



Education Division Student Handbook

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Doctor Franklin Perkins School
Don Watson Academy
RFK Academy

2025-26 School Year



WELCOME!

On behalf of the RFK Community Alliance Education Division, we extend a warm welcome to you! Our goal is to provide supportive, individualized, and professional care and education for our students. This handbook serves to provide you with helpful information as we work together.

Thank you for being a member of our school family. We look forward to partnering with you on behalf of your child.

Yours in Education,

Dawn Bentley, Ed.D., Vice President of Education, Head of Schools

The RFK Community Alliance Education Leadership Team

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MISSION

To promote meaningful and sustained well-being for children, youth and adults facing educational, developmental, or mental health challenges.

VISION

All children, youth, and adults are supported and empowered to lead productive and rewarding lives.

CORE VALUES

Collaboration, Compassion, Excellence, Learning, Inclusivity, Integrity, Hope



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

When each of us is **Connected, Capable, and Healthy**, we are well positioned to experience sustained and meaningful well-being over the course of our lives.



DIVERSITY, BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY (DBIE) VISION

Within our RFK Community Alliance school communities, we are dedicated to working together to build capacity and change systems to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We still have work to do to fully understand and dismantle all forms of oppression and discrimination faced by the students we serve and our team members. We acknowledge that we are on a journey to celebrate and appreciate every identity (diversity), ensure all voices are heard, and those unique perspectives are brought to the table (inclusion). We also strive to remove barriers to participation (equity). Yet, we must ensure equity (fairness) before we get to equality (sameness).

As an organization focused on our mission to promote meaningful and sustained well-being for children, youth, and adults facing challenges, we strive to be an anti-racist organization, to support team members to be advocates for the voiceless, to bring awareness to racism and inequities, and to be purposeful in supporting our team members from all backgrounds by creating a deep sense of belonging for them. We understand that equity work requires a lifetime of learning, unlearning, and dismantling injustices, along with ensuring that we give students what they need to show up as their best selves.



NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

RFK Community Alliance Schools do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, age, active military/veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, employment policies, and other administered programs and activities. In addition, students who are homeless or of limited English-speaking ability are protected from discrimination in accessing the course of study and other opportunities available through our schools.

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH CAREGIVERS

RFK Community Alliance staff members take pride in responding to caregivers with understanding and support. We believe that they are an integral part of student success at school, and their feedback and collaboration are essential. To this end, educators and related service providers communicate regularly with caregivers to provide regular information regarding their child's educational, emotional, and behavioral needs so that they can work in partnership with the school and their community-based resources.

We encourage and welcome students and caregivers to attend special events that we schedule periodically during the school year. We ask that students and families maintain our high standards for fostering a positive and respectful school community. Caregivers are responsible for supervising their students who participate in events and activities outside of the school day. To be eligible to participate in after school activities, students must have active consent forms on file and meet behavioral and academic standards. Students who are absent on the day of special events or activities are not eligible to attend.

Our outreach to caregivers includes calls, emails, consultation, school events, and meetings. In addition, we periodically host events during the school year to promote family involvement that include:

- **Caregiver Conferences:** scheduled two times during the school year. Caregivers can also request an opportunity to meet with the teacher and other school personnel at other times during the school year by contacting your child's teacher or other school professional. Caregiver conferences further strengthen the partnerships between educators and families. These conferences provide updates on a student's class activities, curriculum, and assignments that are being taught and how the student is performing. If you wish to schedule a parent/teacher conference, please contact your child's teacher.
- **Open House:** an event for families to visit their child's classroom, meet the teacher and other school personnel, and hear about upcoming class projects and assignments.
- **Parent Advisory Council:** composed of parents, school leaders, and educators who meet quarterly to review and advise on educational trends, procedures, curricula, and ways to enhance the school program and relationships with families and districts.

CAREGIVER-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Communication with families is vital to our students' success. We encourage and support regular and ongoing communication between caregivers and school staff, and we hope families will contact us at any time with questions and/or concerns about their child's health, education, or social emotional wellbeing.

Given the teacher's responsibility for daily classroom instruction, the student's clinician serves as the primary liaison between families and school. Caregivers should contact their student's clinician first regarding any urgent concerns. Staff members check voicemail and email daily and strive to return correspondence within 24 hours whenever possible.

Each school's main office is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Outside of these hours, families can email or leave a voicemail, and we will respond as soon as possible.

ANNUAL CONSENT FORMS

Prior to a student's enrollment and annually thereafter, each family is required to complete a series of consent forms, which include consent for placement, medication administration and emergency medical treatment, vision/hearing screening, field trips, publicity, and more. If initial and annual consents aren't completed, we will need to take action to ensure there is no disruption to a student's participation in school-based services.

If a student's consent forms are expired, we will need to exclude them from participation in all non-essential activities (e.g., field trips, special events, etc.). Two weeks after consents expire, the team may convene an urgent meeting with the family and funding source. We are committed to protecting the students we serve and the services we provide them.

Through the Annual Consent forms, families are requested to update their contact information and emergency contacts. If contact information changes at any time during the school year, please contact your clinician with updates.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has approved RFK Community Alliance Schools as 12-month programs. Our 218-school day (DFPS) and 216-school day (DWA and RFKA) programs are divided between five academic quarters, including a summer term. IEPs specify the importance and need to attend all school days so we can address students' social, emotional, and educational needs. In general, we follow the local public school calendar with a few exceptions. Any snow days taken during the school year will be made up according to what is indicated on the school calendar. School-specific calendars are posted online at our RFKCA's website at <https://www.rfkcommunity.org/education-overview>.

Early Release and Professional Learning Days

It is critical for our staff to engage in regular professional learning (PL) as we continue to grow our skills to support students. Annually, the days designated for PL are indicated in green on each school's calendar.

SCHOOL HOURS

RFK Community Alliance schools operate from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Students arrive between 8:10 and 8:30 a.m. Students are dismissed at 2:30 p.m.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/SNOW DAYS/DELAYED OPENINGS

Doctor Franklin Perkins School, Lancaster	School Closure - DFPS is always operational unless there is a State of Emergency because we serve residential students. Conditions that alter regularly scheduled programming: - Sending districts do not transport to DFPS if their district is closed. - Parents can opt to transport Day students into DFPS for a 9:00 start time. - Educators upload student resources to Google Classroom for families who cannot safely transport students to school. Teachers email caregivers to direct them to these resources.
Don Watson Academy, Lancaster	School Closure - If Nashoba Regional School District (NRSD) is closed, DWA is closed. Delayed Start: - If NRSD is delayed, DWA is delayed. Typically, a delayed start means school begins two hours late. Early Release: - If NRSD announces an early release due to inclement weather, DWA does the same. - We notify families and contact van companies to notify them of the early release.
RFK Academy, Springfield	School Closure: - If Springfield Public Schools (SPS) is closed, RFKA is closed. Delayed Start: - If SPS is delayed, RFKA is delayed. Typically, a delayed start means school begins two hours late. Early Release: - If SPS announces an early release due to inclement weather, RFKA does the same. - We notify families and contact van companies to notify them of the early release.

GENERAL SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

Personal Possessions

RFK Community Alliance Schools discourage students from bringing expensive clothing, jewelry, and electronic devices to school. We prohibit backpacks, bags, purses, etc. in classrooms and in school buildings. Exceptions to this practice occur on an individual student basis with the understanding that backpacks, bags, purses, etc. remain locked in an administrator's office during school hours. RFK Community Alliance Schools are not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items. The use of personal possessions during the school day is limited to those items that directly relate to education and classroom activities and do not detract from learning. We expect that each student will use his/her personal items with the following guidelines:

- Use their personal items in a respectful and trustworthy manner
- Demonstrate responsibility in taking care of items

- Respect and cooperate with staff requests regarding use of personal items

Items that are not allowed in the school include cell phones, media devices including video games systems, smartwatches, devices with internet capability, cameras or devices with photography capability, vapes/juules/e-cigarettes (including cartridges), cigarettes, lighters/matches, and any item that may pose a safety risk to the student or others (i.e. laser pointers, scissors, handheld pencil sharpeners, etc.).

