



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Welcome

We are happy to have you join our family at First Circle Learning Center! We hope you will find the information contained in this handbook useful in navigating your life at First Circle. As you read, please keep in mind that you are expected to be responsible for adhering to the policies and following the procedures described in this handbook throughout your employment at First Circle. We encourage you ask any questions or request clarification on any issues that you may have. We look forward to a long, successful association with you!

Mission

We live our mission every day. We are a warm, fun and caring environment. We are dedicated to exceptional early childhood education. We practice integrity by applying our mission and core values to everything we do.

History

80 Maple Street has been the home to childcare centers serving families in the Lexington area for well over 30 years. From 1986-1997, it was known as Care-a-Lot Child Care Center and Lexington International Preschool, which reflected the diversity of the community and the multicultural educational goals of the program. When the program became available for sale, it came to the attention of Karina (Charlie) Marcotty and Marcella Smith Lee, two professionals who had worked together for nearly a decade in the management of non-profit educational programs. Both children of teachers, and both starting families of their own, Marcy and Charlie decided to create an organization that could foster their educational goals and provide more time for family. Idris, Inc., a Massachusetts-based corporation with education as its principal goal, was established in 1997 and named for the classical word for knowledge, wisdom and experience. In 1998, they renamed the facility First Circle Learning Center and completed extensive renovations, including wide-scale physical updates and changes in philosophy and policies from the previous management. Marcy and Charlie continue to be actively involved in the administration of First Circle and each have had two children go through the program from infancy until moving on to kindergarten.

Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

As part of the First Circle's guiding philosophy, we welcome and encourage diversity, multiculturalism and anti-bias. Both in our student body and our staff, First Circle does not discriminate against anyone due to creed, race, gender, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, political beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, genetic predisposition, marital status or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws.

We seek to foster among our staff and the children a respectful environment where harassment and intolerance are not allowed, and where differences in background, cultures, and abilities are celebrated.

Licensing

We are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) for 102 children from 1 month to 7 years of age. All our policies and procedures must be in keeping with the EEC regulations. A copy of the regulations is available in the office for families to view. First Circle undergoes an extensive re-licensing and review process every two years and is subject to periodic unannounced visits from our licensor at any time.

Organizational structure

Idris, Inc., d.b.a. First Circle Learning Center, is owned solely by Karina (Charlie) Marcotty and Marcella Smith Lee, both of whom are actively involved in the daily operation and management of First Circle. In cooperation with the administrative team, staff, parents and other child care professionals, Marcy and Charlie determine all governing policies, procedures and guidelines for First Circle. First Circle has an Administrative Team comprised of the owners, the Director, Stephanie Monterroso; Business Manager, Liz Smith; and Program Administrator, Kim LoCicero.

Owners The Owners are responsible for executive oversight of all aspects of the program, including the educational program, administrative and operational aspects, supervision of staff, and support of families and their children. The Owners supervise the Director, Business Manager, Program Administrator and Education Coordinator.

Director The Director is responsible for the supervision, oversight, and management of all aspects of the program, including the educational program, administrative and operational aspects, supervision of staff, and support of families and children. The Director reports to and is reviewed by the owners, and works in collaboration with the Business Manager, Program Administrator, and Education Coordinator.

Business Manager The Business Manager is responsible for the oversight and management of all financial and office operations for Idris Inc. and First Circle Learning Center. The Business Manager reports to and is reviewed by the Owners, and works in collaboration with the Director and Program Administrator.

Program Administrator The Program Administrator is primarily responsible for scheduling of children and staff. The PA collaborates on the implementation of the educational program, administrative and operational processes and systems, supervision of staff, and support of families and children. The PA reports to and is reviewed by

the owners, and works in collaboration with the Director, Business Manager and Education Coordinator.

Teacher Teachers at First Circle are EEC certified. They share responsibility for the overall classroom management and educational program with a co-teacher, and are permanently assigned in a particular classroom. Teachers are also responsible for the direct supervision of Assistants and for providing professional growth opportunities by modeling and communicating their own teaching skills, style, and sharing their professional experience. Teachers are supported, supervised, and reviewed by the Director

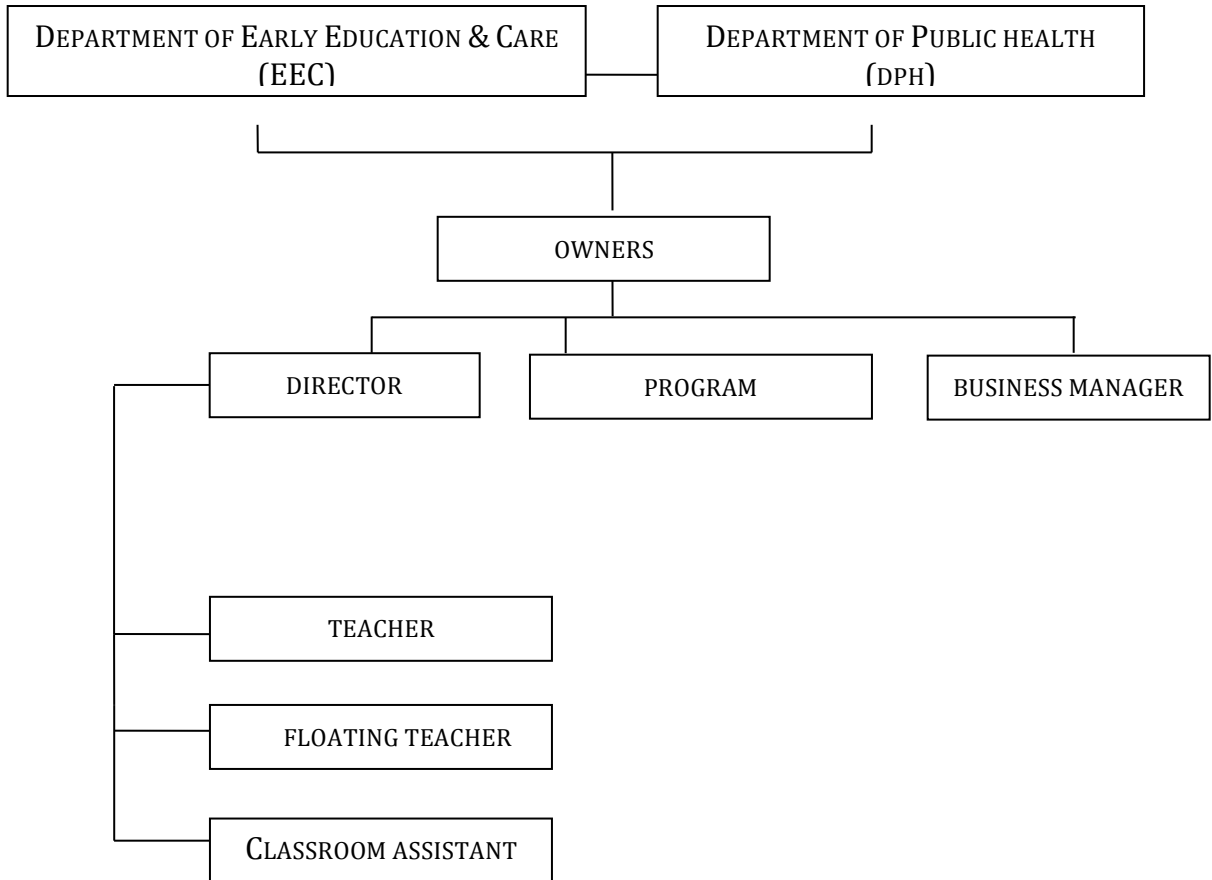
Floating Teacher Floating Teachers are EEC certified as Teachers. They may be temporarily assigned to a particular classroom, or float daily between different classrooms. Floating Teachers are responsible for implementing the curriculum that has been developed by the classroom Teacher. Floating Teachers are supported, supervised, and reviewed by the Director.

Classroom Assistant Classroom Assistants are not EEC certified. They may be permanently assigned to a particular classroom, or float between different classrooms. Assistants are responsible for supporting the implementation of the curriculum that has been developed by the classroom Teacher. Classroom Assistants are supervised and directed by the Classroom and/or Floating Teacher(s). Assistants are never unsupervised or left unattended with children, and do not administer First Aid or medication. Assistants are supported, supervised, and reviewed by the Director.

Designated Teacher

EEC regulations require that in the temporary absence of the Director, we “inform all staff on duty as to who is responsible for administration of the center and appoint a designee who shall be on the premises of the center while it is in operation. The designee shall meet the qualifications of teacher.” The “designee” does not need to be lead teacher or Director certified, and, if the Director is absent more than three days, will be scheduled in the office. The designee will assist the administrative staff to ensure the daily schedule is correct, and support them in the office as needed. The Designated Teacher is required to advise and work with the Administrative Team in the event of an emergency or an issue that that impact on the program.

Lines of Authority & Supervision



EMPLOYMENT PROCESS

Educators play a vital role in the development of children. What children learn and experience during their early years shapes their views of themselves and the world, and can directly affect their later success in school, work, and their personal lives.

Qualities

The most important qualities that all our educators share is their love for children and their passion and commitment to being educators. They are interested in and responsive to each child's needs, and share our educational philosophy that teachers should:

- create learning opportunities in the classroom, on the playground, and in every interaction they have with children
- respect, support and nurture each child's individual abilities, interests, and developmental timetable
- balance the art of leading a group while supporting each child's learning pace, style and needs
- serve as role models for appropriate behavior and social interactions
- foster partnerships with our families, sharing information and insight about children's progress, daily activities, and development

Qualifications

Early childhood teachers bring their own unique strengths and learning styles to their teaching. The most important qualities that all our educators share is their love for children and their passion and commitment to education. We choose educators who are interested in and responsive to children's needs, and share our educational philosophy and commitment to creating a warm and comfortable environment where the well-being of children, their families and staff is the primary focus.

We select staff based on their knowledge and experience in the field of Early Childhood Education, and because their personal educational philosophy and teaching style are compatible with our philosophy. Each staff member meets strictly enforced state standards and their qualifications are in keeping with the standards outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In fact, most of our staff have specialized degrees or certificates in the fields of Education, Child Development, Psychology, or Sociology.

Job Descriptions

First Circle has a job description for every position, included in the Addenda Section. As an employee, it is essential that you be familiar with your job description, as it defines your specific duties, and serves as the basis for review of your job performance. We also recommend that you become familiar with the job descriptions for all the positions at First Circle, as it will help you in your job to know what your co-workers are responsible for. At First Circle, we have employees with a variety of educational, professional, business, managerial, and practical experience.

Job Postings

External First Circle employs educators who have an interest in and aptitude for working with children, and experience and training directly related to the position applied for. Applications are accepted and positions are filled on an as-needed basis anytime throughout the year. Resumes received for a position are reviewed by the Director, who will schedule an interview with those candidates whose background and experience match our needs.

Internal When a position becomes available, First Circle will determine if a copy of the job description and necessary qualifications will be posted in the Staff Room. This does not apply if there is a reorganization of an existing position. If a job is posted internally, as with any candidates, experience and education are considered. Any staff member interested in the position may apply and will be given first consideration before the position is offered outside First Circle. The hiring process applied to each position may be one or more of the steps listed below.

Initial interview

The Director and/or appropriate staff person conducts an initial interview to review the candidate's training and/or experience and to discuss the available position. If not already provided with one, a copy of the job description is provided and discussed. In accordance with EEC regulations, all candidates must:

- complete an application form, and provide a resume if available
- provide at least two professional references
- complete the request for Background Record Check (BRC) (see more below)

The interview includes a history of our program and discussion of our mission, educational philosophy, and teaching practices. We communicate our professional and educational expectations, as well as how we fulfill our commitment to our staff through professional support, communication, growth and development. Administrative and organizational structure, supervision and mentoring, and reviews are discussed, as well as an overview of classroom age and developmental ranges, curriculum and activities, and an overview of the families and children in our program. All candidates also meet educators for the appropriate age-group, and are given a general tour of First Circle.

