



ABILITIES FIRST
ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
& ADULTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Family Handbook
Abilities First School Programs
2026-2027

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Building Information

Dutchess County

LaGrange School at Firemens Way (FW)

24 Firemens Way
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Grades: K - 21
Home District: Arlington
Phone: (845) 452-0774

Myers Corners Education Center (MCEC)

167 Myers Corners Road, Suite 104
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

Grades: Preschool – 2nd
Home District: Wappingers Falls
Phone: (845) 298-2090

Hyde Park Education Center (HPEC)

4327 Albany Post Road
Hyde Park, NY 12538

Grades: Preschool – 2nd & UPK
Home District: Hyde Park
Phone: (845) 698-1072

Orange County

Straus Family Pavillion (SFP)

59 Windsor Highway
New Windsor, NY 12553

Grades: Preschool - 21
Home District: Newburgh
Phone: (845) 330-0356

Educational Learning Experience (ELE)

930 Raz Avenue
New Windsor, NY 12553

Grades: Preschool - 21
Home District: Newburgh
Phone: 845-564-1855

Abilities First Middletown Education Center (MEC)

379 Mount Hope Road
Middletown, NY 10940

Grades: Preschool – 2nd
Home District: Middletown
Phone: (845) 801-0129

****For weather related emergencies each building will follow their home district****

INTRODUCTION

WHO WE ARE

At Abilities First Schools, we are committed to maintaining a culture wherein we deliberately practice excellence, empowering students to obtain goals, utilizing resources that will enable them to become lifelong learners. The collaboration of parents, faculty, staff and community provides a caring, academically challenging, and technologically advanced environment, balanced by discipline and fairness for the cultivation of diverse talents, skills, and interests for life. Our vision is to achieve excellence through a rigorous and challenging academic program that nurtures and expands our students' skills, talents, and interests.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the school program is to enable all students, regardless of their disability to accomplish and function at their maximum potential physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially, and to empower them to achieve the highest possible level of independence in all areas of their lives; school, home and community environments.

VISION

Outstanding Achievement for All Students

Our dedicated staff of special education teachers, therapists, nurses, and assistants support each student's educational needs and personal growth to help them achieve maximum self-sufficiency.

CORE VALUES

Integrity – consistently truthful, dependable, professional and ethical

Equality – fairness in all opportunities

Dignity – deserving of respect and consideration

Distinction – pursuing excellence via world-class best practices

Diversity – encouraging inclusiveness

ABILITIES FIRST AGENCY-WIDE LEADERSHIP:

Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Jeffrey Fox

Chief Program Officer: Mark Nace

Director of Education: Dr. Augustine E. Tornatore

Nursing Coordinator of Educational Services: Louis Morgiewicz

Development Director, Foundation for Abilities First NY: JoAnn Parker

Marketing Manager: Teresa Walsh

COMMUNICATION

Consistent and open communication are crucial to working together to support students. This includes communicating on items that may seem minor, as they may have a major impact on students. Please know that we strive to be as proactive as possible with communications and continuously seek to improve our methods and processes, but many times, as you are aware, things come up in the moment that may require last minute communications. This can be something from the school, or something from you, as parents and guardians.

Communication is a major part of planning here in our building. Whenever possible, we will post communications on our building-wide Dojo and/or Remind App, so please be sure to be connected there so you don't miss any information, forms, or RSVPs. If printed information is sent via backpack, a Dojo will be posted to please check student backpacks. If something is posted and you require a printed copy, please email the Administrative Assistant and School Principal to request a printed copy. Any information can be submitted via a scanned email or backpacked back to the school.

Please RSVP to any events or return any forms by the due date provided. We encourage you to write down any details of events or other information for your reference. This is very important for our planning and coordination of staff, so we truly appreciate you adhering to this. Please note that we may not be able to accommodate any requests after the due dates have passed.

Please note the following items with regards to communication in addition to the above mentioned:

- We must have an active and working phone number to be able to reach you or a designated emergency contact at all times.
- Teachers are very busy working with students throughout the day. Unless absolutely necessary, communication will occur during preparation periods, before, or after school.
- If there is something that you need to communicate to the school in a timely manner, the Front Office should be contacted via phone and/or email. The message will be relayed to the appropriate staff.
- Please ensure that all contact information is updated with our school as well as your home district and the transportation company (name, address, phone number, email, emergency contact information).
- Any changes to contact information should be reported to your home district and our school in writing as soon as possible.
- Note that we work in collaboration with the home district and with each other within the building. Therefore, calls and emails will often include more than one individual to ensure consistent communication with all involved.

- Any requests from parents/guardians for letters of verification must be submitted to the Front Office in writing and include the following:
 - Name, title, and address of the requesting party.
 - Reason for the request.
 - Any other pertinent information that you would like to be included in the letter.
 - Please note email addresses are: firstnamelastname@abilitiesfirstny.org.

Any questions about communication should be directed to the School Principal and Administrative Assistant.

DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS

We believe all children and adults can benefit from quality education. Our specialized school services are designed for children ages 2.9 – 21 with intellectual and developmental disabilities including Autism, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, or Multiple Disabilities. Children in our program are referred by their home school districts so they can participate in our highly specialized academic and therapeutic services. Tuition and transportation are paid for by home school districts or county of residence, therefore there is no cost to the families of children that qualify.

OUR PROGRAMS

As all of our students qualify for Special Education under the New York State Education Department (NYSED) regulations, we are obligated to provide specific specialized services as identified by the State and Federal government. Therefore, our school is a 12-month program meaning we have the regular school-year program which functions from September through June and an Extended School Year program (ESY) which functions for 6-weeks during July and August. During the course of a year, the school is closed on occasion for extended school breaks in the winter, spring, and prior to and after ESY. ESY is designed for students to continue to address goals identified in the IEP and prevent substantial regression of skills they have already acquired or mastered. It is not intended that new goals are addressed, but that students will work towards maintaining or increasing skill level of the current goals.

ACADEMICS

Academic instruction is delivered by NYS Certified Special Education Teachers, or other approved staff when necessary, who access the NYS learning standards and ULS/N2Y curriculum to guide learning.

Instruction is aligned to students' individual learning needs, strengths, and preferences as defined in each Individual Education Program (IEP).

RELATED SERVICES

Students may be eligible for related services, which are additional therapies to support instruction, in an area of need. These related services can include but are not limited to Speech/Language Therapy delivered by a Speech Language Pathologist or Therapist, Occupational Therapy delivered by an Occupational Therapist or Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant, Physical Therapy delivered by a Physical Therapist or Physical Therapy Assistant, or Counseling which can be delivered by a school counselor. All therapists have specialized training and are NYS certified. All related service goals are defined in the student's IEP.

Services are delivered in individual sessions, or small group sessions, when appropriate. This supports transfer of skill and supports students with using learned skills in other environments, or with larger groups of people.

TRANSITION SERVICES AND THE ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (ADL) PROGRAM

As part of our program, it is essential that all students learn ADLs, or activities of daily living, as part of their educational experience. We strive to take every opportunity to teach students a new skill or to be able to develop skills already acquired throughout the day. The skills will be mapped out in a spiraling manner so that students engage in specific skills throughout their educational journey with us.

