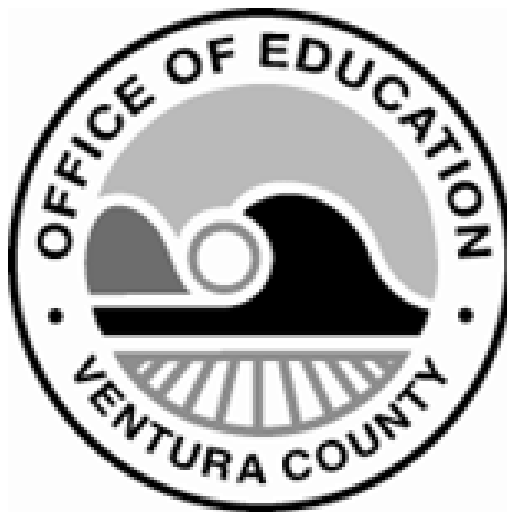


VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

# PARAEDUCATORS HANDBOOK



*Stanley C. Mantooth*  
*County Superintendent*

**Revised: May 2017**

*"Commitment to Quality Education for All"*

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

It is a pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you as an employee of the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE). We are pleased that you have chosen to join our team and to share our goal of providing a quality education for all. This handbook was prepared specifically for you, so that you might know how VCOE is organized, the benefits to which you are entitled and your responsibilities as an employee. It is our hope that this handbook is a helpful source of information that will serve to make your employment satisfying and rewarding. If there is something in this handbook that does not correspond with a Board of Education or superintendent's policy or a contract agreement, the official policy takes precedence. If you find such a discrepancy, or if you have any questions regarding a topic that is not included in the handbook or related to your employment, please contact your immediate supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

Welcome to the Ventura County Office of Education.

### **Vision**

All people will benefit from life-long learning.

### **Mission**

The Ventura County Office of Education provides quality services and support for life-long learning opportunities.

### **Motto**

*"Commitment to Quality Education for All"*

### **Goals**

We will collaborate to build relationships with local educational institutions and other government and private sector entities to provide leadership, service, and support for all learners, local educational institutions, and other government and private sector entities to:

1. Provide, promote and support environments that result in world-class quality learning opportunities.
2. Secure and develop resources (human, fiscal, and information) that support and promote our mission.
3. Develop and maintain an organization based on teamwork, trust, communication, commitment, and competence.
4. Optimize customer satisfaction.

**ORGANIZATION**

The Ventura County Office of Education is governed by an elected Superintendent of Schools and a five member Board of Education. The County Superintendent develops personnel and program policy and is the employer for all county schools employees. The Board makes policy decisions related to county operated programs in appropriate areas of budgeting, curriculum, and planning. Another function of the County Board is to hear appeals related to student inter-district attendance, student expulsions and charter schools. The County Superintendent and Board invite interested individuals to attend board meetings and to take an active role in educational planning at the county level.

**County Superintendent of Schools**

Stanley C. Mantooth

**Board of Trustees**

Area 1 - Rachel Ulrich

Area 2 - Mike Teasdale

Area 3 - Dr. Mark Lisagor

Area 4 - Rob Collins

Area 5 - Dr. Ramon Flores

**WHO WE SERVE**

The Ventura County Office of Education is pleased to serve 8 unified school districts, 10 elementary school districts, 1 high school district, 1 community college district, and 4 Joint Powers Authorities. We provide service to 258 public schools.

A variety of additional information, including staffing and student demographic, can be found at <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

## WHAT WE ARE PROUD OF

The Ventura County Office of Education strongly supports local school districts in building a regional system of services and leadership to maintain, bolster, and improve educational opportunities for all children, staffs and community members in Ventura County. Some of the services and leadership strands include:

### **Educational Services Branch**

- Categorical Programs
- Comprehensive Health and Prevention Programs
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Early Childhood Programs
- Educator Support Services
- Expanded Learning Services
- Hearing Conservation
- Leadership Support Services
- Local District Support Services
- Regional System of District and School Support Services
- Research and Evaluation

### **Fiscal and Administrative Services Branch**

- Facilities and Maintenance
- Internal Business Services
- Human Resources
- School Business and Advisory Services
- Technology Services
- Graphics

### **Student Services Branch**

- Career Education
- Charter School Support and Oversight
- Court and Community Schools
- Special Education
- Special Education Educational Support
- Student Achievement and School Support
- Student Competitions and Fundraising

### **SELPA Branch**

- Identification and Assessment of Children with Disabilities
- Procedural Safeguards for Children/Families
- Program Review
- Personnel Development
- Local Plan Review
- Interagency Agreements
- Required reporting to the California Department of Education
- Facilitation of a Community Advisory Committee
- Coordination of Career and Vocational Education

The Ventura County Office of Education plays an important and vital role in helping educate the diverse population of Ventura County's students. VCOE recognizes that optimizing educational opportunities takes a team effort and must involve the entire community. Our young people will not have the best opportunity for success without each of us doing our part to effectively and efficiently provide an educational system that prepares students to be contributing citizens.

## WHY WE ARE IN BUSINESS

The Ventura County Office of Education is chartered to act as a regional support system for area schools, providing service and leadership to maintain and improve the schools in Ventura County. Our mission is to promote life-long access to world-class educational opportunities in Ventura County.

### DIRECT SERVICES TO STUDENTS

The Ventura County Office of Education operates specialized student programs and coordinates countywide student events. Each year we teach over 8,000 students in specialized programs such as severely handicapped special education, career education center, and incarcerated, expelled and at-risk youth. The VCOE also provides student welfare and special services such as school safety programs; psychological services and nursing services to small districts; gang prevention; attendance improvement and dropout prevention; and healthy-start school based multi-agency services. In addition, the Ventura County Office of Education sponsors student activities and events that support academic excellence i.e. mock trial, academic decathlon, top scholars, spelling bee and science fair.

We are in business for four reasons:

- To provide direct services to students where appropriate
- To provide essential fiscal and administrative services to school districts
- To provide professional development opportunities for staff throughout the County
- To support compliance with State and Federal Mandates

### ESSENTIAL FISCAL & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The Ventura County Office of Education monitors school districts fiscal health, accounting for \$1.7 billion annually. We assist school districts' business offices by providing fiscal oversight of the ongoing fiscal integrity of districts and by ensuring that districts meet reporting requirements in an accurate and timely manner.

The Ventura County Office of Education is uniquely situated to bring together people, programs, and services within the county and offer the 21 school districts and the Community College District the benefits of cost containment and avoidance of duplication of services. Through our centralized business systems center, we distribute all public education vendor checks and paychecks for 25,000 employees in school districts. We coordinate a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that purchases liability and property insurance, workers' compensation coverage, and medical, dental, and vision plans based on much reduced large group rates.

We assist personnel offices through teacher recruitment efforts, credential processing, employee screening, retirement counseling, and employer-employee relations services. Our technology services department provides electronic data storage, retrieval, and processing for fiscal, personnel, and student data systems. To maintain and build resources, we forge alliances with public and private agencies and businesses throughout the County.

The Ventura County Office of Education supports local districts in the development, selection, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum and materials through provision of a variety of curriculum, instruction, and assessment services. We enhance educational technology use through our California

Technology Project for training teachers and administrators in technology use; our teachers' materials preparation center; and the use of technology to strengthen instructional programs.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The Ventura County Office of Education provides a broad array of professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, and other educational staff which might be cost prohibitive to an individual school or district, but can become cost-effective when shared across districts. Participants take advantage of state-of-the-art learning options ranging from administering educational programs to teaching reading to technology-based office practices. We conduct board and administrative retreats; planning sessions for local school districts; and job-alike meetings for superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, special projects directors, librarians, and nurses. The Ventura County Office of Education also coordinates the Teacher of the Year competition and the IMPACT II program designed to spread effective teaching practices throughout Ventura County.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH STATE & FEDERAL MANDATES**

The Ventura County Office of Education also provides services as specified in State and Federal mandates: oversight of school elections for bonds and school boards; oversight of school district reorganization; appeal hearings of local school board decisions on expulsions, inter-district transfers and charter schools; verification of credentials and assignments of personnel; reporting to State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS) and Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) for county employees; review of district audits and vendor warrants; approval of school district budgets and monitoring of districts for solvency; distribution of funding apportionments; maintenance of books of record of transactions; dissemination of California Department of Education advisories, programs, and curriculum frameworks.

County Offices have also formalized their assistance to under performing schools. Ventura County Office of Education has been approved by the California State Department of Education to begin interventions in our highest priority schools and districts in the county. The goal of our Curriculum and Instruction department is to ensure that standards-based teaching is fostering progress in student achievement in each school in the county. To that end, school reviews, and classroom observations focused on curriculum, instructional materials, instructional strategies, and adequacy of classroom support are being implemented. The County Office intervention teams are building capacity in the schools for sustained change and growth.

Without county offices, the quality of local schools would suffer, tax dollars would be wasted, and district and school site personnel would be flooded with additional duties.

### **YOUR SUPERVISOR**

Your supervisor is the most important person you will meet during the first few days on the job. This person is responsible for your orientation, training, and evaluation of your performance on the job. Your supervisor will work with you to ensure overall effectiveness on the job and will let you know exactly what is expected of you and keep you posted on policies and procedures. Your supervisor will assign your work, introduce you to other employees, help you get the feel of your job, explain the regulations concerning lunch breaks, rest periods, reporting absences, scheduling vacations, and other job-related information you will need to know. Do not be afraid to ask questions! If instructions are not clear, always ask for

clarification.

There may be times when you want advice on a problem or an answer to a question. Usually, your immediate supervisor will be able to help you. If not, your supervisor will try to obtain the information you need. The Human Resources Department is also available to answer any questions you may have about your employment.

## **EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS, VALUES AND BELIEFS**

The following values and beliefs are expected to be reflected in the behaviors of VCOE employees.

### **Personal Character**

We hold a strong belief that one's personal character profoundly affects one's work behavior. VCOE employees should be reliable, responsible, collaborative, open, self-reflective, confident, inquisitive, interested in learning, honest, humorous, trustworthy, authentic, enthusiastic, motivated, passionate, fair, ethical, respectful, empathic, sensitive, and culturally proficient.

### **Communication**

We strongly believe that open and honest communication provides the foundation for organizational and personal growth and improvement. VCOE employees provide regular opportunities for oral and written communication between all levels of the organization. Emphasis should be placed on communicating information that is necessary for maintaining organizational progress and goal attainment. Gossip is discouraged. Confidentiality and responsible disclosure of information is a responsibility of employees. Questions and concerns should be taken to the source.

### **Chain of Command / Employee Treatment**

We believe that empowering employees with information and decision-making responsibility will assist in achieving the mission of the organization. VCOE employees should treat each other respectfully, as equals, and should expect this treatment in return. Employees should maintain high standards of conduct and personal character as listed above. Employees should be committed to the organization. Each employee should be viewed as a life-long learner who is competent, committed to organizational goals, motivated, honest, self-directing, and collaborative. Each employee's contribution to the organization should be valued. Feedback regarding effectiveness should flow up and down the organizational hierarchy. The chain of command in the organization should be respected and followed.

### **Challenges / Risk Taking**

We believe that reasoned risk-taking is the only way to "break new ground" and invent new and more successful practices. VCOE leaders should encourage reasoned risk-taking and allow reasonable failure. Leaders should expect professional judgment and continuous self and supervisor evaluation in all experimental practices. The welfare of the student and fellow employees should be paramount in any risk-taking decision.

### **Continuous Improvement**

We believe that a commitment to continuous quality improvement in our service is the charge of all employees. VCOE provides employees with the resources necessary to engage in continuous

improvement including systematic data collection and evaluation, necessary professional development, personal support for change, opportunities for individual contributions along with recognition and celebrations of successes.

**Conflict Management**

We believe that conflict is an opportunity to learn and is a natural occurrence in improving organizations. It is also believed that working toward constructive resolutions helps organizations improve faster. VCOE encourages employees to constructively disagree and provide differences in perspective in an atmosphere of goodwill. Leaders should intervene to resolve conflicts among staff and invest time in each employee's success.

**Customer Service**

We believe that possessing a customer orientation will improve the value of our service. VCOE employees should identify customers, help them make informed decisions, be responsive, teach and model the process of learning and improving, continuously seek customer feedback, and anticipate what customers will value.

**HANDBOOK PURPOSE**

This handbook is designed to familiarize paraeducators with the personnel practices of VCOE, and consolidate the rules and regulations regarding the employee-employer relationship for classified paraeducators at VCOE.

This handbook explains some of our philosophies and beliefs and describes (in general terms) some of our employment guidelines. We hope that it will serve as a useful reference document for employees throughout their employment at VCOE. Employees should understand, however, that this handbook is not intended to be a contract (express or implied), nor is it intended to otherwise create any legally enforceable obligations on the part of VCOE or its employees not otherwise found in California law. This handbook supersedes and replaces all previous personnel policies, practices, and guidelines except as otherwise set out in the Superintendent's Policies.

Because VCOE is a growing and changing organization, it reserves full discretion to add to, modify, or delete provisions of this handbook, or the policies and procedures on which they may be based, at any time without advance notice. VCOE also reserves the right to interpret any of the provisions set forth in this handbook in any manner it deems appropriate. For this reason, employees should check with the Director of Human Resources to obtain current information regarding the status of any particular policy, procedure, guideline, or practice. Similarly, to obtain information regarding specific employment policies or procedures, whether or not they are contained in this handbook, employees should contact the Human Resources Director.

No individual other than the Superintendent has the authority to enter into any employment or other agreement that modifies VCOE employment policy. Any such modification must be in writing.

## CLASSIFIED STAFF

### GENERAL STAFF INFORMATION

The County Superintendent's staff is comprised of two categories of employees: Certificated and Classified.

Certificated employees are those who, in order to perform the function of their position, must be certified by the State of California.

Classified employees are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), with a survivor benefit added. There is no social security coverage. All new hires contribute to Medicare. Classified employees are participants in employer paid health, vision and dental insurance plans, prorated for part-time employees. There are no transfer rights into, or out of, service with the County of Ventura or any other public agency.