Background Check

In order to ensure her/his suitability for working with children and families, all candidates must authorize a Background Record Check (BRC). This is comprised of checks for Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI), Department of Children and Families (DCF), and Sexual Offender Registry Information (SORI). Applicable record checks must be received and reviewed by First Circle before candidates may work in the classroom, or an offer of employment can be made.

In addition, in accordance with EEC regulations, First Circle performs a BRC on all employees as needed. First Circle adheres to all state requirements for standards of review of this background information. Information contained in the BRC may be reviewed with the candidate to determine his or her suitability for working with children. We strictly prohibit any educator from having ANY unsupervised contact with children until the BRC process is complete.

- If the BRC investigation confirms the candidate has no CORI, DCF or SORI record, (s)he is eligible for employment, subject to a successful working interview(s) and a minimum of two professional reference checks. First Circle then documents the completion of the background check review in the candidate's file. The finding is maintained in a locked, segregated file and is not be part of the candidate's file.
- If the BRC investigation reveals a "discretionary disqualification," the candidate may be ineligible for employment in a position where there is potential for unsupervised contact with children until an additional review is completed. First Circle reviews the candidate's appropriateness, informs him/her of the hiring decision, and maintains a written record of the review process.
- If the BRC investigation reveals a "presumptive disqualification," the candidate is ineligible for employment in a position where there is potential for unsupervised contact with children unless he/she provides a written statement from a criminal justice official or qualified mental health professional that (s)he does not pose an unacceptable risk of harm to anyone served by First Circle.

Because of the nature of the field, we require that all educators provide a history of employment (if applicable) and relevant background information in an honest and detailed manner. Relevant background information is defined as a background free of any conduct which First Circle determines could adversely affect the ability to provide a safe, healthy environment for children. First Circle has the right to determine whether relevant background information adversely affects the educator's suitability for employment.

Working Interview

If both First Circle and the applicant are interested in proceeding, a working interview is scheduled. Please note that due to EEC regulations, a candidate can complete a working interview only when the BRC is received back from EEC and reviewed. A working interview consists of several hours in the classroom. Interaction with the children and other staff is supervised. Candidates are asked to participate in the classroom activities, and should come prepared to lead an activity. We encourage candidates to take the time to get a feel for the classroom and our program to determine whether our program, environment and team are the right choice for you. The working interview also gives First Circle an opportunity to evaluate your skillset in the classroom and determine if you are the right fit for our program. We also encourage you bring to the working interview any materials and/or portfolio information from prior teaching experiences (e.g., curricula, daily schedule, sample projects, etc.), that may positively impact on the hiring decision.

Hiring

Once an applicant has completed the interview process and working interview, and all forms, references and background checks are complete, if we determine that his/her experience and personal teaching style makes a candidate a suitable addition to our team, our Director will

call with an offer of employment detailing salary, benefits, start date, classroom placement, work schedule, etc. The hourly wage offered is determined by a combination of the applicant's education, work experience and additional skills. If the offer is accepted, the Director will send written confirmation to be signed and returned . The Director will then schedule an orientation to finalize all details and confirm the start date of employment.

Employment Status All First Circle employees are employed "at will." Idris, Inc., D.B.A. First Circle Learning Center, may dismiss an employee at any time for any reason without cause or notice. No employee of First Circle is authorized to amend this status, except in a written document signed by an officer of Idris, Inc. None of these personnel policies, the Employee Handbook, nor any other document regularly issued by First Circle shall be construed to be an employment contract.

Required Documentation As required by EEC, and before hiring, each employee must satisfy the following requirements, and must provide evidence of the following medical information (unless contra-indicated or against religious beliefs):

- documentation of EEC (Department of Early Education and Care) certification;
- a minimum of two (2) professional references;
- a physical exam within one year prior to employment;
- evidence of TWO doses of MMR (staff members born after 1957);
- a negative Mantoux TB test within 1 year.

Material(s) you will receive All employees will receive from First Circle:

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

The Employee Handbook contains all regulations, policies, procedures and information pertaining to Employment Process, Compensation & Benefits, Employment Policies, and Our Expectations. The handbooks are updated on an annual basis. Employees are responsible for keeping a current handbook at their disposal, and updating it as required.

CLASSROOM HANDBOOK

All employees will receive a copy of the Classroom Handbook, which contains specific information to support and guide the implementation of First Circle policy and practices in the classroom, with children and families, and with peers. There is specific information to support and guide the implementation of First Circle's curriculum, including classrooms, daily schedule, and specific program goals. **This handbook is on loan from the office, and should be returned at the end of your employment.** Employees are responsible for keeping a copy of the Classroom Handbook in the classroom at all times, and updating it as required.

Orientation

After the employment offer has been agreed to, the Director will schedule an orientation. **No person shall supervise or be solely responsible for children until orientation is completed.**

The New Employee Orientation is at least three hours in duration, is completed in one session by the Director and other staff as appropriate, and includes the following:

- A detailed tour of First Circle;
- Review of the Employee and Classroom Handbooks, including but not limited to EEC required content, and an opportunity for discussion of any questions or issues the new employee may have. Employees will bring with them or be asked to sign an Employee Handbook Sign-Off form indicating that they have received, read and understand the contents;
- Anyone new to the field (as well as student interns and volunteers) must also complete EEC's two-hour on-line orientation;
- Meeting with appropriate staff to discuss plan for transition into the program and an overview of the training period;
- Introduction to all staff as well as children in the relevant classroom(s);
- Review of the job description, the relevant classroom(s) curriculum and daily schedule;
- A Staff Contact List, Emergency Calling Card, a personalized security code for signing in/out, and an entry key if appropriate.

Training Period

All new and newly-promoted employees undergo a 90-day on-the-job training period. The training period provides an opportunity for both the employee and employer to determine the suitability of the position, schedule, and level of responsibility for each individual. It also enables First Circle and the employee to determine whether additional training and/or assistance is needed to ensure the professional success of the employee.

The first two weeks of the training period are used as an orientation period; the employee will work closely with the Director and team members to assure familiarity and understanding of the policies, practices and philosophies of First Circle. The remainder of the training period is devoted to assuring that the employee is able to meet the performance standards set forth in this manual, and that the employee and employer have compatible expectations for the job. During this time, the Director and/or appropriate staff will mentor the new employee, and will regularly observe and meet with the employee to oversee his/her training and provide support and assistance as needed.

Any new employee who does not meet First Circle's performance standards during the training period may be dismissed without a warning [see Job Performance]. During the training period, new employees are not eligible to accrue PTO, holiday pay, and health/dental insurance coverage [see Benefits section].

At the end of the training period, new and newly promoted employees will be evaluated by the Director as appropriate [see Forms section]. Any areas needing improvement will be identified and a plan devised to assist the employee in meeting the established performance goals. **The Director may choose to extend the training period at her discretion after evaluating the staff member's performance during the initial training period.** At the end of

the training period, the employee becomes eligible for benefits as described in the Benefits section.

Completion of the training period does not imply any change to the Employee-at-will status.

Personnel Files

Personnel files are maintained for each employee, containing the following, as well as any other information deemed appropriate:

- Employment application including general information, employment history, written references and notes from conversations with telephone references, resume, school records, EEC certification documentation and/or information, and First Aid/CPR training information and/or certification;
- Medical information and W4 form,
- Working interview review, written performance reviews and observations, letters of promotion, notices of counseling or disciplinary action;
- Documentation of training, professional growth and development and continuing education;
- Records of time off and schedule change requests and unscheduled absence forms (these forms are kept in a separate locked file cabinet).
- Salary rate, raises, etc.

An additional separate, confidential, and locked file is maintained in a secure place and contains your I-9 form and current BRC information. Employees are responsible for providing any information that needs to be added or updated to the Director. This includes any changes to the personal information kept on file.

Upon request, employees have the right to review their personnel and confidential files at any time during their employment. Files will be made available to the employee within 24 hours of the request, and the employee will be asked to note in his/her file that (s)he has reviewed the enclosed information.

Departure

Employees who wish to resign their position are asked to give at least 30 days written notice, or at least two week's notice. Before departure, information will be provided as applicable about the balance of benefits owed by or due to the employee, available C.O.B.R.A. benefits (see Compensation & Benefits section), and the procedure for final paycheck(s). The employee will be asked to turn in any keys, books or items belonging to First Circle. The Director and Administration may also ask optional confidential questions regarding the individual's employment at First Circle towards the goal of improving operations and gaining insight about others' performance.

JOB PERFORMANCE

We want employees to succeed, and we try to provide every opportunity to excel in the classroom. We support your job performance in many different ways, including mentoring,

training, written resources, observations, professional development plans and goals, and performance reviews.

Supervision Procedures

All employees are supervised on a daily basis. All supervision and communication is conducted in a positive, productive manner to foster professional growth, and the betterment of the school. Daily informal observations are conducted by all members of the Administrative team, including the Director, Business Manager, and owners. Employees are encouraged to approach the Director, Business Manager, or the owners if they have questions or concerns about supervision procedures.

Observations

Throughout the year, each employee is observed a minimum of every two months in their primary classroom by either the Director or appropriate staff. Additional unscheduled observations may also occur at any time, and for any purpose deemed necessary. Observations will include, but are not limited to, how educators interact with children in the following areas:

- Being nurturing and responsive ;
- Supporting children in the development of self-esteem, independence and self-regulation;
- Supporting children in the development of social competence;
- Providing guidance to children in a positive and consistent way based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of children.

Observations will also include how educators are interacting with other educators and staff. Areas of strength will be noted, as well as areas needing improvement or attention. The next steps will be identified, and if needed, will become part of the Professional Development Plan (see below).

Performance Review

We strive to create a supportive professional atmosphere where open and constructive communication can take place. Performance reviews are a tool to help Administration and employees identify performance strengths, and areas needing further development. The review process serves as a means for professional review from a number of different sources; their main goal is to assist each employee in developing professionally, and to give you the feedback necessary to do your job.

Performance reviews are conducted annually and serve as the basis for continued employment and promotion. They also serve as a basis for raises [see Compensation & Benefits section], which may or may not be considered at the same time as the performance review. The review form reflects First Circle's expectations for each employee and is a direct reflection of each individual's job description [see Job Descriptions section].

The review process is as follows:

1. Each employee completes a Self-Review. The Self-Review is an opportunity to take a look at your work and highlight your skills and abilities, as well as areas for development. It is important to be as honest as possible when assessing your professional strengths. You will review your own performance, provide comments about particular responsibilities or areas of responsibility, and communicate any goals you would like to achieve in any area.
2. A random sampling of parents of the children in your care will be asked questions based on your job description about their experience in your classroom. Although we will maintain confidentiality about individual responses, they will be incorporated into your review.
3. Observations from the past year are compiled, reviewed, and used as a primary tool in the review process. Any information recorded throughout the year in the employee's file is also reviewed.
4. The Director completes a review with input from members of the Administrative Team, as appropriate. The review form is identical to the self-review, with one column added so you can see the noted rating next to your own self-rating. Each section will include comments and goals for each section.
5. Employee and Director will meet for the review. You will go through the document carefully together. You will discuss areas of success and areas for development. The Director will be as supportive and honest with you as possible, and allow ample time for discussion.
6. At this time the Director and employee create or update the Professional Development Plan, which is part of review. This plan includes an update of the professional and/or educational goals from the previous year's review goals (if applicable), the goals identified in the current review, and a plan and timeline for addressing those goals.

The review is signed by the employee, one copy is provided to them, and the original to the employee file.

There may be times when an employee disagrees with the assessment contained within the review. Every attempt will be made by the Director to provide examples of issues that may be addressed. An employee may provide written information that explains their perspective, which is then appended to the file. While the employee and Director may not agree on the review, it's important to note that the process is not a negotiation, and information provided will not alter the review.