Students are required to hand in all personal electronic devices (including smartwatches) upon arrival to school. Items will be stored in an administrator's office for the school day and will be returned at dismissal time. Students who do not comply with the rule for handing in electronic devices upon arrival at school will forfeit this privilege of bringing these items onto school grounds. Any student who uses an electronic device to threaten, harass, or intimidate another person will be prohibited from bringing electronic devices to school and the student is subject to further disciplinary action if deemed appropriate. Failure to comply with the practices of handing in and returning electronic devices will result in the student's ability to bring electronic devices to school. RFK Community Alliance is not responsible for stolen, lost, or damaged personal electronic devices. In the event of chronic infractions of this policy, school administrators will hold personal items and other items deemed dangerous or unsafe and request that a parent pick them up.

Prohibited Items and Search Practices

RFK Community Alliance Schools protect the rights of all students for a safe and secure school environment. To ensure the safety of our students, our schools maintain certain standards regarding personal belongings that a student may have in his/her possession while in attendance at school. When reasonable grounds for a search exist, school personnel may request administrative approval for a student and/or the student's personal property to be searched and may seize any illegal, unauthorized or prohibited items materials as defined by this policy. At the time a search protocol has been authorized by a school administrator, staff are required to write an incident report to justify the reasonable suspicion and/or actions or comments the student made to warrant the increased search protocol. Students with active substance use issues and students who engage in self-harm will automatically be subject to a daily search protocol.

Prohibited items cause substantial disruption to the school environment and present a threat to the health and safety of students, staff, or visitors. Prohibited items not permitted on campus, that can lead to a search, include but are not limited to: tobacco products, weapons, poisons, vaping/juuling devices chains, spikes, matches/lighters, laser pointers, pepper spray, needles, hand held pencil sharpeners, pornographic material, gang paraphernalia, drug paraphernalia, controlled substances, prescription medications, nonprescription medications, alcoholic beverages, energy drinks, and any item that could result in endangering others or creating a disturbance. Electronic devices, such as cell phones, music players, and smartwatches, must be turned off and handed to staff upon arrival. Possession of illegal or unauthorized materials and/or because of safety concerns are justification for a student to be placed on an ongoing (daily) or random search protocol. We will take disciplinary action for all prohibited items.

If a student chooses to not fully complete the identified search protocol, they will be restricted from being around other students until they comply with the search protocol. We will immediately notify parents/guardians to ensure they are a part of the communication and resolution of the situation.

Search protocols are based on the severity of the safety concern under the following guidelines:

- All searches are conducted in a private setting and at no time include conducting a pat down or strip search of any type.
- All searches are conducted with at least two staff present with the following guidelines:
 - Personal bags and belongings are searched.
 - Staff give the student specific instructions to pat down their own clothing and empty pockets to show contents to identify any hidden items.
 - Shoes and socks are visually inspected.
- At DWA and RFKA, students are searched using a metal detector wand.
- At DFPS, the metal detector is used in circumstances where there is concern and suspicion that an individual may be in possession of a weapon or other item that would be detected by a metal detector and that causes a potential safety risk. Two types of searches are conducted: Routine/Planned searches and Unplanned/Heightened alert searches.
 - *Unplanned/Heightened alert searches:* Such searches are conducted because of a suspicious situation or concern that an individual is in possession of items that are prohibited. Heightened searches include examples such as possession of an electronic device, vapes/e-cigarettes, illegal substances, gang paraphernalia, and/or weapon-type objects.
 - *Routine/Planned searches:* Such searches occur because of continuous infractions meaning that there is concern and reason to believe that an individual is routinely bringing or likely to be in possession of prohibited items as described

above. These searches are conducted, in collaboration with the individual and family at random or daily intervals, as appropriate. Minor infractions include examples such as being in possession of electronic devices; illegal substances; and/or weapon-type objects. If any prohibited items are discovered in a student's possession, an administrator will take possession of it. If staff discover an illegal substance or item, they will turn it over to the local police.

We will verbally notify the family at the conclusion of a search to communicate findings and next steps for action to ensure the safety of the student and staff. Students will remain on a search protocol until a school administrator determines otherwise. Typically, we review student searches on a monthly basis. We will place students who make threats to bring a weapon to school or threaten to physically harm another student or staff member with a weapon on a daily search protocol. Students who violate the school's policy on the use of electronic devices may also be subject to a daily search protocol. School administrators reserve the right to dispose of confiscated items at the conclusion of the school year if parents have not picked them up. In the case of a student repeatedly bringing prohibited items to RFK Community Alliance, and/or refusal to comply with the search procedures, we will consider disciplinary action, including suspension and/or termination of placement, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, staff, and visitors.

Cell or Telephone Use

RFK Community Alliance prohibits students making telephone calls in school and on transportation vehicles due to the potential disruption to learning and safety. The student's clinician will facilitate emergency phone calls during school hours. The van driver will manage emergency phone calls while on transportation. If families need to communicate with their child during the school day, they should reach out to the student's clinician.

Students may not have cellphones in their possession during school hours. Cell phone use on transportation vehicles should be restricted to accessing music (via headphones, video games, etc.). In order to promote student success, all communication (cell phone, any electronic means, visits, etc.) between students outside of school should first be reviewed and approved by each student's clinician. Students are strongly discouraged from sharing personal contact information with other students unless approved by parent/guardian and clinician.

Breakfast and Lunch

We provide breakfast and lunch to students free of charge. In addition, our dining room staff provide fresh fruit and other healthy snack options that are available throughout the day. We also provide lunch for students on days when we have an early dismissal.

Students are welcome to bring their own lunch to school. Students are expected to consume food during breakfast and lunch periods and not at other times. Classroom teachers manage snacks in the classroom. We do not permit students to consume soda, energy drinks, coffee, etc.

Students with special dietary requirements should communicate restrictions to the school nurse. Given dietary and allergy considerations, students are not allowed to bring food into school for special events or share personal food with other students. The school will provide food for special events. Each school has identified peanut-free tables in the dining room for students with nut allergies.

Birthdays

We understand that birthdays are a special occasion for students, and they often want the opportunity to celebrate their special day with classmates and peers. As part of our daily announcements, we acknowledge birthdays and on a monthly basis, provide birthday cupcakes to celebrate birthdays that occurred during the month. With that, we ask that you contact your child's clinician or teacher prior to sending in any party invitations. If families send invitations without prior communication, staff will not distribute them. In addition, due to dietary and allergy considerations, we are unable to distribute any special treats brought in by students.

VISITORS TO OUR SCHOOLS

Prior to meeting with school staff, families and visitors are required to check-in at the Front Desk of the school and obtain a visitor badge. Courtesy among students, teachers, school staff, and visitors is a tradition in our schools. Please make every effort to treat students and staff with respect and dignity. **Photographing and/or videotaping students and staff members is prohibited on school grounds, during visitations, and at school-sponsored events.** We do not permit students to have visitors during the school

day unless it is arranged with their clinician. To ensure safety and privacy of our students, we require that all visitors be accompanied by a school employee while on school grounds and in our buildings.

The use of smoking, chewing, vaping, or other use of tobacco products by staff, students, and visitors is prohibited on school grounds. In addition, tobacco use by staff, students, and visitors is prohibited at all school-sponsored events, even though such events do not take place on school grounds.

USE OF VIDEO CAMERAS

RFKCA uses video cameras throughout its buildings for the purpose of enhancing school safety and security. The objective is to promote and foster a safe and secure teaching and learning environment for students and staff, to improve safety for visitors to our programs, and diminish the potential for personal and agency loss or destruction of property. Only authorized RFKCA staff may view security camera footage.

RFKCA also utilizes digital video equipment in school vehicles as an important tool in staff and student safety of all students and staff. Students or staff identified on video recording who are in violation of RFKCA's policies and procedures may be subject to disciplinary action. Violations of the law may be referred to law enforcement agencies and video recordings may be provided to law enforcement agencies. Each RFKCA vehicle has a notice stating that the vehicle is equipped with a video monitoring system.

