response to a data request from an appropriate individual. For example, e-mails relating to a student may be released to that student's parents. Employees are expected to be mindful of this possibility when crafting e-mail communications.

### Calendar

Staff are expected to keep their Cooperative calendar updated and shared with the building administrative assistant. At a minimum, the building administrative assistant must have sufficient access to see whether an employee is listed as "busy" or "free." However, employees are not required to share the details on their Cooperative calendar with the building administrative assistant, nor are employees required to share their personal calendar. However, staff do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in information they enter into a Cooperative-provided calendaring system. The Cooperative may access staff calendars, including personal calendars stored on the Cooperative's e-mail or calendaring systems or computers, without prior notice to staff.

The following are best practices for staff when using the Cooperative calendar.

- Use student initials and/or purpose of meeting when using the Cooperative calendar
- Respond to a calendar invite in a timely manner to let the organizer know of the intention to accept or decline.

- All IEP or parent meetings are required to be on the building calendar and scheduled by the administrative assistant.
- Contact the building administrative assistant to schedule other meetings requiring use of a conference room or large building space.
- Team and small group meetings generally do not need to be reported on the building schedule, unless otherwise directed to do so or required by Cooperative policy.

### Voicemail

Voicemail is assigned to designated employees. Employees with voicemail access must listen to their messages during the day as their schedule allows and return messages in a timely manner. For purposes of this policy, the term “timely manner” generally means as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours, unless the voicemail is received on a Friday, the day before a holiday, or the day before an employee is otherwise not at work due to an approved leave, in which case a response is considered timely if the employee responds by the end of the next business day following the employee’s return to work.

Employees are required to update the outgoing voicemail message with their name, title, building, and building main office number.

### Mailboxes

An individual mailbox may be assigned to employees at their work site. It is expected that employees check their mailbox daily.

### Right to Monitor

All Cooperative-supplied technology, including email systems, voicemail boxes, and mailboxes, and Cooperative-related work records belong to the Cooperative and not to the employee. The Cooperative routinely monitors use of Cooperative-supplied technology. Employees do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in such technology, electronic systems, and work records. Inappropriate, unlawful, or illegal use of communications may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

### Personal Cell Phones at Work

Employees are expected to exercise good judgment and professionalism in use of personal cell phones and other devices. Employees may not use their personal cell phones at work, except in extenuating circumstances or when the use of the cell phone is required of the employee as a part of their normal duties. Employees may not use personal cell phones or any other device while supervising students (engaged or not).

Personal calls may be taken during breaks. Employees will not take a personal call or use their personal cell phone for other reasons while working with and/or supervising students without express written permission from their supervisor. If it is necessary to address a personal issue while on duty, contact your supervisor to find coverage for yourself during that time.

### Walkie-Talkies/Radios

The Cooperative recognizes the need for communication between staff during the school day. Staff may be provided a walkie-talkie/radio or a District-issued cell phone in to communicate with other staff. Employees shall not text or make telephone calls to other employees using personal cell phones during the school day or in their capacity as Cooperative employees.

Employees will return all walkie-talkies/radios to the assigned charger at the end of each day. Employees should contact the building supervisor if there is a question on use or if there is a problem with the walkie-talkie/radio, charger, or other District-issued device.

### Cooperative Cell Phones

The Cooperative recognizes the benefits of administrative and itinerant employees having access to cell phones for communication and safety reasons. Therefore, considerations have been defined to establish the need for cell phone supplemental compensation.

Considerations currently include, but are not limited to, the following:

- \*Serve more than two programs
- \*Communicate with the greatest number of people and agencies
- \*Schedule is not fixed

Cooperative employees who meet eligibility requirements may be provided with a Cooperative owned cell phone, at the sole discretion of the Executive Director.

The Cooperative may supply a cell phone to programs who travel off site for employee use in emergencies. The STEP program will utilize the Cooperative cell phones for going to work sites, if assigned. Programs going out of town on field trips will utilize the Cooperative cell phone, if assigned.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Employees must be careful to separate personal financial or other personal interests from their role as a public employee. Specifically, any circumstance where the employee's judgment could be in question as a result of a personal or financial interest must be avoided by the employee. This requirement is particularly important for any employee who makes purchasing decisions, management personnel, and anyone who has proprietary information concerning the Cooperative or other sensitive data, including data regarding Cooperative staff and students.

Possible conflict of interest situations includes, but not limited to:

- Using Cooperative time, personnel, equipment, supplies, or good will for an intent other than Cooperative-approved activities, programs, or purposes.
- Receiving personal gifts or loans from third parties doing business with the Cooperative.
- Using confidential information obtained as a result of Cooperative employment for personal gain.
- Selling anything at the employee's work site to students for personal gain.

### **Gifts and Gratuities**

As a representative of a public employer, it is essential that a public employee's work is, and is perceived as being, free from external influences. Employees must decline gifts, gratuities, or favors from any outside organizations or individuals doing business or seeking to do business with the Cooperative. Any gifts should be graciously declined or referred to the employee's supervisor. For detailed information related to employees and gift acceptance, review the School Board Policy.

### **Respectful Workplace**

Employees shall cooperate with and be courteous to co-workers at all levels. While everyone is entitled to their feelings, they are not entitled to act on their feelings inappropriately in the workplace. Employees shall control their tempers and refrain from behaviors that are hostile, offensive, intimidating, degrading, threatening, obscene, harmful, exploitative, or unprofessional. Inappropriate displays include, but are not limited to: slamming doors, pounding tables, kicking furniture, unwanted physical contact of any nature, making threats, berating or belittling others, speaking in raised voices, using coarse, violent or profane language or gestures, refusing to speak or respond when spoken to, and refusing to provide assistance when requested.

Employees shall treat each other with respect. They shall refrain from making remarks about or using nicknames for other employees that are disparaging or based on a personal characteristic; producing cartoons or other graphics displaying other employees in an unfavorable light; communicating threatening or disparaging remarks via any medium (voice, e-mail, notes, etc.); engaging in unwanted horseplay or practical jokes; failing to relay written, verbal or telephone messages; unwanted, unwarranted physical



contact of any nature, including “roughhousing” such as punching in the arm, pinching, arm twisting, etc., and other, similar unwanted conduct

Any employee who feels he or she has been subjected to conduct prohibited by this policy must report the matter to his or her supervisor or to the Cooperative Office. Employees who witness prohibited conduct or possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a staff member has engaged in conduct prohibited by this policy, must report the prohibited conduct to the employee’s supervisor or to the Cooperative Office.