Wage Review

As an integral part of professional development, each employee's job performance will be evaluated at least annually, and more often as needed or requested. In conjunction with the performance review, each employee's wage rate will be reviewed annually, on or about the anniversary of the employee's date of hire, adjusted review date or change of position, if applicable.

The range of wage increases is established by the owners based on the wage increases offered by other area centers and programs, in conjunction with the inflation rate. An employee's wage increase is based upon a combination of performance of his/her job responsibilities, attendance and punctuality, attitude, and positive reviews by parents, peers, and administration.

If an employee's wage is adjusted for any reason other than the annual review, the date of the change becomes the employee's new wage review anniversary.

Professional Development Plan

A personalized Professional Development Plan is created in conjunction with the performance review. After or during the review, the Director and employee identify three professional goals, what support or assistance is needed to meet those goals, identify a target completion date, and a plan for follow-up. Professional Development Plans can also be created based on an observation, in conjunction with corrective action, or for any other reason deemed appropriate. The employee is provided with a written copy of the plan, and the original is placed in the employee's file.

Promotion/Change in Classroom

When a position becomes available at First Circle for which a current employee may be eligible to fill via a promotion or lateral move, First Circle will give first preference to hiring from within. Eligibility criteria for promotion include qualifications and experience required for the position as written in the job description, and positive performance review(s) at least six months prior to application for promotion. When an employee is approved for promotion, First Circle will strive to place the employee in the new position as soon as possible.

When an employee is promoted, (s)he undergoes the standard 90-day training period. Employees who received benefits prior to their promotion continue to receive and accrue benefits without interruption. At the end of the training period, the standard 90-day review will take place. If an employee does not receive a positive review either at or before this time, the employee will not retain the new position. First Circle will endeavor to provide the employee with another available position.

Corrective Action

Whenever people work together, it is necessary that they conform to established standards of conduct, which are laid out in the job description [see Job Description section]. We believe that employees want to do excellent work and adhere to policy, procedure and regulations. We also believe that our employees will quickly correct any lapse in their work or violations of policies, if these problems are brought to their attention in a professional, cooperative manner that assumes they want to improve. Corrective action may be necessary to protect the rights of other employees, encourage appropriate conduct and cooperation, and obtain expected work performance.

Corrective action is a process of communicating with the employee to improve unacceptable behavior or performance after other methods such as coaching and performance appraisal have not been successful. The goal is to guide the employee to correct performance or behavior by identifying the problems, causes and solutions, not to punish the employee. If there is no improvement or if there are repeat occurrences, correction action may be appropriate.

In general, corrective action is progressive, i.e., beginning with the lowest severity action before employing actions of more severity. Depending on the individual issue, one or more actions may be used, and the process can start with any of the actions outlined below. These actions are not necessarily sequential. We reserve the right to employ more severe corrective action at any time an infraction occurs. The corrective action will be based on the gravity of the offense, the employee's length of service, and the employee's work record.

Important note: Any employee may be put on probation, suspended or be dismissed immediately for committing any actions prohibited by this handbook or engaging in conduct that endangers child safety, interferes with First Circle's operations, or is otherwise, in the sole discretion of Administration, deemed dangerous or improper.

The following guidelines have been formulated to provide for consistent and equitable application of this policy. The corrective action policy has three primary objectives:

1. Maintaining the program's high standards of service and education;
2. Supporting and assisting employees in improving job performance;
3. Facilitating constructive communication between employees and supervisors.

Any corrective action will include the following elements:

- A private meeting with the Director to discuss the specific issue;
- Input from other employees and/or families, when appropriate;
- An opportunity for the employee to provide his/her perspective of the issue.

**Informal
Counseling**

If possible, the first step before formal corrective action would normally be informal counseling. Counseling by the Director will include a written record of the counseling based on specific facts and discussion points. Informal counseling is not a form of corrective action; however, it can be referenced at a later date if corrective action is taken. This discussion can take place during periodic performance reviews or as stand-alone counseling. If twelve months pass following informal counseling and no additional lapses in job performance occur, the informal counseling will normally not be considered when determining future corrective action.

**Verbal &
Written
Warnings**

The first type of formal corrective is a verbal and/or written warning. Specific performance goals and time frame for meeting the goals are specified in the warning. A notation and/or documentation of the warning is noted in the employee's file. If there are more than two warnings in either verbal or written form, further corrective action may be taken. Issues that result in a verbal or written warning may include, but are not limited to:

- not satisfactorily meeting requirements laid out in the job description;
- not adhering to standards of professionalism or communication;
- repeated absenteeism, tardiness, and/or failure to clock in/out;
- not adhering to policies for requesting and using PTO;
- leaving work without approval or permission;
- excessive idle or time spent out of classroom during working hours;
- poor attitude affecting the morale of staff members, families or children;
- dishonesty or failure to report an issue or event that impacts

- negatively on staff, families or children;
- malicious gossiping;
- causing minor damages to equipment or loss of materials resulting from poor judgment or lack of responsibility;
- unauthorized use of First Circle equipment or materials;
- using cell phones or unauthorized electronic devices in the classroom;
- not properly supervising children in the classroom or playground;
- failure to maintain confidentiality;
- inability or refusal to work previously scheduled hours;
- not adhering to solicitation & distribution policy;
- any other similar offense which is not in the best interest of the program and its employees, families or children

Probation and Suspension

If the employee does not show improvement based on the verbal or written warning, or engages in actions prohibited by this handbook or conduct that endangers child safety, interferes with First Circle's operations, or is otherwise, in the sole discretion of Administration deemed dangerous or improper, the corresponding corrective action is placing the employee on probation or suspending the employee with or without pay. In those instances where the action leading to probation or suspension is found not to have been caused by, or the fault of the employee, the employee shall be reinstated without loss of pay or benefits, and no record of the suspension will appear in the employee's personnel file. If an employee is suspended for an alleged abuse or neglect inquiry, they may not return to the classroom until cleared by both EEC and First Circle.

Documentation including a description of and all supporting information of the issue, the date(s) of probation/suspension, and an action plan with details outlining what is needed for the employee to return to work will be provided to the employee as appropriate, and is placed in the employee's file.

Issues that result in probation or suspension may include, but are not limited to:

- Documented, observed or suspected abusive physical, mental or verbal action towards children, families, or staff;
- Excessive absenteeism, tardiness, and/or failure to clock in/out;
- Suspected or attempted theft, or misappropriation of First Circle's property or funds;
- Suspected possession or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- Falsification of documents or records or falsification of benefit claims;
- Not informing the Administration of a health issue that may be contagious or adversely affect the health and well-being of the children in your care;
- Leaving children unattended in classroom or on playground;
- Failure to maintain confidentiality;
- Suspected destruction of First Circle property, materials or equipment;
- Failure to provide required medical information, etc.
- Suspected possession of a weapon or firearm on First Circle property;
- Suspected gambling on First Circle property;
- Refusal to adhere to policies for requesting and using PTO;

- Any similar offense which is not in the best interest of the program and its employees, families or children.

Dismissal

When the misconduct is severe or serious in nature or the employee's behavior has remained unchanged or worsened throughout the corrective action process, the final step is dismissal. If the employee is to be dismissed, a meeting with the Director or other member of the Administration will take place, and specifically address the issue that has resulted in dismissal.

Issues that result in dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Abusive physical, mental or verbal action towards children, families, or staff;
- Poor attitude affecting the morale of staff members, families or children;
- Dishonesty;
- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness;
- Malicious gossiping;
- Theft, attempted theft or misappropriation of First Circle property or funds;
- Falsification of documents or records or falsification of benefit claims;
- Not informing the Administration of a serious health issue that may be contagious or adversely affect the health and well-being of the children in your care;
- Leaving children unattended in the classroom or on the playground;
- Failure to maintain confidentiality;
- Destruction of First Circle property, materials or equipment
- Possession or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- Possession of a weapon or firearm on First Circle property;
- Gambling on First Circle property;

First Circle will never dismiss an employee:

- For refusing to break a law;
- In retaliation for filing a discrimination or safety claim;
- Without following our own stated procedure or policy.

The employee will be provided with a letter outlining the specific dismissal issue, which they will be asked to sign to confirm their acknowledgment of the dismissal. In accordance with state and federal employment laws, they will also be provided with unemployment information, and information outlining the option of enrolling in C.O.B.R.A. (see Compensation & Benefits; Health & Dental section).

If the employee has a positive balance in their PTO bank, any accrued hours will be paid to them at the time of dismissal. If the employee has a negative balance, the hours owed will be deducted from their final paycheck. At the time of dismissal, a check constituting the final worked hours and any PTO balance will be produced.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

There are many reasons that employees choose a place of employment. We believe that providing a supportive, respectful and fun environment is as important as offering competitive

salaries and benefits. We work hard to ensure that our staff feels that our compensation and benefits recognize and value their contribution and dedication to children.

Compensation

Compensation is calculated by multiplying hourly wages by the number of hours and/or minutes worked in a particular work week.

Wages	Starting hourly wage for each employee is determined on an individual basis before hiring, and is based upon qualifications, experience, training, education and job responsibility. All non-administrative employees are paid on an hourly basis.
Time Sheet	Every week, employees are provided with a Time Sheet that reflects each Clock In/Out Time you entered into the ProCare system. The time sheet is a legal document that must accurately reflect hours and include the signature of the employee in order to receive compensation.
Payday	Employees are paid on a weekly basis every Friday. New employees will receive a paycheck the second Friday after their first day of employment.
Direct Deposit	You may elect to have your entire paycheck (or a portion of it) directly deposited into your checking or savings account, or a combination of up to six accounts. The funds are available at the start of business on the payday, and employees who have elected this option and submitted a Direct Deposit Authorization form will receive the regular pay stub indicating the amount of pay deposited and the itemization.

Compensation Categories

All employees are eligible for the following compensation categories, except as noted. Your paycheck will categorize your wages by the names listed below, or "Other," as applicable:

Work Hours	The weekly Time Sheet reflects all hours worked. The work week begins on Sunday at 12:01 AM and ends on Saturday at 12:00 midnight. Employees are compensated for any time therein spent on the premises at First Circle.
Overtime	<p>As required by the federal government, all First Circle employees, except those considered exempt from the law, are paid one and one-half times their hourly salary for any hours worked in excess of 40 hours per work. Overtime must be approved in advance by Administration. By federal law, "comp" time is not available. Employees must be authorized by Administration to come in early, work late, or work through scheduled breaks.</p> <p>For the purposes of calculating overtime, hours paid are defined as hours actually worked, not including PTO, holiday, emergency closure, leave of any kind or other personal time. They are exclusive of any meal or other break time for which you are required to sign out, as well as unscheduled, unapproved time worked.</p>

Any overtime worked should be pre-approved by the Director or member of the Administration.

Non-exempt employees include Teachers and Teaching Assistant. The only exempt employees at First Circle are select members of the Administrative team, who are salaried, and therefore not eligible for overtime.

Late pick-up

The late fee rate of \$1.00 per minute per child is determined by the time they **leave** First Circle. The late fee is paid directly to the Teacher. The late fee can either be paid directly at the time of pick-up or is paid by the parent with their next tuition payment and paid to the Teacher (minus taxes) with the next paycheck. Teachers are also paid their hourly wage for the additional time. For children who are scheduled to depart at 12:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m., the same procedure applies; however, it is not paid to the staff member, it is instead given to the classroom budget if the fee exceeds \$20.00.

Professional Development & Training

Employees are paid for Professional Development and Trainings at their regular hourly rate. We do not pay for travel time or expenses. Time attended must be reflected on the Time Sheets. Staff must work the day before and the day after the professional development or training opportunity to be eligible for pay.