STUDENT SERVICES

Specialized and Therapeutic Services

RFKCA offers a wide range of services for students. Each student's Individual Education Program (IEP) determines what services are needed and provided. Services available vary among our three schools; available within the school programs may include:

- Specialized academic instruction and 1:1 technology
- Transition programming for students ages 17-22*
- Small classrooms with low student-teacher ratios
- School-based clinical supports and clinical case management
- Electives that may include: Computers, Music*, Art, Health & Wellness, Physical Education, and more
- Related Services (e.g., Speech Language Therapy*, Occupational Therapy*, Nursing, etc.)
- Academic support, credit recovery, and MCAS tutoring
- Social skills and behavioral coaching
- Individual student planning
- Family support, consultation, and education
- Educational assessment
- Psychological evaluation*
- Enrichment activities

**May not be available in each of our school programs*

School-Based Clinical Services

School-based clinical services are an essential component of our therapeutic schools. These services are designed to maximize time on learning, strengthen coping skills that allow students to actively participate in school, and support the development of self-regulation skills and coping skills to enhance social emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Each student is assigned a clinician who oversees their social-emotional and behavioral services and supports. Clinicians collaborate with students, educators, specialists, families, and collaborating districts/agencies to support success in school, at home, and in the community. Clinical services include psychosocial evaluations, supportive counseling, case management, safety assessments, parent support, crisis intervention, and family outreach. Clinicians provide weekly services to students that focus on social, emotional, and behavioral IEP goals. Our aim is for students to develop critical skills in self-regulation, conflict resolution, effective communication, frustration tolerance, and more. Our mantra is "Connected, Capable, and Healthy."

IEP Meetings

Required IEP TEAM meetings, progress meetings, and any other special meetings are scheduled as necessary. While we attempt to be flexible in scheduling these meetings, it is often necessary to hold them when the professional staff involved in a child's

education are available. We do not permit audio recording of meetings. We work with families to ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of what occurred at each meeting.

Student and family IEP meeting attendance is critical. The IEP TEAM includes the school district, parents/guardian, student (minimally at 14 years of age and older), school team members, teacher, specialists, and other appropriate representatives. At the TEAM meeting, after the IEP has been developed, the TEAM shall consider the identified needs of the student, the types of services required, and where such services may be provided. The TEAM shall consider all aspects of the student's proposed special education program as specified in the student's IEP and determine the appropriate placement to provide services.

Decisions regarding placement rest solely with the IEP Team and include the specially designed instruction, related services, accommodations, and/or modifications, the setting and location for those services, and the service providers. The TEAM shall determine each student's placement according to the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Student Participation in IEP Meetings

We recognize that students are also considered important members of TEAM meetings. At the earliest age possible, we expect students to be a part of the TEAM meeting process. Students are invited to attend every TEAM meeting, and shall attend beginning at the age of 14, or younger if the purpose of the meeting is to discuss transition services. If the student does not attend the meeting, TEAM members collaborate with the district on what other steps will be taken to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.

Massachusetts law establishes 18 as the age of majority. At that age, students are adults and competent to make their own decisions including decisions in relation to special education services. Therefore, on the student's 18th birthday and in the absence of any court action to the contrary, RFK Community Alliance must seek the consent of the student to continue the special education program. Prior to the student's 18th birthday, RFKCA provides the student consent forms to consider and complete no later than the first school day following their 18th birthday. If students don't complete consent by their 18th birthday, they will review the forms required for ongoing placement. To prepare students to assume their own decision making, the TEAM discusses the Age of Majority and transfer of rights at least one year before the student turns 18 as part of the IEP process.

IEP Progress Reporting

RFK Community Alliance provides each local district/agency with IEP progress reports at the end of each marking period. Teachers, specialists, and related service providers prepare these progress reports, which indicate the student's progress toward annual goals. We also encourage districts to visit the school to monitor student progress.

ATTENDANCE

Under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "Every child between the ages of 6 and 16 is compelled to attend school." Except in cases of illness or other extenuating circumstances, students are expected to be present when school is in session. A student is allowed up to **14 unexcused absences total for a year**. We review attendance quarterly and note it on report cards. Missing more than half of the class period due to unexcused tardiness will be counted as an absence for the class period.

Excused Absences (Documentation Required)

- Death in the immediate family (parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin)
- Health Professional appointment –note required from Physician, Dentist, Optometrist, etc.
- Religious Holiday Observance
- Legal/Court appointments- Court note required upon return to school

A student is required to submit an absence note within two days of his/ her return to school. Notes do not eliminate or excuse absences, tardiness, or early dismissals; they indicate parent awareness of the absence.

Making Up Work After an Absence

When students miss a class, or an entire school day for an authorized reason (e.g., sickness, medical appointments, death in the family, etc.), they are allowed time to make up missed work. The amount of time teachers give students to make up missed work and assessments is proportional to the amount of time they missed (i.e. if a student misses 1-2 days, they have up to 2 days to make up work, etc.). If a student misses more than 5 school days, they will work with each teacher to determine how long they have to make up missed assignments or assessments.

If, because of legitimate tardiness, a student misses a test or quiz or fails to hand in assignments, they are expected to make up that work that day or receive permission from their teacher for an alternative make-up date. Failure to do this will result in a zero on the assignment. If students miss a test or fail to hand in assignments due to participation in a field trip, they must notify the teacher in advance to arrange any make-up requirements. This procedure also applies to students who have missed school or class for an authorized reason, including suspension.

Late Arrival or Early Dismissal

To every extent possible we ask that appointments be scheduled after school hours. To maintain security and accuracy of attendance records, parents who drop their child off late or pick them up early from school must notify their child's clinician or homeroom teacher. We will only release students to individuals who are listed on a student's contact sheet. We require parents/guardians to check in at the Front Desk of the school to sign their child in or out. The parent is responsible for notifying the transportation company when their child will not be riding the van to or from school.

Vacations and Unexcused Absences

We expect that our students and families will plan vacations during school breaks. Family vacations and trips that are scheduled when school is in session are not considered valid reasons for absence and are therefore unexcused. Although teachers allow students to make up missed assignments, tests, and quizzes, they are not required to prepare work in advance for a vacation-related absence, nor are they required to re-teach or tutor students when they return from vacation. The classroom teacher will establish the appropriate timeframes to make up missed work.

Credit Bearing Courses in Grades 9-12

A student is allowed up to **14 unexcused absences total for a year- long course (5 block hours)** and **7 unexcused absences for a semester course (2.5 block hours)**. Attendance will be reviewed quarterly and each semester and noted on progress reports and report cards. Missing more than half of the class period due to unexcused tardiness will be counted as an absence for the class period. Absences will affect a student's ability to receive high school course credit.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

Goal of Learning

Our goal is to provide excellent academic instruction using technology and curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks to ensure optimal learning experiences. Students are encouraged to develop, connect, and integrate knowledge from various subject areas in order to understand the world they live in and learn to be contributing members to society.

Grades

Teachers are responsible for documenting student progress throughout each quarter. There are four marking periods plus an Extended School Year/summer program throughout the academic school year. We email report cards to families and to the school district. We use a traditional letter grade/percentage system to record student progress.

If a student is having difficulty with a specific subject area, the teacher will collaborate with the family and discuss the situation with the school. Teachers are expected to communicate with parents/guardians by mid-term if the student is in danger of failing a subject. Parents and teachers are encouraged to schedule conferences to discuss academic concerns.

Learning and Class Participation

We expect students to attend all classes and be engaged in learning. Teachers provide students with timely written constructive feedback for all assignments/assessments within one week.

*If students are absent from class for therapeutic services, the Classroom Participation grade will not be impacted. If students are absent for an extended period of time for excused medical reasons, tutoring will be arranged and the classroom Participation grades will not be impacted. All efforts will be made by clinicians and related services providers to avoid student removals from core academic subject periods. For more information on courses, curriculum, and academics, please refer to our Program of Studies, located on our website.

Technology and Internet Usage Policy

To ensure that students receive a quality education, it is RFKCA's policy to provide all students with access to a variety of technological resources. The creation of a large and varied technological environment demands that technology usage be

conducted in legally and ethically appropriate ways, consistent with our instructional goals and student needs. Thus, it is the intention of RFKCA that technology resources will be used in accordance with all school policies and procedures related to the learning environment as well as local, state, and federal laws and/or guidelines governing the usage of technology and its component parts. Additionally, it is implied that all students will use provided technological resources so as not to waste them, abuse them, or interfere with or cause harm to other individuals, institutions, or companies.

- The Technology Department (IT) will be responsible for establishing specific practices to enforce this policy.
- This policy will be available for review, or a copy may be obtained from IT.
- All RFKCA technology resources, regardless of purchase date, location, or fund, are subject to this policy.
- Any questions about this policy, its interpretation, or specific circumstances shall be directed to IT.

