



SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

APPENDIX V: COMMUNICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

It is the policy of the SDSBVI that communications will be made accessible to all staff as a reasonable accommodation. Please notify the office staff if you need other than standard print.

Anyone who distributes a memo to staff will either record or provide Braille copies to those who need it.

UNCOVERED WAGON

The Uncovered Wagon is a weekly calendar published during the school year announcing school events, meetings, tours, appointments, and all-school news for staff and students. Information to be included in the Uncovered Wagon should be e-mailed or given to the Administrative Assistant by 4:00 p.m. each Wednesday. The Uncovered Wagon is made available in print, Braille and by e-mail.

ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

All activities and scheduled meetings should be placed on the master calendar. Please inform the Administrative Assistant of any item to put on this calendar. Anyone wishing to place an item on the calendar should check first with the Administrative Assistant to see if an activity is already scheduled - first come, first scheduled. Any activity or meeting not on the calendar will not be considered an approved activity.

BULLETIN BOARDS

The six (6) bulletin boards located in the Staff Lounge should be used as follows:

1. COHE Information
2. Medical Updates; so that every staff member knows where to look to find medical news from the nurses.
3. The large bulletin board in the Lounge is for general information and should be used as follows: The left half is to be used for information that is for one week or less. The information will be removed weekly. The right half is to be used for information that deals with everything in general. This information will be removed monthly.
4. The Career Service bulletin board is used for posting information concerning Career Service employees.
5. SDSBVI Committees' Minutes
6. Job Openings (in-state and out-of-state)

The two bulletin boards located by the Superintendent's Office are for the Uncovered Wagon and any information that deals with human resource items.

ERASABLE BOARDS

There are two (2) erasable boards to be used as follows:

1. The one located by the Staff Lounge is used for non-confidential day-to-day communication which is useful for all staff.
2. The one next to the Front Office is used for signing out when leaving the campus.

SIGN-OUT POLICY

Each employee, when leaving and returning to campus during working hours, must sign-out/sign-in on the erasable board located on the wall next to the Front Office. Reasons for leaving campus should always be job related unless a request for leave has been approved by one's supervisor or the Director of Human Resources. Any employee leaving campus during their lunch time needs to also sign-out/sign-in.

The Superintendent will approve attendance at off-campus meetings or workshops in advance. Date(s) and time(s) of meetings are to be given to the Administrative Assistant.

INTERCOM

Each classroom and other areas without phone access have been fitted with a two-way intercom. In a classroom emergency, the teacher/staff member can use the intercom to call the office and request the assistance needed. The front office staff will summon help. Students should not use the intercom. The base in the office includes an "all call" feature to broadcast messages throughout the school.

During the class day, the intercom will not be used by the front office to contact the classroom.

During the school day, personal messages will continue be relayed by e-mail, unless the call is of an emergency nature or the teacher/staff member makes a specific request (i.e. a call from a specific person or a work-related call they need to be returned). After 3:00 we will attempt to notify people of phone calls using the intercom in the assigned classroom.

TELEPHONE

Employees shall have access to school phones for the transaction of school related business. Personal calls may be made on the staff phones located across from the Lounge and in the Staff Work Area. The cordless phone must be signed out if taken from the Staff Work Area. Personal phone calls should not be placed or received during work times. Except in cases of emergency, staff members will not be called from work situations to answer phone calls. Under ordinary conditions, messages will be taken so that the staff member may return the call during break time, lunch period or for short periods during class preparation time. If expecting a return phone call, please let the office personnel know where to locate you. All personal long distance phone calls must be collect or billed to one's home phone number.

Work-related calls take priority and we will try to handle these calls as efficiently as possible. However, there have been an increasing number of phone calls that come into the front office and a lot of time spent trying to locate people.

There are some things you can do to make this whole process more efficient and less frustrating.

- Please let frequent callers know when you have break, prep time or lunch, and to call you then. We will not interrupt classes for routine calls.
- Consider getting a cell phone of your own and give this number to your family and daycare provider. If you give us the number, we can forward calls to you. Give this some thought if you want your children to call you about their after school plans.
- For routine calls, we will take messages for people by emails during the school day and you can return them when you have break.

