

WELCOME TO EASTERSEALS

Life skills, Employment Readiness, Advocacy, Participation (LEAP)



Easterseals mission is to change the way the world defines and views disabilities by making profound positive differences in people's lives every day.

This handbook is designed to help you get to know about our programs, act as a general guide for you to follow and to answer any questions or concerns you might have.

The staff is here to help you do your very best and want you to succeed in whatever tasks and activities you choose.

The rules in this handbook are for you to know and follow. Please read them over carefully and discuss them with your parents/guardians, support coordinator, support staff or a member of our Life skills, Employment Readiness, Advocacy, Participation (LEAP) staff. These rules are not meant to restrict your activities but are in place to make sure you are safe, and in a pleasant and productive place for you and for all of us at Easterseals.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

LEAP has been designed to prepare individuals who are no longer attending school for work through community engagement, which includes both community based recreational activities, work experiences through volunteerism and internships, and job readiness activities and continuing education. This handbook outlines responsibilities and an atmosphere that is designed to replicate a work environment and the expectations of employees. Easterseals will coordinate with Vocational Rehabilitation and other agencies in order to advance each individual's goals. Specific job training and identification of employment opportunities are the program goals, as appropriate for each individual.

MEMBERSHIP

Enrollment forms are reviewed on an individual basis to ensure criteria fulfillment. All forms and other requested information must be complete, accurate, and on file before services begin. Each new member, upon admission, will serve a **30-day probationary period**. The LEAP program retains the right, when warranted, to limit or remove you from the program. When you join LEAP, you will be evaluated on your abilities and skills. We also want to learn about your interests and job preferences.

ATTENDANCE

As with any good employee, we expect that you attend the program on all your scheduled days. However if you are sick,

we hope that you will stay home so as not to make others ill. If you are not able to attend on a scheduled day, please notify LEAP staff. It is your responsibility to call us as you would any employer.

If you stop coming to LEAP without previously notifying staff, you may be considered to have abandoned your slot in our program. Your slot may be given to another member. It is very important that you let us know of your plans during long absences.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Although students attending Easterseals Academy will arrive at the center first thing on the morning, LEAP hours are from 9:30 am – 3:30 pm, Monday – Friday. You will be provided with a calendar of holiday closures upon registration into the program, annually thereafter.

PROPER DRESS

LEAP members are expected to dress neatly and appropriately in clean clothes suitable for a work setting. LEAP is a training program and should be treated as a place of business and your appearance is important. Clothes should not be overly revealing (no halter tops, tube tops, etc.). Open-toed shoes, high heels and “flip-flops” are not to be worn. You are encouraged to bring a spare set of clothing to leave in the center in case you need to change clothes.

GENERAL BEHAVIOR

Good manners and courteous conduct make being together both pleasant and safe. Running, pushing, yelling, stealing, banging on furniture, fighting, the use of profanity and making a mess of the program areas or bathrooms is not appropriate behavior. Speaking quietly with your co-workers and keeping your space clean and neat is appreciated and expected. Members should also respect each other's right to privacy. It is not appropriate to gossip or spread rumors. Also, LEAP members are leaders at our center. Students attending Easterseals Academy follow the tone that you set. LEAP members will be positive role models.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Each member will report any accident or injury to the LEAP Coordinator.

If you become ill or are injured in the LEAP facility, immediately notify the nearest staff member. If emergency medical assistance is needed, your parent/guardian/caregiver will be notified and you will be transported to the nearest medical facility. Members who arrive ill or become ill during the day will have arrangements made to allow them to return home as soon as possible. In the case of a serious or contagious illness, permission from the doctor will be required to return to the program.

To insure your safety in the case of fire or other emergencies, Easterseals conducts both announced and unannounced

fire/evacuation/disaster drills. Everyone will be expected to participate in these drills. We will leave the building in an orderly fashion and report to a designated area until the drill is complete. At all times you must follow the directions of staff members. If you have any questions about our emergency procedures, please ask your LEAP Coordinator.

Members and staff must always be alert to any potential dangers. Practicing safety precautions at all times is extremely important. Members should report any real or potential danger to the first staff member they see. All members will obey safety rules. Any necessary safety equipment will be worn at appropriate times.

EMERGENCY OR FIRE

In an emergency or fire, you will be directed by staff members to go to the nearest exit in an orderly fashion. Be considerate of others, especially those who may have difficulty walking or using wheelchairs or walkers. Never run to the exit. You will be directed to a specific gathering place where you will remain until the “all clear” is given.

VISITORS AND PHONES

While Easterseals has an “open door policy” regarding visits, we encourage you to keep them to a minimum to avoid frequent disruptions.

Easterseals will **not be liable** for the loss of personal cellular phones or any other personal items.

Excessive personal calls during the day, regardless of the phone used (personal or company), can interfere with productivity and

be distracting to others. Any phone calls a member needs to make while in the program, should be of high importance or an emergency. Members are asked to make personal calls during break or lunch time when possible. Members should tell friends and family members about this policy.

DIGITAL MEDIA DEVICES

Due to privacy matters and HIPAA regulations, the use of personal camera phones, cameras, and other digital media devices are prohibited without written consent from each participating member. Easterseals will provide a photo release form for those interested in granting permission. Easterseals will **not be liable** for the loss of personal digital media devices or personal items brought into the program.