The status of Paraeducators is classified in the following ways:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Special Education</b></li> <li>• <b>Gateway Community School</b></li> <li>• <b>Providence – Court School</b></li> <li>• <b>Special Education – Court &amp; Community Schools</b></li> <li>• <b>Special Education – Triton Academy &amp; ED Programs</b></li> </ul> | A Paraeducator who has met all requirements of the position and has successfully completed the probationary period.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Probationary Paraeducator</b></li> </ul>   | Each Paraeducator shall serve in a probationary status upon initial employment for a minimum of six months and maximum of one year.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Substitute Paraeducator</b></li> </ul>   | A Paraeducator on the approved substitute list who is hired on a daily or hourly basis to substitute for probationary and regular paraeducators during periods of absence. A substitute is classified as a long-term substitute after working for more than ten consecutive days for the same paraeducator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Long –Term Substitute Paraeducator</b></li> </ul>  | A Paraeducator hired from the approved substitute list to serve as an "extra" paraeducator at a work site for a defined period of time. The "extra" paraeducator's status becomes long-term after working for more than ten consecutive days in the same assignment.  |

The primary function of a paraeducator is to become a member of an instructional team who assists and enables the teacher to fulfill the functions of a classroom manager. This is accomplished by the paraeducator performing both instructional and student supervisory duties that complement and support the programmatic and management functions of the teacher. The paraeducator helps to improve the quality of individual educational programs and instructional activities by:

1. Allowing the educational program to become more student-oriented and flexible.
2. Providing additional support to individual students.
3. Providing extra "eyes and ears" that are alert to individual needs and problems.

4. Providing the teacher more time to try a broader range of teaching techniques and strategies.
5. Providing for the care and safety of students.

As a paraeducator, you are under the immediate supervision of the teacher and under the general supervision of the Administrator responsible for the program. A paraeducator must pass a proficiency test to assure an appropriate educational background including, but not limited to, an ability to use the English language in written work, an ability to communicate clearly, and mastery of simple math concepts.

In summary, the California State Education Code (45340-45345) clearly states that the employment of paraeducators is to assist the specially trained teacher in whatever capacity needed. Therefore, the paraeducator:

- **is** an aide to a credentialed teacher with class size remaining stable;
- **is** to be a team partner in whatever capacity - whether clerical or instructional;
- **is** to have taken and passed a proficiency test;
- **is** to maintain complete confidentiality regarding students' records and progress;
- **is not** to be used as an excuse to increase class size;
- **is not** statutorily limited in capacity, except in the giving of grades;
- **is not** to be an instructional burden to the classroom teacher; and
- **is not** to discuss any of the students with friends, neighbors or others.

Keeping in mind the foregoing explanations relative to the classified staff, the balance of this handbook will be devoted to explaining details that concern you as a member of VCOE's Paraeducator Staff.

## THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The teacher has had a minimum of five years of training to attain special skills and to achieve the necessary knowledge for assisting the students in their growth and development.

The teacher has the responsibility to study and evaluate each student's ability in the classroom and to develop annual goals and short-term instructional objectives for the student. Further, the teacher develops specific plans and schedules that will most effectively meet the education and training needs of the student.

The teacher also has the duty to plan with the paraeducator ways to meet the needs of each student, and the specific means for reaching those objectives.

The teacher reports to parents, maintains standards of conduct, keeps student records and plans the actual development of classroom activities. In the classroom the teacher is responsible for the direction of the educational program.

## THE ROLE OF THE PARAEDUCATOR

The role of the paraeducator in the classroom is to assist the teacher in preparation for the implementation of the education and training program being presented. The paraeducator must always consider the welfare of the student as paramount in his/her work.

He/she should be aware that in helping students to help themselves, he/she neither overindulges them, nor completes an assignment for them. He/she directs, assists and encourages the completion of the assignments. The behavior standards are established by the teacher, and the paraeducator reinforces those standards. The paraeducator's limited time should be directed towards the preparation of materials, working with students and specialized health care, not with activities unrelated to school.

The close cooperation of the paraeducator and teacher should result in a high level of instruction. The paraeducator, working effectively, allows the teacher to devote greater time to individual instruction.

## MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The major duties and responsibilities of the paraeducator parallel in many ways to the duties and responsibilities of the teacher. These duties are categorized in four areas of major importance: instructional program, learning environment, student/classroom control and other duties and responsibilities. These are to be supportive of the total program under the leadership of the teacher. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the paraeducator's performance.

### INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

#### Pupil Progress

- To share in the responsibility of promoting self-help skills as appropriate to the students;
- To reinforce learning initiated by the teacher (The teacher determines pupil progress and when the pupil should proceed);
- To support the teacher's instruction in helping students recognize and avoid hazards;
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their materials and supplies;
- To demonstrate initiative in working with students on a day-to-day basis; and
- To reinforce the individualized discipline plans developed by the teacher.

#### Program Planning

- To participate in regular planning sessions with the teacher; and
- To report notable observations of student behavior to the teacher.

### LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

#### Physical Comfort and Safety

- To assist the teacher in maintaining physical comfort and safety in the classroom or learning environment.

#### Social Interaction Opportunities

- To work toward effective student-paraeducator relationships, and student-student relationships;

- To work toward effective and appropriate paraeducator-staff, paraeducator-parent, and paraeducator-community relationships.

### **Personal Characteristics**

- To possess integrity, dependability, courtesy, good judgment and self-confidence;
- To be consistently well groomed and appropriately dressed including covering the following:
  - underwear;
  - midriffs;
  - tattoos;
  - cleavage; and
  - body piercings (except ear piercings), you may be asked to remove any body piercings if they present a safety hazard;
- No baseball caps in classroom; (Adhere to student dress codes at given schools);
- To maintain personal self-control in the classroom or learning environment;
- To be professional in the handling of all information regarding the students and their progress (or lack of progress). All information regarding students is confidential by law and should be shared only from teacher to parent.(Education Code 45345);
- To support the educational program;
- To accept responsibility and direction; and
- To demonstrate initiative within the specific learning environment.

### **Displays and Bulletin Board**

- To assist in creating visual displays, bulletin boards and effective learning environment arrangements.

### **Systematic Care of Equipment and Supplies**

- To assist in the systematic care of equipment and supplies, and encourage student cooperation in this goal; and
- To share in the responsibility of housekeeping duties within the learning environment.

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| <b>STUDENT / CLASSROOM CONTROL</b> |
|------------------------------------|

#### **Student Discipline**

- To assist the teacher in maintaining and reinforcing the patterns of student conduct and discipline set forth for the classroom, school or other learning environment;
- To show kindness and firmness, fairness and consistency in dealing with students;
- To recognize individual differences in ability and their relationship to following established rules and guidelines;
- To be a model for the students; and
- To assist the teacher in helping students assume individual and group responsibilities.

#### **Individual Needs of Students**

- To be aware of individual differences and how they relate to the learning environment; and

- To provide needed health care, where appropriate, such as feeding, toileting, changing and positioning.

#### **OTHER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To provide supervision of students during breaks, recesses, lunches, field trips, and arrivals and departures; and
- To strive for personal growth through individual reading and attendance at meetings related to Special and/or Alternative Education.

#### **Meetings**

- To attend staff and in-service meetings when scheduled;
- To participate in any meetings specifically designed for paraeducators;
- To feel welcome to attend and participate in parent-teacher functions at the school; and
- To assume other school duties as requested by the principal or department head.

#### **EXAMPLES OF INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY PARAEDUCATORS**

These are activities that provide Direct Instructional Services (DIS) to the students and allow the paraeducator to fully participate as an active team member by:

- Instructing individual students using instructional objectives and lessons developed by the teacher and/or the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team;
- Assisting with supplementary work for students and supervising independent study;
- Reinforcing lessons with small groups of students;
- Providing assistance with individualized program materials - written and oral;
- Administering classroom assessment instruments (spelling test, etc.), scoring objective tests and written papers and keeping appropriate records for teachers;
- Assisting the teacher in observing, recording and charting behavior;
- Implementing behavioral management strategies - using the same emphasis and techniques as the teacher;
- Assisting the teacher with crisis problems and discipline;
- Assisting with the preparation of material for use in specific instructional programs; and
- Attending IEP meetings at the request of the teacher or administrative personnel.

#### **HELPFUL HINTS FOR SUCCESS**

1. Ask where to put your personal belongings when you arrive. Do not leave your purse, wallet or keys sitting out. It is your responsibility to keep personal articles secured.
2. Be an independent thinker and self-starter. The teacher does not always have time to direct the paraeducators to where they are needed.
3. Sometimes students need emotional support. It is urgent that paraeducators exercise good judgment in providing appropriate emotional support.
4. Recognize individual differences. No two students are the same.

5. If you feel uncomfortable or unable to do a job, speak up. Ask questions; there is always something you can do.
6. Never leave a student unsupervised.
7. Walk over to the student instead of speaking across the room.
8. Consult the teacher to whom you are responsible. It is important to know how far to use your own judgment and when to call on the teacher in charge.
9. Assist in the area you are needed most.

## **LIABILITY**

Although the legal responsibility for the liability of students rests with the certificated teacher, it is the paraeducator's job to keep his/her attention on the students and assist in their supervision at all times. According to Education Code 45344, a paraeducator "need not perform assigned duties in the physical presence of the teacher but the teacher shall retain his responsibility for the instruction and supervision of the pupils in his charge."

## **OBTAINING A SUBSTITUTE – Aesop SYSTEM**

The Ventura County Office of Education utilizes Aesop, an automated system for reporting absences and obtaining substitutes. It allows teachers and paraeducators to report an absence in two different ways.

### **Option #1**

You can interact with Aesop on the internet at <http://www.aesoponline.com>. Here, you will be able to enter absences, check your absence schedule, update personal information, and exercise other features such as uploading your lesson plans for substitutes to view online.

### **Option #2**

You can also call Aesop toll free at 1-800-942-3767. Simply follow the voice menu to enter and manage absences and access other features. We recommend that you call in to check the computer recording of your name and title. To do this, press Option 5 and follow the prompts.

Below is a link to the Quick Start Guide that will show you the basics of getting started with Aesop.

[http://help.frontlinek12.com/WebNav/Docs/QuickStartGuide-Employee\(English\).pdf](http://help.frontlinek12.com/WebNav/Docs/QuickStartGuide-Employee(English).pdf)

For additional information contact:

Chelsie Newman, Substitute Recruiter / Human Resources Assistant

[cnewman@vcoe.org](mailto:cnewman@vcoe.org)

Phone: (805) 383-9339

## **PARAEDUCATOR COACHING**

There is an important resource available to **all** paraeducators if you ever have any questions, feel overwhelmed or just feeling uniformed. The Human Resources Department can assist you in finding support.

## STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The goal of discipline is to help students build their own self-control. Discipline techniques must be positive and rely on a problem-solving approach. It is important to be patient and consistent.

Suggested discipline techniques:

1. Talk to students at eye level.
2. Encourage students to think of alternative solutions to the conflict. Help the student see the consequences of his/her actions.
3. Suggest that the student use his/her own words to express feelings instead of using aggression. You may need to assist the student at first. Let him/her know how well he/she handles a situation when using his/her own words.
4. Remind students of the rules. Help them to understand why their behavior may not be acceptable. Use words the student can understand and be consistent.
5. Tell the student what you want instead of what you do not want.
6. Acknowledge the students' feelings. Let them know it is okay to feel sad or angry, but not to be aggressive. Promote self-esteem.
7. Redirect or distract. Shift a student's attention or redirect him/her to another activity to avert a problem before it gets out of hand.
8. No single technique will work with every student. Match the technique you use to the individual student and the situation. Work with the teacher to provide a positive environment that supports student success.
9. Be a positive role model. Students learn by example.

### Positive Reinforcement – Staff Behavior

VERBAL Components of positive behavior include:

- Using a firm and clear voice;
- Expressing feelings and beliefs honestly and directly;
- Standing up for one's legitimate rights;
- Expressing respect and empathy for others;
- Using "I" statements;
- Taking the initiative in interpersonal encounters; and
- Offering alternatives.

NONVERBAL Components of positive behavior include:

- Good eye contact;
- Appropriate facial expression;
- Relaxed and natural posture;
- An air of confidence; and
- Appropriate distance from the other person.

Listed below are a few key words/phrases to use with students:

- "I like how you use your words"
- "I knew you could do it!"

- “What a fine job!”
- “I see you are working very hard”
- “That shows a great deal of work”
- “Good thinking!”
- “Keep on trying! You've almost got it!”
- “Show me how you can...” (ride a bike, pick up a toy, use a computer, etc.);
- “Super!”
- “I like the way you handled that situation”
- “That was very kind of you”
- “Thank you” and
- “Please”

Remember to...

- React positively;
- Once a directive is given, allow for “wait time” for a student to process and respond;
- Give the student an acceptable solution that he/she can carry out;
- Be patient and try again;
- Disapprove a student’s negative behavior, but never the student;
- Deal with negative behavior by correcting the action, not attacking the student's character;
- Give directions in short, concise statements;
- Reinforce learning with praise; and
- Offer student alternatives whenever possible - "How could you have handled this differently?"

### **Problem Solving and Decision Making**

Because consistency is important, be sure to consult with your teacher, before any interventions are implemented. Below is a problem solving technique developed as an intervention to aid communication.

Use the following steps as a process:

1. Identify and describe the problem;
2. Define and determine the causes of the problem;
3. Decide on a goal and identify alternative solutions;
4. Select and implement a course of action; and
5. Evaluate the results.

### **BE PROACTIVE – PLAN AHEAD!**

### **RESTRAINING STUDENTS**

California law is very clear about restraining students. Restraints may only be used to control unpredictable, spontaneous behavior that:

1. Poses clear and present danger of serious physical harm to the individual or others or serious property damage; AND
2. Cannot be immediately prevented by a response less restrictive than temporary application of a technique used to contain the behavior.

No restraints shall be employed for longer than necessary to contain the behavior. Any situation that requires prolonged use of restraining shall require staff to seek assistance of the school site administrator or law enforcement agency, as applicable to the situation. Additionally, state law requires that a report be filed with the site administrator right away, if any types of restraints are used in an emergency situation. If you or anyone else on staff uses a restraint in order to contain a behavior, notify the classroom teacher and/or administrator immediately.

You may never use:

1. Locked seclusion unless it is in a facility otherwise licensed or permitted by state law to use a locked room.
2. Employment of a device or material or objects that simultaneously immobilizes all four extremities.
3. An amount of force that exceeds that which is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances.
4. Corporal punishment, which is any willful infliction of physical pain on a pupil. (per California Education Code, Section 49000-49001.)