The Cooperative will thoroughly investigate all reports or incidents. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as possible, consistent with applicable data privacy laws. Retaliation for making a good faith report of conduct prohibited by this policy is prohibited.

Any employee found to be responsible for conduct that is in violation of these guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Employees are encouraged to bring their disputes to the attention of their supervisors or executive director before the situation escalates. The Cooperative will not discipline employees for raising such concerns.

### **Violence is Prohibited in the Workplace**

Employees are required to refrain from conduct that may be dangerous to others. Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, student, or other stakeholder will not be tolerated. Cooperative resources may not be used to threaten, stalk, or harass anyone at or outside the workplace. Direct or indirect threats of violence, incidents of actual violence, and suspicious individuals or activities must be reported as soon as possible to a supervisor or the Cooperative Office. When reporting a threat or incident of violence, the employee must be as specific and detailed as possible. Whenever possible, employees should not place themselves in peril, nor should they attempt to intercede during an incident. Employees should give verbal directions, remove any students or staff members who may be close to the incident, and contact their supervisor.

Employees should promptly inform the Cooperative Office of any protective or restraining order that they have obtained that lists the workplace as a protected area. The Cooperative will thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of violence, or incidents of actual violence, and of suspicious individuals or activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as possible, consistent with applicable data privacy laws. Retaliation for making a good faith report of conduct prohibited by this policy is prohibited.

Anyone found to be responsible for conduct that is in violation of these guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Whenever possible, Employees are encouraged to bring their disputes to the attention of their supervisors or Executive Director before the situation escalates.

### **Severe Weather and School Closings**

All emergency closings will be sent via the Cooperative notification system and email.

For the purpose of this Section an “emergency” shall include, but shall not be limited to, unusually severe weather as a result of which the Executive Director closes the Cooperative or a particular Cooperative building or program, mechanical failure of essential equipment affecting the comfort and safety of pupils and teachers, epidemic or widespread illness, severe energy shortages, or damage to building by fire or water, etc., and work stoppages by other employee groups.

The Cooperative may reschedule cancelled student days, with the approval of the School Board. Teacher work days lost because of emergency closing will not be made up, but other teacher duty days may be made up upon recommendation by the Executive Director and approval by the School Board. All leaves scheduled for a day cancelled by the Cooperative will be returned to the employee’s corresponding leave account.

### **Outside Employment**

Employees who choose to engage in outside work or to hold other jobs are subject to restrictions as outlined

below.

All employees are:

- Prohibited from using any Cooperative resources, facilities, data, and/or information to fulfill employment obligations for another employer or for their own benefit or personal use.
- Prohibited from sharing private, confidential, nonpublic, and educational information about a student if working with the student/family outside of the Cooperative or for any other reason not specifically authorized by the Cooperative.
- Prohibited from soliciting or conducting any outside business during paid working time.
- Cautioned to carefully consider the demands that additional work activity will create before accepting outside employment or additional assignments. Outside employment and additional assignments will not be considered an excuse for poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, refusal to travel, or refusal to work different or additional hours. Cooperative work must always be primary, regardless of the nature of any outside employment.
- Prohibited from using any paid sick leave time or to report an absence due to illness in order to perform services for another outside employer. Fraudulent use of sick leave will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

In addition to the above, administrative employees are prohibited from working in any other Cooperative paid position. Exceptions will be considered for management employees who are scheduled to work less than a 225 duty day contract. An exception must be pre-approved by the Executive Director.

## **Parking and Driving for Work**

### **Personal Vehicles/Mileage/Travel Expenses Reimbursement**

If an employee is required to use their personal vehicle on Cooperative business, the employee may be eligible for mileage reimbursement at a rate approved by the School Board. The employee may also receive payment or reimbursement of travel expenses if any approved training, work, or professional development requires the employee to travel outside the Cooperative, consistent with School Board policy and procedures. Employees must contact their supervisor to obtain information about submitting a request for reimbursement.

All mileage traveled must be logged to include the date, business purpose, and destination of each trip on the form provided by the Cooperative. Total mileage will be computed for that day and included on the appropriate location of the form. Mileage claim forms will be submitted to the office the last workday of each month. Consistent with applicable Cooperative policy:

1. Employees will be reimbursed for all authorized business travel;
2. Employees will not be reimbursed for the number of miles equal to the mileage to and from home to the base of operations each day; and
3. The Executive Director will determine the office/base of operations for each employee at the beginning of the school year, and modify the office/base of operation as job assignments change.

All reimbursements for mileage must be based on the mileage from the employee's normal place of work in the Cooperative. Employees are expected to verify their eligibility for reimbursement in advance with their supervisor. All expenses are subject to Cooperative approval, procedures, and audits.

### **Parking**

There is no charge for Cooperative employees to park their vehicle during working hours in approved Cooperative parking spaces. Most buildings and programs designate a staff parking area. Employees are required to maintain a safe speed in Cooperative parking lots and to remove their vehicles from the premises at the end of the work day.

Employees are prohibited from allowing a student to start, operate, or ride in an employee's personal vehicle.

### **Transporting Students**

School Board Policy #707 (Transportation of Students) provides parameters related to employees transporting students. Staff members are not permitted provide transportation to students (other than their own children) except in an emergency situation in accordance with authorization by the Executive Director. If emergency transportation must be provided and is authorized by the Executive Director, two staff members must accompany the student.

## **Employee Personnel Records**

### [Personnel File](#)

Personnel files are kept in a secured, central location to which only a select few employees generally have access. Employees who wish to review their personnel file, can contact the Cooperative Office to schedule an appointment to view the personnel file. Viewing of the personnel file must be done in the presence of a designated Cooperative representative. Employees may request copies of the information stored in their personnel file, consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and other applicable law. Except as provided in any applicable collective bargaining agreement or applicable law or Cooperative policy, employees are not allowed to add to, subtract from, or modify the contents of their personnel file.