As part of this, when students approach the middle school and high school years, the transition services become a more pronounced part of their daily learning in order to prepare students for the future. We have a developed program aligned to the NYS Standards and supplemented by additional activities. In addition, when a student is approaching the age of 14, the CSE will discuss specific goals which will become part of the student's IEP. We strive to provide students with a wealth of opportunity by accessing community resources as much as possible.

PARENTS BILL OF RIGHTS FOR DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

To satisfy their responsibilities regarding the provision of education to students in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve, "educational agencies" (as defined below) in the State of New York collect and

maintain certain personally identifiable information from the educational records of their students. As part of the Common Core Implementation Reform Act, Education Law §2-d requires that each educational agency in the State of New York must develop a Parents' Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security (Parents' Bill of Rights). The Parents' Bill of Rights must be published on the website of each educational agency and must be included with every contract the educational agency enters into with a "third party contractor" (as defined below) where the third-party contractor receives student data, or certain protected teacher/principal data related to Annual Professional Performance Reviews that is designated as confidential pursuant to Education Law §3012-c ("APPR data").

The purpose of the Parents' Bill of Rights is to inform parents (which also include legal guardians or persons in parental relation to a student, but generally not the parents of a student who is age eighteen or older) of the legal requirements regarding privacy, security and use of student data. In addition to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Education Law §2-d provides important protections for student data, and new remedies for breaches of the responsibility to maintain the security of confidentiality of such data.

Parents' rights under FERPA include:

- Students' personally identifiable information cannot be sold or released for any commercial purposes.
- Parents have the right to inspect and review their student's educational records within 45 days after the school receives a request for access.
- A student's personally identifiable information must be kept confidential and secure when stored or transferred for necessary purposes.
- Parents shall be informed of all student data elements collected by the State. A complete list of all student data elements collected by NYSED is available at <http://www.nysed.gov/data-privacy-security/student-data-inventory> and by writing to: Chief Privacy Officer, New York State Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234.
- Parents have the right to file complaints about possible breaches of confidential student data by contacting Abilities First Director of Quality Assurance, Stacey Garland, at staceygarland@abilitiesfirstny.org or (845) 485-9803 or Family Policy Compliance Officer, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, Washington, DC 20202-852. Complaints may also be submitted to NYSED at <http://nysed.gov/data-privacy-security/report-improper-disclosure> or by writing to Chief Privacy Officer, New York State Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234.

Furthermore, whenever Abilities First enters into any contract with a third party that would have access to student personally identifiable information, we require the contractor to execute a Business Associate Agreement that binds the contractor to:

- Maintaining strict security and confidentiality of student data.
- Returning or eliminating student data when the contract expires.
- Allowing parents, eligible students, teachers, or principals to review and challenge the accuracy of student data.

This Parents' Bill of Rights will be provided to all third-party contractors along with the Business Associate Agreement.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students have the right to:

- A quality education
- A clean and safe learning environment
- Access to learning tools and equipment
- Be respected and treated fairly by other students and staff
- Communicate needs and wants in a safe forum, free from judgement

Students have the responsibility to follow the Code of Conduct included in this handbook.

The Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gives students, 18 years of age, rights to review their education records and if warranted request changes to those records. Students also have the right to file a complaint with the US Department of Education, if they feel the NYS Department of Education has failed to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The address is: Family Policy Compliance Officer, US Dept. of Ed, 400 Maryland Ave. Washington, DC 20202-852.

STUDENT CELL PHONE POLICY

Cell phone use by students during the school day is prohibited. In the event of an emergency parents may utilize the main school number to reach students. Cell phones should be turned into classroom teachers for safekeeping in the morning and will be returned at the conclusion of the school day. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

INQUIRY AND SEARCH PROCEDURES

To achieve a safe and secure environment, it may be necessary for the school to impose a disciplinary action or question a student about an alleged violation of law or code of conduct. There is no “Miranda” type of warning necessary for questions of this level. If it is deemed a serious situation for school safety, the school will contact the parent or guardian to tell them of the pending questions but is not obligated to wait until that individual arrives to begin. In all cases, the school will inform the parent or guardian within a reasonable time.

If an interview is not successful, it may be necessary to search a student and/or his or her belongings. This would be conducted in the Nurse’s Office by an administrator and the school nurse. If findings result in a legal situation, it may be necessary to contact the police and/or Child Protective Services (CPS). The principal or designee would be present and comply with any directions given to them during any police or CPS interaction.

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to adhere to the Abilities First School dress code. Violations will be referred to the administration and may result in disciplinary action. The dress code is as follows:

- Clean and neat
- Weather appropriate
- No head coverings at school unless for medical, therapeutic, or religious reasons
- Chain wallets and bandanas are prohibited
- No hoop or dangle earrings or other Jewlery or items that can potentially be unsafe
- Unsafe clothing, such as spikes, metal parts, or anything posting a safety concern, will not be allowed
- Clothing that displays images or language that is not appropriate for the school setting

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

For the safety of our students and staff and in accordance with NYSED regulations, we will conduct fire drills and lock down drills throughout the year. As part of the drills, particularly where we must evacuate the building as in the case of a fire drill, the Emergency Evacuation Plan will be followed by every staff member in the building. The plan includes:

- Emergency Evacuations for suspected or detected smoke or fire;
- An emergency within the school building which requires calling 911 or 311;
- An emergency within the school building which requires all students and staff to remain in the classroom or room they are in until further instructions are provided, such as in a severe weather or flood situation;
- An emergency situation where a lock down is required, and all students and staff are to remain in the room they are in with specific instructions. These instructions include silencing all cell phones, turning off all two-way radios, not answering any calls or responding to any fire alarms, being attentive to students and answering texts only from the principal, and not answering the door for anyone. In this situation, local authorities will be the only ones permitted to unlock doors and inform staff that the situation has been resolved.

In all situations, the School Leadership Team will follow the direction of authorities, and our Agency Administration will be notified. Families will be notified by phone, and an all-school Dojo message will be posted. At that time, specific instructions will be provided to you. Only individuals on the designated pick-up list will be able to pick up a child, and they must have the proper form of identification. It is imperative that you please adhere to the directions provided to you for the safety of all families, students, and staff involved. Thank you for your cooperation.

WEATHER CLOSINGS AND DELAYS

Each school location follows its HOME DISTRICT for weather-related delays and/or closings (see attached). Families should first check with their home district for updates. Please also monitor Abilities First social media pages, the Remind App, and Class Dojo for additional information and school-specific communications. Our building-wide Dojo posts will contain the most up-to-date information available. If no updates have been posted yet, it means we are still awaiting information.

PARENT OR GUARDIAN EMERGENCY/CONTACT POLICY

It is important that the school staff always have current, working phone numbers on file for parents and guardians and at least one emergency contact, if not more. It is essential that we are able to make verbal contact with a responsible party during the school day in case of emergency.

If we are not able to make contact in a timely manner with a parent, guardian, or designated emergency contact, school administration will exercise best judgement in resolving an emergency

situation for the student. This might involve the intervention of local law enforcement, paramedics, or Child Protective Services.

