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## A Message from the Executive Director

*New England Residential Services, Inc. (NERS) values the talents and abilities of its employees and seeks to foster an open, cooperative, and dynamic environment in which employees and the Agency can thrive. The strength and success that NERS enjoys is due in no small part to the many important contributions made by each of its employees. The Agency benefits greatly from the dedication and professionalism that each employee brings to their work and we hope that you take pride in being a member of our team. NERS believes choosing one's path to independence brings energy and happiness. Having someone to guide and support you along that path brings contentment, and that guidance comes from YOU! NERS is committed to providing a nurturing atmosphere where people can trust, increase self-esteem and work towards independence. Most importantly, we provide opportunities for people to make their own choices and to participate in the achievement of their future goals and dreams. Here at NERS, we believe that the accomplishment of our mission depends on you. It is our hope that you believe that you can achieve personal success here as we work together to help NERS fulfill its mission and commitment to the individuals we serve. You are part of an organization that is known for outstanding service and we are dedicated to providing a working environment that is inclusive and welcoming. Whether you've just started your career, are new to NERS, or are a seasoned professional, we hope you feel welcome in the NERS family.*

Sincerely,

*Chet Fischer*  
*Executive Director*

### **Mission Statement**

To support people at home and at work so that they may participate in and contribute to their community.

### **Our Belief**

We believe choosing one's path to independence brings energy and happiness. Having someone to guide and support you along that path brings contentment. All people have the right to make choices about their lives. Our job is to facilitate those choices and to work toward positive outcomes.

### **Our Commitment**

We are committed to providing a nurturing atmosphere where people can trust, increase self-esteem and work towards independence. Most importantly, we provide opportunities for people to make their own choices and to participate in the achievement of their future goals and dreams.

## **The History of our Agency**

### Helping Others Help Themselves

In 1987, New England Residential Services, Inc. made a commitment to the Department of Developmental Services to accept and welcome individuals who were at that time living in one of the many institutions in the state. We opened our first two group homes in the fall of 1987. In the spring of 1989, we continued to grow and opened four more homes successfully. Since 1990, New England Residential Services, Inc. has also been supporting people who live in their own apartments who need less than 24 hours of daily supports. Currently, we support eleven group homes and three apartment programs.

New England Residential Services is a private non-profit Agency funded by the State of CT through the Department of Developmental Services, Department of Social Services and in some cases, through the Department of Children and Families. We provide residential options in central and southern Connecticut and our Supported Living Apartments are located in the Kensington and Middletown area. Our supports are focused on the individuals and their home, however, we also work closely with vocational and day programs. We encourage active participation in the community. Our staff assist in all areas to ensure that each individual will achieve the best quality of life.

## **Employee Handbook Disclaimer**

This Handbook was written to assist you in understanding the practices and procedures of New England Residential Services, Inc. It is to be used as a reference to provide a general overview and is intended for informational purposes only.

Nothing in this Handbook, or any other Human Resources document (including benefit plan descriptions), creates a promise of continued employment. This Handbook is not intended to create, nor should it be construed as, a contract of employment. Neither this Handbook nor any other Agency practice or communication creates an employment contract, term or obligation of any kind on the part of the Agency.

The current Handbook contains the policies and practices of the Agency which are in force at the time of publication. Please read this Handbook thoroughly as all previously issued policies or memoranda are superseded by this Handbook. As an employee, you are responsible for abiding by the Agency's rules and policies. The Agency reserves the right to revise, modify, delete or add to any and all programs, practices or procedures described in this Handbook at any time. Proposed revisions on policies are discussed with the Management Team prior to implementation.

This Handbook will not contain all the information that you will need during the course of your employment. As such you should review the Policy and Procedure Manual of the agency which is located at each group home. If you have any questions regarding this Handbook or any Agency policies, please direct your concerns to your immediate supervisor or Administration.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Connecticut fair employment laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, marital status, national origin, ancestry, past or present history of mental disorder, mental retardation, learning disability, physical disability (including blindness and pregnancy), sexual orientation or genetic information. It is the policy of NERS to comply with all relevant federal, state and local laws with respect to equal employment opportunities for employees and applicants in all aspects of employment, including the terms or conditions of employment, recruitment, hiring, promotion, discipline, benefits and termination. If you feel that you may have been subjected to any form of unlawful discrimination, submit a written report to your Supervisor, Manager or the Human Resource Director. Your report should be specific and include the names of the individuals involved and any witnesses. If you prefer to make a report in person, please speak with your Supervisor, Manager or the Director of Human Resources. The Agency will immediately undertake an effective, thorough and objective investigation and will attempt to resolve the situation. If the Agency determines improper actions have occurred, effective remedial action will be taken to deter any future impropriety. The Agency will not retaliate against any person for filing a report or participating in an investigation and will not permit retaliation by management or your co-workers.