If the caller indicates the message can't wait, we will try to locate you. In order to make this possible,

- A. If you leave the building, sign out with the place and time you expect to return.
- B. If you leave your classroom area, leave a note on the door.
- C. If we can't readily find you, we'll take a message.
- If you are expecting a call, let both Susan and Sonia know who will be calling and where you can be found. We understand playing telephone tag is often unproductive, but so is running around the building trying to locate people.
- If you have certain calls that would always need your immediate attention (childcare provider, school, etc.), please let both Susan and Sonia know who these people are.

NOTE: If you happen to be near the front office during the day and Susan and Sonia are either on the other line or away from their desks, please answer the phone rather than letting the answering machine get it.

TELEPHONE CREDIT CARDS

When you travel on school business and are required to make long-distance calls in the course of your job, a telephone credit card is available in the Business Office. This card must be returned to the Business Office upon completion of your travel. All credit card calls are to be recorded, and turned in to the Business Office.

ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE

To improve our overall telephone communication system and to create a consistently positive image for the school through all telephone contacts, please implement the following guidelines.

- A. Whenever you answer a telephone, please identify us by using one of these variations:
 - 1. Good Morning/Afternoon. School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
 - 2. S.D. School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
 - 3. Either of the above with the addition of your department or name.
- B. Be sure to finish any conversations with those around you before you pick up the phone. Give the caller the benefit of your full attention.
- C. Speak clearly and loudly enough so your caller can easily hear you. Make an effort to sound pleasant and positive. Your tone will convey an overall impression of the school.
- D. If the caller needs to talk to someone else in the building, tell them that you will be happy to transfer the call. (See instructions for "transferring calls" under Using The Telephone Correctly.)
- E. If the caller does not volunteer his/her name and you are directing the call to someone else, please ask the caller, "May I tell him/her who's calling?" This gives the person answering the call a few moments to collect their thoughts and be ready for the caller.
- F. Please transfer calls to the appropriate person. If the caller specifically requests a faculty or staff member, try them first; if the person is not available, you should ask if anyone else could help them or offer to take a message.
- G. Rather than simply lying the receiver on the desk, please use "hold". If you do not use hold, the caller can hear the extraneous conversation going on near the phone. (See instructions for "putting calls on hold" under Using the Telephone Correctly.)
- H. General informational calls, requests for tours or speakers and calls pertaining to students not currently enrolled should be directed to the Liaison for Services. Requests for specific information may be directed to the person responsible for that area.
- I. If you are unsure of which resource is best, contact the Principal, Business Manager, Director of Human Resources, or Superintendent.

TAKING TELEPHONE MESSAGES

- A. Whenever you take a telephone message, please include the following information:
 - 1. Name of caller (verify spelling if you aren't sure.)
 - 2. Phone number if call is to be returned
 - 3. Any message
 - 4. Date and time call was received
 - 5. Name/initials of person taking message
- B. If the message is of an emergency nature, get that message to the person as quickly as possible.
- C. For messages that are not emergencies, but need attention by a specified time, an attempt should be made to contact the staff member by contacting the appropriate department.
- D. Messages will be placed on the e-mail system.