ALL EMPLOYEES

- 100% for mandatory First Aid and CPR training taken at First Circle
- 100% of training costs for EEC mandated training
- In addition to course registration costs, employees are paid for their time in attendance

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

Employees are eligible for tuition and other professional development reimbursement as outlined below. All requests for reimbursement must be approved by the Director in advance of registration or enrollment in the class or course. No reimbursement is made for tuition or professional development already completed or in progress. Annual reimbursement amount per class or professional development activity is limited to \$500 per semester, with a maximum of \$1000 per calendar year. Upon completion, the employee will meet with the Director to present an overview of their learning. The Director will determine whether and when that learning is to be presented by the employee and/or shared with other employees.

After six months of continued employment at First Circle

- 75% towards approved workshops, conferences and seminars
- 75% towards CDA approved courses

After one year of continued employment at First Circle

- 75% towards any approved Early Childhood Education class

*funds will be reimbursed after proof of course completion with a passing grade

Staff Meetings

Employees are paid for attending Staff Meetings at their regular hourly rate. Time attended is noted separately from the time clock system.

Public

Employees are paid for attending Public Relations Events at a flat rate of

Relations	\$10.00 per hour for the time attended. Time attended is noted separately from the time clock system.
Jury Duty	Employees will be reimbursed for time taken for Jury Duty at their regular wage rate, up to a time when reimbursement is taken over by a government agency.
Bereavement Leave	Employees will be reimbursed for Bereavement Leave at their regular wage rate.

For the compensation categories listed below, employees must have successfully completed the three-month training period, and be regularly scheduled for at least 20 hours per week. Your paycheck will categorize your wages by the names listed below, or "Other," as applicable:

Benefit Deductions	Deductions from paychecks are made for any health and dental premiums, child care, IRA or other benefits. Deductions for the employee's contribution to health and dental care plans are made in pre-tax dollars. This means that the employee does not pay state and federal taxes on this portion of his/her wages.
Paid Time Off (PTO)	Employees are compensated for all Paid Time Off (PTO) at their regular hourly wage, unless otherwise indicated [see Time Off section]. PTO must be noted on the Time Sheet in order to be compensated.
Holidays	Employees are compensated for Holidays at their regular hourly wage. Hours compensated are for regularly scheduled hours on the day of the holiday. If you regularly work a four hour day on Monday, and the holiday falls on a Monday, you will be paid for four hours only. Employees must work all scheduled hours on the day before and day after the holiday to be compensated. Also, if the day before or after the holiday is approved PTO, the holiday will be paid. If the day before or after the holiday is not approved PTO, and you have an unplanned absence, the holiday will be paid at the discretion of Administration, and may require additional documentation.
Referral	Eligibility and guidelines for referral compensation are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Families must attend for at least one month before a referral is paid. • Referral amount will be calculated and paid at the discretion of Administration.
Emergency Closing	Employees are paid at their regular hourly wage for the hours they were regularly scheduled to work when First Circle has an emergency closing due to severe weather or other emergency (such as loss of heat).
Maternity Leave	Employees are paid at their regular wage rate for Maternity Leave. Guidelines and exceptions are noted in the Benefits section.

BENEFITS

Because we value our staff, we provide a generous benefits policy as part of our employment package. We offer eligible employees a competitive health and/or dental plan(s) with employer contribution of 50%, and a variety of other benefits as described below. As a small business with fewer than 50 employees, First Circle is not required to offer health insurance or other benefits to employees. However, we feel strongly about providing our staff with benefits, and comply with all federal and state laws designed to protect benefit recipients.

Eligibility

Staff members become eligible for benefits after their 90-day training period has ended, provided they receive a positive review. Permanent staff members consistently working 20 or more hours a week throughout the year are eligible for benefits. Part-time employees hired for a regular schedule of less than 20 hours per week are not eligible for benefits, regardless of scheduled hours, unless they change status permanently to 20 or more hours. Employees hired on a substitute or temporary basis are not eligible for benefits, regardless of hours worked.

If a non-eligible employee's status permanently changes to one that entitles the employee to benefits, benefit coverage begins on the first date of active work with the new schedule. If an eligible employee's status permanently changes to one that does not entitle the employee to benefits, benefit coverage ceases on the effective date of change.

For purposes of benefit eligibility only, hours worked include approved PTO and other paid time as listed below. Required sign-out times, including breaks and unscheduled time worked, are not considered part of the calculation.

Paid Time Off (PTO)

Paid Time Off (PTO) provides an accrued bank of hours to be used and paid from to take time off from work. PTO can be used for vacation, personal time, illness, personal emergencies, time off to care for dependents, or for medical, dental or other appointments. PTO is available to each eligible staff member to be used for rest and relaxation, to handle personal business and for short-term illness. PTO eliminates the need for separate vacation, personal and sick time by combining the time off components into one category.

PTO does not include scheduled holidays, or time off for jury duty or bereavement leave. Questions about PTO earned and used should be referred to Administration.

Accrual Eligible staff members will accrue PTO weekly based on the number of hours worked and the length of employment (see chart below). PTO is added to the employee's PTO bank when the weekly paycheck is issued. PTO is accrued in pay periods during which approved unpaid leave or workers' compensation leave are taken.

During the first three years of employment, eligible First Circle employees accrue PTO at a rate of **.06548 for every hour worked** (in an eligible pay

category) from January 1 through December 31. The chart below provides you with sample accrual totals based on hours worked.

HOURS WORKED	ACCRUAL RATE	HOURS ACCRUED WEEKLY (hours x rate)	HOURS ACCRUED ANNUALLY (weekly hours x 52 weeks)
40	.06548	2.62	136.2 hours or approximately 17 (8 hour) days
38	.06548	2.49	129.4 hours or approximately 16 (8 hour) days
35	.06548	2.29	119.2 hours or almost 15 (8 hour) days
30	.06548	1.96	102.15 hours or almost 13 (8 hour) days
20	.06548	1.31	68.1 hours or approximately 8.5 (8 hour) days

After three-year of employment, eligible First Circle employees accrue PTO at a rate of **.08846 for every hour worked** (in an eligible pay category) continue to accrue vacation time for every hour worked (in an eligible pay category), from January 1 through December 31. The chart below provides you with sample accrual totals based on hours worked.

AVERAGE HOURS	ACCRUAL RATE	HOURS ACCRUED WEEKLY (hours x rate)	HOURS ACCRUED ANNUALLY (weekly hours x 52 weeks)
40	.08846	3.54	184 hours or approximately 23 (8 hour) days
38	.08846	3.36	174.8 hours or approximately 22 (8 hour) days
35	.08846	3.10	161 hours or almost 20 (8 hour) days
30	.08846	2.65	138 hours or approximately 17 (8 hour) days
20	.08846	1.77	92 hours or approximately 11.5 (8 hour) days

PTO accrues for every hour paid in any of the following eligible pay categories:

- Regular Hours Worked,
- Staff Meeting Hours,
- Holiday Hours Paid,
- Delayed Opening/Emergency Closing Hours,
- Bereavement Hours Paid,
- Other Paid Hours,
- PTO Hours (you will still accrue PTO hours for the time period that PTO is taken)

Requesting & Using PTO

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Please be efficient. Try to schedule appointments outside your work day, particularly if you work less than full-time. We have also built a half-day into most full-time staff schedules to facilitate this.

Please be timely. Please request PTO as soon as possible. While we understand that everybody has appointments and responsibilities that cannot always be scheduled outside of work time, it is harder to be accommodating when we aren't notified of the appointment in a timely manner.

Please be considerate. When you are out, your co-workers must cover for you. When the Administration is forced to go into the classroom, the operation of the program suffers. Our policy is that in order to maintain a quality program, we will not move children unless we absolutely have to. If you are consistently out, you place a burden on everyone.

To be eligible for PTO, staff members must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Requests for PTO should be submitted using the following timetable, except in cases of urgent appointments or emergencies:
 - 1-3 days – submit at least two weeks in advance.
 - 3 or more days – submit at least one month in advance.
 - More than two consecutive weeks – submit at least two months in advance.
2. PTO is requested in one hour increments. No less than one hour can be requested.
3. All requests for PTO must be submitted on a PTO Form and put in the marked box. No request will be processed or PTO approved without the use of this form.
4. In all instances, PTO must be approved by Administration. The returned, signed PTO Form is confirmation of approval.
5. A signed copy of the PTO Form will be returned to you within one week, noting approval or inability to cover. If the latter, Administration may ask if you have the flexibility to change your request.
6. By pre-arrangement and written approval by Administration, staff members may make up hours missed instead of using PTO, but only if the hours are made up within the same week.
7. If staff members request PTO for the same time, the staff member who submits the request first will get preference. If staff members submit a request at the same time, the staff member with seniority will get preference.
8. If you are out unexpectedly, you must indicate on your time sheet the hours that you wish to take from PTO, and submit an Unscheduled Absence Form upon your return.
9. Any absence in excess of a staff member's current PTO accrued balance

that results in a negative balance (hours have gone below 0) will be allocated to PTO *before* any unpaid leave is allowed.

10. If you have used all of your PTO for the year, unpaid time may be only be taken at the discretion of the Administration.
11. PTO accrued prior to the start of a requested and approved leave of absence must be used in advance of or during the leave of absence.

BORROWING PTO

If an employee has or is nearing a negative balance in their PTO they may borrow up to one week of their regularly scheduled total hours

CARRY-OVER

Eligible staff members may carry-over a maximum of 40 hours of PTO into the following year. Staff members are responsible for monitoring their PTO balance over the course of a year via their weekly paycheck so that they do not lose time accrued when the current calendar year ends.

If emergency or unexpected work requirement causes you to forgo scheduled PTO already approved, special arrangements may be made by Administration and will be confirmed in writing.

BUY

Staff members may also choose to buy up to one week of their regularly scheduled hours of PTO to use in advance. Please ask the Director for the Personal Time Purchase form to request approval to buy PTO. All requests will be processed and returned to you within two weeks. You may buy PTO at any point throughout the year in one-hour increments for the next calendar year. The amount of PTO you buy will be paid back to First Circle by deducting a specified amount from your paycheck weekly over a period of time, but must be paid back before you take the PTO you buy. The amount deducted and number of weeks paid back will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

NOTE: Any PTO “bought” will be paid back with the employee’s usual taxes deducted.

For example:

- You want to “buy” the maximum amount of PTO allowed = 40 hours
- Your gross wages = \$480 week ($\$12/\text{hour} \times 40 \text{ hours}$)
- The \$480 worth of PTO you buy can be paid back by having \$9 deducted weekly from your paycheck for 52 weeks or one year. ($\$480/52=\9)

PAY OUT

At the end of each calendar year, staff members may request to pay out up to 75% of one week of their regularly scheduled hours of accrued PTO, within the following guidelines:

- You may elect pay out in one-hour increments.
- Pay out can be combined with carry-over.
- The PTO pay out amount will be paid to you either in a lump sum (for

amounts less than \$200) **or** by adding a specified amount to your paycheck weekly over a period of time.

- Use the PTO Form to request approval from the Director to buy out PTO. All requests will be processed and returned to you within two weeks.
- Pay out amount and number of weeks paid back will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

For example:

- You want to buy out the maximum amount of PTO allowed = 40 hours
- Calculate 75% of 40 hours (40 x 75% = 30)
- Your gross wages = \$480 week (\$12/hour x 40 hours)
- Calculate your buy out amount (\$12/hour x 30 hours = \$360)
- You have \$360 worth of PTO to buy out be paid back to you

**Attendance/
Absences**

If you become ill or have a personal emergency for which you must miss work, you must use PTO to be compensated for your absence. First Circle does not permit unpaid time off for absence. Specific protocol is to be followed when providing notice of absence, and is outlined under Employment Policies.