SCHOOL SECURITY SAFEGUARDS

Our first responsibility is to provide a safe and secure learning environment for all students. In order to ensure this, our school safety plan includes the following measures:

Procedures for:

- Emergency Evacuation
- Hold in Place (threat outside the facility)
- Lockdown (threat inside the facility)

All facilities shall be outfitted to properly and effectively execute Hold in Place and Lockdown procedures that include but are not limited to:

- Locking doors
- Visual barriers into classrooms and other education spaces
- Emergency bags with supplies and pertinent information
- Exterior doors on all facilities are always locked and visitors are only permitted entry upon screening for proper authorization, including photo identification
- Exterior doors shall never be propped open
- Exterior doors shall never be locked from the inside. Staff, students, and visitors must always be able to exit through exterior doors without barriers or locks
- All site safety plans shall include the express prohibition of weapons and all potentially dangerous items from being brought inside education facilities
- All facilities shall have working intercom or walkie-talkie systems at all times to enable proper communication in emergency situations
- All site safety plans shall include a designated alternative shelter or gathering area outside the facility.
- All staff will receive initial training on our Emergency Evacuation Plan, with refresher training at least annually. Refresher training will also be delivered to all staff as soon as possible following any instance of non-compliance with the Emergency Evacuation Plan and any breach of security or potential breach by an unauthorized person.

PARENT/GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Students that attend our school are referred by their home district's CSE or CPSE. Your child's records are shared with us upon consent during the referral process. Every family must have updated information with their child's home district Registration Department, as that informs that district's Special Education Department/Pupil Personnel Services Department and our building.

Your legal residence, parent/guardian information, phone number, and any other demographic information is input through your home district's system into our shared IEP. This is the document that we obtain our information from and what we must adhere to. Given this, please note that regardless of any information provided on our school forms, all legal information that comes from your home district is what we will use as our reference. It is crucial that any updates to demographic information, student diagnosis or medical records, guardianship or other information go through the home district and our school.

Please note that school staff are permitted to speak directly to a child's parent or legal guardian only. All forms, medical notes, or other written documentation must be completed and signed by a child's legal parent or guardian only.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE

Students are required to attend school daily. Per each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and NYS Regulations, students are required to have a specific amount of instructional time daily and related service time, as indicated. Therefore, it is extremely important for students to be present in school, on time, each day pending illness or other specific circumstances.

Please see the Policy and Procedure for Student Absence, Tardiness and Early Dismissal within this handbook.

DRIVING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL

To establish and maintain a routine for students, we highly encourage families to utilize the bus transportation that has been arranged by the home school district to and from school. However, parents and guardians are of course welcome to drive their child to school. If you plan to drive your child, please try to inform the teacher in advance so our staff can be prepared if additional support

may be required for this transition. As our day and your child's daily function thrives on routines, it is very important to have your child in school at the arrival time should you choose to drop off.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS

PHOTO RELEASE

The Abilities First Foundation has an Agency-wide consent for photo and video use which parents/guardians are asked to complete and sign annually. This form is used for both internal school pictures and postings on Dojo as well as Agency postings for any school events or marketing materials. Any questions or concerns about shared photographs should be directed to the Marketing Manager listed above. If you would like further information before submitting the consent, please contact the Marketing Manager via email at teresawalsh@abilitiesfirstny.org.

Please note that if you choose to not provide consent for photos or videos any pictures posted in class, or the school-wide Dojo, will not have pictures that include your child. Should you change your mind at any time, another consent form can be provided for you to update.

MONTHLY FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Each month, a Family Newsletter will be posted on the building-wide Dojo and will note any special events or school functions, school closure days that are pre-planned, and the monthly theme and instructional focus for the building. Please be sure to read the calendar and accompanying family letter for explanations of events. Additional information may be posted on Dojo or sent home via backpack as the event approaches.

Whenever possible, RSVPs will be sent through an online form for families to complete. Any permission slips will be provided as a hard copy as parent or guardian signature is required. It is asked that you respond to any inquiries/RVPs by the due date in order for proper planning and arrangement of details to occur.

PARENT/GUARDIAN TRAININGS

Specific training may be available to parents as necessary.

MEALS

Please contact your child's school building for meal information.

SCHOOL VISITORS

Abilities First Schools welcomes parents, guardians, or other family members to visit our schools. For the safety of all, any visitors are required to sign in prior to entering the building and also have a valid picture identification. A visitor badge will be given to each guest, which is to be worn at all times in the building. All visitors must sign out and place the badge on the sign out sheet upon departure.

PARENT/GUARDIAN TEACHER CONFERENCES AND TEAM MEETINGS

Parent or guardian teacher conferences or team meetings are scheduled as needed. Parents and guardians are urged to attend these meetings, which are scheduled at mutually convenient times.

In addition, all parents and guardians are encouraged to attend their child's Annual Review Meeting, which is a type of CSE/CPSE meeting, with their respective school district, which occurs in the spring of each year. The home district will send a notification letter to you with the details of the meeting.

PROGRESS REPORTS

The purpose of progress reports is to provide parents/guardians quarterly information on how your child is progressing on each goal within the IEP. Goals, and objectives where appropriate, have specific information on data collection and reporting and include what, when, where, how, and by whom of progress monitoring quarterly as well as overall goal achievement for the year or other designated date indicated.

If a family has questions about goals, progress towards goals, or progress reports, you are encouraged to reach out to your child's teacher, the School Principal, and IEP Coordinator at any time. If a goal has been mastered prior to the projected time frame or given any individual unexpected situation needs to be adjusted, the teacher or therapist will coordinate communication with you through the IEP Coordinator.

FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Field trips may be scheduled during the school year. While we would like to plan for more trips, often transportation costs limit the number of off-site trips we are able to take. For any trip, detailed information will be provided to the parent/guardian and a signed permission trip MUST be turned in prior to the trip in order for the student to be able to attend. The original permission slip will be kept in the school building and a copy will be taken on the trip in the emergency bag. No students will be permitted to attend a field trip without written and signed permission from a parent or guardian.

As part of our transition program, our secondary students participate in community outings when they are ready for this experience. Students practice skills in the school environment and then when they are ready, go into the community to transfer learned skills in another setting. If students are not yet ready to go out into the community, they will continue to practice in school until they are ready for outside exposure. For this program, the parent/guardian must sign a permission slip for the weekly outings one time. The permission slip would be sent home for an additional signature only if there are any changes to the program details. Any questions about this process should be directed to the IEP Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, and School Principal.

We will have a variety of special events in the school building. This would include staff organized events, often supported by our Foundation, or outside community organizations or other individuals providing enrichment for students. Permission slips will not be requested for these events; however, if there is something that you would like to communicate to our staff knowing about an upcoming event, please do so in writing as early as possible so we can prepare for any adjustments or additional necessary planning and/or communications.

MOVING UP CEREMONIES/GRADUATION

Moving up/Graduation Day is a heartfelt experience for the graduates, their families, classmates, and staff. Happy tears are shed, arms are pumped, cameras flash, and smiles are plentiful when Pomp and Circumstance plays as the students march down the aisle.