Student Technology Acceptable Use Agreement

Technology Access

- The use of all RFKCA's technology resources is a privilege, not a right. Inappropriate or suspected inappropriate use will result in a cancellation of those privileges.
- Students may use only accounts, files, software, and technology resources assigned to them for educational purposes.
- Individuals may not attempt to log in to the network by using another person's account and/or password or allow someone to use his/her password to access the training network, or the Internet.
- Individuals must take all reasonable precautions to prevent unauthorized access to accounts and data and any other unauthorized usage within RFKCA.
- Students identified as a security risk may be denied access.
- Any use of technology resources that reduces efficiency of use for others is considered a violation of this policy.
- Students may not attempt to disrupt any computer services or data by spreading viruses or by any other means.
- Students may not attempt to modify technology resources, utilities, and configurations, or change the restrictions associated with his/her accounts, or attempt to breach any technology resources security system, either with or without malicious intent.
- IT staff will determine when inappropriate use has occurred and will seek authorization to deny, revoke, or suspend specific student accounts.

Technology Privacy

- To maintain network integrity and to ensure that the network is being used responsibly, IT reserves the right to review files and network communications.
- Students should not expect that files stored on RFKCA's network will be private.
- Because communications on the Internet are often public in nature, all students should be careful to maintain appropriate and responsible communications.
- RFKCA cannot guarantee the privacy, security, or confidentiality of any information sent or received via the Internet.
- Students should be aware that IT routinely monitors and performs maintenance on file servers, workstations, the Internet, and user accounts. During these procedures, it may be necessary for them to review files stored on the network.
- IT performs routine backups. However, all users are responsible for storage of any critical files and/or data.

Internet

The intent of RFK Community Alliance is to provide access to resources available via the Internet with the understanding that staff and students will access and use information that is appropriate for his/her various curricula. All school rules and guidelines for appropriate technology usage shall apply to usage of the Internet.

Teachers will screen all Internet resources they plan to use in the classroom prior to their introduction. Students gain access to the Internet by agreeing to conduct themselves in a considerate and responsible manner and by providing written parental permission. Students may conduct independent research on the Internet upon the receipt of the appropriate permission forms. Permission is not transferable, and therefore, may not be shared. Students who are allowed independent access to the Internet will have the capability of accessing material that has not been screened.

Internet Content Filtering

- IT ensures safe Internet access for all students through filtering software that they maintain and update.
- Access to the Internet may be filtered by URL, IP address, category, keyword, or access rules, as appropriate.
- The Technology Department may add or delete URLs, IP addresses, categories or filtering rules at any time.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Services

Sending districts arrange curb-to-curb transportation for students who attend our school programs. In the morning, transportation drops students off at a specified location. In the afternoon, staff dismiss students directly to their assigned vehicle. If, for any reason, a child will not ride the van to or from school, it is the family's responsibility to communicate directly with the transportation company about any changes.

Students are transported to school under the authority of the sending school district. Students are subject to all sending school district policies and rules. Families should direct all questions and concerns regarding transportation to the sending school district. Incidents occurring directly during transit on the van/bus will be addressed by the transportation provider to your child's school district. Typically, RFK Community Alliance will also be notified. In collaboration with the transportation provider, the sending school district will determine any consequences, including suspension, of any misconduct that occurs during transit to and from school.

If a student exhibits dangerous behavior that may make it unsafe for them to ride in a transportation vehicle, our clinical staff will assess a student's ability to be safely transported home. Should the clinician determine that a student is at risk for safe transport, the clinician will contact the parent/guardian or the emergency contact(s) to arrange for alternative transportation home.

Transportation Expectations

RFK Community Alliance fully supports the transportation company's high expectations for safe and respectful behavior during transportation to and from school. While being transported to and from school, students are subject to all school rules. Students are expected to follow the bus company and sending district expectations for bus safety. Drivers should report any and all behavioral problems that occur on their vehicles to their company, the sending district, and our staff. When our staff understand the concerns, we will work with the student and family to support improved student behavior.

Field Trips

A field trip is like any other school day except that learning takes place in a different environment. Field trips are planned to provide extended learning opportunities and are a privilege. All field trips are conditional on student behavior. Students exhibiting behavioral difficulties in school or refusing to participate/complete schoolwork will not be eligible for field trips. Expectations for behavior on field trips are the same as when on school grounds. Inappropriate behavior during a field trip will jeopardize participation in future field trips.

EMERGENCIES

Fire Drills

Each program site runs monthly fire drills. RFK Community Alliance takes the practice of any evacuation procedure seriously to ensure the health and safety of all members of the school community. Evacuation drill expectations:

- Directions and evacuation routes are posted in all rooms.
- When the fire alarm sounds, staff and students exit the building immediately through the nearest exit.
- Staff and students must maintain silence throughout the drill.
- Drills are treated as seriously as a real emergency.
- Students remain with their class during the drill.

Lockdown Drills

It is the policy of RFK Community Alliance to periodically run lockdown drills. Its main purpose is to keep students safe in the event of an emergency (i.e., gas leak, bad weather conditions, intruder, etc.). During these drills, we ask that all students take them seriously and follow directions as indicated by the teacher/staff. Lockdown drills will be randomly conducted throughout the school year to keep the students familiar with the procedure.

Shelter In Place Drills

Shelter in place is used for an environmental situation or weather-related situation where it is necessary to keep all occupants within the school and out of the hallways. This procedure may also be used for a medical emergency or serious student issue. In this situation, the school continues to function normally within the classroom or building until the situation is resolved.

Psychiatric Emergencies

The decision to have a student psychiatrically evaluated for hospitalization is based on the client's presentation and the recommendation of the clinical team. When a student's psychiatric condition is such that they are a danger to themselves or others or are presenting with a significantly distorted thought process preventing them from making appropriate decisions, the clinical team will make the determination to have the client evaluated by emergency mental health services or the Mobile Crisis Team. For day students the screening process involves:

- Contacting the family/guardian to notify them of the actions being taken and the reasons for the evaluation. Parent/Guardian will be asked to come to the school immediately to assist in the evaluation process.
- Contacting the community mental health agency to provide pertinent details and the reason for the request.
- Depending on the student's presentation, the school team decides whether the student is safe for transport to the mental health agency or if the evaluation will be conducted at the school with a mobile crisis team.
- Clinical staff remain with the student and their family for the duration of the evaluation to offer support and assistance, if deemed appropriate.
- Once a facility has been identified, an ambulance will arrange to transport the student. Parents will need to accompany their child using their private vehicle to complete the admission process to the identified placement.

If a student is placed in an inpatient facility, the clinician will be in contact with the hospital treatment team to facilitate a comprehensive treatment plan. This shall include:

- Sharing observations prior to placement.
- Maintaining regular communication with the treatment team at the hospital.
- Offering recommendations as to the services both the student and family could benefit from during admission and post hospitalization.
- Confirming any medication changes the hospital is making.
- Being available for any clinical team meeting at the hospital.
- Working with the treatment team to set up a school discharge plan.
- Maintaining contact with family and collaborating agencies to keep them informed on the course of treatment.
- Providing schoolwork as appropriate/requested.

Upon discharge from the placement, the clinician will:

- Review the discharge plan, including any medication changes and any scheduled outpatient appointments.
- Communicate with the family and outpatient providers to facilitate a smooth return to school.
- Communicate with the family and outpatient providers any information pertaining to the student's presentation in school and medication efficacy.
- Communicate with the family any modification to the student's school day program and/or supports.

MEDICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Illness, Injuries, and Accidents, or Emergencies

RFK Community Alliance has nursing oversight available during the school day. Nursing care includes basic first aid, administration of prescribed medications, monitoring injury and illness, ensuring compliance with Massachusetts health care requirements, maintaining the school health record, collaborating with parent and health care providers, and managing allergy action plans. In the event of illness, accidents, or other emergencies, we will contact families and/or emergency contacts as soon as possible at the emergency telephone numbers provided. If your child needs to be excused from physical or academic activities due to an injury or illness, please contact the school nurse. For all excused absences from physical or academic activities for more than a one-week period of time, families are required to provide a note from their child's primary care physician that includes any further limitations for the student and when they are able to return to normal activities.

Sick Student Assessment

In the case of a day treatment student presents a new onset of symptoms during the school day, the school nurse will evaluate the student to determine: fever greater than 100.4f, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or other signs of contagious illness. If the student presents with these symptoms the parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to pick the student up from school as soon as possible. The student will remain in an area away from other students that can ensure proper supervision until the parent/guardian is able to pick them up.

Screenings

Massachusetts requires that students have periodic hearing, vision, dental, and posture screenings. Our nurses work with parents/guardians to ensure that these screenings are done and that the records of these screenings are on file.