TELEPHONE USAGE GUIDE

- A. EMERGENCY - Dial 9 + 911
- B. OPERATOR - Dial 9 + 0
- C. DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE -- Dial 9 + 1 + Area Code + 555-1212
- D. DEPARTMENT CALLS/OTHER "626" NUMBERS - Dial the desired extension number. Each phone has a list of local numbers for each department located by the phone. In-house calls should be kept to a maximum of three (3) minutes per call.
- E. LOCAL CALLS - Dial 9 + Seven Digit Number. Personal calls made on a school phone should be kept to a minimum.
- F. LONG DISTANCE CALLS -- Dial 9 + 1 + Area Code + Seven Digit Number.
- G. TOLL FREE CALLS - Dial 9 + 1 + Ten Digit Number
- H. CREDIT CARD CALLS
 - 1. In-State: Dial 50 (listen for tone) + 0 + 605 + Seven Digit Number (listen for tone) + credit card number.
 - 2. Out-of-State: Dial 50 (listen for tone) + 0 + Area Code + Seven Digit Number (listen for tone) + credit card number.
- I. TRANSFERRING CALLS - Advise the caller of the reason for the transfer and be sure to transfer to the right person. Depress the switch hook once and release; after getting a dial tone, dial the phone number needed, announce the call, hang up and the call will be connected. If busy/no answer, depress the switch hook twice to bring the caller back to you.
- J. PUTTING CALLS ON HOLD - Depress the switch hook and release (listen for tone), dial *12, lay handset down (do not hang up). To remove the call from hold, depress switch hook and release or hang up and the phone will ring back automatically.
- K. CALL PICK UP - To pick up a call from another phone, lift handset and listen for dial tone, dial "*68" and answer the call.
- L. FORWARDING CALLS - To forward your calls to another number. On your phone dial "*39", then the phone number where you want your calls answered. Listen for confirmation tones, hang up. To deactivate, dial "*40" on your phone. If forwarding to a line that is busy/no answer, repeat procedure twice within two minutes.
- M. THREE WAY CALLING --Call first party, depress switch hook and release, listen for dial tone, call second party, depress switch hook and release to connect both parties.

N. MULTI-PORT CONFERENCE CALLING – (This feature is similar to Three-Way Calling, but allows you to connect 5 lines and is available in the West Conference Room, Dean North Conference Room, South Conference Room, Superintendent’s Office, and Principal’s Office.) To activate this feature, you must first dial “*43” on the phone, then call first party, depress switch hook and release, listen for dial tone, call second party, depress switch hook and release, listen for dial tone. Continue this sequence until you have up to five additional lines, then depress switch hook and release to connect all parties.

CELLULAR PHONE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

OVERVIEW - Cellular telephones (cell phones) may be issued to SDSBVI employees who have a frequent need for remote phone access. For the purposes of this policy, cell phone use includes all forms of cell phone use including but not limited to voice calls, internet access, and text messaging. SDSBVI employees shall use their SDSBVI provided cell phones for necessary and business related purposes. Each employee shall be responsible for the safekeeping, care, and custody of the provided cell phone.

The SDSBVI reserves the right to monitor the use of all SDSBVI provided cell phones. Repeated employee misuse of SDSBVI provided cell phones may lead to disciplinary action.

Employees should avoid talking on a cell phone while driving a motor vehicle due to safety concerns. Employees should be aware that cell phone conversations are not secure and should use discretion in relaying confidential information.

ACQUISITION PROCEDURE - SDSBVI employees who wish to acquire the use of a cell phone and service shall request approval from their supervisor. Upon approval the request shall be submitted to The Business Manager for processing.

TAX CONSEQUENCES

Overview - IRS Code provides that no deduction shall be allowed with respect to “listed property”, unless a taxpayer substantiates such deduction by adequate records regarding the amount, time, and business purpose. Listed property includes any cell phone or similar telecommunications equipment. Listed property, by IRS definition, means the very nature of the property subjects itself to personal use and is subject to strict substantiation requirements in order to be excluded as a taxable benefit.

In general this means that unless the employee keeps records to substantiate the business use of the phone, the value of the use of the phone will be income to the employee.

Taxability - Effective **January 2009**, the monthly service plan amount paid for an employer provided cell phone will be treated as taxable income to the employee **unless** the employee signs a SDSBVI cell phone usage agreement, and agrees to only use the cell phone for “SDSBVI business”.

In order to exclude the SDSBVI provided cell phone value from taxable income, the employee must sign a written agreement that the usage of the SDSBVI provided cell phone is solely for business purposes. The employee must maintain auditable records on a monthly basis showing that all calls made or received on the SDSBVI provided cell phone have a SDSBVI business purpose.

For purposes of this policy, inadvertent or infrequent personal use of a SDSBVI provided cell phone of up to 10 minutes per month will be considered to be a “de minimis” fringe benefit and will not be considered as a taxable benefit to the employee.