This law requires that restraints be applied only when safety requires them, and must NOT be used as either consequences or punishment instead of using a Positive Behavioral Intervention Plan. If an emergency occurs in which staff feels they must use restraints in order to protect the safety of themselves, the student and others, they may only use techniques approved by the Ventura County SELPA. These techniques are taught in Level One training by the Crisis Prevention Institute, (CPI). If you are a Special Education paraeducator, speak to your administrator about registering for CPI training.

## PARAEDUCATOR REPRESENTATION

Under California law, employees have the right to be represented by a professional association, and to collectively bargain (negotiate) wages, hours and certain conditions of employment. VCOE recognizes the Ventura County Federation of Paraeducators, Local 4434 AFT (Federation) as the exclusive representative of all paraeducator employees of VCOE.

If you are a bargaining unit employee, you may wish to join the Federation. There is a representative at all sites who can explain the benefits of membership in the Federation, or contact the Human Resources Office to obtain the names and phone numbers of Federation Officers. You are not required to join the Federation as a condition of employment or to maintain employment. It should, however, be noted that you will be required to pay dues under the Fair Share provision of the bargaining unit agreement. Refer to Article 8.6.1, "Service Fee" for more details.

All bargaining unit employees are covered by the terms of the contract of agreement negotiated between VCOE and the Federation. The Federation must represent all members of the bargaining unit whether or not they are a dues-paying member. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO READ THE BARGAINING UNIT AGREEMENT BETWEEN VCOE AND THE FEDERATION.** Ignorance of the terms of this contract is not an acceptable excuse for violation of any contract provision.

## PARAEDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

### PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PROGRAM

1. **Professional Growth Committee** - The Professional Growth Committee shall be composed of five members, as follows:

Two classified employees (selected by the unrepresented classified staff); one paraeducator (appointed by the VCOE Paraeducators Federation); one management employee (appointed by the Superintendent or designee); and the Director of Human Resources.

Committee members shall serve one-year terms and shall select the chairperson at the first meeting of the school year. The Professional Growth Committee will meet periodically as needed to review individual proposals submitted for approval. The employee shall have the right to appeal by doing so in writing to the Professional Growth Committee; however, the final decision shall rest with the Committee.

2. **Eligibility** - All permanent, non-probationary, non-management classified employees are eligible to participate in the Professional Growth Program.
3. **Participation** - **Contact Human Resources for an application forms packet.** The employee shall complete a "Declaration of Intent" form. The course(s) to be taken and alternate(s) shall be listed, the institution to be attended, and the estimated time involved to complete the program. It is the responsibility of the employee to apply for professional growth credit and verify completion of course work with the Human Resources Department. When all records are in order and have been submitted to the Human Resources Department for consideration, the Human Resources Department will submit a change of status to Payroll indicating approval of additional compensation for professional growth.

A certificate of courses completed will be filed permanently in the employee's personnel file.

4. **Requirements** - Each program requires **advance approval** by the Committee. Programs must be submitted with "Declaration of Intent." This intent shall serve as an indication of the employee's future plans and may be changed or adjusted by the employee, pending Committee approval, as necessary. Courses must be job-related or clearly related to a career path leading to upward mobility within the classified service of VCOE. Coursework taken as part of a degree program that is unrelated to specific VCOE job requirements is not eligible for this program.

No points are allowed for "credit by examination."

A course may be repeated for credit if so stated in the college catalog.

A grade of "C" or better or "pass" status must be earned. If letter grades are not given for a course, a letter of satisfactory completion, duly signed by the instructor, is required.

Service in a professional organization must be approved by the Committee and assigned points.

Attendance at educational conferences or conventions, participation at regional workshops, or serving on a state committee may be considered provided it is not on released time. Credit will not be given for course work or workshops taken during the employee's work time and/or at VCOE expense. In addition, credit will not be given for coursework where tuition and/or books were paid for by VCOE. Released time to attend approved professional organization conventions cannot be counted for professional growth increments.

Courses may be approved for credit retroactively up to six months prior to committee approval.

5. **Increments** - A professional growth increment shall be granted and effective the beginning of the pay period following submission of all documentation required for verification of completion of **fifteen approved professional growth points**.

No more than one professional growth increment shall be granted to an employee in a single fiscal year. A maximum of three professional growth increments may be earned.

A professional growth increment shall be on salary range above the normal range of the employee's position (approximately 2½%).

When an individual has qualified for a professional growth increment and has more points than are required for that increment, the most recently earned points shall be carried over to apply to the next growth increment, if applicable.

6. **Point System** - The point system, as listed below, includes credit for credit courses, job-related adult education courses, attendance at workshops and/or seminars, and membership in professional organizations.

| <i><b>Academic Course Work</b></i>         | <i><b>Points</b></i> |
|--|----------------------|
| 3 unit course                              | 3.                   |
| 2 unit course                              | 2.                   |
| 1 unit course                              | 1.                   |
| 15-week non-credit course (1 absence only) | 1.5                  |
| 8-week non-credit course                   | .75                  |
| All day seminar                            | .5                   |
| Workshop                                   | .5                   |

| <i><b>Adult Education Courses and In-service Training Workshops</b></i> |                                  |                      |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i><b>Total Hours</b></i>   | <i><b>Absences Permitted</b></i> | <i><b>Points</b></i> |
| 5-9 hours   | None                             | .25                  |
| 10-15 hours   | None                             | .5                   |
| 16-20 hours   | 1                                | 1                    |
| 21-30 hours   | 1                                | 1.5                  |

|                  |   |     |
|------------------|---|-----|
| 31-40 hours      | 2 | 2   |
| 41-50 hours      | 2 | 2.5 |
| 51 hours or more | 2 | 3.  |

| <i>Institutes, Lectures, Conferences</i>                           | <i>Hours</i> | <i>Points</i> |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| Attendance verified for short learning program                     | 20           | 1.            |
| Auditing a course (certification of attendance required)           | 20           | 1.            |
| Attendance at conferences & convention (maximum allowable 9 hours) | 3<br>4 to 9  | .25           |

| <i>Committee Service, Professional Organizations, etc.</i>                                 | <i>Points</i> |
|--|---------------|
| President of a job-related professional organization (1-year term)                         | .75           |
| Officer of job-related professional organization (1-year term)                             | .5            |
| Membership in a job-related professional organization                                      | .25 per year  |
| Committee chairperson of a recognized committee of a job-related professional organization | .25           |
| Committee member of a professional organization (1-year term)                              | .15           |

## PARAEDUCATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Contact Human Resources for an application forms packet. This program is the same as the Professional Growth Program **except for the following notable differences:**

- You must have completed five (5) years of service; and
- You are qualified to advance to Step 6 on the paraeducator salary scale.

## TEXTBOOK AND TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

1. **Intent** - VCOE will share in the costs of textbooks, tuition, registration and laboratory fees to a maximum as approved for the employee classification per fiscal year for occupationally related courses presented by recognized schools and taken on the employee's time.
  - Paraeducators \$400
  - All other classified employees \$350
2. **Eligible Paraeducators** - Permanent and probationary employees of VCOE are eligible to participate in this program. However, new employees will not be reimbursed until they have completed six months' employment.
3. **Eligible Courses** - The following criteria will be used in determining eligibility for reimbursement.
  - Courses must have a reasonable potential for resulting in more effective service;
  - Courses directly related to the employee's occupational field are eligible;

- Courses must be presented by a school, college, university or other similar institution. Correspondence courses are eligible only in the absence of equivalent classroom programs in the area of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles counties; and
- Courses must be graded and satisfactorily completed. A grade of 'C' or its equivalent is required for reimbursement.

**4. Ineligible Courses** - The following courses are not eligible for reimbursement:

- Those taken to bring unsatisfactory performances up to an acceptable level;
- Those which duplicate in-service training;
- Those which duplicate training the employee has already received;
- Those presented by associations, professional organizations and similar groups;
- Workshop or seminar type classes; and
- Costs for which reimbursement is received from other sources.

**5. Procedures**

- Obtain the application from Human Resources and return the completed application to Human Resources prior to the first class session—before you spend any money;
- You will receive notification indicating whether your application is approved;
- You should send an official record of your grades (copy of grade card) and receipts to the Business Office within 90 days after the last class session; and
- Reimbursement will be made to you within two weeks after grade cards and receipts are received by the Business Office.

## **RESIGNATION PROCEDURES**

Any classified employee who voluntarily resigns from a position shall provide a written resignation to VCOE. This can be done by use of a VCOE form or personal letter. At least ten (10) working days notice shall be given in order to be eligible for reinstatement, reemployment or positive reference to a potential employer.

You must inform your supervisor of your resignation before resigning in writing. Resignation forms are available from your supervisor or from the Human Resources Department.

Upon termination, the employee shall have an exit interview with the Human Resources Department.

The employee shall be required to turn in all VCOE and school site possessions such as: parking passes, keys to any premise or vehicle, electronic equipment and identification card before the final salary warrant will be released.

Classified employees shall be paid for all time worked, plus accrued vacation, compensatory time and overtime. Final pay shall be reduced by the amount of any unaccrued sick leave that may have been used.

**REINSTATEMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT**

A regular employee may return to the same or similar position within VCOE at the same level on the salary schedule, upon the following conditions:

1. At least ten (10) working days notice was given at the time of resignation.
2. Reinstatement must take place within thirty-nine (39) months after the last day of paid service.
3. Employee's final performance report must have been satisfactory.

**THE REINSTATEMENT IS CONDITIONED UPON THE APPROVAL OF THE DEPARTMENT HEAD TO FILL AN EXISTING VACANCY.**

Reinstatement in accordance with the above procedure also restores:

1. Sick leave accrued at the time of termination (unless transferred to another agency.)
2. Vacation accrual rate.
3. Seniority for the period of time in a paid status.
4. Step placement on the salary schedule.

## EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION / EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY / AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

VCOE is an equal employment opportunities employer. The employment and procurement in every department within VCOE will be on a totally fair and impartial basis, and no factors of race, religious creed, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, age, marital status, medical condition, military and veteran status, or physical handicap, where the latter does not impair one's job performance with reasonable accommodations, are to be considered.

Furthermore, VCOE recognizes the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and acknowledges that reasonable accommodations for the employment of qualified persons with a physical disability or medical condition are necessary and consistent with the philosophy and intent of ADA.

### AB 1432 / MANDATED CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

VCOE is concerned about the national problem of child abuse. In an effort to support existing laws and support county personnel in reporting child abuse, VCOE has established the following procedures which offer direction and, hopefully, clarity to the reporting process. All VCOE employees are required to participate in and complete the AB 1432 training on an annual basis. Successful completion on the related examination is required.

**To report abuse or neglect, call the Human Services Agency 24-hour hotline: (805) 654-3200.  
For emergency help, dial 911.**

IF YOU HAVE A REASONABLE SUSPICION THAT A STUDENT IS A VICTIM OF ABUSE, whether physical, sexual, or neglect:

1. You are legally obligated to report it. Call Child Protective Services (CPS). (Note: Reasonable suspicion means that it is objectively reasonable for a person with your training and experience to entertain such a suspicion based on the facts, i.e., knowledge or observation, available to you.) To assist in determining whether an incident is reportable, you can ask yourself the question, "Do I suspect, based on my training and experience, that the injury was not accidental or not self-inflicted?" If the answer is "yes", the incident is reportable. Try to be clear, include the name of the person making the report, the name of the student, the present location of the student, the nature and extent of the injury, and any other information, including information that led you to suspect child abuse.
2. Complete the Suspected Child Abuse Report Form on file at your site and forward it to the appropriate agency within 36 hours. If necessary, pictures of the abuse area shall be taken.
3. If a student tells you that he or she is being sexually abused, believe the student and report it directly to CPS. It is extremely rare for a child not being abused to make up a scenario involving sexual abuse.

4. Employees who directly work with students are considered mandated reporters and are immune from prosecution and cannot be sued for reporting a suspicion of child abuse, even in the event that it later appears not to have taken place. You can be found guilty of a misdemeanor and confined in the County Jail for failure to report suspected abuse.
5. When discussing a child abuse matter, remember that they are the victims of a crime and are not to be blamed for it. Also, do not belittle the student's parents.
6. Supervisors should not prohibit their employees from completing a CPS report if the employees suspect abuse.
7. All employees should keep any reports made to CPS confidential, discussing the matter only with other employees who "need to know."

#### IF YOU ARE ACCUSED OF MOLESTING OR ABUSING A CHILD:

1. If a verbal allegation is made by a parent, tell them that in view of their serious concerns, you will contact your administrator who will arrange a joint meeting time. Do not debate the issue with the parent. If parents or guardians insist on calling the supervisor directly, that is their right. However, you may wish to call first to alert the administrator to the situation.
2. If a report has been filed with CPS or the police, there will be an investigation and you will be questioned. If a CPS worker questions you, it is recommended that you speak with an administrator present who can confirm what you say, and the context in which you made the statement. It is your right not to talk to a CPS worker without first consulting your personal attorney at your own expense.
3. If a police officer comes to interrogate you, you may wish, for your own protection, to consult your personal attorney at your own expense prior to saying anything to the police. Sometimes innocent people feel "I don't mind talking, I have nothing to hide," but innocent statements can sometimes be manipulated or interpreted in such a way as to aggravate the situation. If you do choose to discuss the matter, it is again recommended that you do so in the presence of an administrator.
4. If formal charges are filed against you, the VCOE will conduct an investigation into the matter before deciding what action, if any, needs to be taken.

#### TO MINIMIZE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT YOU WILL BE CHARGED WITH ABUSE

1. Whenever possible, conduct dressing and toileting activities in the presence of another adult.
2. "High Fives," handshakes, etc. are welcome contact for most students. Unrealistic fears of child abuse charges should not turn us into cold people, afraid to reward children with our touch.
3. When working individually with a child, do so in an area that is open to other areas. If it is necessary to work in a quiet and private place, keep a log of when and where you went and what activities the student was engaged in for that period.