### [Change of Personal Data](#)

Many changes in an employee's records such as address, telephone number, and emergency contact person can be updated via the form developed by the Cooperative. Updates to an employee's name, dependents, and marital status require presentation of appropriate legal documents to the Cooperative Office.

### [Employee Emergency Contact Information and Medical Disclosure Information Maintained at the Worksite](#)

Many sites/programs request that employees complete an emergency contact and medical disclosure information card. This card is used in the event of an emergency that requires access to employee contact information or medical condition(s). Although employees are encouraged to complete the information requested, it is not required. However, employees are required to maintain an emergency contact name and contact phone number on record with the Cooperative office. Employees can update their information via the form developed by the Cooperative.

## **Other**

### [Religious Symbols and Decorations](#)

The School Board recognizes and respects the right of all of its employees to engage in private and quiet religious activities, so long as that conduct is not disruptive and does not interfere with the rights of others who do not participate in those activities, or to have those activities imposed upon them, or result in the harassment of others. Employees whose religious beliefs require religious activity during the workday must request of their supervisor a non-disruptive place for such practices. Time for such practices may be during break periods or non-paid time. Direct any questions about specific issues to the Executive Director.

### [Political Activity](#)

We encourage all employees to be civically engaged, but School Board policies prohibit certain activities of a political nature while acting as a Cooperative employee. During the duty day, and whenever acting as a Cooperative employee, employees cannot actively campaign for or against a political candidate or issue. Employees may not use the Cooperative network or resources to advocate for or against a candidate or ballot question at any time, or use their position to influence subordinates or students to make contributions to or support any political campaign. There are also prohibitions against distributing campaign materials to students and using students to convey or distribute such materials.

### [When an Employee Receives a Work-Related Subpoena](#)

Any employee who receives a subpoena for any purpose related to employment will inform the supervisor immediately upon receipt. The supervisor shall immediately inform the Executive Director that the employee has received a subpoena. No employee may release educational data, personnel data, or any other private, confidential, or otherwise nonpublic data, as defined by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, of any kind without consultation with the Executive Director.

## When an Employee Receives a Request for a Letter from a Parent

The Cooperative prohibits employees from writing any letter, or otherwise creating any data, in response to a request by a parent for such letter or data for use in a court proceeding, including child support, child custody, and divorce proceedings. An employee who is requested to write a letter, or otherwise create data for a parent regarding a court proceeding, child support, child custody matter, etc., must inform their supervisor immediately upon receipt. The supervisor shall immediately inform the Executive Director that the employee has received such a request. No employee may release educational data, personnel data, or any other private, confidential, or otherwise nonpublic data, as defined by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, of any kind without consultation with the Executive Director.

## Use of Cooperative Equipment

Employees may not use, or facilitate the use of, Cooperative owned equipment, including electronic resources and computer equipment, for personal or private use.

## Computer Equipment and Printers

The Cooperative may furnish employees with laptop and/or desktop computers as well as devices such as iPads or Chromebooks. All employees with technology furnished by the Cooperative must comply with the following:

1. Do not leave the technology in an area where it can be exposed to extreme heat or cold, e.g., inside a car. If this should happen let the device warm up or cool down to room temperature before plugging it in and using it.
2. Keep liquids away from all components.
3. Take special care to avoid dropping the equipment.
4. The Cooperative provided protective case must remain on the device.
5. Back up files on a regular basis.
6. Cooperative furnished laptops, iPads, cell phones, and other like devices are considered “listed property” and as such they are subject to substantiation rules.
7. Ensure passwords to access the device and programs is secure. All devices have access to private student data.
8. Staff laptops are not to be used by students.
9. All use of Cooperative owned equipment is subject to all applicable Cooperative policies.

## Purchasing of supplies or equipment with Cooperative funds

Any Cooperative employee who purchases items or intends to purchase an item(s) for or on behalf of the Cooperative, or while acting as a Cooperative employee, must comply with federal regulations, Minnesota Statutes, School Board Policy, and the Cooperative’s Administrative Procedures regarding purchases. Purchases made without the Executive Director’s authority are unauthorized and a staff member making such an unauthorized purchase may not be entitled to reimbursement for such purchase or may be required to reimburse the Cooperative for the purchase. Contact your supervisor or the Executive Director for specific purchasing direction.

## Budget Supplies and Materials

Funds for assessment, instructional materials, and supplies budgeted within all program areas, are available for use by all students in the specific disability area, subject to applicable Cooperative policies and procedures.

Material or equipment needed for programs or students will be requisitioned through the Cooperative Office and the item will be coded either by the Executive Director or Business Manager. All requisitions and/or purchase orders will be reviewed by the Executive Director.

All supply and material orders must include:

- The requisition form with the appropriate information completed;
- A printout of the item from the on-line catalog or copy from the physical catalog to ensure proper ordering; and
- If the item is for a specific student, a copy of the IEP goal page or accommodation/modification page related to the item.

All orders will be delivered to the Cooperative Office, inventoried, and routed to the appropriate building/employee.

### Furniture

Employees assigned a specific classroom or office are responsible for items on the inventory record of their assigned classroom or office during checkout in the spring. Should any furniture need repair, employees must inform their supervisor immediately. No personal furniture can be brought into the Cooperative's buildings without permission from the Executive Director.

### Inventory

All items on the inventory record will be inventoried annually by the Executive Director or designee. All items that are the property of the Cooperative will be labeled with a number. Property of the Cooperative will not be thrown away, sold, or otherwise disposed of unless approved by the School Board in accordance with applicable law.

### Search of Employees' Desks and Offices

The Cooperative generally has wide latitude to search employee offices, desks, lockers, cabinets, and files. Employees do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in any desk, file cabinet, locker, work area, computer, voicemail, cell phone, other file storage device or programs, or e-mail account provided or maintained by the Cooperative. A search warrant or probable cause determination is not required for the Cooperative to conduct a search. Employees should be aware of this right to search workplace desks, offices, computers, internet access history, emails and files.