Medication

The nurse cannot dispense any medication without a physician's written order and written parental consent. All medication, both prescription and over the counter must be brought to school in the original container, clearly labeled with the student's name, name of medication, daily dosage, and time during the school day when the medication is to be taken. In order to ensure the safety of all of our students, all medication to be administered to your child at the school must be delivered to a staff member on a monthly basis, by a parent, guardian, or other designated responsible adult. **No medications, either prescription or over the counter, can be transported with students on school buses.** Students are not allowed to carry any type of medication. Any student who receives medication for the diagnosis of allergies or asthma must have a written action plan from the prescribing physician and signed parental approval of the plan. This action plan must be updated annually.

Medication may be dropped off or retrieved from the school at any time after speaking with a member of the nursing office. If you need any assistance regarding medications, please call the nursing office. If your child's prescribing physician changes the medication dosage, we will need a written order from the doctor, and an updated medication bottle. If a student's medication is stopped, a written order by the physician is required. Medication will be destroyed if it is not picked up within one week following the termination of the order or one week beyond the close of school.

We request families notify the nursing office of all medication changes to assist in monitoring the side effects and efficacy of medication. Parents may notify the nurse through use of the communication log, phone, or by email.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education and Supports

Protecting the health and wellbeing of all students is of utmost importance in our programs. Students will learn about recognizing and responding to warning signs of suicide in friends, using coping skills, using support systems, and seeking help for themselves and friends.

When a student is identified as being at risk, they will meet with a clinician who will collaborate with the family to help connect them to appropriate local resources. Students will have access to resources they can contact for additional support, such as The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255/www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

All students will be expected to help create a school culture of respect and support in which students feel comfortable seeking help for themselves or friends. Students are encouraged to tell any staff member if they, or a friend, are feeling suicidal or in need of help. Students should also know that because of the life or death nature of these matters, confidentiality or privacy concerns are secondary to seeking help for students in crisis.

BEHAVIORAL AND THERAPEUTIC SUPPORTS AND EDUCATION

Core Elements of Our Educational Philosophy

Our educational philosophy is accomplished through developing working alliances with our own professional staff, students' families, and school districts. We embrace six core elements to our philosophy:

- Our education approach is strength based.
- Our instruction is sensitive to the social, emotional, and mental health needs of our students.
- Our approach to learning incorporates the individual learning needs of each student.
- Our learning environment promotes a sense of safety, comfort, and support.
- Our staff recognize and celebrate student achievements.
- Our instruction provides students with skills and tools needed to be successful

Philosophy of Responses, Interventions and Consequences

Our responses, interventions, and consequences related to actions are designed to teach and promote self-control and self-regulation. We believe this is best accomplished when staff develop partnerships with students and work to share control.

Even with the best discipline model, all students will at some point misbehave and test limits. It is a normal part of development. When working with students with a range of social, emotional, and developmental needs, the degree to which their behavior can test limits can be quite extreme. As a result, we promote a wide range of interventions and responses that support the principle of positive discipline but also recognize that there are unique challenges of safety with our population.

We recognize and understand that students can display opposition, disagreement, and challenging behaviors as part of their developmental process and that those can be exacerbated by a lack of social skills and from past trauma and abuse. We acknowledge student struggles and setbacks as opportunities for learning and change. We regularly utilize on-going practices of intervention strategies that are based on understanding developmental stages, past trauma histories, emotional readiness, and cognitive development within the learning environment. The majority of responses and consequences we use can be replicated in the home and community.

We abide by a philosophy that sees responses and consequences as tools for behavioral change through personal reflection and collaboration. We believe that intentional interventions support a change in behaviors and attitudes positively and pro-socially over time. Determining responses and consequences are managed by a hierarchy of decision makers based on the severity of the situation along with discussion and feedback with the individual. Because responses and consequences are part of a therapeutic intervention, we regularly review and discuss their use.

Promoting Self Control and Self Regulation

Self-control requires training and practice if it is to become self-directing. A person with self-control and self-regulation is one who is trained to consider his or her actions and undertake them deliberately. Therefore treatment has the two-fold responsibility to help students learn to govern their own behavior and to prepare them to cope with future needs and problems.

Our approach to teaching self-control and self-regulation is consistent in all components of our educational program. We use common language and simple logic so that the student can easily transfer what they learn here to the community. We provide a system that offers fairness, caring, and moral responsibility while assisting students in developing a moral understanding of the importance of rules and that rules exist in all settings.

For students who have not had healthy decision making and establishment of rules modeled for them, the school experience can provide them with the opportunity to feel a sense of participation in and responsibility for what goes on in the school community. This is central to their own moral development.

We believe that normal conflict is an important opportunity to learn perspective-taking and fairness, when staff and peers can help students to understand each other's point of view and work out a fair solution. This approach helps students learn the skills needed to solve problems without adult intervention.

Developing Social Competence

We believe our educational environment must include a focus on social competence, character development, and personal values for learning to be truly comprehensive. Social competence is key to successful relationships, conduct, and personal achievement. Our classrooms focus on social competency through instruction and structured learning experiences that include building the following skills and attitudes:

- accurately assessing abilities and interests
- building strengths
- making effective use of family, school, and community resources
- building and maintaining positive relationships with others
- recognizing the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others
- appreciating different viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences
- promoting one's own health and avoiding risky behaviors
- being a positive member of various communities (classroom, school, family)

Social competencies are learned through a developmental process involving both formal and informal means including student's observational learning. Different social competencies are required and valued in different contexts. The classroom provides the ideal environment for students to make connections with others who are similar as well as different. This experience builds on personal connections, perspective taking, social and cultural experiences, and empathy. Our classrooms, curriculum, and intervention models endorse three core social competencies:

- *Self-Awareness and Motivation*: identify and manage one's emotions and behavior; recognize personal qualities and external supports; demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.
- *Social Awareness/Interpersonal Skills*: recognize the feelings and perspectives of others; recognize individual and group similarities and differences; use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others; demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.
- *Responsible Decision Making*: consider the possible outcomes, safety, and societal factors in decision making; apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and societal demands; contribute to the wellbeing of one's school and community.

Influencing Character Development

Our curriculum and classroom environment also integrate the tenets of character development. Principles of strong character focus on: *ethical values, conflict resolution, moral reflection, respect for individual learning styles, responsibility, citizenship, and leadership*. Grade-specific service projects focus on character and social competencies through monthly character appreciation themes during the school year.

Logical Responses

We provide a range of supportive tactics to help students manage themselves in the classroom setting. As students adjust in placement it is our expectation that they will be able to remain in the classroom, deal with frustration, and complete assignments. Increasing a student's time in class and focusing on academic success is considered a major educational goal. Using logical responses help students identify a problem and help them find a way to work through it. Logical responses include: clear expectations, feedback, breaks, limit setting, support center/solution/quiet space/cool down area, mediation, behavioral/social skill coaching, out of class restriction, out of school suspension, and emergency removal or discharge.

Clear Expectations

We believe that student success is guided and supported through clear expectations. When students know what to expect, it helps provide them with a roadmap towards success. Clear expectations help define cause-and-effect relationships and help eliminate confusion for students. When students understand what they are expected to learn and how they are expected to act they are able to take greater responsibility for their own learning and success.

Feedback

Feedback is the most important way we can assist a student to develop new social and behavioral responses. Students learn best when they receive regular, specific feedback on how they are meeting expectations. Feedback shall always be respectful, informative, and helpful. Staff provide feedback to a student after any action that impacts the individual, classroom, or school community negatively. Feedback provides students with an opportunity to explore the impact of their behavior and alternative actions.

Limit Setting

Limit setting is the most helpful way to promote positive behavior change in students. We believe in students having a voice and a choice in their decisions. Limit setting allows students to think independently while learning to take responsibility for their behavior. Limit setting helps students own responsibility for their behavior and see that there are boundaries in life. We believe that limits should be realistic and presented in a clear and understandable manner that allows students to be accountable for their actions. The goal of limit setting is to foster greater student independence.

Centering

Centering is a simple response used to assist a student whose behaviors or attitude are not responding to feedback. Centering consists of directing the individual to sit in an area slightly removed from the group, but within the classroom to center themselves to return to the task. As a response, it is meant to help the individual regain self-control without consequence. In general, a student will center for approximately five minutes. When centering time concludes, the teacher will cue the student to return to the task/activity.