## ARMATUS SEXUAL MOLESTATION PREVENTION PROGRAM

VCOE has teamed with the Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority, our insurance Joint Powers Authority (JPA), to contract with the Praesidium group in order to provide the Armatus Sexual Molestation Prevention training program for all employees. The purpose of this program is to raise everyone's awareness level regarding the compelling issue of Sexual Molestation in our schools today. Sexual molestation of children is a vital social issue that affects all of us. It is our duty to safeguard the children and young people we serve in our schools each day and we can do this most effectively by observing and understanding the "signs" that sexual abuse may be occurring. The system tracks your participation and makes a report available to VCOE automatically. All employees must complete the Armatus Sexual Molestation Prevention Program training. The program is now available online. It is simple to use and the average time of completion of all modules is approximately one hour. Logging on is quick and simple by following these steps:

1. Logon to a high-speed Internet connections and go to: [www.Praesidiuminc.com](http://www.Praesidiuminc.com). Click on **LOGIN** under **Online Training** on the lower left side of the screen by the magnifying glass. You may need to scroll down.
2. Select **Login to Armatus 1.0**.
3. Enter your login. Your login is the first letter of first name and full last name (example: Mary Smith = msmith). You must use lowercase keys.
4. Enter your password and click submit. Your password is your four digits employee identification number (which can be located on your paystub), followed by "ca". (example: 1234ca)
5. Click on Submit and begin.

## EMPLOYEE MEDICAL EXAMINATION

All employees of VCOE may be required to undergo a periodic medical examination to insure that the employee is free from any communicable disease, or when there is evidence that a medical problem exists that interferes with the normal responsibilities of the employee's position. VCOE will either provide the required examination or cause the examination to be provided. A medical certificate stating that the employee is physically able to resume regular duties shall be placed in the employee's medical file.

## FREEDOM FROM TUBERCULOSIS

During payroll orientation, employees will be given the necessary forms to ensure verification of freedom from Tuberculosis. Verification of freedom from tuberculosis is required upon employment and every four years thereafter. If you had a TB taken for employment in another district which has not expired, it will be accepted to meet this requirement. If you had a TB x-ray or intradermal skin test within the past 60 days, for another reason that can be verified in writing by the doctor or agency who administered the test, it will be accepted. VCOE must have TB verification within thirty days of beginning your services.

## **EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION DOCUMENT**

Verification of the right to work in the U.S. is required by the Federal Government. Upon initial employment, the employee must show evidence of identity and employment eligibility when completing the I-9 Document.

## **FINGERPRINTS**

As applicable to the position with VCOE, each employee shall be electronically fingerprinted in conformance with Education Code Section 45125 and as a condition of employment. Fingerprints are forwarded to the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation for screening to assure that no employee has been convicted of a controlled substance, sex crime or other crime that would preclude employment by VCOE. Employees may not report to their assignments for duty prior to acceptance of their fingerprint clearance by the Human Resources Department.

## **OATH OR AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE**

A signed Oath of Allegiance is required of all California public employees.

## **MANDATORY DISASTER SERVICE WORKERS**

All employees are by law disaster service workers in the event of a declared emergency. (See Appendix A – Government Code, Chapter 8, Division 4, Title 1, Sections 3101) According to the type of emergency, specific duties shall be assigned to all employees. In addition, VCOE employees can be reassigned to other public agencies during a state of emergency.

## **VERIFICATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY CARD**

VCOE requires a copy of your social security card be on file with the Human Resources Department before any payroll checks will be processed. Per federal regulations, VCOE must pay you exactly as your name is listed on your social security card. This regulation is in place to protect both the employee and employer. By using the exact information printed on your social security card, earnings reported to state and federal agencies will be posted accurately to insure proper credit to you. If an employee is paid under an incorrect name or social security number, VCOE may be subject to penalties. A copy of your social security card is also required by the State Teachers Retirement System upon enrollment.

## **PERSONNEL FILES**

The personnel file maintained in the Human Resources Department is the only official and legal permanent record that can be maintained on employees. A major purpose of the file is to protect employees against arbitrary and prejudicial personnel decisions. The personnel file is governed by Education Code 44031 which requires a procedure whereby employees can correct or rebut incomplete or inaccurate

All employee personnel files are confidential and are available only to the employee and to people with official access permission.

information in the hands of their employers which might affect their employment status. Additionally, no information of a derogatory nature can be entered or filed unless and until the employee is given notice and an opportunity to review and respond. To this end, any document relating to an employee's performance, whether it is a formal evaluation, observation, report, memorandum, commendation, written warning, reprimand, or otherwise, shall be put in the employee's personnel file.

Every employee has the right to inspect his/her personnel file upon request, provided that the request is made when the employee is not required to render services to VCOE.

### **CHANGE OF NAME, ADDRESS or PHONE NUMBER**

If you change your name, address or phone number, remember to report the change to your supervisor and to the Human Resources Department.

### **CONVICTION OF NARCOTICS OR SEX OFFENSE**

Conviction of a sex offense or narcotics offense as defined in California Education Code Sections 44010 and 44011 will result in immediate termination of employment.

## SALARY AND BENEFITS

### DISTRIBUTION OF PAY CHECKS

Pay day is the last business day of each month. The following options are available for delivery of pay checks:

1. Direct deposit to a financial institution, provided employee has filed the appropriate forms with the Payroll Department. This option will electronically post the employee's pay check to a checking or savings account of the employee's choice each pay day; the employee will receive a pay stub (paper copy or e-mail) that looks like a regular check stub with all of the tax and deduction information. (One month processing time is required before the first direct deposit can be made.)
2. Employees, with the approval of their supervisors and as permitted by assignment, may pick up their check in the Payroll Department after 8:30 a.m. on pay day each month.
3. A specific employee, acceptable to the Business Office, may be authorized to receive pay checks for staff at various locations and distribute those checks to employees at that location. (This option is only available if there is a volunteer from your site that will come into the Payroll Department on pay day and pick up the checks.)
4. Employees may designate, **in writing**, a member of their immediate family to whom, with proper identification, the Payroll Department may release a pay check. This person will be required to sign for the check.
5. U.S. Mail may be utilized to forward pay checks to the employee's home. **We cannot assume responsibility for delays that may occur when mail is lost or delayed. A minimum of 7 days is required to report a pay check was lost in the mail.**

If you feel there has been an error in any pay check you receive, or if you have questions concerning the amount of your check, contact the Payroll Department immediately at 383-1949.

Your choice may be changed at any time. The Payroll Department must be notified at least 10 days prior to pay day for direct deposit, and at least 48 hours before pay day for any other option. Cancellation or change of any of the above options must be made to the Payroll Department in writing.

### PAY DAY AND DEDUCTIONS

Employees are paid monthly, on the last working day of each month. Accompanying your check will be a statement of earnings and deductions. The following deductions are required:

1. Federal and State Income Tax
2. Retirement Contributions\*
3. Survivor Benefit (currently \$2.00 monthly)
4. Employee portion of Medicare contribution (applies to anyone employed after 4/1/86)
5. Union dues (Fair Share).

All other deductions are voluntary and require written authorization. If you choose, deductions will be made for such things as: Credit Union payments or savings, union dues (if applicable), Section 125, Tax Sheltered Annuities and some charitable contributions.

\*Retirement contributions are deducted before state and federal tax is calculated. Retirement contributions will be taxable when received at the time of retirement or withdrawal from the retirement system. Withdrawal prior to retirement or age 59½ may also result in tax penalties.

## **SALARY SCHEDULE PLACEMENT**

The salary schedule for paraeducator employees of VCOE is negotiated through the collective bargaining process and adopted by the County Superintendent. New employees shall be hired on the first step of the salary schedule, and shall serve a probationary period.

Errors in the current salary schedule payment made by VCOE shall be corrected as follows: Overpayments or underpayments will be corrected retroactively no more than four (4) years if the error is based on a written contract or three (3) years if the error is based on a statutory entitlement.

## **TIME CARDS**

Each employee is required to maintain a record of time worked, vacation, holidays, sick leave and other approved leaves of absence.

All time cards require recording of regular hours worked, overtime worked, and any absences. Each employee shall record, on the time card, the actual daily hours worked. The employee's signature on the time card will serve as certification that "ALL" time worked is reported on the time card. All time cards must be submitted to your supervisor whose signature of approval is required prior to submission to the Payroll Department.

It will be the supervisor's responsibility to ensure the following:

1. Overtime has been properly approved and reported.
2. Leaves taken have been approved and meet the requirements set forth for each type of leave.
3. No salary is paid for time not worked, (i.e., unofficial leave of absence, leaving work assignments early, tardiness, etc.)
4. Time off for industrial (work-related) injuries/illness must be coded appropriately on time card, (i.e. medical appointments, physical therapy, x-rays and/or diagnostic testing).

All time cards become a part of the employee's permanent record.

## **LEAVES, VACATIONS, AND HOLIDAYS**

Refer to Article 21 and Article 23 in the federation contract.

## **SICK LEAVE**

Sick leave is authorized for all regular employees. Employees shall accrue sick leave credit at the rate of twelve (12) days per fiscal year of service.

Employees who work less than full-time will accrue that proportion of twelve (12) days that the amount of time employed bears to full-time service. Full-time service is twelve (12) months per year, five (5) days per week, eight (8) hours per day.

Sick leave shall be cumulative from year to year, and shall be used as follows:

1. Injury or illness of employee.
2. Medical and dental office appointments for employee.
3. Injury, illness, medical and dental office calls for immediate family. (These are covered under Personal Necessity Leave and are limited to seven (7) working days per fiscal year.)

Upon employment, each regular classified employee shall be advanced one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of the sick leave accruable in the first year of service. Should it be necessary to use sick leave, it will be subtracted from this advance. Should sick leave exceed the amount advanced **before** the end of six (6) full months of service, there will be a monetary deduction for sick leave. No additional time shall accrue until the seventh month of service, at which time sick leave shall be credited for the balance of the current fiscal year.

Sick leave may not be used to increase any vacation accrual.

### **Sick Leave Accrual**

VCOE employees have no limitation as to accrual of sick leave. Time accrued may be transferred to another VCOE employee through the Catastrophic Leave Process (See Agreement between VCOE and the Ventura County Federation of Paraeducators local 4434.1 AFT), another school district in California, or the California State Department of Education.

An employee transferring from any of these agencies may be credited for sick leave accrued at the prior agency, when verified in writing by that agency.

### **Change to Sick Leave Status**

An employee who becomes ill or injured while on vacation may change the status from vacation to sick leave by informing the supervisor on the first day of such disability. No time prior to the notification is subject to change.

### **Doctor's Certificate - Medical Evaluation**

You will be required to furnish a certificate from a medical doctor during any period of absence for illness/injury exceeding five days. Before you return to work you may be required to submit to a medical evaluation by a physician designated by VCOE.

### **Pregnancy**

Pregnancy is not considered an illness; however, paid sick leave may be used toward the necessary time off if the attending physician certifies it as a disability. Time beyond that may be charged to vacation, compensation

time, or taken without pay, in accordance with Leave of Absence policies. At any time during pregnancy, the supervisor may require a doctor's certification indicating the employee is able to continue working. Leave of absence may be granted for up to one (1) year. Following childbirth, the employee must provide the supervisor with a doctor's certification that she is able to return to work, before she is reinstated.

### Calling In

When it is necessary to be absent because of illness or accident, the employee shall notify the department head at the **beginning** of the normal work day, on the **first** date of absence. If the illness continues, the employee shall continue to notify the department head of the status on a daily basis. If the doctor or the condition indicates a specific period of absence will be required, and the supervisor is advised of the anticipated period of absence, it will not be necessary to report daily during the specified period. Additionally, if you are under the care of a doctor, notify HR for further guidance. Call in procedures may vary at school sites.

Regular and prompt attendance is an important requirement of your job. If illness or some other emergency causes an unplanned absence, you must notify your department head or supervisor as soon as possible on the first day of absence. Failure to call in shall be treated as unauthorized time off without pay. **Absence from work for three (3) consecutive days without authorization will be judged to be a voluntary resignation.** It is the sole responsibility of the employee to call in such instances.

### CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS (COBRA)

Dependents who become ineligible due to age or marital status may purchase continuation of health and dental benefits for a limited period of time, if the Payroll Department is notified within 30 days of the date the dependent becomes ineligible. It is the employee's or dependent's responsibility to advise the Payroll Department upon expiration of eligible status.

An employee who becomes ineligible for paid health and dental insurance coverage, due to reduction in hours or termination of employment, may purchase continuation of health and dental benefits for the entire family for a limited period of time. The employee will be notified of continuation options at the time of termination or reduction in hours.

If you choose the option to continue your health and dental benefit coverage under COBRA you will be responsible for ensuring that payment is received on the due date (1st) of the month for which the premium is due. If any monthly payment is not received within 30 days of the due date, your continued health coverage will be cancelled without notice, (the postmark is not considered the received date). Checks returned by the bank constitute non-payment of premium and will result in cancellation of coverage without further notice.

### HEALTH AND DENTAL INSURANCE

VCOE contributes to health and dental insurance for all eligible employee and their eligible dependents. If employment is less than full-time, VCOE will be responsible for paying a prorated amount toward insurance. Employees must work at least 20 hours or more per week to be eligible. A brochure explaining

benefits of the plan is provided to each employee during payroll orientation. Any questions regarding coverage or payment of benefits should be directed to the claims administrator as indicated in the brochure.

It is the employee's responsibility to request a change form, from the Payroll Department, to report a change of address or changes in eligible dependents. All changes must be reported within 30 days to assure uninterrupted coverage.

The open enrollment period for changing health coverage is the month of September, with changes effective October 1.

Due to the fact that paraeducators do not work an eight hour day, they will be responsible for paying a flat fee of \$75.00 per month for benefits. Employees must work at least 20 hours or more per week to be eligible.

## **RETIREMENT COVERAGE**

Membership in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) is mandatory for employees working four or more hours per day on a regular basis. Work hours equivalent to five years of full time service and age 50 are required to be eligible for retirement benefits. Upon termination, you may request a refund of your contributions, leave your contributions on deposit until retirement age is attained, or roll over funds to a personal IRA.

Members of Public Employees' Retirement System are also covered by a "Survivor Benefit" program with a mandatory monthly deduction of \$2.00 (currently), which is not refundable.

This provides an income for survivors in the event of the death of a member while in service before attaining retirement age.

Accrued unused sick leave may be added to service credit at the time of retirement.

## **SECTION 125 FLEXIBLE BENEFIT PLAN**

This plan allows for the use of "pre-tax" dollars to pay for the employee portion of certain benefits. Additionally, if you have dependent care or contribute to your health and dental insurance coverage, you may set aside more pre-tax dollars to pay for these. Contact the Payroll Department for more information.

## **TAX SHELTERED ANNUITIES**

Tax sheltered annuities (TSA) may be purchased through a number of licensed insurance companies or agencies. The employee must select the plan desired and request the appropriate contract revisions. Neither VCOE nor any member of the staff may promote or recommend any particular plan. The Payroll Department may advise you of the names of companies currently providing plans to other staff members.