Other Paid Time

Holidays

First Circle is closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Patriot's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Friday before Labor Day *
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day *
- Veterans Day *
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day
- *Staff training days

In addition, we close at 4 p.m. on the following days:

- Day before Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- New Year's Eve

The actual dates of these holidays listed above will be posted at First Circle as they occur. If the holiday falls on a Saturday, we will be closed on the Friday preceding. If the holiday falls on a Sunday, we will be closed on the Monday following.

Professional Development & Training	Professional development courses, trainings, seminars, and workshops previously approved by the Director are paid time. Professional development hours are also available for staff members to visit other programs. This time can be arranged by the Director, and Administration is always open to suggestions for professional time you would like to take.
Staff Meetings	Staff meetings are mandatory and are generally held the third Tuesday of every month from 6:30-8:30 PM. A dinner at 6:00 is provided by First Circle. Staff meetings can not be missed unless approved by the Director.
Public Relations	<p>First Circle works in partnership with families, and hosts events outside of operating hours to reinforce that positive relationship. There are annual social events, including the Fall Festival and Spring Fling, as well as classroom pot luck dinners, outings, parent outreach events, and a variety of other events and activities. Attendance is strongly encouraged, although not mandatory. Your attendance and participation is noted and impacts on your annual performance review and wage review.</p> <p>Occasionally, First Circle may request your attendance at events that promote and market the program. For these events, you will be asked to represent the program .</p>
Jury Duty	Leave may be taken with prior approval for jury duty. Employees will be paid their regular wages for their time, up to a time when reimbursement is taken over by a government agency.
Maternity Leave	<p>All female employees are eligible to receive up to three (3) paid weeks of their regularly scheduled hours, following the birth or adoption of a child, provided they return to First Circle at the completion of their leave. Employees earn one week paid Maternity Leave for every year worked, up to a maximum of three weeks for three or more years of employment. We do not pay for paternity leave. Unpaid leave up to a total of 12 weeks may also be taken and added to Maternity Leave (see Unpaid Leave).</p> <p>The following conditions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The weeks of paid Maternity Leave are included in the 12-week total; • Maternity Leave must be taken consecutively; • Once paid Maternity Leave is used, all PTO hours must be used before any unpaid leave is taken; • If you receive health/dental benefits, during paid Maternity Leave the Employer portion will continue to be paid, and benefit deductions (if applicable) will continue throughout; • During paid Maternity Leave only, PTO hours will continue to accrue; • Upon return from leave, full benefits resume; • Regardless of the reason, failure to return from leave by the approved return date will be considered a resignation effective on the first day of leave.
Bereavement Leave	<p><u>IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER</u></p> <p>When a death occurs in an employee’s immediate family, all regular, full time employees may take up to three (3) days off with pay to attend the funeral or make funeral arrangements. Part-time employees may take</p>

prorated hours if the funeral occurs on a scheduled work day.

Immediate Family Defined for Bereavement Leave

Immediate family members are defined as an employee's spouse, parents, stepparents, siblings, children, stepchildren, grandparent, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, or grandchild.

NON-FAMILY MEMBER FUNERAL LEAVE

All regular, full-time employees may take up to one (1) day off with pay to attend the funeral of a close, non-family member. This time off will be considered by the employee's supervisor on a case-by-case basis. The pay for time off will be prorated for a part-time employee if the funeral occurs on scheduled work days.

Unpaid Personal Leave

First Circle does not permit unpaid time off or leave without prior approval from the Director, and only then in extenuating circumstances. However, we understand that life can present challenges that must be addressed outside of work for extended periods of time. Offering unpaid leave for personal reasons is the best way we can continue to support our eligible employees and their individual needs. Unpaid Personal Leave may be taken for needs and situations that cannot be handled with PTO (including borrowing and buying of hours). This includes time needed to deal with short-term illness (including illness of someone you are caring for), personal emergencies, time off to care for dependents, or to handle personal business.

We ask that, whenever possible, you provide us with flexibility in the start and end date of requested leave. When requesting unpaid leave, the following requirements must be met:

- You must have worked at First Circle for at least 1,250 hours in the last 12 months (an average of about 24 hours per week);
- The request must be submitted in writing, with as much advance time possible;
- An employee on an approved leave of less than 30 days will be reinstated to the position and salary held immediately preceding the commencement of the leave. Although we will try our utmost, we cannot guarantee an employee who takes leave longer than 30 days will be returned to their prior classroom and schedule.

Once unpaid Leave is approved, the following conditions apply:

- If you participate in our health/dental plan, or any arrangement for which a deduction is made from your paycheck, the Business Manager must approve any special arrangements that would allow coverage to continue;
- Employees are responsible for 100% of the cost of applicable health and dental plans while on unpaid Leave. The monthly premium must be paid by the first of the month for the month ahead - failure to make timely payment will cause the coverage to lapse;
- While on unpaid Leave, employees do not accrue PTO hours;
- Scheduled wage reviews will be adjusted forward by the amount of time on Leave. The adjusted date will become the new annual wage review date;
- Regardless of the reason, failure to return from any approved leave of absence by the approved return date will be considered a resignation from First Circle.

- If an employee suffers a medical condition that prohibits working, First Circle ensures the employee returning from medical leave will be returned to the same or comparable position.
- Upon return from leave, full benefits resume.

Additional Benefits

Health/Dental Insurance

First Circle offers health and dental plans that meet high standards of coverage, availability of care, and administrative efficiency. The dental plan is available as a separate option from the health plan. Informational brochures that provide specific information about each health care option are available from the Business Manager. It is your responsibility to read the information, contact the designated person at the plan to ask any questions, and make a decision about which, if any, health care package to choose. We reserve the right to alter, amend, delete, cancel or otherwise change any health or dental plan offered by First Circle at any time.

Employees working 20 or more hours a week are eligible for health/dental care coverage as listed below. Individual and Family plans are available. Please see the Business Manager for rates and details.

The health and dental care plans each allow an open enrollment period once each year; at that time, you may enroll if you were not previously enrolled. We will advise you annually of plan enrollment dates, rates, and deadlines. If you did not enroll in the health and dental plan when you first became eligible for coverage or during the open enrollment period, you will only be eligible if you have a qualifying event (e.g. loss of other coverage, birth of a child, etc.). It is your responsibility to notify the Business Manager if you are interested in enrolling in a plan. To enroll in a plan, you must complete an application form and submit it in time. Once enrolled in a health or dental plan, please refer to the summary of benefit coverage from your carrier for further details about coverage.

When electing to participate in a health care or dental plan, you are making an annual commitment to pay your share of premiums. Your level of coverage will be changed if: your employment status at First Circle changes to one that no longer qualifies you for enrollment in the plan; you notify us in writing of a family status change (marriage, divorce, birth, or death of a spouse or child); or you provide us with a written request to cancel your insurance coverage for any other reason.

Your contributions to the health and dental insurance premiums are deducted pre-tax from each weekly paycheck and are itemized separately on your pay stub. This means that you do not pay state and federal taxes on this portion of your wages.

Simple IRA Plan

After one year of employment, eligible employees may sign up to participate in our retirement plan. A Simple IRA is a retirement savings plan

designed specifically for employees of small businesses. If an eligible employee chooses to participate, they will make pre-tax contributions through their paycheck to their account (no taxes are paid), until the money is withdrawn at retirement. First Circle also contributes to your account matching your contribution, dollar for dollar, up to 3% of your gross pay, allowing your savings to accumulate even faster over the years.

For specific information, employees must meet with our Financial Advisor (please ask Administration for contact information) to set up a plan that is suited to your individual needs.

Child Care Discount

First Circle offers a 50% discount off the current tuition for staff with a child enrolled at First Circle. A limited number of enrollment spaces are allocated for employees' children.

For staff with more than one child enrolled at First Circle, we offer a 50% discount off tuition of each child, plus a 10% sibling discount off the tuition of the older child(ren).

The staff member must be the parent or legal guardian of the child. Grandchildren, siblings, nieces, nephews or any other relations are not eligible for the discount, although we do offer a Friends and Family childcare discount. The employee must be actively at work to receive the benefit.

All requirements for enrollment apply, and the staff member must abide by all First Circle policies. The amount of weekly child care is deducted from the employee's weekly paycheck, and is itemized separately on the pay stub.

Employee & Staff Referral

We offer a referral bonus to any staff member who refers a new full-time staff member or family to our program. Eligibility requirements and compensation process is found in the Compensation and Benefits section.

Workers Compensation

Every employee is entitled to Workers' Compensation. Employers are required by Massachusetts General Laws c. 152, § 25A to provide workers' compensation (WC) insurance coverage to all their employees. This insurance pays for any reasonable and necessary medical treatment related to the injury or illness and also pays partial compensation for lost wages after the first five calendar days of total or partial disability. Current information about our insurance carrier is posted on the labor law poster in the kitchen.

It is your responsibility to let Administration know if you think the injury or illness may cause you to seek medical attention or lose time from work. This procedure must be followed in order for your medical bills – if any – to be covered by our Workers' Compensation insurance:

1. Staff member (or witness) reports injury to member of Administration.
2. We complete a FORM 101 (Employer's First Report of Injury or Fatality), including as much detail of the injury as possible, within 5 days of the injury.
3. We give the injured employee the following information to be provided

to the health care provider: Our insurance carrier's name, phone number, and policy number as well as the newly assigned case number. I usually list my contact information for any additional questions.

4. If the injury results in just medical bills, or fewer than five full or partial calendar days of disability, we will report it just to our WC carrier to report the injury, supplying them with all pertinent information from the form and receiving an assigned case number
5. If the injury results in five or more full or partial calendar days of disability, we will report the injury to the DIA (Department of Industrial Accidents) as well as our WC carrier within seven days of the injury.
6. All initial medical bills will be covered through our Worker's Comp Insurance.
7. The employee will be paid for any hours worked only, and day of the injury is considered the first calendar day of disability.
8. The insurance company has 14 calendar days from the date they receive the Employer's First Report of Injury or Fatality - Form 101 to mail a check and the Insurer's Notification of Payment - Form 103 to the employee; or if they intend to contest the claim, to send a certified letter denying compensation via an Insurer's of Denial - Form 104.
9. The injured employee will then be contacted directly by the caseworker assigned to their claim and all subsequent reasonable and necessary medical treatment needs will be approved.
10. You should start getting a check (60% of total gross average weekly wage) within three to four weeks after your injury or illness. You will receive compensation for lost wages for any days you are disabled after the first five full or partial calendar days. (You are not compensated for the first five calendar days of incapacity unless you are disabled for 21 calendar days or more.)

C.O.B.R.A.

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) allows employees with a qualifying event, including retirement, resignation or dismissal, the option to continue group coverage for a limited period of time. This also applies to their dependents who lose coverage because of divorce or legal separation; death of the covered employee; the covered employee qualifying for Medicare; or a loss of dependent status under the health plan's provisions. COBRA applies only to employers with 20 or more employees.

First Circle will provide you with a written notice stating your right to elect COBRA either in person or within 14 days of the qualifying event. Qualified beneficiaries are offered benefits identical to those received immediately before qualifying for continuation coverage. The election period is the time frame during which each qualified beneficiary may choose whether to continue health care coverage under an employer's group health plan. Qualified beneficiaries have a 60-day period to elect whether to continue coverage. This period is measured from the later of the coverage loss date

or the date the notice to elect COBRA coverage is sent. COBRA coverage is retroactive if elected and paid for by the qualified beneficiary. Once you select COBRA coverage, you have to pay 100 percent of the total insurance cost.

COBRA beneficiaries generally are eligible to pay for group coverage during a maximum of 18 months. Certain qualifying events, or a second qualifying event during the initial period of coverage, may permit a beneficiary to receive a maximum of 36 months of coverage.

Coverage begins on the date that coverage would otherwise have been lost by reason of a qualifying event and can end when:

- The last day of maximum coverage is reached
- Premiums are not paid on a timely basis
- The employer ceases to maintain any group health plan
- Coverage is obtained with another employer group health plan that does not contain any exclusion or limitation with respect to any pre-existing condition
- A beneficiary is entitled to Medicare benefits

Professional Growth and Development

We place a high value on education and learning at First Circle, and we believe that process begins with staff. We provide you with a number of opportunities and resources for growth and enhancement of your professional skills. Some of the workshops and trainings are mandatory, and some are optional.