## Compensation

### Wage Disclosure Protection

Under the Minnesota Wage Disclosure Protection Law (Minn. Stat. §181.172) (as amended), employees have the right to tell any person the amount of their own wages. While the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Minn. Stat. §13.43) (as amended), specifically lists an employee's actual gross salary and salary range as public personnel data, Minnesota law also requires wage disclosure protection rights and remedies to be included in employer personnel handbooks. To that end, and in accordance with Minn. Stat. §181.172 (as amended), employers may not:

- Require nondisclosure by an employee of his or her wages as a condition of employment.
- Require an employee to sign a waiver or other document which purports to deny an employee the right to disclose the employee's wages.
- Take any adverse employment action against an employee for disclosing the employee's own wages or discussing another employee's wages which have been disclosed voluntarily.
- Retaliate against an employee for asserting rights or remedies under Minn. Stat. §181.172. subd. 3 (as amended).

Rates of pay are determined by collective bargaining agreement or by the Cooperative School Board for employees who are not part of a collective bargaining unit. For questions about pay rates, contact the Cooperative Office.

Employees are also able to access their own payroll and personal information on the SMART system. (There is a link on the Cooperative website.) Information shown in the portal includes, but is not limited to: paycheck history, leave account balances, year-to-date totals, and W-4 information. For information on accessing the employee

self-service portal, contact the Cooperative Office.

### **Payment of Wages**

The Cooperative issues salary payments through direct deposit on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> day of each month. If the normal payday falls on a non-duty day, payment of wages will be directly deposited on the duty day immediately prior to the normal payday. Information related to earnings and deductions may be viewed on SMART. The Cooperative Office is also available to assist employees with specific questions or concerns.

Information regarding pay periods and pay dates may be found on The Cooperative website, or employees can connect with the Cooperative Office. Employees wishing to change their withholding allowances should obtain a W-4 form from the Cooperative website or by contacting the Cooperative Office. Minn. Stat. § 518.611, subd. 8 (as amended), requires employees to notify the Cooperative of any child support obligations to be withheld from paychecks.

### **Direct Deposit**

Direct Deposit is required for all employees (except in the event of an extenuating circumstance, as approved by the Executive Director) and allows employees to have their paycheck directly deposited into up to three (3) accounts of their choosing. For additional information, contact the Cooperative Office.

### **Payment for Overtime (non-FLSA exempt employees)**

Any additional time worked beyond the employee's normal schedule must be approved, in writing, by the supervisor prior to working the additional hours. Hourly, non-FLSA exempt, employees are not authorized to work from home and are not expected to respond to emails and inquiries during their non-duty time.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) governs when employees are entitled to overtime compensation, either as additional pay or compensatory time. Payment of overtime is also subject to the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement. For the purposes of computing overtime compensation, overtime hours worked shall not be pyramided, compounded, or paid twice for the same hours worked. .

### **Time Off and Leaves of Absences**

Leaves of absence, both paid and unpaid, are provided in accordance with applicable provisions of collective bargaining agreements, individual employment contracts, Cooperative School Board policy, and applicable law. Employees must use leave for the purpose for which it is intended. Leaves must be pre-approved, except in the event of emergencies.

All employees are encouraged to maintain good personal health and attend to personal affairs during non-working hours whenever possible. It is an expectation that employees be at work and be on time to work. Regular attendance is an essential function of all employees' jobs and is critical to the operation of the Cooperative.

An Absence Request Form must be completed whenever an employee is absent from work. The Absence Request Form can be found in SMARTeR.

### **Unexcused absences are not acceptable**

Employees who are absent without approved leave may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. Employees must be sure to follow the Cooperative's reporting procedures if they are unable to attend work. Contact the Cooperative Office with questions about workplace absences.

### **Substitute Plans**

All employees will maintain substitute plans and will include a current copy of their schedule along with these plans. These plans will be kept in the main office.

### **Reporting Absences**

Employees are required to enter their absence request on the Absence Request Form for the following types of absences: sick leave, childcare leave, surgeries, medical leaves, jury duty, vacation, non-duty days, personal leave, funeral leave, floating holidays, workshops, meetings, time off without pay and other special situations. Absence requests must be taken as described in the applicable collective bargaining agreement or other employment agreement. Any adjustment to this or custom absence must have the prior written approval from

the Executive Director.

Employees must report absences via the SMARTeR by 6:00 AM of day of absence. If need for absence occurs after 6:00 AM on day of absence, employee must enter it in the Form and text their immediate supervisor as soon as possible.

#### Holiday Pay

Holiday pay eligibility is defined in collective bargaining agreement or individual employment agreement. For information about school calendars and holidays, review the calendar information posted on the Cooperative website.

#### Vacation and Personal Leave

Vacation and personal leave are governed by the terms of an applicable collective bargaining agreement or individual employment agreement. Advance requests for vacation and personal leave are required for all employees and should be submitted to the employee's supervisor a minimum of three (3) days prior to the requested absence date. Employees are encouraged to submit their leave requests well in advance of the scheduled date. . The Cooperative limits the number of employees who can be out on personal or vacation leave on any given day.

#### Usage

Requests for vacation and personal leave are subject to supervisor approval, based on the operating needs of the Cooperative.

#### Sick Leave

An employee receives paid sick leave accruals as defined in their collective bargaining agreement or other employment agreement.

An employee may use sick leave when the employee is unable to attend work or perform work duties due to illness, injury, the necessity for medical, dental, or chiropractic care, childbirth, or exposure to contagious disease where such exposure may endanger the health of others with whom the employee would come in contact during the course of performing work duties. Employees may also use their accrued sick leave for the following:

1. Illness or injury of the employee's spouse, child, adult child, sibling, parent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandchild, grandparent, or stepparent. Sick leave to care for an injury or illness of the employee's adult child, spouse, sibling, parent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandchild, grandparent, or stepparent is limited to 160 hours (20 days) in any given twelve (12) month period.
2. "Safety leave," as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 181.9413(b) (as amended). Employees may use up to 160 hours (20 days of an eight-hour shift) of sick leave for "safety leave" during any given twelve (12) month period.
3. Any other purpose for which the Cooperative is required to allow an employee to use sick leave by State or federal law, including, but not limited to, Minnesota Statutes, section 181.9413 (as amended).The Cooperative maintains employee leave balances. Employees are responsible for monitoring their leave balances and ensuring that they have enough leave time remaining to cover any absences. Leave balances can be reviewed via SMART.