The amount of annual contributions to a TSA is limited by Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Regulations. The employee is responsible for assuring contributions are within the authorized limit. The untaxed retirement contributions may count as a part of the maximum allowable TSA contribution. Consult your tax advisor to assure proper calculation of maximum allowable contributions.

Once established, tax sheltered annuity deductions may be changed only one (1) time per calendar year. Contributions to a TSA are taxable when withdrawn and may be subject to tax penalties if withdrawn prior to age 59½.

### **TUITION REIMBURSEMENT**

Refer to **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES**.

### **WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE BENEFITS**

Workers' Compensation Insurance benefits are provided for industrial injuries. Coverage is provided by participation in the Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority. If you are injured, follow the procedure for Industrial Injuries as outlined in the Health and Safety section of this handbook.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

State Unemployment Insurance benefits are provided to all employees as required by State law. Upon termination of employment, you are eligible to apply for benefits through any State Employment Development Department. Eligibility for benefits is determined by circumstances related to each individual situation. **Only** the Employment Development Department can determine your eligibility status.

#### **Summer Recess**

Employees normally assigned to work for ten or eleven months shall, prior to the end of the school year in June, receive "Reasonable Assurance Letters" for continued employment for the following school year.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### AIR POLLUTION EMERGENCY ALERT PLAN

In the event of an air pollution emergency alert, the Human Resources Department will notify each site of the level of the alert. School staff will be expected to modify programs which require students to have prolonged or strenuous physical activities on the day of the smog alert. In determining whether a proposed activity can be conducted, assess each activity to ascertain its potential for increasing the respiration rate for an extended period of time. The intensity of an activity should be the determining factor in deciding to cancel an activity.

During a **Stage 1 Alert**, strenuous outdoor physical activity for all students shall be discontinued. Activities of a less strenuous nature shall be substituted. The following students shall be allowed to remain indoors:

- Students with respiratory difficulties which are aggravated by smog;
- Students who have notes from parents or doctors; and
- Students who are complaining about the effects of smog.

VCOE believes that safety and health information should be shared openly with anyone using or working around hazardous substances and that all attempts should be made to minimize the use of hazardous substances.

During a **Stage 2 Alert**, all students are to remain indoors.

### DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE WORKPLACE

VCOE is fully committed to achieving a drug and alcohol free environment for its students and employees. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispersing, possession or use of a controlled substance or alcohol is prohibited in all VCOE work places.

While VCOE has no intention of intruding into the private lives of its employees, involvement with drugs off the job can affect job performance and safety. Employees who think they may have a drug/alcohol problem are urged to voluntarily seek assistance and get help immediately through their individual health plans. While VCOE will be supportive of those who seek help voluntarily, it will be equally firm in identifying and disciplining those who continue to be substance abusers and do not seek help. To this end, VCOE will act to eliminate any substance abuse (illegal drugs, prescription drugs or any other substance which could impair an employee's safety and ability to effectively perform the functions of the assigned job) that increases the potential for accidents, absenteeism, substandard performance, poor employee morale or damage to the reputation of VCOE. All employees must be aware that violations of the Drug Free Workplace Policy will result in discipline, up to and including termination.

Employee responsibilities for a drug free workplace include:

- Not having his/her ability to perform job duties impaired due to the use of illegal drugs or prescription drugs without a prescription.
- Not reporting to work or being subject to duty while his/her ability to perform job duties is impaired by use of illegal drugs or prescription drugs, with or without a prescription.

- Not possessing or being under the influence of illegal drugs or prescription drugs, without a prescription, during working hours or while subject to being called to duty, on breaks, during meal periods or at any time while on VCOE property.
- Not directly or through a third party selling or providing drugs to any person, including any employee, while either employee or both employees are on duty or subject to being called to duty.
- Submitting immediately to a drug test when requested by a responsible VCOE manager.
- Notifying his/her supervisor, manager or the Human Resources Department before beginning work, when taking any medications or drugs, prescription or non-prescription, that may interfere with the safe and effective performance of duties or operation of equipment.
- Providing within 24 hours of request, bona fide, verification of a current valid prescription for any potentially impairing drug or medication identified when a drug test is positive. The prescription must be in the employee's name.
- Notifying his/her supervisor or the Human Resources Department of any criminal drug statute conviction within five (5) days after such conviction.

As a condition of being employed to work under any federal grant received by VCOE, employees are required to abide by the terms of this statement. These employees are further required to notify their supervisor, (or the Human Resources Department), of any conviction for a criminal drug statute violation within five days after such conviction.

## **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS COMMUNICATION PROGRAM**

VCOE maintains a Hazard Communication Program that complies with Cal-OSHA General Industry Safety Orders, California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5194. The full program is available on request to all employees or their designated representatives, Cal-OSHA personnel and other authorized persons as required by California law.

The following is a summary of VCOE's Hazard Communication Program:

- VCOE will label, tag or mark all hazardous substance containers with the chemical make/contents and appropriate health and physical hazard warnings;
- VCOE will maintain a list of all hazardous substances in the workplace;
- VCOE will maintain in a designated book in each area, Safety Data Sheets (SDS), recording when hazardous substances are used or stored; and
- Before being assigned to handle hazardous substances and before new hazardous substances are introduced into the work area, employees shall participate in Hazard Communication Training.

## INDUSTRIAL INJURIES

It is imperative that the following procedures be followed when an industrial (on-the-job) injury occurs:

1. All injuries, illnesses, and near-miss incidents **must** be reported immediately to your supervisor and the Risk Management Department before the end of the work shift during which the incident occurred, regardless of whether medical attention is necessary. Risk Management Department's phone number is (805) 383-1916. *(Note: If an industrial accident occurs outside of normal work hours, the injured worker must call the Risk Management Department and leave a message before seeking medical treatment.)*

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| Risk Management Department's phone number is (805) 383-1916. |
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2. Injuries on the job, regardless of how slight, must be reported to your supervisor immediately and cared for by First Aid, or if necessary, by a doctor. **Failure to report an injury at the time it occurs is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.** (See item 15 under the "Rules and Regulations" section of this handbook.) Minor injuries (scratches, cuts, puncture wounds and contusions) should be treated immediately with appropriate First Aid procedures on site. Failure to apply First Aid to minor injuries can result in serious infections later. Reasonable precautions to prevent further complications are the responsibility of every employee.
3. The supervisor will complete and sign a "Supervisor's Report of Injury" form and submit it to the Risk Management Department.
4. Employee should contact the Risk Management Department to obtain (1) a Department of Workers' Compensation (DWC-1) and (2) an Employee Statement form. Failure to do this could result in a delay of payment of medical expenses or Workers' Compensation benefits.
5. If the injury requires medical attention, you will be given an authorization to seek medical treatment with a "designated medical facility." These facilities have been specifically selected for treatment of industrial injuries. The doctors are familiar with Workers' Compensation laws regarding reporting and billing. Unless a Pre-Designation of Personal Physician form is on file, **prior** to sustaining an injury, VCOE has the right to designate the treating physician in all industrial injury cases for the first 30 days of treatment. **DO NOT seek medical treatment without authorization from the Risk Management Department.** Proper procedure must be followed in order for VCOE to accept responsibility for your injury and required medical bills. Treatment at a hospital emergency room is only authorized when an actual emergency exists.
6. After 30 days from the date of injury, you have the right to be treated by a physician of your choice, within the Medical Provider Network (MPN) and within a reasonable geographic location. Contact the Risk Management Department if you desire a change in medical facilities during the course of treatment. A change in physician must be authorized by our Workers' Compensation Administrator before Workers' Compensation insurance will assume financial responsibility for any services.

7. As soon as you have been treated by a designated medical facility, report to the Risk Management Department and then to your supervisor the outcome of the visit. Submit all medical status reports from the medical facility to the Risk Management Department. If modified work or time off is required, the Risk Management Department must be notified immediately. Regularly update your supervisor on your progress.
8. If you have any questions regarding your injury, status during time off, medical bills, etc., contact our Workers' Compensation Administrator at (805) 288-4072 or the Risk Management Department at (805) 383-1916. For questions regarding salary continuation, contact the Payroll Department.
9. If, after treatment, you are dissatisfied with the physician or medical facility, contact Risk Management or the Workers' Compensation Administrator.
10. Prior approval must be obtained to leave the state while receiving Workers' Compensation benefits.

For additional benefits provided, refer to the Industrial Injury or Illness Leave section of this handbook.

## **INFECTIOUS DISEASES / BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS EXPOSURE CONTROL PLAN**

VCOE's "Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Program" is in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogens Standard 29 CFR 1910.1030. The following summary outlines the VCOE Exposure Control Plan:

### **1. Exposure Determination**

Occupational exposure means reasonably anticipated skin, eye, mucous membrane, or parenteral contact with blood, saliva, semen, vaginal secretions or other potentially infectious body fluids that may result from the performance of employment related duties.

The tasks/procedures that are considered potential routes of exposure for teachers, paraeducators, nurses and specialists include: specialized healthcare procedures; interaction which results in a student spitting at, biting or bleeding on an employee; clean-up of blood, saliva, semen or vomit; toileting or diaper-changing students; inspection of students for possession of weapons or drugs; and rendering first aid.

The tasks/procedures that are considered potential routes of exposure for custodians include: clean-up of blood, saliva, semen or vomit; handling, repair or maintenance of equipment or tools that may be contaminated with blood, saliva or vomit.

Although administrative and clerical staff do not routinely perform tasks/procedures that are considered potential routes of exposure, they may occasionally perform any of the tasks/procedures listed above. Therefore, they are included in all aspects of the Exposure Control Plan.

## 2. Implementation Methodology

- a. Work Practices - **Universal precautions will be observed at all VCOE facilities.** All blood, saliva, vomit and semen will be considered infectious regardless of the perceived status of the source individual. Work practices shall be implemented to eliminate or minimize exposure to employees.
- b. Personal Protective Equipment
  - i. Personal protective equipment may include gloves, outer garments, masks, eye protection, face shields. Personal protective equipment shall be provided at no cost to the employee. The program manager/principal is responsible for ensuring that the proper personal protective equipment is available. Employees are responsible for wearing the designated personal protective equipment.
  - ii. **Disposable gloves** shall be worn whenever it is reasonably anticipated that employees could have contact with blood, saliva, semen or vomit. Associated tasks/procedures which require the use of disposable gloves include: rendering first aid; clean-up of blood, saliva, semen or vomit; toileting and diaper-changing; specialized health care procedures; and decontamination of surfaces, tools or equipment. Disposable gloves are not to be washed or decontaminated for re-use. They shall be replaced after each use and when they become contaminated, torn, punctured, or when their ability to function as a barrier has been compromised.
  - iii. **Utility gloves** may be worn to perform some of the above tasks. They may be decontaminated for reuse as long as their ability to function as a barrier is not compromised.
  - iv. **Barrier masks** shall be available in all first aid kits. They shall be used whenever possible, for administering rescue breathing or CPR. They shall be decontaminated after each use.
  - v. **Masks/Eye Protection/Face shields** shall be worn when performing specialized health care procedures, feeding students and rendering first aid if it is reasonably anticipated that blood, saliva or vomit would enter the employee's eyes, nose or mouth. Masks shall be replaced after each use. Face shields shall be decontaminated after each use.
  - vi. **Personal protective equipment is decontaminated by soaking in a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water for at least five minutes.**
- c. Hand Washing - Employees shall wash their hands with soap and water following any contact with blood, saliva, semen or vomit and upon removal of personal protective gloves.
- d. Decontamination - All surfaces contaminated by blood, saliva, semen or vomit will be decontaminated as soon as possible. A solution of one part bleach to ten parts water shall be used.

## 3. Hepatitis B Vaccine

Hepatitis B Vaccine (HBV) and vaccination series shall be offered at no cost to employees designated as having primary occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Employees not

offered the vaccine may request it by completing the "Voluntary Request for the Hepatitis B Vaccine" form. The vaccine shall be provided at no cost to the employee. The HBV vaccine is administered in a series of three injections spread out over a six-month period. Side effects are minimal, but the vaccine is not recommended for persons who are allergic or hypersensitive to yeast. Employees are encouraged to discuss any questions/concerns about the Hepatitis B vaccine with their personal physician. Employees shall be notified in writing of the locations and dates where the vaccine will be administered.

Employees have the right to decline the vaccination. Those who do so shall sign a declination form. Employees who initially decline the Hepatitis B vaccine and later wish to have it may then have the vaccine provided at no cost to them.

The Hepatitis B vaccine program is administered by the Risk Management Department, in cooperation with program managers and principals.

4. Post-Exposure Evaluation and Follow-Up

All exposure incidents shall be reported to the Program Manager or Principal and the Human Resources Department immediately. Some examples of exposure incidents are: an employee bitten by a student; blood, saliva or vomit entering the eyes, nose, mouth or an open wound; clean-up of blood, saliva, semen or vomit without personal protective equipment; and a search resulting in a needle stick or cut by a contaminated sharp object.

Employees who experience an exposure incident will be offered post-exposure evaluation and follow-up in accordance with the OSHA Standard.

5. Training

Training will be provided to all employees regarding all aspects of the Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan.

## **INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

The use of pesticides and chemicals has become increasingly common in schools when dealing with such problems as pests and weeds. Many of the pesticides currently in use in our society pose risks to human health and the environment. Therefore, VCOE has adopted a policy for managing pests on school sites in a manner that is safe for humans.

All employees are responsible for good housekeeping. Good housekeeping is an essential part of an effective pest management program. No chemical products shall be used directly around children. There will be no open food storage nor preparation in areas not intended and/or designated for the use. Classroom food and all lunches brought from home must be stored in a designated, sealable container. No chemicals or other pest management products shall be brought from home for use in the classroom.

When necessary to apply pesticide applications, warning signs will be posted prior to application at the school site. An annual written notification will be sent to parents and staff addressing expected pesticides to be used. The recipients of this notification will be given the opportunity to register to receive

information regarding individual pesticide applications. School sites will maintain records of all pesticides use for a period of four years.

### **TOBACCO-FREE ENVIRONMENT**

Tobacco use is prohibited in all facilities owned and/or operated by VCOE, including indoors, outdoors and in all VCOE vehicles whether located on or off the premises. Included in the prohibition is tobacco use in privately owned vehicles located on VCOE owned and/or operated property. This policy applies to employees, students, and the general public.