Sensory/Coping Tools

RFKCA provides students with sensory support as a part of the daily norm within our community. Students have access to an array of different sensory tools to support them in various settings across the school. For some, the multitude of experiences felt through the senses can become overwhelming and/or difficult to fully process effectively. We include the use of sensory tools to either decrease or increase arousal levels, depending on individual needs. Students work with their clinician and other staff to develop strategies. We then implement these plans throughout the learning environment to provide support. Examples of

interventions may include: use of a standing desk, wobble stool and other seating options, walks with a staff member, ice, chewing gum, and staff check-ins, as needed.

Student Support Center/Solution Area/Cool Down Room/Quiet Space/Sensory Area

Known by different names across our three schools, these areas are therapeutic resources for students to utilize when they become overwhelmed in the classroom. These areas provide a quiet, calm environment to assist a student who needs to leave the classroom either because distractions inhibit them from focusing or their behavior has begun to escalate and poses a disruption to the learning environment. Staff accompany the student to the identified area for a period of time- usually 5-15 minutes. The goal of this intervention is to support the student to regain control and return to class. When the student is ready to return to class, staff will process with the student and evaluate their ability to re-integrate into the classroom.

A student may request the use of one of these areas in order to regain composure. If a student is stable and safe, he/she may use the room along with personal support tools for up to 15 minutes, given staff approval for this intervention. When a student exceeds the recommended use of a solution area over a one week period, the school team will facilitate a meeting with the teacher and other staff to evaluate the circumstances and develop a plan to assist the student to remain in class.

Collaborative Problem Solving

Some students have more significant difficulties with meeting expectations and successfully engaging in all aspects of the treatment program. This is based on substantial deficits in one or more developmental pathways. For these students, their explosive behavior significantly impacts their ability to manage frustration, accept guidance, and respond to behavioral expectations.

RFK Community Alliance has implemented the Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) approach as one of its best practices for managing challenging behavior. For more than a decade, this CPS model has been used with children with a wide range of social, emotional, and behavioral challenges across a variety of different settings. This model provides a common philosophy, language, and structured process for understanding challenging students and helping them develop problem-solving skills. CPS is a strengths-based approach that assesses a student's strengths and vulnerabilities and then, through collaborative efforts, teaches the underdeveloped skills needed to succeed. The approach focuses on understanding the student's behavior as a statement of frustration and recognizes that the circumstances that elicit the behavior are beyond the student's ability to manage. The approach involves working with a student to understand a problem from their perspective, inviting them to brainstorm solutions to the problem, and designing a plan that is realistic and achievable.

While student behaviors may seem common outward behaviors, the deficits that set the stage for those behaviors are unique to each individual. Using the Pathway Inventory, the team meets and conducts an extensive evaluation of the child to understand lagging skills, triggers, and strengths. Based on this evaluation the team then meets with the student and collaboratively develops a plan to address skill deficits and triggers. The team reviews and adjusts the CPS plan as needed.

Collaborative & Effective Response Model

The CEFM is designed to ensure that the treatment team's response to a specifically challenging youth behavior is followed through in a consistent, collaborative, and effective manner, while taking into consideration how each youth's history impacts current presentation/behavior, highlighting treatment needs, and designing a response based on youth learning styles. The goal of a response is to repair relationships and learn and/or practice skills that are lacking/lagging, in addition to building attunement and greater self-awareness with regards to youth triggers and warning signs. The approach is informed by and integrates the Attachment-Regulation-Competency (ARC) framework, Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS), and Positive Youth Development (PYD) principles, such as voice and choice, understanding of trauma experience integration, and collaboration.

The four main features of the *Collaborative & Effective Response Model* are described below:

1. Behaviors that are challenging and/or unhelpful are explained through a trauma-informed lens.
2. Behaviors are identified as *Category I* (behaviors that may challenge their own safety but not the safety of others) or *Category II* (behaviors that challenge the safety of others).
3. Staff and students work collaboratively to determine which category best describes the challenging behavior.
4. Staff and students collaborate on a response based on the learning task that matches the student's skill development needs. There are a range of options within each of the four response categories (Process, Rehearse, Repair & Restore, Increase Support).

Understanding that behavior (helpful and unhelpful/challenging) has at one point served a purpose in meeting the youth's needs, and that challenging behavior can be viewed as **"lacking skill, not will"** (CPS), informs the goal of the *Collaborative & Effective Response* process to identify response options that promote skill development of a youth's functioning across the domains of attachment, regulation, and competency, while further emphasizing the importance and process of relationship building, perspective taking, collaboration, and increased safety. Once a student and staff agree on a response, staff document the incident and the student's response throughout the processing meeting, in addition to clearly outlining the responses and outcome within the reporting of an incident.

Individual Support Plans

When needed, the teacher and members of the student's team create individual support plans for students with chronic behavior issues. These plans identify specific behaviors being addressed and the tools and support the student will receive while working to learn and demonstrate desirable behavior. Although plans are typically written in affirming language designed to promote skill development, some behaviors may be significant enough that a plan will include a negative consequence. Support plans are time limited and skill driven. Once the student demonstrates the skill, we discontinue the support plan.

Logical Consequences

Whenever possible, staff will issue logical consequences to underscore the serious ramifications of undesirable behavior. By definition, logical consequences reflect the negative impact of an individual's choice. We value the importance of teaching students the reality of what occurs when an individual acts in a socially unacceptable way.

Loss of Privileges

Classroom teachers may determine that a student has lost privileges for a specific infraction for a defined period of time. Two examples of lost privileges are: a temporary restriction on computer use due to technology misuse, or a weeklong restriction from eating in the dining hall due to inappropriate lunchtime behaviors.

Removal from Class

We place major emphasis on an environment that is safe, respectful, and conducive to learning. While we recognize that conflicts and disagreements are a normal part of social relationships, certain actions are very serious because of their potential to disrupt the classroom environment and potentially cause emotional or physical suffering. Based on the age and developmental level of the child we take a swift and strong stance on the following actions: bullying or harassment, leaving the classroom or building without permission, threats, aggression and/or destruction of property, major disruption to the classroom or school building.

Out of Class Restriction

Students who display extremely unsafe behaviors or excessive disruption may be removed from class for a period of time to become stabilized with the assistance of school staff. The classroom teacher will provide schoolwork to complete in a temporary alternative setting, where the student receives a higher level of support and assistance. Prior to returning to class, staff facilitate an opportunity for the student to debrief and process the incident.

Mediation

Clinicians facilitate mediation between students when needed. Mediation is designed for individual students to share opinions and perspectives with the goal of problem solving and restoring a supportive school climate.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Every staff and student is responsible for their actions and for maintaining appropriate community standards and the Code of Conduct. The following interventions are available to support students to this end, along with individualized responses students may have in their IEP.

RFKCA adheres to a code of conduct in order to maintain an environment that is safe and conducive to academic learning, social and emotional growth, and overall well being. It is essential that all members of our community— staff, students, and caregivers— work together to support these expectations. We expect all members of our community to:

- Be respectful to all students and staff in person and via electronic communication, regardless of a person's race, religion, age, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, color, appearance, disability, national origin, ethnic group, or living status

- Contribute to a safe, kind, and respectful school climate that is free from bullying, hazing, harassment, discrimination, dehumanizing language, exclusionary behavior, retaliation, and negativity
- Follow school expectations and policies around technology, dress, physical contact, and belongings allowed in school

Annually, we ask students and staff to take the [RFKCA Rehumanizing Pledge](#), which emphasizes the importance of maintaining human dignity and prioritizing positive relationships within our school community. This commitment to rehumanization is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

To ensure clarity, and with the goal of maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment, the school prohibits the following; should the following occur, loss of school privileges, and disciplinary action, including suspension or termination from programming, may occur:

- Behavior taken to excess that directly compromises the wellbeing of a staff or student
- Theft or damage to school, staff, or student property
- Possession of drugs/cigarettes/tobacco/e cigs/vape products/weapons/lighters/potentially dangerous items on campus or school-sponsored events (these items will be confiscated and may be turned over to the police)
- Leaving school grounds without permission
- On-going refusal to receive 1:1 support when deemed necessary for their wellbeing and/or that of the school community

Student Rights and Standards of Conduct

A school functions best when it has a unity of purpose: to promote respect for self, others, and learning. It is important to create a learning environment at RFK Community Alliance where students can grow as individuals, learn how to think for themselves, learn when to talk and when to listen, see another person's side of things, and be part of a community. These qualities are valuable life-long learning tools. Mutual respect, common expectations, procedures, cooperation, and consequences are necessary to achieve this goal within the community.