## **At-Will Employment**

Your employment with NERS is “Employment at Will”, which means that either you or NERS may terminate the employment relationship at any time for any reason with, or without, cause or notice. This Employee Handbook is not a contract and does not guarantee employment. No Manager or employee of this Agency has any authority to enter into any verbal or written agreement for employment for any specified period of time, or make any agreement for employment other than at-will.

## **Sexual and Other Harassment**

Sexual and other harassment of employees is prohibited under both state and federal law. Based on federal law, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Connecticut Discriminatory Employment Practices Law. Together, federal and state law prohibit harassment based on an individual’s race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, ancestry, past or present history of mental disorder, intellectual disability or physical disability, including but not limited to blindness.

This agency believes that all employees have the right to work in an environment free from all forms of discrimination and will not tolerate harassment of any kind. **The Agency strongly condemns and will not tolerate threats, violent behavior or acts of harassment of any kind by any employee towards other employees, residents or visitors.**

**What is Sexual harassment?** It is a form of prohibited conduct, which means any unwelcome sexual advance, requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is offensive or objectionable. Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as suggestive or offensive comments, lewd remarks and sexual propositions.
- Non-verbal conduct such as derogatory or pornographic displays, cartoons or drawings, sexual gestures, leers or stares.
- Physical conduct such as touching, kissing, patting, brushing up against someone or assault.

**What is Harassment?** It is any unacceptable behavior that may be offensive to another. Harassment may be verbal, written or by gesture. Harassment conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Threatening telephone calls and written messages
- Vandalism of personal or company property
- Assaults or stalking of other employees or their families
- Pushing, fighting, shoving or horseplay
- Threats of retaliation

### **When is conduct unwelcome or harassing?**

- When submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions is made either explicitly or implicitly (e.g. hiring, promotion, termination)
- When such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

**Not sexual or other harassment?** Harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature, nor does it refer to any inappropriate behavior that some of our residents may exhibit. These behaviors will be addressed in training on **Standards of Conduct**. Work standards are necessary to make sure everyone has a common understanding of what is expected. This allows the Agency to consistently enforce a set of standards that create a positive work environment. The work standard rules are designed to protect the rights and safety of all. This includes the individuals we support, their families, co-workers, and members of the public.

Since the Agency cannot create a list that addresses all situations, the standards that follow are considered a list of basic common sense rules. No conduct which is immoral, unsafe, unethical or illegal will be tolerated.

**What should you do if you feel harassed?** If you believe that you have been harassed in any manner, you should immediately report to a member of the management team. You may submit your complaint in writing or verbally. A harassment form is accessible upon request and helps to clarify an employee's concern. All complaints of sexual and/or other harassment will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. This agency will not tolerate any retaliation against any complaining employee or witness.

Any manager or supervisor who is aware of possible sexual and/or other harassment must immediately bring it to the attention of the Director of Human Resources.

**What happens following a complaint?** After a report is made the complaint will be investigated. If possible, the anonymity of the individual who brought forth the complaint will be protected. Individuals found to have engaged in sexual and/or other harassment will receive appropriate disciplinary and corrective action, up to and including termination.

In addition to resolving your harassment complaint internally within the agency, you may also decide to initiate legal action. Should you do so, you are advised that Connecticut law requires that a formal written complaint be filed with Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities within 180 days of the date the alleged sexual and/or other harassment occurred. Federal and State laws include a variety of remedies which may include cease and desist orders, and harassers may be subject to civil or criminal penalties.

This policy is issued pursuant to regulations issued by the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities ("CCHRO"), 21 Grand Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106 (Tel. No. (800) 477-5737).

### **Workplace Violence- (Zero Tolerance)**

The Agency is committed to maintaining a zero tolerance violence-free workplace and prohibits all acts of violence between employees. Threats or acts of violence shall include, but are not limited to:

- Any act or gesture by an employee intended to harass or intimidate another employee.
- Any act or gesture by an employee likely to damage Agency property.
- Any act or gesture by an employee likely to leave another employee injured or fearing injury.

All employees are responsible for helping to maintain a violence-free workplace. Each employee is required to govern himself accordingly and at no time will it be acceptable for anyone to bring firearms or weapons on Agency property. In addition, any employee experiencing an act or threat of violence is required to report such acts or threats to his/her immediate supervisor and/or Senior Manager, Human Resources Director or Executive Director, as appropriate. Each act or threat of violence will be investigated, and if substantiated, may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Any act or threat of violence from a visitor or vendor on Agency property will result in an immediate call to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

### **Alcohol and Drug Use**

In order to ensure the health and safety of employees and program participants, the Agency shall continue strict enforcement of the zero tolerance policy on possession, use, sale or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol on the premises of the Agency. Employees who violate this policy may be subject to immediate discharge.