### **VIOLENCE-FREE WORKPLACE**

VCOE has adopted a Zero Tolerance Policy for workplace violence because it recognizes that workplace violence is a growing nationwide problem that needs to be addressed by all employers. Consistent with this policy, acts or threats of physical violence, including intimidation, harassment, and/or coercion, which involve or affect VCOE employees, or which occur on VCOE property will not be tolerated.

Acts or threats of violence include conduct that is sufficiently severe, offensive or intimidating to alter the employment conditions or to create a hostile, abusive, or intimidating work environment for one or several VCOE employees. Examples of workplace violence include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All threats or acts of violence occurring on VCOE premises, regardless of the relationship between the County Schools and the parties involved in the accident.
- All threats or acts of violence occurring off VCOE premises involving someone who is acting in the capacity of a representative of VCOE.
- All threats or acts of violence occurring off VCOE property involving a VCOE employee if the threats or acts affect the legitimate interests of VCOE.
- Any acts or threats resulting in the conviction of an employee or individual performing services for VCOE on a contract or temporary basis, under any criminal code provision relating to violence or threats of violence which adversely affect the legitimate interests and goals of VCOE.

Specific examples of conduct that may be considered threats or acts of violence include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hitting or shoving an individual.
- Threatening an individual or his/her family, friends, associates, or property with harm.
- Intentionally destroying or threatening to destroy VCOE property.
- Making harassing or threatening phone calls.
- Performing harassing surveillance or stalking.
- Suggesting or intimating that violence is appropriate.
- Unauthorized possession of firearms or weapons.

VCOE's prohibition against threats and acts of violence applies to all persons involved in VCOE's operation, including but not limited to personnel, contract, and temporary workers and anyone else on VCOE property. Violations of this policy by any individual on VCOE property, by any individual acting as a

representative of VCOE while off VCOE property, or by any individual acting off of VCOE property when his/her actions affect the County Schools' business interests will lead to disciplinary action (up to and including termination) and/or legal action as appropriate.

Every employee and every person on VCOE property is encouraged to report incidents of threats or acts of physical violence of which he/she is aware. The report should be made to the Human Resources Department, the reporting individual's immediate supervisor, or another supervisory employee if the immediate supervisor is not available. Nothing in this policy alters any other reporting obligation established in policies or in state, federal or other applicable law.

## **EMERGENCIES**

Each site has a disaster plan in case of an earthquake or other major disaster. Assure you are familiar with the plan for your site. It is available to each employee and is on file in your school's office or department. Contact Pamela Heron, Risk Manager, for additional copies.

In the event of a bomb threat, learn as much as you can while on the phone. Complete the bomb threat checklist. This is available in the Disaster Drill Handbook available at all sites and departments. Call 911 (9-911 from facilities on the County of Ventura phone system) without delay. Be sure to identify yourself and location. Notify your supervisor immediately.

In the event of a medical emergency, immediately call 911 (9-911 from facilities on the VCOE phone system), and administer appropriate first aid (if trained) or make the individual as comfortable as possible without being moved until first aid can be administered.

## VCOE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The key word in defining sexual harassment is **unwelcome**. When any unwanted, unwelcome, or unsolicited sexual conduct is imposed on a person who regards it as offensive or undesirable, it is sexual harassment. When a person finds the conduct is unwelcome, it becomes illegal. Even conduct implicit in nature--hidden in subtlety or innuendo--is unlawful if it is unwelcome. If the employee or student states that she (or he) finds the behavior offensive, the actions are unwelcome. Often victims will seek to avoid confrontation or may fear reprisals and consequently do not clearly state their objection. Therefore, all employees must learn to be sensitive to how their actions may be perceived by others, no matter what they personally may believe or intend. For the Sexual Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedure, refer to Superintendent Policy No. 4119.11.

### DISCRIMINATION

If you feel you are being discriminated against, or if you observe that discrimination is being practiced in your work area, you should contact the Human Resources Department. It is your right to file a complaint under our Complaint Procedure, which is found in the Superintendent's Administrative Regulations.

### COMPLAINT POLICY

The complaint procedure is the channel through which employees seek adjustment of complaints arising out of alleged violations of established VCOE rules, administrative regulations, policies or procedures. For more information, refer to Administrative Regulation No. 4144 and 4244. For the Sexual Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedure, refer to Superintendent Policy No. 4119.11.

### CODE OF ETHICS

The maintenance of high ethical and moral standards in public business is the basis of effective government. Since public confidence is endangered when ethical standards falter, all officers and employees must act with unwavering integrity, absolute impartiality and devotion to the public interest.

Following are those principles which have not been mentioned previously, and must be observed.

1. There shall be no discrimination in any VCOE activity because of race, religion, sex, age, national origin, physical handicap or political affiliation.
2. No officer or employee shall accept any fee, compensation, gift, payment of expenses, or any other thing of monetary value in circumstances in which acceptance may result in, or create the appearance in: "Use of Public Office for private gain, preferential treatment of any person, impeding governmental efficiency or economy, any loss of complete independence or impartiality or any adverse effect on the confidence of the public in the integrity of VCOE."
3. Persons in the public service shall not disclose confidential information acquired by or available to them in the course of their employment with VCOE or use such information for speculation or personal gain.

## **RULES AND REGULATIONS**

In conjunction with and in addition to the Code of Ethics, a list of rules has been established so that each employee might know exactly what is or is not permissible.

In addition to the "Causes for Disciplinary Action" listed in the Disciplinary Action Policy, the following acts will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal:

1. Falsifying personnel records or VCOE records.
2. Making false, vicious, profane or malicious statements concerning any employee, VCOE or the public.
3. Removing from the premises, without proper authorization, any public property or the property of any employee.
4. Willfully delaying work, wasting time or disobeying orders.
5. Gambling on VCOE property.
6. Possession of or trafficking in illegal drugs or narcotics on VCOE time or premises.
7. Threatening, intimidating, coercing, or interfering with fellow employees or the public.
8. Engaging in horseplay, scuffling or creating a disturbance on VCOE property.
9. Engaging in any immoral or indecent conduct.
10. Using VCOE telephones or credit cards for personal long distance calls.
11. Failing to maintain production standards.
12. Inability or unwillingness to work harmoniously with other employees.
13. Removing of records or release of confidential information.
14. Disregarding safety rules, codes of safe practice or failure to wear personal protective safety equipment.
15. Failing to report injury or accident.
16. Sleeping during working hours.
17. Use of VCOE letterhead for personal correspondence or other non-business purposes.
18. Smoking on VCOE property.

The above listing of rules shall not be considered all inclusive. Disciplinary action may be initiated for reasons not listed in this handbook, as deemed appropriate by the County Superintendent of Schools.

## **CELL PHONE USAGE**

The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) maintains an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), as per Administrative Regulation 4040, which discusses the use of cell phones in the workplace and during work hours. As stated in the VCOE AUP:

“This Acceptable Use Policy provides direction regarding the appropriate and inappropriate use of technology, personal or otherwise:

- During the performance of duties;
- While at a VCOE location; and/or
- While using VCOE equipment and/or accessing VCOE resources.

“VCOE recognizes [...] that some personal use is inevitable and that incidental and occasional

personal use that is infrequent or brief in duration is permitted so long as it occurs on personal time, does not interfere with VCOE business, and is not otherwise prohibited by VCOE policy, procedure, or statute.”

### **In the Presence of Students**

For employees assigned to classrooms, use of cell phones, smart phones, tablets and similar mobile communication devices for calls, texts, emails, social media, internet use, etc. is prohibited during instructional time, in the presence of students, or during scheduled work hours, with the exception of emergencies. Examples of prohibited employee use of communication devices during the work day include:

- Checking, reading, composing, and/or sending personal texts, instant messages and/or emails in the classroom or in the presence of students;
- Using a cell phone to check voicemails in the classroom or in the presence of students
- Using a cell phone for personal calls in the classroom or in the presence of students;
- Accessing social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) in the classroom or in the presence of students.

### **Emergency Situations**

The VCOE AUP, as quoted above, recognizes the occasional need for personal cell phone use in emergency situations. Although cell phones may be used to place and/or take calls in these situations, staff members must inform their supervisor of the need to step outside of the instructional setting to either place and/or take such a call. Additionally, even where calls made or received are reasonably characterized as “emergencies,” such calls should not be excessive and should not interfere with VCOE’s normal business practices and the performance of the individual’s tasks.

Violation of Administrative Regulation 4040, as explained above, may result in discipline in accordance with VCOE Handbooks, collective bargaining agreements (if applicable), Board Policies, and state and federal law.

## **EMAIL POLICY**

By using the email system, the employee expressly consents to VCOE’s email policy. The user agrees not to misuse or abuse the email system, agrees to comply with all limitations on the use of the email system and understands that the email system is not a private communication medium.

The email system is a business tool owned and paid for by VCOE, therefore, the email system is VCOE’s property. All email messages, including personal messages sent or received by VCOE resources, are the property of VCOE and are subject to office policy, procedures and control. As such, VCOE has the right to view them at any time. VCOE respects the individual privacy of its employees. However, that privacy does not extend to the employee’s work-related conduct or to the use of VCOE provided technical resources or supplies. Therefore, employees have no right of privacy as to any information transmitted or stored through VCOE’s email system. To ensure proper use, VCOE may monitor its technological resources at any time without advance notice or consent.

Employees shall use the email system for purposes related to their employment with VCOE. Use of the email system that promotes unethical practices, or any activity prohibited by law, the Education Code and/or any other statutes, or VCOE policy is strictly prohibited. Except as otherwise indicated in this policy, commercial or political use of the email system is also strictly prohibited. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities are strictly prohibited and will be reported to VCOE authorities and may be reported to legal authorities.

Employees may use the email system for occasional personal email communications and life-long learning outside of assigned work hours, provided that all provisions of the policy are followed. Personal activities should be limited and should in no way interfere with educational and professional responsibilities. Employees are reminded that they have no right of privacy in correspondence that is sent or received using VCOE technology. This includes personal correspondence via services such as America Online or Hotmail accessed using VCOE technology.

Employees should be aware that computer files and communications over electronic networks, including email are not private. This technology should not be used to conduct personal commercial business.

The transmission of information about students or VCOE affairs shall adhere to the following:

- Confidential information should never be sent or forwarded to outside individuals or outside agencies not authorized to receive that information; Confidential messages and information should never be sent or forwarded to others, including faculty, staff and students who do not need to know the information;
- Confidential information should not be forwarded to multiple parties unless there is a clear and legitimate need to do so;
- Confidential email should not be retained in an employee's personal mailbox, but should be deleted as soon as possible; and
- Confidential messages from or to legal counsel should not be forwarded to others without counsel's authorization, since such messages may constitute privileged communications between VCOE and its attorney.

Users shall not use email in ways that violate any copyright laws. This includes but is not limited to copyrighted information, graphics and software.

The email system is not provided as a public, student, or employee forum. Sending unnecessary messages to a large number of people (chain mail) is prohibited. Appropriate work related email may be sent to a group of VCOE users, such as Education Services Center or All Elementary Secretaries. The sender should select the appropriate group. Since email is not provided as a public forum, it should not be used to broadcast personal opinion or personal information.

Email shall not include the transmission of the type of material that is threatening, disruptive, sexually explicit, obscene, or that could reasonably be perceived as harassment or disparagement of others based on their race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, or political belief, or which is otherwise inconsistent with VCOE policies, regulations or procedures, or which is contrary to law.

Email shall not be used to produce, distribute, access, use or store information which would subject VCOE or the individual to criminal, civil or administrative liability for its use, production, distribution, access or storage. Electronic communication on VCOE computers could reflect upon VCOE since all messages sent from VCOE include the name of VCOE in the electronic address.

For VCOE employees provided with email, the email is considered a primary avenue of communication and should be checked by employees frequently.

Guests may receive an individual account with the approval of a VCOE administrator if there is a specific, VCOE-related purpose requiring such access. Use of the system by a guest must be limited specifically to the VCOE-related purpose. Guest accounts will not be included in any email groups or distribution lists without authorization from Information Technology Services.

Users must comply with the provisions of Education Code section 7054, which includes email when it states that, no public funds, services, supplies or equipment shall be used for the purpose of urging the support or defeat of any ballot measure or candidate including, but not limited to, any candidate for election to the governing board. Any email sent or received using VCOE system or resources, whether VCOE business or personal, may be inadvertently viewed, printed, forwarded, and/or saved. Users are advised that information and communication deleted by the user may be restored and retrieved from the computer by VCOE or a legal authority.

Security on the network is a high priority. The person in whose name an account is issued is responsible at all times for its proper use. Employees are responsible for preventing unauthorized access to the email system by:

- Logging off or taking other measures when they are away from their workstation;
- Ensuring that email windows are not left open on the screen when the workstation is unattended; and
- Keeping account passwords confidential and not allowing others to use them.

No employee shall send email that either masks the employee's identity or indicates that the email was sent by someone else. No employee shall access the email system using another employee's password.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

VCOE does not consider conduct in violation of this policy to be within the course and scope of employment or the direct consequence of the discharge of one's duties. Accordingly, to the extent permitted by law, VCOE reserves the right not to provide a defense or pay damages assessed employees for conduct in violation of this policy. VCOE requires employees to comply with the terms of the VCOE Email Policy.

In addition, the following guidelines should be considered in order to avoid unfortunate situations when using email:

- Be polite. Never send, or encourage others to send, abusive messages;
- Remember that humor and satire is often misinterpreted;

- Use appropriate language. Remember that you are a representative not only of yourself, but also your school or VCOE on a publicly accessible system. Never swear or use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language;
- Be brief. Few people bother to read a long message;
- Minimize spelling errors and make sure your message is easy to understand and read;
- Forgive the spelling and grammatical errors of others;
- Use standard upper and lowercase letters (not all capital letters);
- Do not repost a message that was sent to you privately without permission of the person who sent you the message;
- Respect the originator of communications. Use good judgment and follow all limitations identified in this regulation when forwarding email messages; and
- Be selective when providing your email address to others. The wider you send out your email address, the more opportunity you provide for unwanted messages. Internet sites that offer daily emails, promotions such as contests, and online shopping areas will often rent their lists of email addresses to others who will send you mail you may not wish to receive.

## **CREATION, PUBLICATION AND SALE OF MATERIALS**

VCOE recognizes that employees may create copyrightable materials at work, at home, or both at work and at home. The development of such materials during, or in part during, the workday shall be approved by the VCOE. However, VCOE's approval or lack of approval shall not affect the Superintendent's ownership of copyrights for materials developed during work hours. Materials written or developed by an employee during the normal workday are considered the property of the Superintendent.