Nothing in this handbook shall be construed to create any contractual right or obligation relating to payment for any unused leave balances at the time an employee resigns, retires, is terminated, or otherwise separates from employment. To the extent that any such obligation or right exists, it would arise solely from the applicable collective bargaining agreement(s) or individual contract(s), not this handbook. The Cooperative reiterates that nothing in this handbook creates, can be construed as creating, or is intended to be construed as creating, any

contractual right or obligation between the Cooperative and any employee.

#### Medical Documentation

In some circumstances, an absence due to a personal illness or family illness may require submission of a medical confirmation from a healthcare provider. Situations that may require medical documentation include, but are not limited to:

- A period of absence consisting of multiple consecutive working days.
- Leave of any duration if absence from duty recurs frequently or habitually.
- Leave of any duration when there is reasonable cause for requiring medical confirmation.
- Leave of any duration that occurs on Cooperative-defined “high volume” days.
- Leave of any duration if the illness is as a result of a workplace injury.
- Return from medical leave that is longer than three (3) to five (5) days, depending on the circumstance.
- Return from medical leave with medical restriction(s) like a need for a temporarily reduced work schedule or limitations in job duties that can be performed.

Eligible employees, as determined by the Business Department or designee, may be entitled to take unpaid leave pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA) for the purposes described in 29 U.S.C. § 2612 (as amended). All such leave, including the responsibilities of the Cooperative and its employees related to such leave, is subject to the conditions prescribed in the FMLA and the Department of Labor’s regulations implementing the FMLA.

#### A. Restrictions on FMLA Leave

For additional information regarding FMLA leave, including the circumstances in which such leave may be taken, employees should consult the posted notices. In addition, as permitted by the FMLA, the Cooperative places the following restrictions on eligible employees’ use of FMLA leave:

1. The Cooperative has designated a “rolling” twelve (12) month period for purposes of determining employees’ entitlement to FMLA leave. The “rolling” twelve (12) month period is measured backward from the date the employee uses any FMLA leave.
2. Spouses employed by the Cooperative are permitted to take a combined total of twelve (12) work weeks of FMLA leave during a single twelve (12) month period if the FMLA is: (1) due to the birth of a son or daughter of the employees; (2) due to the placement of a son or daughter with the employees for adoption or foster care; or (3) in order to care for a parent of the eligible employee.
3. Employees who request leave under this policy based on: (1) their own serious health condition; (2) to care for a parent, spouse, or child’s serious health condition; or (3) military caregiver leave, are required to submit a completed medical certification that complies with the requirements of the FMLA. Medical certification forms are available from Human Resources. The Cooperative reserves the right to request a second opinion, at the expense of the Cooperative, to the extent permitted by the FMLA. If the results of the employee’s certification differs from the results of the Cooperative’s certification, the Cooperative may obtain a third opinion at the Cooperative’s expense. The Cooperative also reserves the right to require periodic recertification, to the extent allowed by the FMLA and to contact the certifying medical provider to authenticate or clarify the medical certification in lieu of seeking a second opinion. Separate certification may also be required regarding the nature of the family member’s military service and/or the existence of a qualifying exigency, if leave is requested for that purpose.



4. Except in emergency situations, the employee is required to provide written notice of the need to take leave to his or her immediate Supervisor not less than thirty (30) days before the date the leave is scheduled to begin. If the leave is to begin in less than thirty (30) days, the employee shall provide such written notice as soon as practicable.

5. Employees are required to use all accrued sick leave, vacation leave, and any other accrued paid leave concurrently with leave provided under the FMLA. Employees with both accrued sick and vacation leave are required to use sick leave and compensatory time, if any, before using accrued vacation leave. The combined paid and unpaid leave cannot exceed the applicable twelve (12) week or twenty-six (26) week maximum FMLA leave time. FMLA leave may run concurrently with a worker's compensation absence if the on-the-job injury or illness also qualifies as a serious health condition under the FMLA.

6. Subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of applicable plans, eligible employees are entitled under the FMLA to the same health insurance benefits provided by the Cooperative while on FMLA leave to the same extent as if the employee were not on FMLA leave. Employees who contribute toward their health care coverage must continue to make that contribution while on leave, either through payroll deduction (if using paid leave) or by personal check (if using unpaid leave). If the employee fails to return to work after taking family or medical leave, the Cooperative may recover the premiums paid by the Cooperative for group health and life insurance unless the serious health condition of the spouse, child, parent or employee continues or for other circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

7. Vacation, sick, holiday, and other types of paid leave will not be earned during a period of unpaid FMLA leave. FMLA leave, whether paid or unpaid, will not constitute a break in service for purposes of computing years of service.

8. The Cooperative requires a medical certificate attesting to the employee's fitness for duty prior to the employee being allowed to return to work. The fitness for duty report must be based on the particular health condition(s) for which the leave was approved and must address whether the employee can perform the essential functions of the job. The Human Resources Director or designee may consult with a physician or other expert to determine reasonable accommodations for any employee who is a "qualified disabled" employee under the Americans with Disabilities Act. If a fitness for duty certification is required, the Cooperative may deny reinstatement until it is provided.

9. Records of FMLA leave will be kept along with normal personnel records except that any medical record(s) will be maintained separately in accordance with applicable laws. [Extended Illness or Recuperation](#)

If an employee exhausts their accrued paid leave during a prolonged illness or injury, they may be permitted to use other accrued time, consistent with applicable law, Cooperative policy, and/or the terms of any collective bargaining agreement or individual contract. Once the applicable paid time is exhausted, the employee's absence will be modified to a leave of absence without pay, if the employee qualifies for such leave.

#### [Bereavement Leave](#)

Paid bereavement leave benefits are defined in the employee collective bargaining agreement or individual contract. An employee who takes time off for bereavement is required to submit a leave request.