ABILITIES FIRST FOUNDATION

The Abilities First Foundation supports our school programs in a number of ways. Several of our school events are fully or partially funded by the Foundation. In addition, they provide materials, take photos, and create any necessary marketing materials needed.

Founded in 2018, the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Its mission is to garner the financial resources necessary to meet the programmatic interests and to assure the sustainability of the mission of Abilities First, Inc. There are a number of ways families and outside community partners can support the foundation and be involved in events. If you are interested in more information, please contact the School Principal.

HEALTH CARE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES - Revised 3/25/2024

Pick-up time for an ill child is to be within the hour of the call home. However, exceptions due to distance or lack of transportation should be discussed with the Coordinator of Nursing and/or Building Administrator

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

Any child presenting with any of the following symptoms: temporal temp of 100 degrees F. or more, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (pulse ox-SaO2 below 90), uncontrollable cough, headache, or nausea/vomiting that is not related to a documented or known medical condition (asthma, chronic GI issues, menses) will be isolated and parent/guardian notified of necessary pick-up.

As per CDC regulations, your child will not be able to return to school until the following criteria are met:

- The new CDC guidelines have removed the quarantine of 5 days and instead are doing an isolation based on the severity of symptoms and the presence of a fever or not. The student should have improved symptoms and be fever free for 24 hours without the use of any medications before they return to school.
- However, the CDC recommends that a mask be worn and to keep your physical distance of 6 feet for the next 5 days. As most of our children cannot tolerate wearing a mask properly or keeping their distance, it is **“Our policy that they remain home the 5 days as it remains a highly contagious illness.”**
- A minimum of 24 hours with a resolution of symptoms, including no fever or the use of fever reducing medications, no runny nose, and only a minor cough (that is not frequent or disruptive to the classroom).
- A doctor’s note should accompany the student upon return to school if out for five or more days in a row.

TEMPERATURE

Any child with a temporal temperature of 100 degrees F or more will be sent home as soon as transportation can be provided by the parent/guardian. The child will not be allowed to return to school until their temperature is normal for a 24-hour period without medication.

VOMITING AND DIARRHEA

Any child that vomits due to illness will be sent home based on nurse's evaluation and remain home for 24 hours after the vomiting has stopped.

Any child with loose, watery, foul smelling or discolored stools will be sent home based on nurse's evaluation (parent/guardian should be called after 2nd loose stool) The student should remain home for 24 hours after the diarrhea has stopped.

RASHES

The school nurse will assess all rashes and determine if the child needs to be picked up from school and/or the need to have a physician's note to return to school. Any child with a rash associated with a fever must be examined by a physician and return with a physician's note.

HEAD LICE

Head lice infestation will be suspected when there is the presence of live lice or the presence of 5 or more nits within ¼ inch of the scalp. Any child with a suspected case of head lice will be sent home and instructions regarding care will be explained to the family. The child will need to be treated with the appropriate medicated shampoo. There are over the counter medications such as RID or NIX. Treatment should be accomplished as per instructions that are included with medication.

The child's hair should be combed as per medicated shampoo instructions to remove nits.

Once treatment is completed, the child may return to school. Upon return, the child will be checked for lice, if 5 or more nits are found within a ¼ inch of the scalp, the child will be sent home again with instructions for the family to continue to comb out nits – THE REPEAT TREATMENT WITH MEDICATED SHAMPOO SHOULD BE DONE PER PRODUCT INSTRUCTION ONLY. The child should be seen by a physician for clearance to return to school.

If fewer than 5 nits are found within a 1/4 inch of the scalp upon return to school the child will be allowed to return to the classroom, and the nurse will recheck the child for lice periodically over the next two weeks.

RINGWORM

Child must be treated with a topical anti-fungal or an oral antifungal prescribed by a physician. May return to school the next day with a doctor's note. Area involved must be kept covered at all times with a dressing or clothing when possible. If area involved cannot be covered, the child cannot return to school until lesions are dry. Child cannot participate in any swimming activities.

IMPETIGO

Child must be home 48 hours after beginning medication and while affected areas are draining or heavily crusted. A doctor's note is required before the child is allowed to return to school.

CONJUNCTIVITIS

Child must be home for 24 hours after starting eye medication and if eye is draining or heavily crusted. A doctor's note is required before the child is allowed to return to school.

STREP INFECTION

Child must be home for 24 hours after starting antibiotics. If the child has strep throat and is not drinking fluids, please keep them home. A doctor's note is required for the child to return to school.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION AND STORAGE

If the child requires medication during school hours, the medication must be transported to the school by the parent/guardian. Transportation personnel should not be responsible for medication transport.

- All medications, prescription or non-prescription, MUST be accompanied by a written physician's order with full instructions.
- All medications need to be in a labeled pharmacy bottle from the pharmacy.
- All medications will be stored in a locked cabinet (double locked if the medication is a controlled medication), or placed in a locked refrigerator or in a locked labeled box that will fit in the refrigerator.
- Upon receipt of the medication at the school, the medication will be logged in noting the date, quantity, and medication received as well as the child's name and the name of the person receiving medications.
- Controlled substances will also be documented on a controlled substance count sheet that will be reviewed daily.
- If the parent/guardian wants any unused/discontinued/expired medication returned to them, they will need to pick up the medication from the school.
- The school nurse must be notified of any medication changes or additions INCLUDING short-term use medications such as antibiotics. This will enable staff to be aware of possible medication-related side effects.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

In the event that a medical emergency occurs while a child is in school, the procedure will be:

- The nurse and/or staff member who is treating the child will administer first aid as appropriate.
- Each Classroom will have a first aid kit readily accessible.
- If the nurse is not in the immediate area, the nurse will be notified of the situation immediately.
- A determination will be made by the attending nurse as to the appropriate medical disposition. If it is determined that transfer to a hospital is appropriate, then the school secretary will call 911.
- In the event that the child is taken to the hospital, a copy of the emergency medical fact sheet will be sent with the child.
- The classroom teacher or designee will notify the parent/guardian as soon as possible.

IMMUNIZATION POLICY

All children must be up to date on all immunizations.

Any new children, to our programs, must have written immunization records on file before starting school. These records should be reviewed by the School Nurse prior to the child beginning school.

The immunization record will be reviewed on at least a semi-annual basis and reminders will be sent home to the parent/guardian regarding the need for any updated immunizations.

PHYSICAL AND DENTAL EXAMS

It will be recommended that each child have a yearly physical and a yearly dental exam. All new students will have a physical exam that has been performed within the past year before entering the school program. A complete health care record for each child will be on file and readily accessible. These records will include the following information:

1) Allergies 2) Diagnosis 3) Parent/guardian telephone number 4) Emergency contact number 5) Copy of student's most recent Physical Exam 6) Any other Pertinent Medical Information 7) Medications (if any) 8) Current Immunizations

You will be asked to sign acknowledgement of this handbook and its contents annually.

Any updates during the 2026-2027 school year will be made in red font for your convenience.