Whatever your professional development goals are, we will encourage and support you in a process of on-going learning and self-development.

Staff Training We are required by state licensing requirements to provide (and each staff member is required to complete) a specific amount of training for all staff members throughout the year. We also believe strongly that we can all benefit from more education. For these reasons, we provide opportunities for staff to attend professional workshops and seminars and schedule in-house training seminars. Training hours are calculated from January to December of each year.

EEC requires that staff members attend the following amount of training hours:

Educators working fewer than 10 hours per week: 5 hours per year, a minimum of 2 of those hours must address Diverse Learners.

Educators working at least 10 but fewer than 20 hours per week: 12 hours per year, a minimum of 4 of those hours must address Diverse Learners.

Educators working 20 or more hours per week: 20 hours per year, a minimum of 7 of those must address Diverse Learners.

STAFF TRAINING DAYS

Columbus Day is our scheduled day for mandatory staff training. Each

October, we provide First Aid, CPR, Medication Administration (5 Rights) and Emergency Management training for staff members. These sessions are mandatory for those whose certification will expire in the coming year. All staff must attend the Emergency Management portion. Staff who do not need to take one segment or another have the option to stay and clean classrooms or other common areas, complete curriculum projects, or meet with teams. All staff will be paid at their hourly rate of pay for the time they are in attendance on this day.

The Director will suggest and approve training opportunities as well as track completed training hours. In addition, MA EEC requires that each educator must register annually with the Professional Qualifications Registry maintained by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, inputting all required information, and then submitting confirmation to the Director. Please go to the website www.eec.state.ma.us/PQRegistry/ to complete this process and process your confirmation.

PQ Registry

Each educator is required to register annually with the Professional Qualifications Registry maintained by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Information is to be entered and regularly updated, and a printed confirmation provided to the Director. Please go to the website www.eec.state.ma.us/PQRegistry/ to complete the required forms and print your confirmation. You may use the computer in the staff room or complete at home.

First Aid/CPR Certification

Each employee is responsible for maintaining a current First Aid certificate to be renewed every three years. All teachers must maintain a current CPR certificate to be renewed every year. Group First Aid & CPR training sessions will be conducted by First Circle on a yearly basis; employees needing certification or re-certification are expected to attend. First Circle pays for 100% of First Aid/CPR training of employees. Employees are also compensated for their time, at their hourly rate of pay.

If an employee begins employment at First Circle before the annual First Aid/CPR training session and they can't provide current certification, we may ask that they arrange for certification on their own. First Circle will reimburse the employee for the cost of the First Aid/CPR training session, and compensate the employee for their time if the training has been pre-approved.

Note: If current employees do not attend the provided, scheduled First Aid/CPR training, they are fully responsible for arranging and financing alternate training within 30 days.

Professional Development Plan

Annually, each staff member will develop their own Professional Development Plan in collaboration with the Director. This plan will consist of three professional goals, what support or assistance is needed to meet those goals, a target completion date, and a plan for follow-up. Additionally, these goals will be discussed during annual reviews or other meetings as necessary, to track progress.

Continuing

First Circle strongly believes in the value of continuing learning and

Education education. As an educational facility, we make every effort to support our employees' pursuit of personal and professional growth through a variety of channels. We support continuing education with a tuition reimbursement program [see Compensation].

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

First Circle strives to implement employment policies that are fair to both the employee and employer, and are as generous as or more so than those of other early education programs. The policies described in this manual have been thoroughly researched, and are consistent with federal and state employment laws, and conform to accepted employment practices in the field of Early Childhood Education.

Operating Hours First Circle is open each day from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. We do not follow the Lexington Public Schools calendar. We remain open year-round.

Work Schedules Because First Circle is open eleven hours a day, staff schedules must be coordinated carefully. Employee schedules are determined by enrollment, availability, and seniority. Although we will do our best to respect individual preferences for schedules, staff members are expected to work the schedule we have determined will best maintain a high standard of care for our children and families. **All full-time teachers in the classroom must work at least two days per week until 6 p.m.** We reserve the right to increase or reduce or eliminate staff hours or employment due to a change in student enrollment.

Whenever possible, schedules are determined seasonally, and each employee will be provided a copy of their schedule for the upcoming three months. Temporary schedules may be devised to cover vacations, leaves of absence, changes in enrollment, etc. Temporary schedules are determined on a weekly basis, and we make every effort to advise you in writing by Thursday of the week before of the next week's schedule. First Circle's administration will work cooperatively with individual staff if a temporary schedule is necessary, and will provide staff with a clear beginning and end date of the temporary schedule.

The following guidelines apply to work schedules:

- Full-time: scheduled to work 30 paid hours or more per week.
- Part-time: scheduled to work less than 30 paid hours per week.
- The work week begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday.
- Educators are expected to be in their classroom ready to begin work at their designated start time.
- Staff members may not work more than, less than, or make any changes to their established schedule without prior authorization from the Administration.

Clocking In & Out Each employee must clock in and out daily using the ProCare system. In addition, employees are required to review their weekly time sheet, and

record and correct any errors.

We are required by federal law to maintain accurate time sheets for time worked by our employees. Therefore, it is imperative that all First Circle staff follow the sign in/out procedures and review their printed time sheet. Time sheet printouts are distributed on Mondays for review. All staff must review, sign, and return their time sheet no later than Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. for the previous week. The time sheet is a legal document and must include the accurate times and signature of the employee for the time period indicated. Weekly time sheets must include time spent in team meetings, staff meetings, parent conferences, parent social events and other additional activities.

Schedule Change

If you would like to request a change to your current schedule, a Staff Schedule Change Form must be completed and submitted to the Director. Please note that no request is guaranteed, so you should not schedule classes or outside activities until you receive approval from the Director. You will be notified as soon as possible whether your request has been approved, and an explanation will be provided if the request cannot be accommodated. No change to the current schedule may occur without prior approval. Seniority, availability of coverage, and job performance are the most important factors considered by the Administration when deciding whether to approve a schedule change.

Breaks

Because of the inherently stressful nature of childcare, we encourage all staff members to take regular breaks during their work day. **No staff member may skip or change a scheduled break without approval from Administration.** By state law, any employee working six or more hours must be provided with a half-hour unpaid meal break. Employees may choose to take an unpaid meal break, or may take two 15-minute unpaid breaks during their shifts (provided that their work time does not exceed 6 hours before or after their break). You must clock in and out for any break, and may leave the premises if you wish. You may NOT take this break in any classroom. All breaks will be scheduled and covered by qualified personnel. Employees leaving the building for anything other than these scheduled breaks (i.e. smoking or taking a personal phone call) must obtain coverage AND CLOCK OUT. Although it is a rare occurrence, due to unexpected absences or unforeseen circumstances, it occasionally becomes necessary for the Administration to request employees to either forego taking their scheduled break (leaving early instead), or to take their break earlier or later than scheduled.

There are certain times when it may be necessary for you to leave the class under the supervision of your co-worker for a short period of time, including: bathroom breaks (for staff or bathroom/diaper changes for one of the children in your class); occasional phone calls; getting/preparing snacks for the children; getting/preparing materials for a particular project; or coming to talk to the Administration about a pertinent issue that cannot wait until the end of your shift. In all cases, we expect that you will be considerate of your co-workers and of your

Attendance, Punctuality & Absences

responsibility to your class, and keep time out of the classroom under ten minutes. For any other reason, or for any purpose that takes you out of the building (examples: to go out to get lunch, or to smoke a cigarette) you must use your scheduled break time.

As in any business, dependability of our employees is essential to the operation of the center. We rely on you. Our policy is to make fair and reasonable allowances for an employee's absence, being aware that a moderate amount of absence due to sickness or emergency situations is often beyond your control. Staff who are consistently late or absent place a burden on all of us, and especially on the children. Dependability is one of the key factors we consider when we determine raises, schedules, bonuses and advancement. Excessive tardiness or absenteeism, regardless of prior notification, may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

If you become ill or have a personal emergency for which you must miss work, you must follow the procedures outlined below:

- You **must provide at least 2 hours notice prior to an absence**. If you are calling during center hours, you **must** speak with someone. Do not leave a message. If it is after hours or before opening, and you are not a scheduled opener, you may leave a message on the attendance hotline, NOT on the Director's voicemail. Every staff member has a copy of the most current phone numbers for all staff and administration. Additional copies are always available in the office.
- **If you are scheduled to open at 7:00 a.m.** and are not able to come in, you must call the Program Administrator's cell phone by 5:30 a.m. If the Program Administrator is unavailable, or you reach a voice mail, you must then contact the Director to ensure coverage is arranged. If you are scheduled to open at 7:00 a.m., please check for staff absence messages.
- To protect the health of your co-workers and yourself, we follow the guidelines used for children in determining whether you should come to work. If you have a fever, are coughing extensively, or have gastrointestinal symptoms, you must stay home. The decision of whether you (or your child) are too sick to come to work must be made by you. If there is a question of whether you can come in, we will apprise you of our staffing/children situation. However, only you can make the final decision of whether you should work, bearing in mind your contagiousness, your alternatives for child care, and your overall attendance patterns.
- If you are out sick or for an emergency and have not completed a Time-Off Form in advance, or you were late for your shift in excess of 30 minutes, you must submit an Unscheduled Absence Form to the Director within 24 hours of your return. Additionally, PTO must be recorded on your Time Sheet.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCE

As in any business, dependability of our employees is essential to the operation of the center. We rely on you. Our policy is to make fair and reasonable allowances for an employee's absence, being aware that a moderate amount of absence due to sickness or emergency situations is often beyond your control. Educators who are consistently absent place

a burden on all of us, and especially on the children. Staff members who have an unplanned absence of more than three consecutive scheduled days may be required to present a doctor's note. Dependability will be one of the key factors we consider when we determine raises, schedules, bonuses and advancement.

**Classroom
Assignment &
Teaching Team**

Classroom and teaching team assignments are based on a variety of factors, including certification, work experience, suitability for a particular age group, compatibility with other educators, personal preference, and the needs of the program. Assignments are also assessed based on daily need, and educators may be asked to temporarily substitute for an absent teacher in another classroom. When such situations occur, we will make every attempt to assign educators to a classroom within their program. Employees may request and be considered for re-assignment of classroom and/or teaching team.

**Late Pick-Up Of
Children**

If children are still in attendance after 6:00 p.m., a teacher will be asked to stay with a member of Administration until the last parent picks up. The Teacher is then responsible for providing a Late Pick-Up form to the family when they arrive to pick up their child that outlines the time and fee that will be charged. Families are not charged for the first time they are late. Families who arrive after 6:00 p.m. are charged a late fee at the rate of \$1.00 per minute per child; the fee is determined by the time they leave First Circle. The late fee is paid directly to the Teacher. The late fee can either be paid directly at the time of pick-up or is paid by the parent with their next tuition payment and paid to the Teacher (minus taxes) with the next paycheck. Teachers are also paid for their time.

When families arrive late to pick up children who are scheduled to depart at 12:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m., the same procedure applies; however, it is not paid to the staff member, it is instead given to the classroom budget if the fee exceeds \$20.00.

**Arrangements for
Alternate Pickup**

Staff at First Circle have their own responsibilities in the classroom, therefore only staff who are not scheduled to work until 6:00 p.m. can be an alternate pick-up.