#### [Jury Duty](#)

Employees who receive a summons for jury duty are to notify their supervisor as soon as possible after receipt of summons. Should employees serve as jurors, they will be allowed time off with full pay for any time missed due to the jury duty. Any reimbursements, less mileage and parking expenses for serving as jurors, shall be remitted to the Cooperative upon release from jury duty.

If employees on jury duty are excused from jury duty at any time throughout their scheduled workday, they are expected to return to their normal work location and continue serving in their normal assignment. This leave applies only when the employee's normal work schedule conflicts with jury duty time. If an employee is "on call" for jury duty, he/she must report to work until required to report for jury duty.

If an employee is summoned for jury duty, the employee will not lose regular salary or benefits. In order to properly account for duty time, the employee must submit the following to the Cooperative Office.

Employee is required to submit the following within 48 hours of receipt of the summons for jury duty:

- Completed Absence Request Form
- The summons the employee received requiring the employee to report for jury duty.

Submit the following within thirty (30) days of the last jury duty day served:

- The original receipts for expenses incurred while serving as a juror (e.g., parking),
- The stub from the expense/mileage check received for serving on the jury,
- A check from the employee representing the difference between the stipend the employee received for jury duty and the total amount of the receipts (including mileage) the employee is submitting.

### Military Leave of Absence

Employees taking part in a variety of military duties may be eligible for benefits under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and other applicable state and federal law. Such military duties include leaves of absence taken by members of the uniformed services, including Reservists and National Guard members, for training, periods of active military service, and funeral honors duty, as well as time spent being examined to determine fitness to perform such service. Employees requesting leave for military duty should notify their supervisor and contact the Cooperative Office to request leave as soon as they are aware of the need for leave. Employees are required to submit necessary documentation to support the leave request.

### Unpaid Long Term or Extended Leave

Employees may, in certain instances, be granted a long-term leave of absence without pay at the Cooperative's sole discretion, subject to the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement, individual contract, or applicable law. Employees do not accrue any paid leave in any month in which an employee has been on an approved unpaid leave for an entire month. Service credit toward salary schedule advancement, retirement, seniority and longevity may be suspended as well. Employees who choose to continue to participate in the Cooperative group health plans will be required to pay the full cost of medical premiums.

Requests for an unpaid long term or extended leave should be submitted to Human Resources for consideration. Among other considerations, the Cooperative will take into account the reason for the employee's request, any applicable law or contract term, and the Cooperative's operating needs when considering a leave of absence request.

### Professional Conferences

All Cooperative employees seeking to attend professional conferences, meetings, and trainings shall make a written application using the Cooperative's approved request form. For pre-payment of conference costs, the request form must be submitted by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month preceding the month that pre-registration is due. Any requests made after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month may necessitate the employee paying the costs and claiming expenses post attendance. The Cooperative has the sole discretion to approve or deny any request to attend any conference, meeting, or training. The following conditions apply to all requests for payment or reimbursement regarding conference, training, or meeting attendance and related expenses.

- Lodging will be paid in full. However, no lodging shall be allowed when the setting is within 50 miles of the person's home, place of work, or the Cooperative offices, whichever is the shortest distance from the setting.
- Mileage shall be reimbursed at the current IRS rate for the use of a personal car. When more than one person attends the same function, mileage will be paid for one car, unless the number of persons

attending precludes travel in a single car, in which case, mileage for another car may be reimbursed. The actual transportation method shall determine the amount of reimbursement.

- Registration fees shall be reimbursed but not expenses for college credit earned through the experience.
- Itinerant employees are required to notify scheduled programs of their absence and indicate so by initializing the Request Form.
- All requests will have completed registration forms and a copy of the conference agenda attached to them.
- The Executive Director reserves the right to review and/or refuse requests which are not in accordance with the established policy.
- Purchase orders will be utilized where possible.

Procedure for hotel registration:

1. Fill out a conference/meeting request form with complete hotel information
2. Submit form to the Executive Director for approval
3. Cooperative office staff will complete hotel reservation process

## **Benefits**

For more information regarding benefits programs, please refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement, individual contract, and/or plan document. Summaries of the Cooperative's benefits programs may be available on the Cooperative's website as well. In general, the Cooperative provides health, dental, life, and disability insurance coverage to eligible employees. Eligibility for the Cooperative's contribution toward all benefit plans is determined by the employee's bargaining unit's eligibility and negotiated employer contributions or the terms of any individual contract for employees who are not part of a collective bargaining unit.

### **Coverage**

Coverage in group insurance programs is available upon the first day of employment for employees eligible for group insurance coverage. Eligible employees are automatically enrolled in the Cooperative long-term disability and life insurance coverage. Health, dental, and optional life insurance coverage shall be effective on the first day of employment once enrollment is completed. New employees are allowed up to a maximum of thirty (30) calendar days to complete enrollment. Current employees may make changes to their current enrollment within thirty (30) days of a change in employment status or life change event (see below).

### **Change in Employment Status or Life Change Event**

A life event is an opportunity for employees to change their health and or dental insurance coverage due to an event such as marriage, birth of a child, divorce, death, or change in spouse's insurance coverage through their employer following IRS guidelines. An employee, who experiences a life change event, is required to make the change within thirty (30) days of the date of the event. The Cooperative Office can provide detailed information.

### **Benefits Open Enrollment**

Benefits open enrollment is the only time during the year employees are able to change their health insurance plan or coverage, enroll in or decline health and/or dental insurance, and enroll in flexible spending without a life change event or other circumstance dictated by applicable law. The Cooperative generally notifies employees about the open enrollment period via email.

Group Health Insurance Health and hospitalization insurance is offered to eligible employees based on the terms of a collective bargaining agreement or other contract for employees who are not part of a collective bargaining unit. Employees generally receive a Cooperative contribution toward the premium cost of single or family health insurance for each employee who qualifies for and is enrolled in the Cooperative insurance plan.

### **Group Dental Insurance**

Dental insurance is offered to eligible employees. Coverage is available upon the first day of employment. The opportunity for enrollment is within the first thirty (30) days of initial employment or within thirty (30) days of a

change in employment status or life event. Employees receive a Cooperative contribution toward the premium cost of single coverage.