RFK Community Alliance Schools strive to provide a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable taking academic, behavioral, and social risks. In addition, we strongly believe that all members (students, staff, visitors) of the school community will demonstrate good citizenship and show respect for the dignity of others. The code of conduct applies to all aspects of the school community including after school activities/events and on transportation. We expect our students to:

- Challenge themselves to learn new things and new ways to handle difficulties
- Demonstrate respectful behavior toward themselves, fellow students, staff, and property
- Strive to meet academic and behavioral challenges
- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Respect the rights, feelings, and opinions of others
- Think independently
- Listen to others who are talking and act and speak respectfully to one another and to staff
- Remain open-minded to suggestions and alternative ways to manage their behavior

The physical and emotional safety and well-being of all students and staff is taken very seriously. All members of our community (staff, students, parents, visitors) must commit to supporting a school conducive to learning and social-emotional well-being. We will not tolerate the following:

- Physical aggression towards any member of the school community
- Leaving school buildings without permission
- Threatening, intimidating, hazing or bullying of any kind including verbal, physical, or electronic means retaliation towards those who report such behaviors
- Disruption of the learning environment
- Foul, vulgar, derogatory, or sexualized language
- Dehumanizing, prejudiced or biased statements toward any member of our community.
- Destruction of school or personal property
- Stealing or being in possession of stolen property
- Smoking or possession of vapes, drugs, alcohol, medication (prescription and over the counter medications)
- Cheating, plagiarism
- Violation of the Student Handbook policies/practices

These behaviors are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or a request for an emergency IEP Team meeting to identify necessary supports and/or review appropriateness of placement.

Personal Appearance/Attire (Dress Code)

At RFK Community Alliance we strive to promote a positive community, which is reflected in the personal appearance of all members of the school community. The intent of our school dress code is to create a positive environment that is conducive to student learning and safety.

Students should be able to dress in a way that allows for individual expression, without the fear of unnecessary discipline or body shaming. Our student population is diverse with regard to race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, cultural observance, household income, body type/size, and body maturity. We will consistently enforce our dress code so as not to create disparities or reinforce or increase the marginalization of any group.

Students are required to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Clothing and jewelry must be free from obscenities, nudity, sexualized language/images, excessive violence, double entendre messaging, advertisement/logos that promote alcohol/ drugs/pornography, and words/phrases/symbols equated with hate or discrimination of others
- Students may not wear or display items such as chains, spikes, heavy rope bands, and other potentially dangerous articles on or around various parts of the body.
- Clothing must entirely cover a student's front, side, and back torso, as well as undergarments and may not be see-through
- Footwear must be worn at all times in accordance with Massachusetts state law

Clothing that does not meet the above standards or is deemed inappropriate by an administrator will need to be changed.

Concerns about the Dress Code may be addressed by the Human Rights Officer or designee. Ongoing concerns or issues related to a student's choices in regards to the dress code will be addressed by the student's clinician.

Guidelines for Student Dress:

School officials will not interfere with student rights around personal dress and appearance, unless they determine that a student's dress or appearance causes a substantial disruption in school or to learning by:

- violating reasonable standards of health, safety or cleanliness (e.g. no sandals/crocs for PE or exercise, etc.)
 - infringing on the rights of others
 - demonstrating association/affiliation with hate groups or depicting hate speech targeting groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, or other protected groups
 - describing or depicting illegal activities (e.g. drugs, weapons, gangs, etc.) or prohibited conduct
- Students are required to dress appropriately for different weather conditions.
 - Hats are not permitted except on days that celebrate or promote awareness. Hat Days are announced in advance.
 - If students wear a hooded sweatshirt, the hood shall be down throughout the school day while at school.
 - Students may not wear outerwear in classrooms or the school during the school day.

Staff will use reasonable efforts to avoid dress-coding students in front of other students. Students will not be disciplined or removed from class as a consequence for wearing attire in violation of this policy unless the attire creates a substantial disruption to the educational environment, poses a hazard to the health or safety of others, or factors into a student behavior rule violation such as harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying.

Disruptive clothing is considered clothing upon which any of the following is displayed: obscenities, words or symbols that will knowingly incite others, or words or symbols that put down (defame) the beliefs or heritage of others. We will ask students to change or cover clothing that is considered a concern based on the definition above and/or the clothing causes a disruption to learning. Some school events may have additional rules regarding dress.

Consequences for a violation of school dress code include parent/guardian contact or conference and a staff directive to cover, change, or remove the non-complying attire. Staff may instruct a student to leave a classroom briefly to change clothes.

Suspension Policy

Suspension is a last resort at RFKCA and is reserved for significant violations of the Code of Conduct. School leaders will immediately notify the caregiver, school district(s), and collaterals responsible for the placement of the student involved.

Students will not be sent home unless there is a responsible adult available to receive the student. Students and/or caregivers are expected to attend a re-entry meeting at school after a suspension. Re-entry meetings allow the opportunity to discuss the incident, review expectations, and evaluate how to safely bring the student back to school. When a series of suspensions constitute a pattern of behavior, a full Team meeting will occur with caregivers, districts, and collaterals to discuss the events and determine if the behavior is a manifestation of a disability. Based on the outcome of the re-entry meeting and other available data, the Team will determine intervention, support, and/or best options to meet the individual student's needs and goals.

EMERGENCY SAFETY BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS AND MANAGEMENT

Physical Interventions

RFKCA provides a wide range of supportive, strength-based interventions to help students manage themselves and successfully engage in learning. Staff work with students to develop individual coping strategies that help them manage or prevent challenging behaviors. We encourage students to continuously work with staff to assess their strategies to ensure they feel empowered to advocate for their individual needs. As an absolute last resort, a physical intervention or restraint may be considered when the behavior presents imminent or serious physical harm to self or others. We use extreme caution and least restrictive interventions in these situations to prevent and/or minimize the use of physical interventions, with the goal being to maintain safety for the student and staff. If we need to initiate a physical intervention, the student will debrief with their clinician to ensure they feel supported. Clinicians will also contact the family immediately following a physical intervention/restraint.

Placement Termination Policy

Our main priority is to support the student's vision, goals, and transition process. RFKCA has provisions for both planned and emergency terminations. Planned terminations provide the opportunity for caregivers, the district, and school staff to participate in an IEP review meeting that details a clear and specific termination plan for the student that shall be implemented in no less than thirty days unless all parties agree to an earlier termination date. Emergency terminations occur when students exhibit a clear and present threat to the health and safety of him/her/themselves or others. RFKCA provides notice to all parties and agreed upon by the school district, caregivers, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. RFKCA will not terminate any student without the school district's opportunity to hold an emergency Team meeting or to conduct other appropriate planning discussions prior to the student's termination from the school.

Emergency Termination

In an event that a student presents a significant safety threat to themselves or to others, RFKCA shall immediately notify caregivers and the school district(s)/collaterals. If the student's needs exceed our ability to provide required services, we may recommend a notice to terminate a student's placement in our program. In this case, we collaborate closely with the sending district and/or agencies through the IEP Team process around next steps.

PROHIBITION OF HARASSMENT, HAZING, AND BULLYING

Harassment

RFK Community Alliance is committed to maintaining a school environment that values civil discourse and diversity where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, we will take appropriate action to:

- Prevent and/or otherwise respond to demeaning behavior and unlawful discrimination or harassment of its employees or students, and
- Define processes by which individuals can bring concerns about unlawful discrimination or harassment to school staff attention for resolution.

RFK Community Alliance will not tolerate harassment of their employees or students. Harassment of staff or students based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, active military/veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, employment policies, and other administered programs and activities is prohibited. In addition, students who are homeless or multilingual are protected from discrimination in accessing the course of study and other opportunities available through the schools.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment includes verbal or physical conduct which may offend, denigrate, or belittle any person because of, or due to, any of the characteristics described above. Harassment may include pictures, jokes, comments, innuendoes, slurs, derogatory remarks based on a protected characteristic or any other behavior which creates an environment that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive to anyone.

Investigations of Harassment

RFK Community Alliance will promptly investigate every complaint of harassment, observing all relevant state and federal laws and regulations and policies and procedures.

Student or Staff Complaints

All employees must respond to suspected harassment and to complaints by students of harassment by notifying the program director. Employees are expected to take every report of harassment seriously. A student or any individual wishing to file a complaint alleging harassment may inform any trusted staff member, their program director, or the Vice President of Education.