Employees signing a SDSBVI cell phone usage agreement must submit adequate documentation to the Payroll Office by the 20th of each month. If personal use of a SDSBVI provided cell phone in excess of the de minimis amount is found, the pro rated personal use portion of the monthly service will be added to the employee's taxable income. If proper substantiation is not submitted by the 20th of each month, the entire cost of the monthly service will be included as taxable income.

The following are some suggested methods for documentation that will be considered acceptable:

- All numbers called or received having a "626" or "773" prefix can be considered to be business related calls.
- If a phone number is called for a business purpose on more than one occasion in a particular month, the same number does not need to be documented every time a call is placed to that particular number.
- A single phone log of commonly called business numbers, including the business purpose for each number, can be maintained as documentation.

SHARED CELL PHONES - In situations where SDSBVI provided cell phones are shared by more than one employee, each employee that uses the cell phone is required to abide by these policies. It is the departmental responsibility to ensure that cell phone usage is substantiated as for business use only.

INTERNET AND E-MAIL USE POLICY

The SDSBVI recognizes the value of the Internet and E-Mail as tools for communication and sources of information for both students and staff. As we learn to use these tools in an educational environment, we accept responsibility for establishing and implementing policies regarding their use. The policies define what is appropriate, what is unacceptable, and the consequences for misuse. Staff members are expected to serve as role models for students.

The following general guidelines apply to all users:

- Students and staff will receive instruction in the use of the Internet as an educational resource.
- Students and their parents are required to sign a contract indicating their understanding of proper educational use of the Internet.
- Staff members will be asked to sign a similar contract.
- Students will use the Internet and E-mail as a part of classroom instruction with supervision.
- Students will be allowed to use the Internet and/or E-mail independently (without direct supervision) only with parental permission.
- Students and staff are responsible for their exploration on the Internet and use of E-Mail and in the event of misuse may be subject to discipline, loss of Internet privileges, and/or legal action.

APPROPRIATE USE POLICY

E-Mail:

1. Be courteous and respectful in your messages to others. Never put anything into an E-mail message that you wouldn't say face-to-face.
2. Use appropriate language. Swearing, vulgarity, and obscenity are strictly forbidden.
3. If you are the unintentional recipient of inappropriate materials, alert a staff member and/or delete them. Do not pass them on.

4. E-mail is not guaranteed to be private communication; it is subject to discovery. People who operate the system do have access to all mail. Messages relating to illegal activities will be reported to authorities, and the employee will be subject to disciplinary action.

Internet:

1. Internet sites containing inappropriate materials are “off limits.” You are responsible for the sites you choose to visit.
2. The Internet may not be used for illegal activity.
3. Do not reveal your home address or telephone numbers or that of other students or staff.
4. Do not post personal messages on bulletin boards or list serves. Send personal messages directly to the person you wish to contact.
5. Do not download any programs from the Internet without specific permission from the Business Manager. Because we are on a networked system and we have assistive technology on many machines, an inappropriate “download” may cause problems for other users.
6. Do not open files from unknown sources.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR USE OF THE INTERNET AND E-MAIL

The Internet and E-Mail access is available at the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. We are excited to have these new tools available for the use of our students and staff. The Internet provides connections to millions of computers around the world and a wealth of excellent and useful information for learning. Electronic mail (E-mail) provides a quick and convenient method of communication within our building and with any other computer user (including parents and family).

Although there are many excellent resources on the Internet, there is also material inappropriate for children, inappropriate in an educational setting, and inappropriate in the workplace. E-Mail messages can also be used inappropriately. It is the intent of the SDSBVI to immediately implement the following policies regarding use of the Internet and E-Mail.