#### Flexible Spending Account

The Cooperative Flexible Benefits Plan permits eligible employees to set aside money from pre-tax income to be used to pay for certain eligible health care and dependent care expenses. As a result, the employee's taxable income is reduced. Eligible expenses include:

- Medical, dental and vision expenses (not paid by insurance)
- Day care expenses

Additional details are available in the Cooperative's plan document. In addition, the Cooperative's website may have a summary of the plan.

Note: Employees who choose to participate in the Flexible Spending Account benefit must submit an enrollment form every year of employment.

#### Group Life and Long-Term Disability Insurance

The Cooperative pays 100 percent of the premium cost for basic life insurance and long-term-disability insurance for eligible employees. Supplemental coverage for employees may be available at their own expense. Insurance coverage is effective on the employee's date of hire.

#### Retirement Plans (Public Pension)

The Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) & the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) are associations that are responsible for the administration of retirement plans providing defined benefit plan coverage to employees of the Cooperative. Employees contribute a percentage rate of their before tax earnings to fund their TRA or PERA contributions. The Cooperative also contributes a percentage rate on the employee's behalf. Additional information can be found on the following websites: MNTRA (All eligible licensed staff members) or PERA (All other eligible staff members.)

#### Retirement Savings (Tax-Sheltered Plans)

Eligible employees are allowed to authorize payroll deductions to be invested in a 403(b) account on a pre-tax basis. Information on investment companies, advisor contacts, and the required form to authorize this payroll deduction may be obtained from Human Resources or through the Cooperative's website.

#### Matching Contributions

The Cooperative will match contributions towards a tax-sheltered 403(b) plan for eligible employees in accordance with the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement, other contract, Cooperative policy, and applicable law. For eligibility information and the required enrollment form, contact the Cooperative Office.

#### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

This Cooperative-paid program offers free and confidential assistance when an employee is experiencing personal life or work issues, such as alcohol or drug abuse or psychological, financial, family, or marital problems. Employees may request assistance on their own or may be referred by their supervisor. Eligible employees and eligible family members may utilize the Cooperative Employee Assistance Program.

## APPENDIX A: Sample Policies You Are Expected to Know

Employee work and activities in the Cooperative are governed by official School Board policies which have been developed and adopted by the School Board. Current School Board policies may be available on the Cooperative website. In addition, Cooperative administration has developed procedures to implement these policies and to provide more information concerning Cooperative expectations and practices. You are required to familiarize yourself, and comply, with these policies and procedures at all times.

The summary on the following pages is not exhaustive of all policies pertaining to education. This section is provided for general informational reference only. Full policies can be found on the Cooperative website ([cannonvalleyspecialled.org](http://cannonvalleyspecialled.org)) and are available from Human Resources. The Cooperative reserves the right to change/modify/terminate these policies or the above procedures at any time with or without notice to employees. As an employee, you are accountable for understanding and complying with all School Board policies. Violations of policies or expectations could be cause for disciplinary action. To the extent that the summary of any policy presented in this handbook is inconsistent with the School Board's official policy, the official policy controls.

### Policy 102 - Equal Educational and Employment Opportunity

**Key Idea:** The Cooperative prohibits discrimination against any student or employee who is a member of a class protected by the Minnesota Human Rights Act, such as race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital or parental status, or status with regard to public assistance or disability. Any student or employee who believes he/she may have been subject to discrimination has the right to submit a formal complaint in accordance with the grievance procedures outlined in the formal procedures for Policy 102 found on the Cooperative website.

**Good Practice:** Become familiar with this policy. Treat students and colleagues with respect and care. Behave in accordance with our organizational core value that everyone has equal intrinsic value. Report any potential violation to the executive director.

### Policy 403 - Discipline, Suspension and Dismissal of Cooperative Employees

**Key Idea:** Employees are expected to behave professionally and to abide by any applicable state/federal laws, School Board policies and applicable professional codes of ethics. Violations could be subject to discipline up to and including discharge of employment.

**Good Practice:** Become familiar with this policy and procedure. Make sure your actions are always respectful, and professional. Maintain a high level of integrity and ethics in your work and in your relationships with those whom you encounter in your work. If you have any concerns, questions or need assistance, contact the Cooperative Office or your supervisor.

### Policies 402, 413, 521, 522, and 525 – Discrimination, Harassment, and Violence Prevention

**Key Idea:** The Cooperative prohibits any form of violence or harassment based on any characteristic such as sex, religion, or other protected status. This includes any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature between a supervisor and a subordinate, between peers, or between an employee and a student when it interferes with job performance, creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment, or affects potential educational or employment opportunities or benefits. Employees are responsible for understanding what constitutes harassment and violence as outlined in the School Board policies and are required to report to the proper authorities any conduct that appears to be a violation of these policies.

**Good Practice:** Become familiar with these policies. Treat students and colleagues with respect and care. Behave in accordance with our organizational core value that everyone has equal intrinsic value. Refrain from any behavior that could be considered a violation of the policies. Consult with your supervisor or the Cooperative's Human Rights Officer in the Cooperative Office any time you have questions about appropriate behavior or believe a violation of these policies has occurred.

### Policy 414 - Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Children or Vulnerable Adults

**Key Idea:** Any employee of the Cooperative is mandated to report suspected neglect or abuse (physical or sexual) of

vulnerable adults or children in the home, school, and community settings. Any employee having reasonable cause to suspect that a student is being physically, emotionally, or sexually abused, or neglected must immediately report this information to the appropriate authorities (Minnesota Department of Education, local welfare agency, police department, or the county sheriff).

Good Practice: Whenever possible, the employee will first share his/her suspicion with the site leader. The employee then has the responsibility to report directly to the Minnesota Department of Education, child protection, police, or sheriff in accordance with the procedure. If you suspect maltreatment of a student by a Cooperative employee, contact your supervisor and the Cooperative Office.

#### [Drug and Alcohol Testing \(Policy 416\) & Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free School \(Policy 418\) & Tobacco-Free Environment \(Policy 419\)](#)

Key Idea(s): The Cooperative prohibits the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, transfer, possession or use of any defined prohibited drug while on school property, in school vehicles, or while accompanying students on school-affiliated activities. The use of alcohol and/or tobacco including e-cigarettes is prohibited for all persons within all school buildings, in school or contracted vehicles, or on school grounds during all hours of every calendar day. The prohibition applies to all students and adults. The prohibition also applies to medical cannabis, regardless of whether or not the employee has been prescribed medical cannabis, and to non-intoxicating cannabinoids or edible cannabinoid products.