LEAVING THE PROGRAM AREA

Members should not leave their designated area at our facility or when they are out in the community without notifying a staff member. Even when someone is here to pick you up early, please make sure you let a staff member know so you can be “clocked out”. Do not assume a staff member saw you leave. LEAP staff members need to know where you are at all times when you are in our program.

HARASSMENT

Easterseals will not tolerate any forms of harassment. It is our intent to investigate all complaints and encourage fair and full

processing of any harassment allegations. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken if determined that harassment has occurred.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

As a LEAP member at Easterseals, you have the right to tell a supervisor if you do not like the way you have been treated or do not agree with something in the program. It is important to tell someone right away. If you feel more comfortable, you may talk to your family or support coordinator. If they cannot solve your problem, you can meet with the Area Director for a meeting and invite whomever you would like to attend. The Area Director will respond to your problem in writing and by talking to you within five (5) days. If this does not solve the problem, you can take your problem to the Vice President of Programs. They make a decision within ten (10) days, and this will be the final decision.

* Easterseals Florida, Inc. does not allow any form of retaliation (negative actions, ignoring, laughing at, termination) against members or employees who file a grievance or who participate in an investigation.*

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

It is Easterseals policy that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to unlawful discrimination under any program or activity receiving or benefiting from federal financial assistance and administered by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities or Vocational Rehabilitation.

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Our Equal Employment Policy provides that job opportunities are afforded to all and that applications and employees are evaluated on the basis of job qualifications. In this policy is the commitment to maintain a place of employment and work environment that is safe, productive and free of harassment and intimidation based on such things as religion, sex, national origin or age.

PARTICIPANT'S CIVIL AND ABUSE RIGHTS

Easter Seal Florida, Inc. agrees that it will comply with:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving or benefiting from federal financial assistance.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, in regard to employees or applicants for employment.
- Title XI of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities receiving or benefiting from financial assistance.
- Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, handicap, political affiliation or beliefs in programs and activities receiving or benefiting from federal financial assistance.
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications.
- Title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 431.51, which states that each individual served will be afforded freedom of choice within the scope of available funding levels.

- Chapter 415, Florida Statutes, that states: An employee of the provider who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child, aged person or disabled adult is or has been abused neglected, or exploited, shall immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the central abuse registry and tracking system of the Department on the single-wide toll-free telephone number (1-800-96ABUSE).

LEAP MEMBER BILL OF RIGHTS

Every member has rights that are followed every day in our program. The Bill of Rights was a law passed to protect and give importance to rights for individuals with disabilities.

- The right to dignity, privacy and humane care.
- The right to religious freedom and practice.
- The unrestricted right to communication.
- The right to personal possessions and effects.
- The right to education and training.
- The right to participate in community activities and to social interaction.
- The right to prompt and appropriate medical care and treatment.
- The right to behavioral and leisure time activities.
- The right to physical exercise.
- The right to humane discipline.
- The right to physical examination prior to subjection to a treatment program to eliminate bizarre or unusual behaviors.

- The right to minimum wage protection and fair compensation.
- The right to vote.
- The right to be free from physical restraint.
- The right to a central record.

LEAP MEMBER RECORDS ACCESS

Member records/files are confidential and only certain people may look at your files:

- Each member may have access at any time and staff may be used to help them understand information in their file.
- The member's legal guardian will have access their file.
- DCF/APD or other directly involved contract related staff would have access to a member's file for monitoring or other purposes.
- A written release signed by a member or a legal guardian would allow access by other individuals.

MEDICATIONS

LEAP members are encouraged to take care of medication needs outside of program hours if at all possible. However, if an individual must take medication during program hours, arrangements will be made for them to be taken after all necessary paperwork has been submitted to the center as defined in Florida Administrative Code Chapter 65G-7. This paperwork is required to be updated annually or medications will not be administered during program hours.

STAFF MEMBER ROLES

LEAP staff work together to give you the help you need to reach your goals. These are the staff working with the LEAP program:

- Area Director – is in charge of the overall program and related program areas, supervises other staff members and helps ensure you are treated with respect and dignity and also achieve your goals at Easterseals.
- LEAP Coordinator – is here to help staff members train you to reach your goals. The Coordinator will help the Area Director provide important trainings, help you set up your goals every year, and write reports on your progress in our program. They will also work directly with you at our facility and various locations offsite.

WAITING LIST

We will make every effort to serve everyone who is qualified to be a LEAP member. There may be times when a waiting list must be established to insure that everyone's needs are being met. The quality of our program is very important to us. If you are placed on our waiting list, rest assured that we are working hard to get you off the list and into the program as quickly as possible.

SUSPENSION

In accordance with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities policy, you may be temporarily suspended for up to three (3)

days due to violation of program rules or behaviors that place you or others at risk.

TERMINATION

If the Area Director determines that due to misconduct or health reasons your continued participation is inappropriate or does not meet program guidelines, and all steps have been taken in accordance with APD regulations, you may be terminated. Misconduct would include destructive, unsafe, threatening or otherwise hazardous behaviors, which place the member or other members, Easterseals Academy students or staff at risk.