

Code of Conduct and Professional Ethics

All Head Start staff and volunteers are required at time of hire or placement to understand and abide by the codes of conduct as set forth in the Federal Performance Standards 45 CFR 1304.52 (h)(1-3). The following standards specify that:

1. I will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability.
2. Maintaining confidentiality is important to the success of our mission, our reputation in the community and the privacy of clients and staff. Family files, personnel records, financial information, client information and other related information is considered confidential. I am required to protect this information by safeguarding it when in use, filing it properly when not in use, and discussing it only with those who have a legitimate need to know. If approached by members of the news media requesting information regarding Douglass Community Services/Head Start operations, I will refer requests to the Executive Director.
3. I understand that no child shall be left alone or unsupervised while under my care. I will use positive methods of child guidance that do not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, humiliation, isolation or the use of food as punishment or reward or the denial of basic needs.
4. I understand that no child may be removed from the presence of staff other than by a child's own parent or guardian or other authorized person.
5. I will not solicit or accept gratuities, favors, or anything of significant value for personal use or enrichment from contractors/vendors or potential contractors/vendors who have been awarded contracts or provide services or materials for Douglass Community Services/Head Start.

This policy complies with Head Start Performance Standard 1304.52 (h-1-3)

Any individuals who have knowledge of or, in good faith, suspect any wrongdoing in Douglass Community Services' business or financial practices or operations, or violation of the Standards of Conduct, shall report it internally so that Douglass can work with legal counsel to investigate and take appropriate action. Douglass will take each complaint or allegation of wrongdoing seriously. Douglass will timely investigate and report, if appropriate, as well as discipline, as appropriate, any Douglass employee, agent, volunteer, or contractor who is found to have engaged in wrongdoing.

Douglass will not punish or penalize any "whistleblower," a person who makes a report of alleged wrongdoing in good faith based on his or her knowledge of such wrongdoing or has reasonable cause to suspect such wrongdoing. This "whistleblower" protection includes Sarbanes Oxley 2002, the False Claims Act 31USC 3730(h) and Whistleblower Protection ARRA 1553. If, however, a person knowingly or willfully fabricates an allegation of wrongdoing or makes an allegation that is not based on actual knowledge or with reasonable cause to suspect wrongdoing, then Douglass shall have good cause to investigate, discipline, and/or terminate the person who made the fictitious report.

Further, it is the policy of Douglass that it and its employees and volunteers will not knowingly alter, destroy, mutilate, cover up, conceal, falsify or make a false entry in any record or document with the intent to impede, obstruct or influence investigations, including federal investigations (such as those by the Office of the Inspector General) or bankruptcy investigations.

Procedure:

Reporting of Complaints Regarding Internal Operations, Fraud, Waste and Abuse, and Use of Federal Funds:

1. Anyone who becomes aware of or in good faith suspects wrongdoing by another employee, a Governing Board or Policy Council member, a vendor, a contractor, or a volunteer should report it promptly to the Executive Director, or in cases in which the Executive Director is alleged to be involved, the Board Personnel Committee Chair. Either the Executive Director or the Board Personnel Committee Chair shall become the “point person” and compliance officer.
2. The individual making the report (the “complainant”) may do so by reporting the concern in writing using the Employee Grievance Form from Policy 718, phone call, drop box or other anonymous method. Douglass will attempt to maintain the confidentiality of the person reporting the concern, but cannot guarantee it. Anyone making an internal anonymous report must realize that the person conducting or coordinating the investigation will not be able to ask questions of the person reporting, nor advise the person of the outcome.
3. The point person will notify the complainant that the concern has been received and will be reviewed and investigated as appropriate. The point person will also explain that depending on the issue, he or she may not be able to tell the person making the report of the outcome (for example, personnel matters are private matters). The point person will offer to keep the complainant informed of progress, if appropriate.
4. Douglass encourages self-reporting of one’s own wrong-doing. Douglass shall consider self-reporting as it determines disciplinary action.