**Emergency
Management**

First Circle could be subject to an emergency situation affecting the facility or as part of a larger scale event. The Director and staff are responsible for ensuring the safety of the children and themselves. To assist staff in responding to emergency situations, First Circle has an Emergency Management Plan that includes important policy and procedure for responding to emergency situations including:

NATURAL HAZARDS

Severe Weather, Snow and Ice Storms, Tornado, Hurricane, Earthquake;

TECHNOLOGICAL HAZARDS

Fire, Utility disruption (heat, water, power), Bomb threat or threatening phone call or message;

PERSONAL SAFETY

Medical emergency, Missing child, unauthorized/suspicious person

The Emergency Management Plan also includes information about Evacuation, Shelter in-Place, and Recovery and Restoration of Operations. There is also information about the Facility and location of emergency supplies.

Emergency Closing We work hard to keep First Circle open during normal business hours. However, under some circumstances we are required to close or must use our own discretion to determine if the center should be closed for emergency reasons. The circumstances under which we are required to close are:

UTILITY DISRUPTION

If First Circle loses power or water for more than one hour, or loses heat for more than one hour and the internal facility temperature drops below 65 degrees

Inclement Weather Closing Most often, the emergency is related to inclement weather. We strive to remain open during inclement weather. We know that parents have work responsibilities that often cannot be rescheduled, and we make every attempt to balance those commitments with our responsibility to the safety of our staff. The general guidelines we use, although there can be exceptions, are as follows:

- If a severe storm occurs overnight, we will attempt to open on a delayed basis, if possible. If we assess that driving is dangerous, we will not open. You will be notified by School Messenger, a message will be recorded on First Circle's main number by 6:00 a.m., and a message posted on Facebook.
- If the inclement weather is predicted to be over early in the morning, we will attempt to open on a delayed basis. This time allows for us to ensure a clean and safe parking lot for families. You will be notified by School Messenger, a message recorded on First Circle's main number by 6:00 a.m., and a message posted on Facebook.
- If inclement weather occurs during the school day, and we decide for safety reasons that we should close early, you will either be advised in person or via School Messenger if you are not currently scheduled.

Please note that **we DO NOT follow the public school's weather cancellations.**

It is your responsibility to ensure that we have current contact information for you, that you are able to receive messages, and/or that you will check yourself to determine if there has been an emergency closing due to inclement weather. Staff who do not arrive at their scheduled time are considered absent without notice, and resultant disciplinary action and emergency closing wages will be adjusted accordingly. If you have PTO scheduled during the time of an emergency closing, PTO time takes precedence over inclement weather for compensation.

School Messenger In the event of an emergency, we use a notification system called School

Messenger that automatically telephones and sends an email to staff and parents advising them of the nature of the emergency, and any related impact (like a delayed opening or early closing) on the program. Identical information will also be recorded on the center's telephone answering system, and posted on the First Circle Facebook page

Health and Safety

We expect that all employees will do everything possible to maintain their physical, mental and emotional health so that they are able to perform their job responsibilities to the fullest. You should expect that we will do our best to provide a workplace that is safe, healthy, and free of undue stress. To support those goals, during your employment, all employees are responsible for:

- Providing documentation of a physical exam every two years after the start of employment;
- Providing evidence of a negative mantoux TB test at least every two years

ILLNESS

Please keep the Director apprised of any changes to your health, including any communicable diseases, injuries, pregnancy, or illnesses. You will be allowed to work as long as it is medically safe for you do so and poses no danger to yourself, your co-workers or the children.

To protect the health of your co-workers and yourself and in keeping with our Health and Safety Policy, staff who have experienced the following symptoms during the previous 24 hours must be excluded from First Circle:

- fever of 100.5° or over
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- pink or red eyes with discharge from the eye (conjunctivitis)
- rash
- any symptoms of communicable disease including flu, chicken pox, measles, mumps, hepatitis, conjunctivitis, infectious rash, scabies, strep infection, especially when there is another confirmed case within First Circle
- head lice (must be nit-free)

Our policy is to make reasonable accommodations for staff that are occasionally ill. Staff members who are chronically ill should re-evaluate their suitability for working in a field where dependability is crucial. (see Job Performance, Attendance/Absences).

Safety

We take the safety of the children and our staff very seriously. We expect you to perform your duties in a safe manner and follow all established safety rules, and above all, use common sense and good judgment when performing your duties. We ask that you incorporate these basic safety rules into your work:

- Liquid, sand and other spills from floors should be cleaned up immediately;

- When lifting heavy objects or children, employees should lift properly by bending their knees;
- When reaching for overhead items, step-stools should be used, not chairs;
- Staff members must wear gloves on both hands when diapering, or helping children with toileting or first aid;
- All staff members must know and follow evacuation procedures (a copy of our Evacuation Routes are posted in each classroom), and assist the children in a safe and comforting manner;
- Care should be taken with equipment, cribs, or other cumbersome items;
- Staff members should be wary of strangers in the building and should feel comfortable asking strangers their business;

All accidents and injuries to staff members, no matter how minor, must be reported at once, and an Incident Form completed within 48 hours.

In addition to safeguarding your own personal safety and health, we ask that you look out for the safety and well-being of your co-workers, to keep the environment safe and healthy for all.

Family Conflict

The heart of Early Childhood Education is in partnering with families to help children learn and grow. During the course of your time at First Circle, you may find yourself at odds with a particular parent’s perspective on the practices in your classroom, or who feel that their child’s care could be handled differently. We try to be as open as possible about our policies and procedures with parents, and place great value on collaboration. As a program and as professionals, we want to be open to receiving feedback and suggestions as we constantly strive to improve ourselves. At First Circle, we pride ourselves on our ability to mediate and seek shared understandings, and most times we can navigate the ups and downs of the relationship together by approaching difficulties with a shared goal of compromise and improved communication.

At First Circle, we believe that an excellent program is one that continues to change and evolve, in part in response to changes to new practices and research in the Early Childhood Education field, but also in response to input from families. We welcome families to work with us on improving our program and maintaining an environment where their children can thrive. There is no issue we are unwilling to explore, whether through our own internal procedures, or with the help of our licensing authority or other agencies. We’re proud of our program and the trust and respect placed in us by our many families, and ask for your contribution in continuing to work hard to earn that trust and respect daily.

Staff Conflict/Grievance Procedure

We encourage staff input and feedback and encourage you to speak openly with Administration about any issue, question or concern. We understand that work-related problems can arise, and will do our best to actively look for signs that a possible or potential issue may exist. This often makes it possible to handle a situation when it is still easy to

resolve. We also encourage individuals to try to reconcile simple or personal issues or differences on an individual basis. Should this not be possible, in order to resolve a problem quickly and fairly, our grievance procedure is as follows:

1. If you feel at any time that a co-worker, regardless of title, is not adhering to his/her job description, including requirements for communication and professionalism, we ask that you schedule a time to meet with that person and inform him/her of your concerns.
 - Come prepared to the meeting and be able to provide specific information and details about your concern, stating specifically which area of the job description in your opinion is not being adhered to.
 - Often misunderstandings or simpler issues are able to be discussed and remedied at this point, or a mutual understanding or compromise can be reached that will resolve the grievance. If resolution is achieved, we ask that you let the Director know of the issue and how it was handled.
2. If you do not feel comfortable discussing your concern with the individual involved, ask to meet with the individual's direct supervisor. You may request a meeting verbally, by written request, or by email.
 - A meeting time will be scheduled with you and the appropriate supervisor(s). The supervisor will make every attempt to meet with you within 48 hours.
 - Come prepared to the meeting to provide specific information and details about your concern, stating specifically which area of the job description in your opinion is not being adhered to.
 - If as a result of the meeting corrective action is required for the other staff member, it will be handled directly with the staff member and you will be notified that this will take place, or a second meeting will be scheduled with the staff member involved.
3. If the issue cannot be resolved in that meeting, an inquiry into the matter will ensue, including any necessary communication with others, including outside agencies if appropriate.
 - When all the facts are known or the inquiry has gone as far as possible, a second meeting will be scheduled, involving any appropriate parties. Results of the inquiry and any other pertinent information will be discussed with resolution, mutual understanding, or compromise as a goal of the meeting.
 - If as a result of the meeting corrective action is required for the other staff member, it will be handled directly with the staff member and you will be notified that this will take place.
 - Follow up on the grievance will occur as appropriate. We will carry through on all aspects of any agreements or decisions made, and expect that you will do the same.

**Harassment or
Discrimination**

Employees are protected from harassment on the basis of their race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, handicap (disability), participation in discrimination complaint-related activities, sexual orientation, genetics, or active military or veteran status.

It is the goal of First Circle to promote a fair and respectful workplace

that is free of harassment or discrimination of any kind. Harassment/discrimination of employees occurring in the workplace or in other settings in which employees may find themselves in connection with their employment is unlawful and will not be tolerated. Further, we will not engage in or tolerate any retaliation against an individual who has complained about harassment/discrimination, or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a complaint.

If at any time during your employment at First Circle you feel you are being discriminated against or harassed by a staff member or a parent, please let the Director or the owners know immediately. We take allegations of harassment/discrimination seriously, and we will respond promptly and confidentially to complaints. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose any corrective action necessary. We reserve the right to exercise any action for workplace conduct that we deem unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of harassment or discrimination.

For more information, please visit <http://www.mass.gov/mcad/>, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.

Allegations of Abuse or Neglect

As defined by Chapter 119, Section 51A, "Early education, preschool, childcare or afterschool program staff, including any person paid to care for, or work with, a child in any public or private facility, home or program funded or licensed by the Commonwealth, which provides child care or residential services" is a mandated reporter, and therefore must file a report when (s)he believes a child is being abused or neglected.

Massachusetts law requires mandated reporters to immediately make an oral or written report to DCF when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is suffering from abuse and/or neglect. In addition to filing with the Department a mandated reporter may notify local law enforcement or the Office of the Child Advocate of any suspected abuse and/or neglect. You should report any physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse; any indication of neglect, including malnutrition; any instance in which a child is determined to be physically dependent upon an addictive drug at birth; or death as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Any mandated reporter who fails to make required oral and written reports can be punished by a fine of up to \$1,000.

Under the law, mandated reporters are protected from liability in any civil or criminal action and from any discriminatory or retaliatory actions by an employer.

Please refer to First Circle's complete Abuse and Neglect Policy, found in the Addendum section. If a staff member has a concern about a child or fellow educator, **the first step we require is to report the concerns immediately to the Director** or, in her absence, the owners, with as much detail as possible.

Staff are required to follow the requirements and process outlined in this policy with no exception. We provide annual in-service training to all staff on recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect. For new staff, this is covered in the orientation.

**Confidentiality,
Social and Digital
Media Policy**

You have the right to access the records of the children in your classroom, including their developmental history (All About Me and My Family), medical records, etc. However, all information in a child's file is confidential. We are prohibited from disclosing or providing the information contained in children's files to anyone without the express written consent of the parent or guardian.

Personal remarks or conversations about families or children in the classroom not related to the children's care with your co-workers, or any other public place where conversation can be overheard are strictly prohibited. Additionally, if a parent says something negative about First Circle, avoid arguments and direct discussions, and direct them to Administration if necessary. Staff should be careful of sharing work stories with family or household members. When discussing work related issues, please protect the identity of the child or family at all times.

The confidentiality policy also applies to all social media and networking websites used for either personal or professional use. You are prohibited from making disparaging, discriminatory, or defamatory comments when discussing First Circle, your supervisors, co-workers, or members of any family (current or past) associated with First Circle. In other words, never write or say anything you wouldn't want read by your supervisor, published to a website, or used in a court of law. Unless given permission, you are not authorized to speak on behalf of First Circle, or to represent that you do so.

We understand that many of you use Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites regularly, but we must strongly recommend that you not "friend" parents of the children that attend First Circle. The potential for violation of the confidentiality of both parties is too great. We do recommend that you use privacy settings that will keep your photographs viewable by "friends" only.