We appreciate the opportunity to be part of your child's educational journey.

Please direct any questions about the information enclosed in this handbook to the School Principal.

Thank you for your support, continued communication, and collaboration!



ABILITIES FIRST

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
& ADULTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

School Behavior Support Policy – For Parents/Guardians

PURPOSE:

Abilities First Inc. School uses the Safety Care Behavior Management System for behavior support. All school staff are trained in proactive strategies to promote positive student behavior. Safety Care physical interventions are to be used only after it becomes evident a student is unable to return to baseline on their own or with staff providing verbal and non-verbal proactive strategies. The student must be at risk of harming themselves, another student, or a staff member or severely damaging school property.

PROCEDURE:

The staff **must first** use **verbal** and **non-verbal proactive** strategies to assist the child in returning to baseline behavior. Some examples of proactive strategies include taking sensory or movement breaks, using visual schedules and timers, using first/then boards, and using simple one-step directions.

If the child is unable to return to baseline behavior (the child's serious behaviors continue) **and** they are at risk of harming themselves, another student, or a staff member or severely damaging school property staff that have completed the Safety Care training will use Safety Care physical interventions.

Within the same day, the event occurs, a phone call is made to the parent/guardian by a member of the school administration, the school nurse or the behavior support team to let them know their child was involved in a physical intervention and why it was necessary.

A staff meeting will be scheduled within five school days to discuss the behavior occurrence and develop strategies for prevention with all staff involved and a member of the behavior support team.



Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to ensure a safe, supportive, and respectful educational environment where every student can grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Abilities First, Inc. (AFI) promotes responsible behavior, positive relationships, and mutual respect among students, staff, parents, and visitors. This Code serves as a framework for maintaining order, guiding conduct, and promoting fairness across all programs operated by Abilities First.

Section 1. Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

Students at Abilities First have the right to:

- Learn in a safe, structured, and nurturing environment.
- Be treated with dignity, kindness, and respect.
- Receive education and related services appropriate to their individual needs.
- Be free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- Have behavioral concerns addressed promptly, fairly, and respectfully.

Students are responsible for:

- Following school rules and directions from staff.
- Treating others with respect and consideration.
- Using appropriate language, communication, and behavior.
- Participating in educational activities to the best of their ability.
- Respecting personal and school property.

This Bill of Rights and Responsibilities is reviewed and explained to all students and families annually.

Section 2. Conduct Expectations and Discipline Policy

Abilities First, Inc. maintains a policy of fair and consistent discipline aimed at teaching appropriate behavior rather than correcting "misconduct". The goal is to ensure safety, accountability, and personal growth. BIPs will specifically address teaching appropriate behavior as part of the document.

Expected conduct includes:

- Demonstrating respect for self, peers, and staff.
- Following classroom routines and school procedures.
- Engaging in safe behaviors and making responsible choices.

Section 3. Disciplinary Measures and Due Process

Disciplinary measures are applied fairly, proportionately, and in alignment with the student's needs and history. Possible interventions include:

- Verbal redirection and de-escalation strategies
- Structured or sensory breaks
- Loss of privileges (if appropriate)
- Parent/guardian collaboration
- Review or modification of individualized behavioral supports
- Suspension when necessary, in accordance with New York State Education Law §3214 and due process requirements

For students with disabilities, discipline will comply with IDEA and NYSED Part 200 regulations. If conduct suggests a need for program modification, a referral to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) will be made.

Behavioral Concern and Consequence Steps

This outlines how behavioral incidents are addressed to maintain safety, support positive development, and provide consistency across all Abilities First programs.

Consequences are individualized and applied through a therapeutic, not punitive, approach.

1. Level I – Minor Behaviors (Handled in Classroom/Program Setting)

Examples of Behavioral Concerns:

- Noncompliance or refusal to follow directions
- Interrupting classroom routines
- Mild verbal outbursts or inappropriate language (no threats)
- Minor disruption of learning environment
- Inappropriate use of materials or equipment (without causing harm)

Typical Consequences / Interventions:

- Verbal redirection or positive reinforcement
- Visual or verbal cues to reset behavior
- Brief structured break in the classroom
- Restorative conversation or problem-solving session
- Re-teaching of expected behavior
- Parent/guardian communication (if recurring)

2. Level II – Moderate Behaviors (Requires Support and Team Involvement)

Examples of Behavioral Concerns:

- Repeated refusal to follow directions after interventions
- Verbal aggression or shouting directed at others
- Property misuse (throwing items, minor damage)
- Leaving assigned area (brief elopement without risk to safety)

- Disruption impacting peers or instruction

Typical Consequences / Interventions:

- Functional behavior assessment (if recurring)
- Review and modification of the student's behavior support plan
- Team meeting with staff, counselor, or therapist
- Parent/guardian notification and collaboration on next steps

3. Level III – Serious or Unsafe Behaviors (Safety Risk or Major Disruption)

Examples of Behavioral Concerns:

- Physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, spitting, pushing)
- Property destruction causing potential harm
- Intentional defiance involving safety risk (running from supervision, entering off-limits areas)
- Severe or targeted verbal aggression/threats
- Repeated Level II incidents with no improvement

Typical Consequences / Interventions:

- Immediate staff intervention and crisis prevention techniques
- Incident report completion and administrative review
- Parent/guardian contact the same day
- The school team shall convene to review the antecedent conditions and behavioral triggers, revise positive behavioral supports and intervention strategies as needed, and determine the student's plan for return to instruction.
- Short-term suspension only if safety is compromised (in line with NYS Education Law §3214 and due process)

4. Level IV – Extreme or Prohibited Behaviors (Severe Safety or Legal Violation)

Examples of Behavioral Concerns:

- Possession or use of weapons or dangerous objects
- Serious threats of violence or credible harm to others
- Intentional physical assault resulting in injury
- Possession or use of drugs, alcohol, or illegal substances
- Chronic or escalating unsafe behavior despite interventions

Typical Consequences / Interventions:

- Immediate administrative response and safety assessment
- Notification of parents/guardians and, if required, law enforcement
- Review of IEP or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) for students with disabilities
- Short- or long-term suspension, applied only as required for safety
- Re-entry meeting and safety plan development prior to return

5. Restorative and Supportive Practices (Applied Across All Levels)

Abilities First emphasizes teaching and relationship restoration following behavioral incidents.

Common supportive responses include:

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Restorative conversations or restorative circles
- Counseling or social-emotional learning sessions
- Reflection sheets or journals
- Family support meetings to align behavior strategies at home and school
- Staff debriefing and coaching to improve environmental supports

Key Principles

- Every consequence must aim to **teach, restore, and support**.
- Responses are **individualized** and based on data, context, and the student's individual plan.
- **Physical restraint** is never used for punishment and only applied under crisis intervention protocols to ensure safety.
- **Parent and team communication** occurs for any event above Level I unless Level I is a recurring event, which would necessitate parental contact.
- All incidents are documented and reviewed to ensure consistent and equitable responses.