Employees are not permitted to use VCOE-owned materials for any profit-making enterprise without written permission from the Superintendent.

The VCOE may publish and market various publications and other media throughout the year. A listing of such products may be brought periodically to the Superintendent upon request.

For additional information, refer to Superintendent's Policy 3598.

## **POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

As an employee you have the right and privilege to take or refrain from taking a stand on a political issue and to support or oppose any issue or candidate. Such activities, however, must be conducted on your own time and off the premises of VCOE. You cannot use VCOE property and/or resources, bulletin boards and letterhead/stationary to express your opinion on a political matter. You can wear political badges or buttons and display political stickers on privately owned cars while at work and express opinions and campaign during non-working hours. You are expected to exercise reasonable care to show that you are acting in the capacity of a private citizen and not as a member of the staff of VCOE.

## VEHICLE USE

### VCOE-Owned Vehicle

Simply having a valid California driver's license does not automatically qualify an employee to operate a motor vehicle on behalf of VCOE. In addition to a valid California driver's license, all employees who operate any vehicle on behalf of VCOE shall consent to participate in the DMV Pull Notice Program. Participation may be a condition of employment and continued employment, in accordance with the appropriate job description. Nonparticipation in the DMV Pull Notice Program may effect an employee's ability to perform duties as assigned.

### Automobile Insurance / Private Vehicles

Employees who are using private vehicles for official business (whether or not mileage reimbursement is claimed), shall show evidence that such vehicles are insured for property loss and damage and personal liability in excess of the minimum amount required by California State law:

- (a) \$100,000 for bodily injury to or death of each person as a result of any one accident;
- (b) \$300,000 for bodily injury to or death of all persons as a result of any one accident; and
- (c) \$50,000 for damage to property of others as a result of any one accident.

This evidence shall be in the form of a sworn statement from each employee. It will be necessary to file this annually, or anytime a vehicle is replaced, deleted from, or added to your policy. The employee must advise the Business Office of a cancellation of coverage. It will remain the responsibility of the employee to maintain an up-to-date record of insurance coverage to assure receiving reimbursement for private vehicle use. If at any time such insurance coverage is not valid, mileage claims shall be returned to the employee without processing. The statement shall be filed in the Business Office.

In accordance with the appropriate job description, employees utilizing private vehicles shall also participate in the DMV Pull Notice Program as described above.

## TRAVEL EXPENSES

In the event it is necessary for you to travel in the duties of your position, you will be reimbursed for mileage and other expenses based on the reimbursement rate currently in effect. You must file a Certification of Insurance Coverage with the Business Office before mileage claims can be processed for payment.

When air travel is necessary within California, utilize the carrier with the lowest fare, such as Southwest Airlines. Whether using Southwest or other carriers, make the reservations and submit a requisition indicating the vendor, airline and detailed flight information including purpose of travel and cost of ticket.

No personal travel costs can be included in this arrangement.

All travel expenses (meals, lodging, parking, etc.) that are reasonable, actual and necessary in the performance of job duties will be reimbursed and must be claimed on the Travel Expense Voucher with all required **itemized** receipts attached. The total cost of daily expenses cannot exceed the IRS allowed

amount for the area of travel. To be reimbursed, the Travel Expense Voucher must be complete and include date, time and location of the start and end of travel, specific purpose and destination of travel and have copies of meeting, workshop or conference notices attached. This is the verification used to approve payment to the travel agency.

For additional information on Travel Expenses, refer to Superintendent's Policy 4133.

## **TRANSPORTING STUDENTS**

No students may be transported in an employee's private vehicle without completing the necessary documents. For additional information on Transporting Students, refer to Superintendent's Policy 3541.1 and/or contact the Risk Management Department at (805) 383-1916.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS**

### **Lunch Break**

All employees who work more than five hours shall be completely relieved from duty for the purpose of eating a regular meal. When a work period of not more than six hours will complete the day's work the meal period may be waived by mutual consent of the employer and the employee. The duty-free meal period shall be a minimum of 30 minutes. Such duty-free meal period shall not be counted as time worked. If the duty-free meal period is rarely and infrequently interrupted for emergency calls, the period of time actually interrupted is counted as hours worked. If the meal period is frequently interrupted by calls to duty, all the meal periods shall be counted as hours worked. The supervisor is responsible for assuring the duty-free meal period is not frequently interrupted. (California Code of Regulations, Title 8. Industrial Relations, S 11010)

### **Rest Breaks**

Employees working seven (7) or more hours per day are allowed a morning and afternoon rest break, not to exceed fifteen (15) minutes each. Employees working four (4) hours or more per day, but less than seven (7) hours are allowed one (1) fifteen (15) minute rest break. Supervisors are responsible for scheduling the appropriate time for these breaks. Rest breaks may not be used to come to work late, leave early or extend lunch breaks. (Exceptions may occur only when necessary to assure continuous supervision of students.) Rest periods are counted as hours worked. The rest period shall not be offset against other hours of work.

### **Work Week**

The work week is the seven day period beginning at 12:01 a.m., Monday of each week. Most employees work five (5) days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with one (1) hour for lunch. There are exceptions. Work shifts are scheduled by department heads. The exact hours that you work each day will be arranged by your supervisor.

## APPEARANCE AND DRESS

VCOE deals with the public. Common sense in your personal appearance should be considered in your neatness, cleanliness, and clothing and should be followed by all employees.

Inappropriate attire is identified as any item of clothing that causes a distraction to other employees, causes a break in the normal flow of office routine, or creates an unsafe situation for the job being done.

1. Employees working with students should consider the issue of safety and avoid wearing clothing or accessories which may cause an attractive distraction. Loose jewelry, such as necklaces, bracelets and dangling earrings, should not be worn as it could catch on apparatus or distract students.
2. Employees who work in areas that require climbing, lifting, and kneeling should consider the safety factor and wear clothing that is compatible with the job function they are performing.
3. Employees who interface with the public should give extra consideration to the appropriateness of their apparel and overall appearance.

Extremes in fashion and leisure activity clothing should be reserved for wear during non-work time. If a special activity or environmental change requires special needs, these needs should be recognized by the supervisor. Common sense should be the guiding principle in selecting apparel. Refer to the Code of Safe Practice for additional information.

## EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION BADGE

All VCOE employees are required, for security purposes, to wear a photograph identification badge. The badge must be prominently displayed on the front of the employee's body at all times. Employees will be photographed by the Human Resources Department when hired and asked to surrender their badge when separating from the Organization. Contact the Human Resources Department for more information.

## VISITORS

Whenever possible, discourage friends, relatives or others from visiting you while you are on the job. This is obviously necessary in order to prevent possible confusion and work stoppage. If such visits are necessary, they should be made as short as possible and **must be pre-approved by your supervisor**. Abuse of this privilege will result in disciplinary action. Under no circumstances should children be brought to work in lieu of obtaining appropriate child care.

## PERSONAL MAIL

You should arrange to have all personal mail sent to your home. Do not send your personal mail through the Ventura County mail system. You are welcome to place your outgoing mail in a U.S. mailbox near your facility.

## **VENTURA COUNTY FAST ACTION SCHOOL TRANSIT (VCFAST)**

The primary purpose of VCFAST is to provide the service and other items necessary and appropriate for a countywide distribution system for the carrying of letters and other such materials as the participants in the Joint Powers Agreement may require to be carried in order to conduct business.

Service will be provided daily to VCOE departments at the Camarillo Airport, and three times per week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) to all participating school districts and other VCOE sites.

Each school district not participating has indicated they will have a courier pick up at the Administrative Service Center on a regular basis; therefore, participating districts may send mail for those districts through VCFAST. The mail will then be placed in the non-participating district box for their courier to pick up.

Contact your supervisor for a complete set of VCFAST operating rules, regulations and guidelines.

## **VCOE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS**

### **Care of VCOE Property**

Every job in the organization requires the use of supplies and some type of equipment. All employees are charged with the responsibility of maintaining this property in the best possible condition and making the most efficient use of supplies issued to them. You can help keep costs down by exercising reasonable care over the property for which you are responsible.

Unsafe, inappropriate or wasteful use of the VCOE's property or equipment is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### **Copy Machines / Printers**

Copy machines and printers are available in most of the VCOE facilities. Copiers and printers are provided for official use only, and are not to be used for reproduction of personal material.

### **Office Equipment Repair**

Office equipment is generally under maintenance contracts and the vendor may be called directly. The Purchasing Office can confirm the vendor and procedure. Other equipment repair is accomplished by submitting a requisition to Purchasing, indicating the following information:

1. Make of equipment.
2. Type of equipment.
3. Inventory tag number.
4. Model and serial number of equipment.
5. Malfunction to be corrected.
6. Location of equipment.
7. Person to be contacted by repair person

Report any building or maintenance problems to your supervisor.

**Telephone System Changes / Repairs**

Requests for telephone changes shall be reported to the Technology Services Department for action. These include:

1. Need for adding or deleting phones.
2. Any staff moves involving moving phones.
3. Any reassignment of staff to a new extension.

For repairs to telephones, contact the Technology Services Department at 383-1951 and provide specific information regarding the problem.

**Repairing / Replacing Employee's Property**

You may claim reimbursement for repair or replacement of personal property, necessarily worn or carried, when damaged in the line of duty, through no fault of your own.

This applies to items such as eyeglasses, watches, and certain articles of clothing. This policy does not include personal electronic devices. In the event of a loss, contact the Risk Manager and request a claim form.

**Requisition Supplies and Materials**

When possible, supplies are purchased in quantities. Each department shall notify the Business Office of its needs on an as needed basis. These requests are grouped and ordered from the best source. Requisitions and the vendor supply list are available from the Business Office.

**USE OF EQUIPMENT OFF THE PREMISES**

VCOE's equipment may be taken from the office by staff members for use in their regular duties with school districts or professional personnel in Ventura County, provided that permission is obtained from the head of the department from which the equipment is borrowed; and provided further, that an accurate record of such use is made by that department. The record shall include the inventory tag number assigned to the equipment and the serial number, if the item has a serial number. **In all cases, the staff member is personally responsible for the proper care and return of the equipment.**

## TRANSFER OF PROPERTY

When property or equipment is identified as surplus or obsolete, the department head or site administrator shall complete a "Request for Change of Inventory" form. The form will be submitted to the Purchasing Department to request removal of the item(s) from the present location (from one site to another). The Purchasing Department will authorize appropriate disposition of the item(s) and initiate the work order to effect removal of the item(s). **Equipment may not be removed from its assigned location without proper authorization.**

The department head or site administrator may authorize equipment to be moved within the location (from one room to another.) A "Request for Change of Inventory" form must be completed and submitted to the Purchasing Department. Updated equipment inventory records will assure prompt and accurate settlement should an insurance claim be necessary.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Because you are employed by VCOE, you have an important public relations responsibility. Your work, attitude and appearance are all subject to close inspection by your employers and the taxpaying public. In

If you receive a call, complaint or request about something that you cannot or should not handle, take a personal interest in seeing that the call, request or complaint gets to the proper office. You are employed to serve the public.

many cases, you are the only VCOE employee a certain individual may know, and total judgment of the efficiency and character of the organization is based on the way you perform. For this reason, it is important that you give a good day's work and courteous treatment to people you have agreed to serve.

Courtesy means, among other things: being prompt to wait on people; being patient and a good listener, and taking a personal interest in seeing that calls, requests or complaints are properly handled.

## GIFTS TO EMPLOYEES

No employee is to receive any commission, expense-paid trip, or anything of value from individuals or companies selling equipment, materials, or services used in the operation of the public schools. This would include the purchase and use of all materials, supplies or other items needed for the repair, maintenance, or operation of school facilities, office or cafeterias, for school transportation, or materials used to conduct classes, activities, and organizations.

## PEDDLERS OR SALESPERSONS

The following office policy shall be enforced on a permanent basis:

"No outside peddlers, solicitors or salespersons will be permitted to sell or demonstrate their products in the VCOE facilities, except on official business."

Employees are to direct solicitors to leave the building upon initial contact.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE VIA TELEPHONE

The way you answer the telephone will have a great effect on the VCOE's image. Telephone contacts are most valued if a favorable impression is created with the people we serve. The following are a few tips that will help in maintaining efficient, courteous service when receiving calls:

1. Answer promptly.
2. Give your name and department.
3. Offer to take a message or transfer the call to voicemail if the person called is not available.
4. Be courteous and friendly.
5. Assure that your voicemail is updated each day and while you are away.

*When making calls...*

1. Plan what you want to say ahead of time.
2. Identify yourself, your department and/or employer.
3. Keep all telephone conversations brief.
4. Be courteous and friendly.
5. Office telephones are for official business. If personal calls are occasionally necessary, they should be limited to three minutes or less. Careful use of the personal call privilege will preserve that privilege.
6. Personal long distance calls are prohibited.

Telephones must have coverage at all times. If you are away from your desk for any length of time, make arrangements for someone to answer the telephones for which you are responsible.

## GRAPHICS REPRODUCTION SERVICES

A complete Graphic Reproduction Department (Print Shop) is available to serve the printing needs of all departments. New employees, whose responsibilities include preparation of material to be printed, are encouraged to contact the Graphics Department at 437-1310 for an overview of the types of services offered and procedures required for submitting printing request forms.

## CONVICTION OF NARCOTICS OR SEX OFFENSE

Conviction of a sex offense or narcotics offense as defined in California Education Code Sections 44010 and 44011 will result in immediate termination of employment.

## PERSONNEL FILES

The personnel file maintained in the Human Resources Department is the only official and legal permanent record that can be maintained on employees. A major purpose of the file is to protect employees against arbitrary and prejudicial personnel decisions. The personnel file is governed by Education Code 44031 which requires a procedure whereby employees can correct or rebut incomplete or inaccurate information in the hands of their employers which might affect their employment status. Additionally, no information of a derogatory nature can be entered or filed unless and until the employee is given notice and an opportunity to review and respond. To this end, any document relating to an employee's performance, whether it is a formal evaluation, observation, report, memorandum, commendation, written warning,

reprimand, or otherwise, shall be put in the employee's personnel file.

Every employee has the right to inspect his/her personnel file upon request, provided that the request is made when the employee is not required to render services to VCOE.