1. Prior to use of the Internet students will be required to receive training in both use of the Internet and appropriate etiquette (Netiquette).
2. Students will have a specific research topic approved by a teacher or appropriate staff member.
3. Independent use of the Internet by students requires prior parental permission and full compliance with school use policies.
4. Any materials from the Internet must be saved on a student disk, rather than on the classroom, lab, or library computer.
5. Unauthorized downloading of information or programs is not allowed.
6. Students and staff may not visit sites with unsuitable materials containing vulgarities, obscenities, or other inappropriate materials.
7. The use of the Internet and E-Mail at the SDSBVI is a privilege, not a right. Inappropriate use will result in suspension of privileges and other disciplinary action.
8. Acceptable use includes research on approved topics and communication/collaboration with others.
9. Unacceptable use includes visiting inappropriate sites, sharing inappropriate or threatening messages on E-mail, violation of copyright laws, or use of the school computers for commercial activity. Product advertisement and political lobbying are also prohibited.
10. Security on any system is a high priority. Any student or staff member who tampers with the system, knowingly introduces a virus, or vandalizes computer hardware or software will result in the immediate suspension of privileges and disciplinary action.
11. Each employee will have an e-mail address through our system. Do not use any of the e-mail services available from the Internet (hot mail, etc.). We all need to be on the same system. Our machines don't have the capacity to run several different services and we will have mass confusion.
12. If you share a computer with other people, don't change the screen or add icons or other things to suit yourself; especially in the beginning it may make it more difficult for others to use the computer.
13. Some computers, including the ones in the Technology Lab, Library, Spicer Hall and Herseth Hall have programs for screen enlargement or speech. **Don't mess with these!** Use them, but don't make any changes to the settings.
14. Use lowercase letters for e-mail. WHEN YOU USE ALL CAPS IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING, and your recipient may think you're angry.
15. Use the e-mail to save unnecessary steps or catch up with people on other shifts, but remember that it is still important to talk with each other, particularly if you're trying to problem solve. Don't use e-mail to avoid a direct conversation or it will become a barrier to communication instead of a positive tool.
16. Keep your personal password simple. Your mother's name, your hometown, your middle name, your favorite food or hobby...something that you are likely to remember.

17. When you forward one of those “cute” things that make the rounds, first determine if it will contribute to a positive work environment. Anything in questionable taste should be trashed, not forwarded! Second, delete the portion at the top that is the list of previous recipients (some go on for pages before you get to the message). Keep in mind when you send something on, it has your name on it. While everyone can use a bit of cheer, some days there is too much of a good thing. Don’t send these to “All Staff.”
18. Clear out your mailbox regularly to free the server space at NSU. If you want to keep something make a folder and move it. If you’re not sure how to do this, ask someone. Also remember to periodically empty your “sent mail” folder as well.
19. Take a few minutes to set up “personal groups” in mail. This will cut down on mail sent to people who don’t need it and don’t want it. This works especially well for departments and committees. You can make this work well for your NAC/NCA committee. Again, if you’d like help, just ask.
20. Don’t hesitate to ask for help or advice. If you have questions or concerns, please ask. If they are questions about the “system”, ask R.Lee. Nobody was born knowing this stuff! We’re just all learners at different stages.

COMMITTEES

A great deal is accomplished each year through the work of committees. Some of these committees are formed to work on specific events; other committees meet regularly to review, plan and implement a variety of valuable functions. The membership for some committees is established in the BOR/COHE contract; others are set by the administration, and still others are on a volunteer basis. What follows is a brief description of the main committees:

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Career Service Employee Advisory Council (CSEAC): This committee represents the Career Service staff members in interactions with the administration, Board of Regents, etc. They help resolve issues relating to Career Service employment.
- Committee on Internal Organization (CIO): This is a meeting of department heads who share information and address interdepartmental issues.
- Dorm Staffing: The residential staff, nurses, instructional assistants, and others who work with ADL review student needs and share information about programs.
- Faculty/Staff Meeting: This meeting is an opportunity for faculty members, instructional assistants, and principal to exchange information.
- Internal Agreement Management Committee: COHE representatives and administrators meet to address issues pertaining to the teachers contract between COHE and the Board of Regents.
- Management and Planning (MAP): The administrative team meets to review student issues, discuss school policies, plan for staffing, and facilitate collaboration between residential and educational programs.
- Outreach Consultants: This group includes the faculty and staff who provide outreach consultation and provides an opportunity to share ideas and information and plan together.
- Transition Committee: This group looks at students of transition age and works to coordinate activities on their behalf and assess progress.