Section 4. Maintenance of Public Order

All individuals present on Abilities First property—including students, staff, parents, contractors, and visitors—must act in a manner that upholds public order and safety. Abilities First will:

- Maintain a safe and orderly campus.
- Enforce rules consistently, impartially, and respectfully.
- Apply disciplinary actions in accordance with principles of fairness and due process.

Disruptive or unsafe behavior by any non student may result in removal from school grounds or further action as necessary. Student discipline is addressed in section 3.

Section 5. Early Identification and Intervention

Abilities First prioritizes early identification and prevention of behavioral and emotional concerns through collaborative planning and support.

Procedures include:

- Team-based discussion involving teachers, therapists, administrators, and parents.
- Ongoing observation, data review, and monitoring of student progress.

- Early intervention strategies to address concerns before escalation.
 - Referral to the CSE for students with disabilities when a behavior pattern suggests the need for program review or modification.
-

Section 6. Alternative Educational and Behavioral Supports

AFI recognizes that some students require flexible or alternative supports to maintain progress.

Alternative approaches may include:

- Modified instructional environments
 - Supplemental behavioral supports
 - Individualized counseling or social-emotional programming
-

Section 7. Staff Responsibilities and Professional Development

Staff play a critical role in modeling and reinforcing appropriate behavior.

All staff members are responsible for:

- Modeling positive, respectful conduct.
- Implementing individualized education and behavior plans.
- Maintaining consistent routines and clear expectations.
- Supporting safety and emotional regulation for all students.

Professional development provided by the administration occurs annually and includes:

- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
 - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - Crisis prevention and intervention techniques
 - Behavior data collection and analysis
 - Legal and ethical responsibilities in student discipline
-

Section 8. Parent and Guardian Collaboration

Parents and guardians are essential partners in supporting student behavior and success.

They are encouraged to:

- Communicate openly and frequently with staff.
- Reinforce positive behaviors and routines at home.
- Participate in meetings and support planning.
- Collaborate in implementing strategies designed to address behavioral needs.

Family involvement ensures consistency between home and school environments.

Section 9. Review, Distribution, and Accessibility

This Code of Conduct:

- Will be reviewed annually by Abilities First leadership and program administration.
- Will be revised as needed to reflect current laws, best practices, and organizational needs.
- Will be available in each school building and shared with staff, families, and students each program year.

All staff and families are expected to read and acknowledge receipt of this document annually.

Section 10. Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

Abilities First, Inc. is dedicated to maintaining an environment where diversity is respected and every individual is valued. No form of discrimination or bias will be tolerated on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or any other protected category under federal or state law.

Statement of Commitment

Abilities First, Inc. remains committed to promoting safety, dignity, and opportunity for every student. Through consistent expectations, proactive intervention, and partnership among all members of the school community, we ensure that every learner is supported to reach their full potential.



ABILITIES FIRST

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
& ADULTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Video and Electronic Security Policy

This policy applies to all video and electronic security systems that monitor or record at any Abilities First, Inc. owned and operated educational programs. This policy does not address video and/or electronic surveillance devices when used exclusively for educational, promotional or entertainment purposes. This policy is administered in compliance with and in conjunction to the current period's Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Policy Statement

Abilities First, Inc. maintains video and electronic surveillance systems for student and staff safety, security, and operational effectiveness. These systems are operated and managed in accordance with all applicable laws and the philosophies and values of the organization.

While Abilities First has regard for the privacy concerns of individuals who are using our buildings and grounds, our facilities remain private property and our primary obligation continues to be the safety of our students and staff. Accordingly, the organization will take lawful, pragmatic and measured steps to provide an efficient, effective, safe, and secure environment.

The approval, installation, operation and use of all video and electronic security systems shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws, and all institutional policies and standards. In particular, and without limitation, we will abide by those laws, regulations and policies that prohibit unlawful discrimination and harassment, that assure the right to engage in protected concerted activity regarding terms and conditions of employment, and that provide a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Approval, Installation, and Operation

Video and electronic security systems shall be installed, maintained and operated only with the written approval of the President & Chief Executive Officer/designee and only in accordance with this policy.

Video and electronic recordings shall be maintained in a master inventory on a secured system. This system may be accessed by the President & Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Program Officer, and the Chief Administrative Officer.

Video security systems shall be installed, administered, maintained and managed centrally.

Video and electronic security data will be accessed by a limited number of authorized managers (upon receiving approval of an above-mentioned executive team member) who have ultimate responsibility for the safety and security of students, employees and visitors. Authorized managers include: School Principals, Director of Human Resources, and Director of Quality Assurance and Quality Assurance Coordinators, when needed.

An authorized manager will be authorized to access video and electronic security data only after: A demonstrated legitimate need for such access consistent with the purposes of this policy upon the report of a potential crime, safety concern, reportable incident or behavioral incident; and Appropriate training in the responsible use of these systems.

Parent or Legal Representative Access to Video Recording

A parent or legal representative of a student (the "Parent"), employee, or visitor of Abilities First shall not install or place video or audio surveillance or recording equipment anywhere on the Facility or School grounds, including in any classroom, under any circumstances.

Use of audio or video surveillance or recording equipment not authorized by this policy is expressly prohibited. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, a parent placing such equipment on a student or in a student's belongings (e.g., backpack, jacket, lunchbox, etc.), or a staff member using a personal device (such as cell phone) to record staff and/or students.

Parent may request to view a video recording made or maintained by or on behalf of the school depicting the parent's child ("student's video") relating to an incident involving the care or treatment of student that has been reported to the Abilities First Quality Assurance, School Principal and School District. The parent's request will be reviewed and determined by the Chief Program Officer with notification to the President & Chief Executive Officer; President & Chief Executive Officer and/or the Chief Administrative Officer may review and grant parent requests in the absence of the Chief Program Officer.

Video footage deemed part of a student's educational record that also includes, depicts or otherwise identifies a pupil other than the parent's child will be made available for viewing by a parent only after images of other pupils have been blocked from view.

Parent may only view video footage part of student's educational record onsite, in the presence of the School Principal/authorized manager as designated by the Chief Program Officer, Chief Administrative Officer and/or President & Chief Executive Officer. The School Principal/authorized manager will establish the date, time, and location of the viewing with at least two days' notice to the parent requesting to review the relevant video footage.

Parent may not record, remove, copy, reproduce, or publish, share or circulate to any other person or third party, student video footage or any of its content, nor cause others to do so, at any time. Parent(s) shall be required to place their cell phone, and any other device capable of taking or transmitting audio or video, in a receptacle at the Main Desk during viewing.

All video recordings and content made or maintained by or on behalf of the school, including a video footage including students, shall be and shall remain the exclusive property of the facility or school respectively. Video recordings will be deleted as the system naturally depletes its memory and ability to store video footage.

Only incidents or events related to students' educational program will be deemed part of the student's educational record.

Appropriate and Prohibited Uses

Video and electronic security systems shall not be installed, maintained or used to monitor or record areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as changing areas, break rooms, and rest rooms.

The video security systems are capable of recording video footage but not audio data.

Video security systems shall not be used to monitor or record proprietary or confidential information.

Information obtained through video and electronic security systems shall not be accessed, used, or disclosed except as outlined in this policy.