Prohibition of Retaliation

It is unlawful to retaliate against, or discipline, any individual who files a complaint of harassment or discrimination, or who cooperates in an investigation of such a complaint. RFK Community Alliance will not tolerate any such retaliation, and individuals who engage in retaliation will be subject to termination/expulsion or other sanctions determined by the program director or Head of Schools, subject to applicable policies and procedures.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

In Massachusetts, sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual conduct, including sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to, acceptance of, or rejection of such advances, requests, or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or education or a basis for employment decisions affecting an employee or for educational, disciplinary, or other decisions affecting a student; or
- Such advances, requests, or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, education or participation in extracurricular activities by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive work or school environment.

While it isn't possible to list all circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are examples of prohibited conduct:

- Unwelcome sexual advances -- whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life; comments about an individual's body, sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, memes, or cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, touching, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences;
- Discussion of one's sexual activities; and/or
- Taking or posting of photographs, videos or images of a sexual nature without consent.

Any employee with knowledge of alleged sexual harassment must report it, whether they personally witnessed the sexual harassment, learned of it from a third party, or they are the alleged victim themselves. RFK Community Alliance will promptly respond to all reports alleging sexual harassment to ensure a fair and equitable resolution to the report, provide support to the victim, eliminate harassment, and impose discipline if necessary. Discipline may range from verbal reprimand to suspension and expulsion or termination in the case of an employee.

Sexual Harassment Complaint and Investigation Procedures

If any student, employee, or contractor believes that he/she has been subjected to any form of sexual harassment, the individual should report the incident as promptly as possible. A student should report the matter to a teacher or administrator with whom the student feels comfortable. An employee should report the matter to their immediate supervisor or another administrator. A contractor should report to an administrator. The report should be written down immediately.

A complaint of sexual harassment by a student, or by a parent on the student's behalf, may also be made to any clinician, teacher, administrator. The report should be in writing. A clinician or teacher who receives such a complaint will notify the appropriate administrator to initiate an investigation.

Sexual Harassment Disciplinary Action

Any employee, volunteer, contractor or student found to have engaged in any form of sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. In the case of a student, disciplinary action may include suspension and/or exclusion from school. In the case of an employee, disciplinary action may include suspension and/or dismissal. In the case of a volunteer or contractor, his/her services may be terminated.

Hazing

In accordance with Chapter 536 of the Acts of 1985, the practice of "hazing" is now a crime punishable by fine (up to \$1,000) and/or imprisonment (up to 100 days). Hazing, as defined by the statute, includes "...any conduct or method of initiation into a student organization...which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct will include whipping, beating, branding, exposure to weather, forced consumption of food, liquor, beverage, drugs...or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person..." Hazing also includes subjecting a person to "mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or causing extended isolation." Those who organize or participate in "hazing" practices will be suspended from school immediately and will be reported to the local police department. Legal action is taken by local police departments.

Bullying

Behaviors that are persistent, pervasive, and chronic that intimidate and/or intentionally harm or threaten to harm someone who is perceived as weaker and more vulnerable. Specifically, bullying is defined as the act of one or more individuals intimidating one or more persons through electronic, written, verbal, physical acts, either direct or indirect, mental and/or visual, when such intentional behavior substantially interferes with a student's education, threatens the overall educational environment, and/or substantially disrupts the operation of the school. These behaviors include maliciously teasing, taunting, name-calling, sexual remarks, stealing or damaging an individual's possessions, spreading rumors, or encouraging others to reject or exclude someone. This intentional behavior includes but is not limited to harassment, intimidation, and bullying based upon race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, marital status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, or sensory disability.

Our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, retaliation and cyber-bullying, and the RFK Community Alliance community's commitment to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. This plan affords all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law. In consultation with these constituencies, we have established this Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. The Vice President of Education and the Chief Operations Officer are responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. At the beginning of each academic year, all students review the Anti-Hazing policy, Bullying Prevention policy, and Grievance Process, acknowledging their understanding and reporting responsibilities related to these policies. Families are also provided with an overview of policies and practices reviewed with students. Families can access the Bullying Prevention Plan at www.rfkcommunity.org.

Cyber Speech

RFK Community Alliance Schools may impose discipline on cyber speech occurring outside of school when it:

- Constitutes a threat—an immediate, unconditional threat of violence directed at a person(s), and where conduct is directly linked to school, or
- Created or was reasonably expected to cause a material and substantial disruption to the school's operation or environment.

Educational Opportunity

Students serving a suspension shall be given the opportunity to make up any missed work and earn credit for missed work (tests and quizzes) while suspended. Additionally, any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide education service plan.

Out of School Suspension and Student Responsibility

Students who are suspended from school are provided the same makeup rights and responsibilities as any student absent from school. However, while suspended from school, students are expected to make every effort to stay current with their course work. At a minimum, students are expected to email their teachers on the day of the suspension. Students are not required to explain why

they will be out of school, but they should notify the teachers of the dates they will be absent. Students may request academic assignments that will assist them in staying current in their coursework.

Students suspended from school are allowed to make up any work they have missed. However, the student, not the teacher, is responsible for making sure that all work is made up in a timely fashion. RFK Community Alliance reserves the right to suspend students from school when they present a threat to the health and safety of themselves or others.

STUDENT AND FAMILY GRIEVANCE PROCESS

RFK Community Alliance takes very seriously its relationship with staff, students, families, and outside professionals. The agency reviews all formal concerns and complaints regarding care and works to resolve differences or concerns. Student discrimination shall be defined as and include: racial, ethnic or color discrimination/harassment of students; discrimination of students based on disability, religion, ancestry, national origin, socioeconomic status, homelessness academic status, physical appearance, gender identity or sexual orientation; harassment against students or peers; or sexual harassment or assault.

If a student, family member, staff person, or referral source is concerned about treatment, that individual is encouraged to immediately speak with the student's clinician or school administrator. The student, family member, staff person, or referral source may also directly contact the agency Human Rights Officer, Vice President of Education, or Chief Operations Officer should they believe the situation warrants a higher level of intervention.

All formal complaints are documented and brought to the immediate attention of the Vice President of Education. It is the responsibility of the Vice President of Education to inform the Chief Operations Officer to assess the level of investigation that the complaint warrants. Within 24 hours, the complaint is reviewed and course of action is identified, including arranging a meeting with the parties involved, reporting suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate state agencies (DESE, DEEC, DCF, DPPC), assigning the investigation to the Human Rights Officer, and/or convening a team meeting to review care. Within 7 days of the complaint, the Vice President of Education or Chief Operations Officer will complete the review and issue a written response to the individual. The Chief Operations Officer maintains a record of all complaints, which may contain a description of the complaint, supporting information, internal investigation, external agency reports, and plans of compliance and correction.

Students have access to a Complaint Form which they can complete anytime they feel their rights were violated, staff engaged in improper restraint procedures, or that their treatment was inadequate. School administrators review complaint forms. It is our practice to inform families, regulatory agencies, and referral sources of the status and outcome of our investigation and actions we take. During an investigation, we make every effort to protect the confidentiality of all involved.

Filing a Complaint

If you believe your rights have been violated at any time, you have the right to contact the agency Human Rights Officer. You may also contact the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer, the VP of Education, or a school administrator if you believe your situation warrants a higher level of intervention. Students also may request a "Student Care Complaint Form" which may be filled out any time you feel your rights have been violated, a restraint was improperly done, or that your treatment is inadequate.

Complaint forms are reviewed by the appropriate director. We take immediate action on all complaints that may include: arranging a meeting with the parties involved, reporting suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate State agencies (DEEC, DCF and DESE), assigning the investigation to the Human Rights Officer, and/or convening a treatment team meeting to review care. It is our practice to inform families, regulatory agencies, and referral sources of the status of the outcome of our investigation and the action taken. During an investigation, we make every effort to protect the confidentiality of all involved..

CONFIDENTIALITY & RECORDS DISCLOSURE

It is our policy to ensure that all student and family information including records, reports, and incidents are private, confidential and are only disclosed when appropriate authorization has been received. Student records may be disclosed only to the student (18 or over), guardian, designated representative, or other legally authorized representative. RFKCA policy regarding student records, Families Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and their respective regulations protect the confidentiality of educational, medical, and personal student information. Such information may not be disclosed except as authorized by law or as authorized by a student's parent/legal guardian. These privacy laws and regulations apply to all persons, including individuals conducting observations in educational settings. All visitors require a staff escort while on campus.