TASK ORIENTED

- Pre-Evaluation Team (PET): They review eye reports and educational records on students who will be evaluated and develop the evaluation schedule.
- External Behavior Management: This is the oversight group that reviews all behavioral policies and implementation of individual behavior programs. This group ensures that policy and procedures as well as state and federal mandates are followed.
- Library Committee: This group develops library policy and provides input to the librarian about curricular needs.
- Curriculum Committee: This group is charged with regular review and revision of our adopted curriculum.
- Arts and Special Activities: This group plans for the Artist in the Schools program and a wide variety of school activities for students and staff. There are numerous sub-committees who work on specific projects and sponsor various fund-raising activities.
- Professional Development: This group plans for the fall professional development days and other staff development.
- Steering Committee: This group is charged with developing, implementing and reviewing our progress on the School Improvement Plan.
- Technology Task Force: This group meets to review the technology needs of students and staff and identify training opportunities. They make recommendations about technology purchases.
- Archives Committee: This group is working to organize and preserve our school's historic artifacts.
- Crisis Team: They review any incident reports and determine what steps can be taken to improve safety for students and staff.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Advisory Council: This group was formed by the South Dakota Board of Regents to advise both the Superintendent and the Board.
- SD Foundation for the Blind and Visually Impaired: This group is an independent foundation that supports the work of the school. The primary mission is to expand opportunities for students to participate in community activities.

Each committee is asked to use the following process each year.

- Designate a chair or co-chairs.
- Determine frequency and time of meetings, and inform Administrative Assistant for scheduling purposes.
- Set annual goals or activities.
- Take brief action minutes of each meeting. There should be a record of specific areas discussed and any plans to implement activities, along with person assigned and projected timeline.
- Post the minutes in the staff lounge and/or distribute them by e-mail to committee members, principal, student services director, administrative assistant, and superintendent. (Some committees do not keep official minutes.)
- Complete a year-end review and make recommendations for the next year.

PUBLIC INFORMATION / PUBLIC RELATIONS

The SDSBVI plays a key role in educating South Dakota students with vision loss, focusing our efforts on building the skills necessary for them to lead satisfying adult lives, through a combination of our academic curriculum and the expanded core curriculum.

In addition to teaching students and providing consultations to parents and teachers, we have an obligation to help create a cultural environment that is accepting of vision loss and doesn't see it as a barrier to full participation in society.

In the broadest sense, responsibility for public information rests with all SDSBVI staff. As we talk with others about our work, we shape community perception of blindness. If we portray the students as capable people with potential, we help create opportunities for employment and participation. We need to be sure that we are ready to answer questions from the general public with current and accurate information.

The SDSBVI encourages staff members to become members of their related professional organizations and organizations related to promoting a barrier-free environment. By doing so, we stay current in our field and bring more ideas into our school and the school becomes an active part of the state, regional, and national dialogue.

The primary responsibility for implementing the SDSBVI Public Relations/Public Information Plan rests with the Superintendent and the Liaison for Services. The PR/PI Plan has specific objectives:

1. Create visibility for the school with our various publics, including parents, teachers, and school administrators so they can access our programs and services when needed.
2. Increase general understanding of the educational needs of students with vision loss.
3. Increase public understanding of blindness and vision loss and the capability of blind people.
4. Increase public understanding of the role and mission of the school
5. Create a positive image of the SDSBVI with our various publics, including the Board of Regents and the state legislature.
6. Share information with organizations and groups who have a particular interest in blindness and vision loss, including the consumer groups and the Lions/Lioness Clubs.

The Public Information/Public Relations Plan is designed to use a variety of means to share information. We use mass media (radio, television, newspapers), some advertising (Aberdeen Area Chamber Directory), printed materials (brochures and handouts), newsletters (Pioneer and Wagon Trails), a booth display, videos, web page, public speaking, special events, and collaborations with community and state organizations.

Confidentiality is an essential consideration. We have both a legal and moral responsibility to respect the privacy of the students we serve and their families. The family's right to privacy is guaranteed under the Family Rights and Privacy Act.

Annually, parents (and students when they reach age 18) have the option of signing annual media releases detailing what (if any) information can be released. All staff members are responsible for respecting the wishes of families in this regard. Basic information such as name and hometown is sufficient for most press releases.