Procedures

Approval: Video and electronic security systems shall not be moved, newly installed and operated without prior written approval by the President & Chief Executive Officer.

Inventory and documentation: the Director of IT and/or IT Operations Manager shall maintain associated documentation of all existing and approved technical systems.

Installation and system maintenance: Video security systems installation and administration will be centralized and coordinated by IT with prior approval of the President & Chief Executive Officer, Chief Program Officer, or Chief Administrative Officer.

Approval of access: The President & Chief Executive Officer, Chief Program Officer, or Chief Administrative Officer will review and approve requests for employee access other than authorized managers listed above. This will be based on a demonstrated work-related need consistent with the purposes of this policy.

Operators will be trained on the technical, legal, and appropriate use of video and electronic surveillance systems and will perform their duties in accordance with this policy.

Storage and retention of information: Information obtained from security systems must be stored in a secure location and configured to prevent unauthorized access, modification, duplication, or destruction. Information will be retained for as long as the memory bank of the security system can retain video data. When the memory bank is full, the system will automatically begin deleting the oldest video data to make room for new video data. Video data may be transferred to a different system and maintained for longer periods of time upon written request by an authorized staff or for permissible business use.

Preservation of information: An authorized manager may request security data be saved for an extended period of time, if needed to preserve evidence or document an event. Such requests will be granted in the determination of the President & Chief Executive Officer/designee.

Use of information: Information may be accessed or otherwise used by authorized managers only as authorized and in accordance with this policy.

Notice: Sign will be posted at main entry indicating the use of electronic security systems. This information will be listed in the Employee Handbook and Parent Handbook.

Violations

An employee's failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Depending on the individual and circumstances, such sanctions could result in remedial and/or disciplinary action and/or appropriate law enforcement agencies. Those actions may include civil liability and/or criminal liability.



ABILITIES FIRST

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN & ADULTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Policy and Procedure for Student Absence, Tardiness, and Early Dismissal

Abilities First is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful and supportive learning Environment. This policy outlines clear guidelines for monitoring absence, tardiness and Early dismissal.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to ensure timely and effective monitoring of student absences, tardiness, and early dismissal, support student attendance, and outline administrative/nurse /teacher/ responsibilities for follow-up. Regular attendance is essential to student learning and overall academic success. Our attendance policy is in full compliance with the New York State Education Law §3205, which mandates compulsory school attendance for all children. The policy is aligned with NYSED guidelines, which require school districts to monitor student attendance, maintain accurate records, and take appropriate actions to address unexcused absences and truancy.

This policy supports student achievement by promoting consistent attendance and upholding the educational standards set forth by New York State.

Scope: The school is committed to fostering a positive learning environment where student attendance is prioritized. Absences will be monitored closely, and all staff will work collaboratively with families to address patterns of absenteeism, provide appropriate interventions, and ensure compliance with state education laws and district policies.

Definitions:

- Excused Absence: An absence due to illness, family emergency, religious observance, medical appointments, or other reasons as approved by the school administration.
- Unexcused Absence: Any absence not approved under the category of excused and not accompanied by proper documentation.
- Chronic Absenteeism: Missing 10% or more of the school year, regardless of reason.
- Tardiness and Early Dismissal: Tardiness and early departures are recorded daily and subject to the same excused/unexcused criteria. Repeated lateness or early sign outs will involve an investigation, and documentation will be required.

Procedures

1. Reporting Absences

- Parents/guardians are expected to notify the school on the day of a student's absence.

- Upon the student's return, a written note or email from the parent/guardian explaining the reason for the absence must be submitted.
- Medical documentation is required for any absence lasting more than five consecutive days.

2. Daily Monitoring

- Teachers are responsible for taking attendance at the start of each school day.
- The main office will enter all absences into the student information system by 10:00 a.m. each day.
- When a student arrives after 10 am or leaves early, it will be documented in the sign-in/sign-out book with a reason.

3. Teacher/Nurse/ Administrator Follow-Up

- Three unexcused absences: If a student is absent for three consecutive days and the teacher has attempted to contact the family with no response or communication, the teacher will notify both the school nurse and administrator.
- The nurse will follow up by contacting the family and will notify the teacher and administrator of the outcome, including any relevant information regarding the student's absence.
- If there is still no response from the family, the administrator will contact the student's home school district to report the absence and document the response.
- The administrator will follow up with the district within 24 hours to obtain an update and determine any necessary next steps.

4. Five Unexcused Absences (or Pattern of Absences):

- The administrator will contact the parent/guardian directly to address the concern.
- If the parent/guardian is unreachable, the administrator will attempt to contact all listed emergency contacts.
- The administrator will offer support and resources to the family as appropriate.
- If no contact can be made with any designated guardian or emergency contact, the teacher or a designated staff member will notify the appropriate outside agency (e.g., Child Protective Services (CPS)).
- The administrator will notify the district regarding the student's unexcused absences.
- The administrator will meet with the teacher and school nurse to review the absences and determine next steps to support the student's well-being and school engagement.

5. Chronic Absenteeism:

- Attendance will be monitored monthly by the teacher and administration.
- Persistent absenteeism may result in referral to appropriate outside agencies, such as Child Protective Services (CPS), if warranted

6. Tardiness

- Students are expected to arrive on time each school day. A student is considered tardy if they are not in their designated classroom by the official start time.
- Repeated tardiness is disruptive to the educational environment and will be addressed by the administrator through progressive interventions, including parent/guardian communication, written warnings, and meetings with school staff.
- Acceptable reasons for tardiness include illness, medical appointments, religious observance, or other legally excused reasons as defined by NYSED.
- All tardies must be documented in the student's attendance record, with appropriate notations for excused or unexcused status. This includes date, time entered school, student name, classroom, reason for tardiness, and indicates "excused late" or "unexcused late".

7. Early Dismissal

- Requests for early dismissal must be submitted in writing by a parent/guardian and include the reason for dismissal and the name of the adult authorized to pick up the student.
- Acceptable reasons for early dismissal mirror those for excused absences and include illness, medical appointments, court appearances, and family emergencies.
- Students will only be released to individuals listed on their emergency contact form, and proper identification must be provided.
- Early dismissals are logged in the attendance system and count toward total time missed. Excessive early dismissals may result in a review and intervention by the school administration. Early dismissal due to behavior is considered a suspension.

8. Documentation and Communication

- All contact with families/district regarding attendance must be logged.

9. Responsibilities

- Teachers: Take attendance, notify administration, and communicate with families.
- Administrative Assistant: Maintain records.
- Administrators: Monitor trends, coordinate meetings, and implement interventions.
- Nurse: calls home after 3 days and provides updates to the administrator and teacher.



ABILITIES FIRST

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
& ADULTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Policy and Procedures for Suspension

Abilities First is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment that prioritizes proactive behavior supports, positive interventions, and respect for student rights. Suspension is a disciplinary action of last resort and will only be implemented in accordance with this policy.

This policy outlines the procedures to be followed when considering suspension of any student in our education services, all of whom are classified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Article 89 of New York State Education Law. The policy ensures compliance with 8 NYCRR Parts 200 and 201 and guarantees that disciplinary actions respect the rights and needs of students with disabilities.