Digital photographs are an important tool used to document children's progress in our program. However, for privacy and liability reasons, any photo taken here is considered First Circle property. You may use your own camera, if you prefer (not a cell phone) – but the photographs (whether printed or on file) must remain here. You may not post pictures taken at First Circle to ANY social networking site or use them for personal use (as wallpaper on your phone or home computer), regardless of whether the family has given you permission.

Smoking Policy

First Circle is a non-smoking environment. There is no smoking allowed inside First Circle under any circumstances at any time. Outside the school, there is no smoking allowed during operating hours within 10 feet of the building. If employees smoke outside the 10-foot radius of

the building, the following guidelines apply:

- You must show discretion and not be seen smoking in front of parents or children;
- You must clock out while smoking;
- All cigarette butts must be disposed of and not left on First Circle grounds;
- You must make every effort possible to minimize the smell of smoke on your person.

There are large numbers of people who are allergic to cigarette smoke, or suffer some very serious breathing issues when they come into contact with it. Even the lingering smell of cigarette smoke on clothes may be close to intolerable to a non-smoker. So if you're not ready to kick the habit just yet, and can't schedule your smoking outside First Circle hours, please take steps to control the odor on your person. First, since we do not allow you to smoke in the eyesight of the children, you may have no option but to smoke in your car or drive somewhere where you can be outside your car and lessen the smell of smoke on your person. Leave the windows open. If you have an overcoat with you, wear it. This will keep most of the smoke away from your clothing.

After you've finished your smoke, remove your coat and stand out in the wind a little longer to flush your person with fresh air. If it's not particularly windy, take a brisk walk. You may need to bring a change of clothes to put on after a cigarette break. As for your breath, the best you can do is brush your teeth, gargle with a strong mouthwash, and follow that up with the strongest mint you can handle. Out of respect for others, ask a co-worker upon your return from a smoking break for a sniff test. If, despite your best efforts, you cannot extinguish the smell of smoke from your clothes to a level tolerable to your co-workers and parents, you may be asked to take further corrective action.

Office equipment & phone use

Staff members may **not receive or make cell phone calls or texts during work hours**. Your cell phone should be switched off while you are in the classroom. Because your position requires your constant attention be on the children, phone calls must be made outside the classroom and on First Circle phones, unless you are on an unpaid break. We ask that as much as possible, you schedule your phone calls outside working hours. We recognize that personal lives cannot always be arranged outside the classroom and ask that, if you do need to use your classroom's phone to make or receive personal calls, they be limited to no more than five minutes in length.

First Circle has a laptop and desktop computer for shared use by staff. Educators using the equipment for educational use have priority over staff using the computer for personal use during break time. Please be polite! Office equipment including a laminator, labeler, copy machine, and any other equipment is not to be used for personal reasons without prior approval from Administration.

Solicitation and

We expect that your work hours at First Circle be devoted to your job

Distribution Policy responsibilities and the care of the children. Solicitation of staff or children’s family members is prohibited at all times, unless the item or activity is approved in advance by the Administration. Non-employees are never allowed to solicit or distribute materials on center property without First Circle’s approval.

Solicitation and/or distribution of materials between employees is prohibited during work hours, but allowed during break or meal times, so long as it does not interfere with the employee’s job responsibilities, and does not take place in the classroom.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

Personal Appearance/ Hygiene

Staff members are selected to work at First Circle for their educational background, their experience, and their rapport with children. We strive to create a comfortable, relaxed environment, where children, staff, and families feel comfortable. That being said, we ask that staff use their best judgment when dressing for working with children:

- Comfortable shoes are essential--Please do not wear heels. We recommend that footwear cover toes and have a back strap or enclosed heel. Although flip-flops are not prohibited, you are risking injury when making a choice not to protect your feet and toes (especially on the playground!).
- Dress for participation in outdoor activities;
- All clothing (even jeans) should be clean, free from excessive wrinkles and without holes or tears;
- Your clothes should be appropriately sized, not too small or too tight;
- Clothing with pictures or writing should be appropriate for children;
- Please do not wear see-through clothing or clothing that allows undergarments or their straps to be exposed. Before coming to work, please make sure that sitting, bending, or reaching doesn’t expose skin or undergarments;
- Shorts and skirts should be of a reasonable length: mid-thigh or lower (with your arms hanging down, make sure your garment is at or below your fingertips), Skirts higher than knee-length require shorts underneath;
- Show good taste in your attire: pants/bottoms with high enough waist to cover the skin of your midsection (front and back), tops with high enough neckline to hide bra or chest hair, (and long enough to keep skin of your midsection covered), shoulder straps must be a minimum three fingers in width (no spaghetti straps) and no strapless tops are to be worn;
- When you wear leggings or stretch pants, please wear a top that reaches to the hip. Please don’t wear spandex, bike shorts, bathing/swimming wear, or sleepwear (unless for a planned event or occasion!);
- Long nails, dangling earrings and other protruding jewelry should be avoided;
- Please wear deodorant/anti-perspirant, especially during the warmer months;

- Please wear a bra or suitable support
- Perfume should be subtle or better yet, left for the weekends:— strong odors of any kind can be offensive, and some people are allergic to perfume

If we expect others to treat us with the respect we demand as professionals, then we have to appear to be professional. In general, if there is any question about an item being inappropriate, DO NOT WEAR IT.

Conflict of Interest

Employees must meet high ethical standards in their job performance. We ask that you not engage in any activities outside First Circle that conflict with job performance; if you know of something that will impact, please advise the Director.

Although many early childhood programs prohibit babysitting for families, First Circle chooses not to. However, in any activity, personal or working relationship with any family or staff member at First Circle, you must adhere to the confidentiality policies stated in this manual, and in no way, may these activities conflict with your work schedule or compromise your ability to adhere to any other First Circle policies.

Communication

Good communication skills are essential to a quality educational program and a healthy work environment. People spend a lifetime developing and improving skills to communicate effectively with one another, and for most of us, it's a work in progress. We recognize that as individuals, we all have different styles of communication. Our goal is to create a workplace where respect, courtesy, and support are the foundations of our communications.

The most important thing to do before engaging in any type of communication, verbal or written, is to *choose your attitude*. **Choose** to communicate with honesty, patience, optimism, and sincerity. **Choose** to be respectful, and accepting of others. **Choose** to be sensitive to other people's feelings, and believe in others' competence.

Here are some basic "rules" of communication that we ask you to work with:

- **Choose the right time and place.** As the cliché states, there is a time and a place for everything, and communicating is no different. Ask yourself: Should this be communicated in the classroom? Is this the best time to go to the office? Should I talk to a parent at drop-off, pick-up, or write a note? Think through where the best place and what the best time is to communicate your message, and ensure that you're creating a space where open communication can take place. To maintain the proper level of supervision for the children, plan meetings and conversations during nap time or before or after your shift.
- **Have courage to say what you think.** Be confident in knowing that you can make worthwhile contributions to a conversation. First Circle is a place where every member of our team is an integral part of our program, and we encourage you to share suggestions, comments and recommendations for change with Administration.
- **Organize and clarify ideas in your mind before you communicate.** If you are feeling passionate about a topic, your message may become garbled if you haven't already planned some key points to stick to when communicating it. A good rule of thumb is to choose three

main points and keep your communication focused on those. That way, if the topic wanders off course, you will be able to return to one or more of these three key points without feeling flustered.

- **Speak clearly and directly:** It is important to speak in a way that everyone can understand. It means uttering your words distinctly, choosing simpler words over more complex ones, and speaking at a level guaranteed to be heard but without coming across as too loud, overly emotional, or disengaged.
- **Stay on topic.** Once you start addressing your three main points, make sure all facts, stories, etc., add to the conversation or debate.
- **Listen actively:** Communication is a two-way street and requires you to listen as well as talk. Remember that while you are talking, you are not learning. In listening, you will be able to gauge how much of your message is getting through to your listeners and whether or not it is being received correctly or is being misinterpreted. It can be helpful to ask listeners to rephrase some of what you have said in their own words if they appear to be returning confused or mistaken views to you.
- **Be aware of distractions.** Don't allow external distractions to sidetrack your concentration. They will distract both you and your listener and they will also effectively derail the communication.
- **Make eye contact:** Whether you are speaking or listening, looking into the eyes of the other person shows that you are interested, and encourages others to be interested in you in return.
- **Be aware of what your body is saying:** Body language can say so much more than a mouthful of words. An open stance with arms relaxed at your sides tells anyone around you that you are approachable and open to hearing what they have to say. Arms crossed and shoulders hunched, on the other hand, suggest you are not interested. *Often, communication can be stopped before it starts by body language that tells people you don't want to talk or listen.*
- **Manage your expectations.** You need to know in advance what you expect from your communication. If you are expecting a particular response or action, and that doesn't happen, what's next? Ask for what you need, suggest what you want, and manage your response if your expectations are not met. Although we will make every attempt to communicate to you and include you in anything that may impact on or be of interest to you, there are times when we may not be able to meet that expectation. .
- **Adhere to rules of confidentiality.** All formal conversations with First Circle Administration that do not take place at a staff meeting are confidential. Inappropriate sharing of those conversations could result in disciplinary action.
- **Feedback.** If at any time someone at First Circle, whether a co-worker, a member of Administration, or a parent is speaking to you in a manner that you feel is discourteous or disrespectful, politely let them know and ask them to rephrase it in a way that meets your needs. We can all learn from each other.
- **Be open.** If at any time someone at First Circle, whether a co-worker, a member of Administration, or a parent tells you have spoken to them in a manner that they feel is discourteous or disrespectful, politely listen to them, and ask them to help you rephrase it in a way that meets their needs. We can all learn from each other.

In addition to monthly staff meetings, team meetings and informal sessions, we will communicate with you via memos and notices in your

cubby, email, and postings in the staff room and lobby – please keep on the lookout for communications and check your cubby daily!

Professionalism To define it very simply, professionalism is about acting in a professional manner. But defining what specifically it means to “act in a professional manner” is not as simple. Being professional is about attitude, conduct, and presenting yourself with self-respect and dignity. It means not just knowing how to do your job, but being able to consistently demonstrate it. It means having a willingness to learn, cooperating and getting along with others, showing respect, and living up to your commitments. It also means avoiding many kinds of behaviors that create difficulties in the workplace. By asking you to join our team, we expect that you will adhere to our standards of professionalism, and trust your ability to act in a responsible and professional manner. That includes:

- Following First Circle policies and procedures as outlined in your job description, Employee and Classroom Handbooks;
- Coming to work with a positive attitude—facing each day as a new experience, avoiding gossip, trying to solve problems proactively, resisting the urge to complain or communicate in a negative manner; assuming your fair share of responsibilities—maintaining balance of workload among colleagues, participating and contributing to meetings and discussions, taking the lead on some projects, providing support on others;
- Managing your time well—passing in paperwork on time, giving ample notice for absences, arriving on time, always being ready for the first child;
- Remaining flexible with classroom assignments and schedule—expecting the unexpected, pinch hitting for a team member in need;
- Staying alert about health and safety matters—ensuring the safety of toys or equipment, washing and sanitizing toys and surfaces, managing your own illnesses and those in your classroom;
- Making consistent and conscientious efforts to expand your knowledge in the field—through articles, books and internet resources that address ECE topics;
- Taking advantage of professional and personal growth opportunities—attending workshops and taking ECE classes, taking on additional responsibilities, trying something new, not being afraid to make mistakes, accepting and using suggestions to improve your work;
- Demonstrating pride in and commitment to being an early learning educator,
- Looking for ways to improve the program, thinking about solutions rather than identifying problems;
- Participating in social events/activities outside regular hours,
- Presenting a clean, healthy, professional appearance [see Personal Appearance above];
- Communicating professionally with others [see Communication above].

While conducting yourself in the ways listed above does not guarantee you won't have issues with your co-workers, if we all, no matter what our title, commit to conducting ourselves in these ways, we'll be very close to our goal of having a workplace that is respectful, nurturing, professionally

rewarding, and fun!