These policies apply at all times at any school-sponsored event, on- or off-campus, while students are under staff supervision. If there is reasonable suspicion that an employee may be under the influence of a mood-altering substance at work, the employee will be required to take a drug and/or alcohol test immediately when directed to do so.

Good Practice: Maintain a tobacco-free and chemical-free workplace. Keep tobacco, alcohol, and chemicals away from Cooperative property and away from school-sponsored activities, no matter where they are held. If you must take prescription drugs at the workplace, the drugs must be kept in a secure location inaccessible to other staff or students and must not impede your ability to perform the essential functions of your job. If you need assistance with finding a secure location, please consult with your supervisor. Any employee who suspects an individual may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol is required to report the information to their direct supervisor or to the Cooperative Office.

#### [Policy 514 - Bullying Prohibition](#)

Key Idea: Bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited conduct among students. This includes any intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harmful conduct that is objectively offensive and either (1) involves an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in prohibited conduct and the target of the behavior, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or (2) materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in Cooperative functions or activities or receive educational benefits, services, or privileges.

Good Practice: All staff members are responsible to help maintain a safe and healthy work and learning environment for students. Treat individuals with respect and courtesy. Avoid uses of social media and other circumstances where actions can be interpreted as bullying. Cooperative employees who witness prohibited conduct or possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a student is a target of prohibited conduct must report the conduct immediately to a supervisor. Failure to notify your supervisor of actual or reasonably suspected bullying may be grounds for discipline.

#### [Policy 515 - Student Records](#)

Key Idea: Cooperative employees create and access a great deal of information about students. The process for storing, sharing, and accessing information about students is governed by a complex set of federal and state laws. In addition, the Cooperative has a School Board policy regarding the storage and dissemination of, and access to, student records.

The laws about data privacy are complex, and they are intended to protect the privacy of individuals. A good rule of thumb is to remember that almost all information on a student kept by school employees in any form is subject to federal and state data privacy laws. Cooperative employees are bound by data privacy laws regarding student

records at all times, including at the employee's work site, other Cooperative sites, and in the community. These obligations continue even after the employment relationship has ended. Violations of data privacy laws may result in criminal penalties, civil penalties, and/or disciplinary action related to employment.

Good Practice: Most of the data school employees know or create about students is private data and includes academic, personal, attendance, medical, disability, special education, and disciplinary information. Logically, it is in these areas where breaches of data privacy occur. To avoid data privacy violations, it is important to remember that most educational data can only be shared with staff members who have a "professional need to know." Do not discuss a particular student with any other student or with parents/guardians other than his/her own, or in the presence of other staff members or volunteers who do not have a professional need to know. If you receive a request for student data, consult with your supervisor.

#### Policy 524 - Network/Internet Acceptable Use

Key Idea: Use of the Cooperative's network/Internet resources is intended only for educational and informational purposes, such as research, professional development, instruction, collaborative education projects, and dissemination of Cooperative information. The use of Cooperative technology and the Internet is a privilege and not to be abused. Use of network/Internet resources must support the curriculum and enhance student learning opportunities and/or support accurate and appropriate communication of Cooperative information. Misusing, intentionally damaging hardware or software, or other inappropriate activities may result in disciplinary action ranging from denial of privileges to criminal prosecution.

Use of Cooperative network/Internet resources for personal gain or profit is not permitted. Personal web pages and personal email accounts may not reside on the Cooperative's network. Cooperative network/Internet resources are not intended for use as a personal email station. All email messages that are sent and/or received on the Cooperative network are considered the property of the Cooperative. The Cooperative monitors all access to websites made through the Cooperative network.

Good Practice: Use the computer or network/Internet only for professional work-related purposes.

#### Policy 533 - Wellness

Key Idea: School Board actions and policies ensure a school environment that promotes and protects students' health, well-being and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity.

Good Practice: Do your best to practice and model healthy eating and physical activity. If food or beverages are used as rewards for good behavior or achievement, make sure they are healthy options. Healthy options can include whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables, and foods low in fat.

#### Policy 807 - Health and Safety

Key Idea: The Cooperative will provide a safe and healthy environment for staff and students. Safety and health protections are an integral part of all operations. Employees are expected to comply with safety rules/procedures, attend related training, and report any concerns or possible violations immediately to their supervisor.

Good Practice: Make sure you know the appropriate emergency response actions for your work location. Talk with your supervisor about training expectations and where to find Health and Safety related information. Comprehensive information is available on the Cooperative's website.

## APPENDIX B: Employment Laws

### Background Checks

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. §123B.03, the Cooperative will seek a criminal background check for applicants who receive an offer of employment and/or seek to volunteer with the Cooperative. The offer of employment or the opportunity to provide services shall be conditioned upon a determination by the school that an individual's criminal history does not preclude the individual from employment with, or provision of services to, the Cooperative once unless you have a break in your employment and/or voluntary leave.

### Equal Opportunity Employer

The Cooperative prohibits discrimination in any form on the basis of race, color, creed, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance. This procedure includes but is not limited to the following: employment, promotion, demotion, transfer, layoff, recall, corrective actions, termination, rate of pay, other compensation, and the application of policies and training. Employees who engage in discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge of employment.

### Immigration Law Compliance

The Cooperative is committed to employing only United States citizens and individuals who are authorized to work in the United States. As a condition of employment, you must properly complete, sign and date the first section of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Form I-9.

### Employment of Minors

No one under eighteen (18) years of age will be employed without providing proper proof of their age in an age certificate, birth certificate, or driver's license. Minors will be employed only in accordance with child labor laws and School Board policies. No one under sixteen (16) years of age will be employed in any capacity.

### Comparable Worth (Pay Equity)

The School Board is committed to equitable compensation for employees without regard to gender. Cooperative job classifications are regularly reviewed to determine the comparable worth of the skills, duties, and responsibilities required in each position.