Policy and Procedures for Suspension of Students with Disabilities

Definitions:

- **Suspension:** The temporary removal of a student from their current educational placement due to behavioral violations.
- **Short-Term Suspension:** A suspension lasting 10 school days or fewer within a school year.
- **Long-Term Suspension:** A suspension lasting more than 10 school days, or a series of removals that constitute a pattern of exclusion.
- **Manifestation Determination Review (MDR):** A meeting held to determine whether a student's behavior is directly related to their disability.

Purpose: This policy ensures that disciplinary procedures for students with disabilities comply with New York State Education Department regulations and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), promoting fairness, legal compliance, and the continuation of educational services.

Scope: This policy applies to all students classified under IDEA.

Short-Term Suspension (1–5 Days) See code of conduct: A short-term suspension may be issued for behaviors that disrupt the learning environment but do not involve serious harm or repeated violations with the approval from the Director of Education.

Procedures:

1. The Principal may issue a suspension of up to five consecutive school days with approval from the Director of Education.

- Parents/guardians must be notified in writing on the same day the decision is made.
- The school district must also be notified in writing the same day.
- The student has the right to due process, including an informal conference with school officials.
- Please note an early departure from school due to a behavior is a suspension and should be documented as such.

2. Long-Term Suspension (6–10 Days)

- A long-term suspension may be considered for serious violations involving harm, repeated misconduct, or potential danger. Examples include:
- Physical aggression or assault resulting in serious injury, or Dangerous behavior
- Repeated violations despite prior interventions
- Harassment or bullying that endangers another's well-being (results in a DASA report)

Procedures:

- A superintendent's hearing is required before issuing a long-term suspension.
- The school must ensure the disciplinary period does not exceed what a non-disabled student would receive for the same behavior.
- Parents/guardians have the right to appeal the suspension decision.

3. Manifestation Determination Review (10+ Days)

- If a student is suspended for more than 10 cumulative days, the home district must conduct a **Manifestation Determination Review (MDR)** to determine if the behavior was related to the student's disability.
- **If the behavior is a manifestation** of the disability:
 - Disciplinary actions cannot proceed.
 - The IEP must be reviewed and revised to address the behavior.
- **If the behavior is not a manifestation:**
 - Disciplinary action may continue.
 - The student must continue to receive educational services.

4. Parental Rights and Appeals

- Parents/guardians may challenge any suspension through a superintendent's hearing and may appeal to the Board of Education.
- A copy of the procedural safeguards under IDEA and New York State law must be provided to the parent/guardian.

5. School Responsibility

- All disciplinary actions must be documented, including suspension notices, hearing records, and parent communications.

- Staff will receive annual training on special education discipline procedures to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.



Policy and Procedure: Abilities First, Inc

Topic: Visitors

Visitor Policy

Abilities First, Inc. is committed to maintaining a safe, secure learning environment for all students, staff, and visitors. All Abilities First school buildings use a controlled single point of entry and a **secure foyer/vestibule** where visitors are screened and registered before entry into program areas.

1. All exterior doors remain locked during program hours; visitor access is only through the designated main entrance.
2. All visitors must present valid photo identification, sign in, and receive a visitor pass before being allowed beyond the foyer.
3. Visitors without a scheduled appointment must remain in the foyer/vestibule and will not be permitted into classroom or program areas.
4. Abilities First reserves the right to deny or end a visit at any time if safety, confidentiality, or program operations may be compromised.

Definitions

- **Visitor:** Any person who is not an Abilities First employee assigned to the building that day, including parents/guardians, contractors, vendors, volunteers, and agency or district personnel.
- **Foyer/Vestibule:** The secure reception area inside the main entrance where visitors wait and sign in.

Visitor Procedures

A. Arrival and Screening

1. Visitors approach the main entrance and use the intercom/buzzer, if present, to request entry. Staff ask the visitor's name, purpose of visit, and who they are visiting.
2. Once admitted into the foyer, the visitor must:
 - Present a valid government-issued photo ID (or other approved identification per program guidance).
 - State the reason for the visit and the student or staff they are requesting.
3. Front office or designated staff verify:
 - The visitor's identity against their ID.

- For student-related visits, that the visitor is an authorized contact in the student's records, when applicable.

B. Sign-In and Badges

1. All visitors sign in using the visitor log or electronic visitor management system, including: name, date, time in, purpose, person they are visiting, and destination.
2. Staff issue a **visitor badge/pass** that must be worn visibly at all times while in the building.
3. If the visitor does **not** have a scheduled appointment:
 - They remain in the foyer.
 - Staff accept items (e.g., medication, equipment, student belongings) in the foyer and ensure delivery to the classroom; visitors do not proceed further into the building.

C. Appointments and Escort

1. If the visitor **has a confirmed appointment** (e.g., CSE/CPSE meeting, conference, scheduled observation, service provider visit):
 - Staff confirm the appointment on the calendar or with the hosting staff member.
 - When possible, the hosting staff member meets the visitor in the foyer.
 - Visitors are escorted to and from their destination by staff whenever feasible.
2. Visitors must remain only in approved areas and follow all staff directions, safety procedures, and confidentiality expectations (including no unsanctioned photography or video).

D. Sign-Out and Departure

1. Before leaving, visitors must return to the foyer, sign out (time out), and return their visitor badge/pass.
2. Staff verify that the visitor has exited the building and secure the entrance

Special Situations

1. **Student pick-up during the day**
 - The visitor remains in the foyer.
 - Staff verify identity and authorization and bring the student to the foyer or main office for release, following existing dismissal and custody procedures.
2. **Deliveries and vendors**
 - Delivery personnel follow the same entry and check-in process.
 - Whenever possible, deliveries are left in the foyer or another designated non-student area; vendors are escorted if they must access interior spaces.
3. **Uncooperative or unknown visitors**
 - If a person refuses to show ID, sign in, or follow instructions, entry may be denied, or the visit ended.

- Staff notify a supervisor or administrator immediately and, if indicated, contact law enforcement according to the site's emergency plan.

Responsibilities

- **Building Administrator/Designee:** Ensures implementation of this policy, trains staff, and reviews visitor logs periodically.
- **Front Office/Reception Staff:** Verify identification, manage the visitor log or system, issue/collect badges, and coordinate escorts.
- **All Staff:** Politely redirect any unbadged or unknown individual to the foyer and notify the office/administration.



ABILITIES FIRST
ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
& ADULTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Please detach this page, sign and return in your child's backpack

Students Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

I acknowledge that I have read and understand:

ABILITIES FIRST SCHOOL PROGRAMS SITE LOCATIONS INFORMATION

2026-2027 FAMILY HANDBOOK

SCHOOL BEHAVIOR SUPPORT POLICY

DISCIPLINE AND CODE OF CONDUCT

VIDEO AND ELECTRONIC SECURITY POLICY

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR STUDENT ABSENCE TARDINESS AND
EARLY DISMISSAL**

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR SUSPENSION

VISITOR POLICY

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date