Investigation of Complaints

5. Upon receiving a report of a complaint or an alleged wrongdoing, the point person will then initiate an investigation into the allegations.¹ The point person will follow the steps included herein to determine the nature, scope, and duration of the complaint or wrongdoing, if any.²
6. Investigations of complaints regarding serious or otherwise sensitive matters, including but not limited to any violations of law or regulations or suspected fraud, should be conducted under the direction of, or by, Douglass’ legal counsel. If the involvement of legal counsel is warranted, then legal counsel should be engaged.³ The point person will be responsible for requesting that legal counsel (1) initiate an investigation of the conduct in question, (2) prepare a report of findings to the point person, and (3) recommend the appropriate actions to be taken by point person or Douglass.
7. Upon receipt of information concerning alleged misconduct, the point person will, at a minimum, take the following actions:
 - a. Ensure that the investigation is initiated as soon as reasonably possible but in any event not more than 2 weeks following receipt of the information. Under the direction of legal counsel, the investigation shall include, as applicable, but not be limited to:
 - i. Interviews of all persons who may have knowledge of the alleged conduct and a review of the applicable laws, regulations and standards to determine whether or not a violation has occurred.

¹ Note: if an allegation is published in a newspaper, or if the Board receives information through audits or other sources of information, the Douglass Board should also be obligated to follow up on it.

² In the case of a community complaint, the point person shall follow Douglass’s policy and procedure on Community Complaints.

³ Note: If the allegation is about the ED, then the Board should engage legal counsel. The Executive Committee can act for the full Board in between meetings. If the complaint is about another staff member, the ED can engage legal counsel.

- ii. Identification and review of relevant documentation to determine the specific nature and scope of the violation and its frequency, duration and potential financial magnitude.
- b. For any investigations not involving serious or otherwise sensitive matters in which Douglass's legal counsel is not involved, ensure that significant developments are promptly reported to the point person so that a determination can be made as to whether Douglass's legal counsel should be contacted.
- c. Situations involving harassment should be turned over to the HR Director.
- d. Ensure that the investigation is completed in a reasonable and timely fashion and that the appropriate disciplinary or corrective action is taken, if warranted.
- e. Contact the complainant to explain the complaint has been received and is being addressed.

Corrective Action

- 8. In the event the investigation substantiates misconduct or suspected criminal activity, Douglass will develop an appropriate corrective action, including but not limited to:
 - a. Douglass will, as quickly as possible, cease the offending practice.
 - b. Douglass will consult with legal counsel to determine whether voluntary reporting of the identified misconduct to the appropriate governmental authority (e.g., the granting agency, the OIG) is warranted.
 - c. If applicable, Douglass will calculate and repay any improper payments made by a federal or state government program as a result of the misconduct.
 - d. To the extent that Douglass deems that the circumstances necessitate disciplinary action of a Douglass employee for wrongdoing, Douglass may exercise appropriate disciplinary action tailored to the circumstances and severity of the allegation in accordance with Douglass's Employment Policies and Handbook. Appropriate disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, reprimand, demotion, suspension and/or termination. If the investigation uncovers what appears to be criminal conduct on the part of an employee, appropriate disciplinary action against the employee or employees who authorized, engaged in or otherwise participated in the offending practice will include, at a minimum, the removal of the person from any position of oversight and may include, in addition, suspension, demotion, and termination.
 - e. Promptly undertake appropriate training and education to prevent a recurrence of the misconduct.
 - f. Conduct a review of applicable Douglass policies and procedures to determine whether revisions or the development of new policies and/or procedures are needed to minimize future risk of noncompliance.
 - g. Conduct, as appropriate, follow-up monitoring and auditing to ensure effective resolution of the offending practice.
 - h. Review whether it is appropriate to follow up with the complainant to explain the issue has been resolved.

No Retaliation

9. Retaliation or reprisal in any form against anyone who makes a report of wrongdoing, cooperates in an investigation, or participates in compliance activities is strictly prohibited. If an employee or a contractor believes that an adverse action in the form of reprisal or retaliation has been taken against him or her as the result of making a report or cooperating in an investigation pursuant to this or any other compliance policy, he or she should report it to the point person.

Signature

Date