### **RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO A FAMILY MEMBER**

All employee information related to employment with VCOE can only be discussed with the employee, unless the employee authorizes or designates a person (spouse/partner/dependent adult) to obtain information and such request must be provided in writing.

### **POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

As an employee you have the right and privilege to take or refrain from taking a stand on a political issue and to support or oppose any issue or candidate. Such activities, however, must be conducted on your own time and off the premises of VCOE. You cannot use VCOE property and/or resources, bulletin boards and letterhead/stationary to express your opinion on a political matter. You can wear political badges or buttons and display political stickers on privately owned cars while at work and express opinions and campaign during non-working hours. You are expected to exercise reasonable care to show that you are acting in the capacity of a private citizen and not as a member of the staff of VCOE.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Because you are employed by VCOE, you have an important public relations responsibility. Your work, attitude and appearance are all subject to close inspection by your employers and the taxpaying public. In many cases, you are the only VCOE employee a certain individual may know, and total judgment of the efficiency and character of the organization is based on the way you perform. For this reason, it is important that you give a good day's work and courteous treatment to people you have agreed to serve.

Courtesy means, among other things: being prompt to wait on people; being patient and a good listener, and taking a personal interest in seeing that calls, requests or complaints are properly handled.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE VIA TELEPHONE**

The way you answer the telephone will have a great effect on the VCOE's image. Telephone contacts are most valued if a favorable impression is created with the people we serve. The following are a few tips that will help in maintaining efficient, courteous service when receiving calls:

1. Answer promptly
2. Give your name and department.
3. Offer to take a message or transfer the call to voicemail if the person called is not available.

Telephones must have coverage at all times. If you are away from your desk for any length of time, make arrangements for someone to answer the telephones for which you are responsible.

4. Be courteous and friendly.
5. Assure that your voicemail is updated each day and while you are away.

#### *When making calls...*

1. Plan what you want to say ahead of time.
2. Identify yourself, your department and/or employer.
3. Keep all telephone conversations brief.
4. Be courteous and friendly.
5. Office telephones are for official business. If personal calls are occasionally necessary, they should be limited to three minutes or less. Careful use of the personal call privilege will preserve that privilege.
6. Personal long distance calls are prohibited.

If you receive a call, complaint or request about something that you cannot or should not handle, take a personal interest in seeing that the call, request or complaint gets to the proper office. You are employed to serve the public.

### **CHANGE OF NAME, ADDRESS or PHONE NUMBER**

If you change your name, address or phone number, remember to report the change to your supervisor and to the Human Resources Department.

### **EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION BADGE**

All VCOE employees are required, for security purposes, to wear a photograph identification badge. The badge must be prominently displayed on the front of the employee's body at all times. Employees will be photographed by the Human Resources Department when hired and asked to surrender their badge when separating from VCOE. Contact the Human Resources Department for more information.

### **APPEARANCE AND DRESS**

VCOE deals with the public. Common sense in your personal appearance should be considered in your neatness, cleanliness, and clothing and should be followed by all employees.

Inappropriate attire is identified as any item of clothing that causes a distraction to other employees, causes a break in the normal flow of office routine, or creates an unsafe situation for the job being done.

1. Employees working with students should consider the issue of safety and avoid wearing clothing or accessories which may cause an attractive distraction. Loose jewelry, such as necklaces, bracelets and dangling earrings, should not be worn as it could catch on apparatus or distract students.
2. Employees who work in areas that require climbing, lifting, and kneeling should consider the safety factor and wear clothing that is compatible with the job function they are performing.
3. Employees who interface with the public should give extra consideration to the appropriateness of their apparel and overall appearance.

Extremes in fashion and leisure activity clothing should be reserved for wear during non-work time. If a special activity or environmental change requires special needs, these needs should be recognized by the supervisor. Common sense should be the guiding principle in selecting apparel.

## **PERSONAL MAIL**

You should arrange to have all personal mail sent to your home. Do not send your personal mail through the Ventura County mail system. You are welcome to place your outgoing mail in a U.S. mailbox near your facility.

## **EMAIL POLICY**

By using the email system, the employee expressly consents to VCOE's email policy. The user agrees not to misuse or abuse the email system, agrees to comply with all limitations on the use of the email system and understands that the email system is not a private communication medium.

The email system is a business tool owned and paid for by VCOE, therefore, the email system is VCOE's property. All email messages, including personal messages sent or received by VCOE resources, are the property of VCOE and are subject to office policy, procedures and control. As such, VCOE has the right to view them at any time. VCOE respects the individual privacy of its employees. However, that privacy does not extend to the employee's work-related conduct or to the use of VCOE provided technical resources or supplies. Therefore, employees have no right of privacy as to any information transmitted or stored through VCOE's email system. To ensure proper use, VCOE may monitor its technological resources at any time without advance notice or consent.

Employees shall use the email system for purposes related to their employment with VCOE. Use of the email system that promotes unethical practices, or any activity prohibited by law, the Education Code and/or any other statutes, or VCOE policy is strictly prohibited. Except as otherwise indicated in this policy, commercial or political use of the email system is also strictly prohibited. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities are strictly prohibited and will be reported to VCOE authorities and may be reported to legal authorities.

Employees may use the email system for occasional personal email communications and life-long learning outside of assigned work hours, provided that all provisions of the policy are followed. Personal activities should be limited and should in no way interfere with educational and professional responsibilities. Employees are reminded that they have no right of privacy in correspondence that is sent or received using VCOE technology. This includes personal correspondence via services such as America Online or Hotmail accessed using VCOE technology.

Employees should be aware that computer files and communications over electronic networks, including email are not private. This technology should not be used to conduct personal commercial business.

The transmission of information about students or VCOE affairs shall adhere to the following:

- Confidential information should never be sent or forwarded to outside individuals or outside agencies not authorized to receive that information; Confidential messages and information should never be sent or forwarded to others, including faculty, staff and students who do not need to know the information;
- Confidential information should not be forwarded to multiple parties unless there is a clear and legitimate need to do so;
- Confidential email should not be retained in an employee's personal mailbox, but should be deleted as soon as possible; and
- Confidential messages from or to legal counsel should not be forwarded to others without counsel's authorization, since such messages may constitute privileged communications between VCOE and its attorney.

Users shall not use email in ways that violate any copyright laws. This includes but is not limited to copyrighted information, graphics and software.

The email system is not provided as a public, student, or employee forum. Sending unnecessary messages to a large number of people (chain mail) is prohibited. Appropriate work related email may be sent to a group of VCOE users, such as Education Services Center or All Elementary Secretaries. The sender should select the appropriate group. Since email is not provided as a public forum, it should not be used to broadcast personal opinion or personal information.

Email shall not include the transmission of the type of material that is threatening, disruptive, sexually explicit, obscene, or that could reasonably be perceived as harassment or disparagement of others based on their race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, or political belief, or which is otherwise inconsistent with VCOE policies, regulations or procedures, or which is contrary to law.

Email shall not be used to produce, distribute, access, use or store information which would subject VCOE or the individual to criminal, civil or administrative liability for its use, production, distribution, access or storage. Electronic communication on VCOE computers could reflect upon VCOE since all messages sent from VCOE include the name of VCOE in the electronic address.

For VCOE employees provided with email, the email is considered a primary avenue of communication and should be checked by employees frequently.

Guests may receive an individual account with the approval of a VCOE administrator if there is a specific, VCOE-related purpose requiring such access. Use of the system by a guest must be limited specifically to the VCOE-related purpose. Guest accounts will not be included in any email groups or distribution lists without authorization from Information Technology Services.

Users must comply with the provisions of Education Code section 7054, which includes email when it states that, no public funds, services, supplies or equipment shall be used for the purpose of urging the support or defeat of any ballot measure or candidate including, but not limited to, any candidate for election to the governing board. Any email sent or received using VCOE system or resources, whether VCOE business

or personal, may be inadvertently viewed, printed, forwarded, and/or saved. Users are advised that information and communication deleted by the user may be restored and retrieved from the computer by VCOE or a legal authority.

Security on the network is a high priority. The person in whose name an account is issued is responsible at all times for its proper use. Employees are responsible for preventing unauthorized access to the email system by:

- Logging off or taking other measures when they are away from their workstation;
- Ensuring that email windows are not left open on the screen when the workstation is unattended; and
- Keeping account passwords confidential and not allowing others to use them.

No employee shall send email that either masks the employee's identity or indicates that the email was sent by someone else. No employee shall access the email system using another employee's password.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

VCOE does not consider conduct in violation of this policy to be within the course and scope of employment or the direct consequence of the discharge of one's duties. Accordingly, to the extent permitted by law, VCOE reserves the right not to provide a defense or pay damages assessed employees for conduct in violation of this policy. VCOE requires employees to comply with the terms of the VCOE Email Policy.

In addition, the following guidelines should be considered in order to avoid unfortunate situations when using email:

- Be polite. Never send, or encourage others to send, abusive messages;
- Remember that humor and satire is often misinterpreted;
- Use appropriate language. Remember that you are a representative not only of yourself, but also your school or VCOE on a publicly accessible system. Never swear or use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language;
- Be brief. Few people bother to read a long message;
- Minimize spelling errors and make sure your message is easy to understand and read;
- Forgive the spelling and grammatical errors of others;
- Use standard upper and lowercase letters (not all capital letters);
- Do not repost a message that was sent to you privately without permission of the person who sent you the message;
- Respect the originator of communications. Use good judgment and follow all limitations identified in this regulation when forwarding email messages; and
- Be selective when providing your email address to others. The wider you send out your email address, the more opportunity you provide for unwanted messages. Internet sites that offer daily emails, promotions such as contests, and online shopping areas will often rent their lists of email addresses to others who will send you mail you may not wish to receive.

## TRAVEL

### Automobile Insurance / Private Automobiles

Employees who are using private automobiles for official business for which mileage reimbursement is claimed, shall show evidence that such automobiles are insured for property loss and damage and personal liability in excess of the minimum amount required by California State law:

- (a) \$100,000 for bodily injury to or death of each person as a result of any one accident;
- (b) \$300,000 for bodily injury to or death of all persons as a result of any one accident; and
- (c) \$50,000 for damage to property of others as a result of any one accident.

This evidence shall be in the form of a sworn statement from each employee. It will be necessary to file this annually, or anytime an automobile is replaced, deleted from, or added to your policy. The employee must advise the Business Office of a cancellation of coverage. It will remain the responsibility of the employee to maintain an up-to-date record of insurance coverage to assure receiving reimbursement for private car use. If at any time such insurance coverage is not valid, mileage claims shall be returned to the employee without processing. The statement shall be filed in the Business Office.

### Travel Expenses

In the event it is necessary for you to travel in the duties of your position, you will be reimbursed for mileage and other expenses based on the reimbursement rate currently in effect. You must file a Certification of Insurance Coverage with the Business Office before mileage claims can be processed for payment.

When air travel is necessary within California, utilize Southwest Airlines. Whether using Southwest or other carriers, make the reservations and submit a requisition indicating the vendor, airline and detailed flight information including purpose of travel and cost of ticket.

No personal travel costs can be included in this arrangement.

All travel expenses (meals, lodging, parking, etc.) that are reasonable, actual and necessary in the performance of job duties will be reimbursed and must be claimed on the Travel Expense Voucher with all required **itemized** receipts attached. The total cost of daily expenses cannot exceed the IRS allowed amount for the area of travel. To be reimbursed, the Travel Expense Voucher must be complete and include date, time and location of the start and end of travel, specific purpose and destination of travel and have copies of meeting, workshop or conference notices attached. This is the verification used to approve payment to the travel agency.

## TRANSPORTING STUDENTS

No students may be transported in employee's private vehicle without completing the necessary documents. Contact the Risk Management Department at (805) 383-1916.

## VCOE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

### Care of VCOE Property

Every job in the organization requires the use of supplies and some type of equipment. All employees are charged with the responsibility of maintaining this property in the best possible condition and making the most efficient use of supplies issued to them. You can help keep costs down by exercising reasonable care over the property for which you are responsible.

Unsafe, inappropriate or wasteful use of the VCOE's property or equipment is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### Repairing / Replacing Employee's Property

You may claim reimbursement for repair or replacement of personal property, necessarily worn or carried, when damaged in the line of duty, through no fault of your own.

This applies to items such as eyeglasses, watches, and certain articles of clothing. This policy does not include personal electronic devices. In the event of a loss, contact the Business Office and request a claim form.

## USE OF EQUIPMENT OFF THE PREMISES

VCOE's equipment may be taken from the office by staff members for use in their regular duties with school districts or professional personnel in Ventura County, provided that permission is obtained from the head of the department from which the equipment is borrowed; and provided further, that an accurate record of such use is made by that department. The record shall include the inventory tag number assigned to the equipment and the serial number, if the item has a serial number. **In all cases, the staff member is personally responsible for the proper care and return of the equipment.**

## GRAPHICS REPRODUCTION SERVICES

A complete Graphic Reproduction Department (Print Shop) is available to serve the printing needs of all departments. New employees, whose responsibilities include preparation of material to be printed, are encouraged to contact the Graphics Department at 437-1310 for an overview of the types of services offered and procedures required for submitting printing request forms.

## EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES

You may not be employed in any position where you are directly or indirectly supervised by a relative.

## VISITORS

Whenever possible, discourage friends, relatives or others from visiting you while you are on the job. This is obviously necessary in order to prevent possible confusion and work stoppage. If such visits are necessary, they should be made as short as possible and **must be pre-approved by your supervisor**. Abuse of this privilege will result in disciplinary action. Under no circumstances should children be brought to work in lieu of obtaining appropriate child care.

## GIFTS TO EMPLOYEES

No employee is to receive any commission, expense-paid trip, or anything of value from individuals or companies selling equipment, materials, or services used in the operation of the public schools. This would include the purchase and use of all materials, supplies or other items needed for the repair, maintenance, or operation of school facilities, office or cafeterias, for school transportation, or materials used to conduct classes, activities, and organizations.

## OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

A VCOE employee shall not perform any work, service, or counsel for outside agencies during the employee's normal VCOE working hours except when the employee is in unpaid status or during supervisor-approved vacation. (The employee will not leave his/her VCOE position early nor call in sick or take personal leave days in order to work elsewhere).

Based upon generally accepted ethical standards of professional organizations and in compliance with Government Code §1126 and 87100, an employee seeking or acknowledging outside employment shall file a written disclosure statement with his/her immediate supervisor describing the nature of the employment and the time required.

For additional information, refer to Superintendent's Policy 4213.12.