In the event that the Agency has reasonable grounds for believing that an employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, that employee may be sent home; or upon consent, the Agency may request that the employee submit to a drug or alcohol test and/or submit to a search of personal property. Failure to comply with such requests shall be viewed as a positive result of such testing and may be used as corroborating evidence if there are independent grounds for concluding that the employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

### **Arrest Statement**

Any employee of New England Residential Services who is arrested and charged with a criminal offense, other than minor traffic violations, will inform the Director of Human Resources and/or the Executive Director within two (2) business days of the charge. This applies to all managers, employees, contracted staff and volunteers of the agency.

## **Your Employment**

### **Progressive Discipline**

To continue our tradition of positive employee relations, the Agency, where appropriate, will use corrective counseling designed to provide employees with opportunities to improve deficient performance. The goal is to help employees improve performance, attendance, and other work related challenges by providing constructive counseling and positive solutions. The disciplinary process may entail the following and will be documented accordingly:

- **Coaching Session:** The employee shall be alerted to a discrepancy between expected performance/behavior and actual performance/behavior.
- **First Written Warning:** A written warning/discipline may be given to the employee if the expectations for the addressed performance and/or behavior for the infraction has not been met.
- **Final Warning:** A final warning/discipline may be given when an employee has received his/her first written warning and has not satisfactorily corrected his/her performance or behavior. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final disciplinary action before termination.
- **Termination:** An employee may be terminated if there has been no significant improvement in performance or behavior following earlier disciplinary action, or if the employee engages in gross misconduct or severe violation of the Agency policy.

The nature and severity of the discipline will be determined by the Agency in its sole discretion, and will reflect the severity of the violation, the employee's past record and other individual circumstances. Under normal circumstances, NERS will apply these levels of discipline in a progressive manner. However, any level of discipline may be applied at any time where the Agency determines that it is appropriate to the situation.

**Any violation of the *Standards of Conduct*, safety rules or any other Agency policies will be noted as "Performance Misconduct" on the written warnings and disciplinary documentation. Violations of different rules shall be considered the same as repeated violations of the same rules and agency policies for purposes of progressive action.**

Disciplinary actions will be documented and reviewed with the employee within seven (7) days of the incident or within reason. Both parties will sign the document which indicates that the discipline has been reviewed with the employee. An employee's signature is not an agreement with the discipline, but that it has been reviewed with the employee. Disciplinary warnings will remain in an employee's employment file while actively employed by the Agency.

**NOTE:** *The following procedure is a guideline only. Any step may be skipped if, in the opinion of the Agency, the situation warrants it.*

## Employee Classifications

Employees may be placed into one of the following job status classifications. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period of time, however, the level of benefits that you are eligible for may depend on your employee classification. Your classification may change during your tenure.

**Full-time:** Employees who are regularly scheduled to work between 35 to 40 hours per week.

**Part-time More:** Employees who are regularly scheduled to work between 20 to 34 hours per week.

**Part-time Less:** Employees who are regularly scheduled to work between 5 to 19 hours per week.

**Temporary:** Employees hired to perform a temporary assignment no longer than six months.

**Substitute/Per Diem:** Employees who do not have regular schedules and fill in for other employees who are out sick, on vacation or for any other miscellaneous reasons. These employees are required to work at least twice a month to remain an active employee unless there are no open shifts available.

## Exempt/Non-Exempt Employees

Consistent with applicable Federal and State wage and hour laws, employee classifications fall into one of two categories: exempt or non-exempt. These terms are defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act, which is a Federal law requiring that *certain* employees be paid at least the minimum wage and overtime for hours worked over 40 hours a week. However, the law provides that some employees are exempt from this requirement and therefore, do not have to be paid a specific hourly wage or overtime. Your job description indicates the classification of the position as being *exempt* or *non-exempt*.

**Exempt:** Exempt employees do not have any limits on the hours that may be worked in a given work or pay period. They are expected to work the hours needed to accomplish their job responsibilities without receiving extra pay for overtime worked.

**Non-Exempt:** Non-exempt employees are paid an hourly rate and are eligible for overtime pay at the rate of 1 ½ times their regular hourly rate of pay for hours worked in excess of 40 hours per work week.

## **Hours of Work**

Each workweek begins on Saturday at 12:00 a.m. and ends on Friday at 11:59 p.m. Work schedules vary throughout the Agency. Supervisors will advise you of your individual work schedule. Staffing needs and operational demands may necessitate variations in starting and ending times, as well as variations in the total hours that may be scheduled. Second and third shifts may be scheduled on an "as needed" basis. These hours may be modified by the Agency at any time.

An employee may not exceed a total of 16 hours on a given day, unless mandated to do so. Scheduled employees will have at least two days off within a week.

## **Job Vacancies**

Vacancies for union job positions within the agency will be posted on Therap for a period of 10 calendar days and shall indicate job classification, title, rate of pay and scheduled hours. Employees interested in applying for such postings shall respond in a scomm message through Therap.

When two or more employees of equal qualifications are applying for the same position, determination will be based on seniority. Employees who are actively on their probationary period may apply, however, preference will be given to the applicants that have successfully completed their probationary period.

If the position is filled by an employee within the same group home, the employee's previous position shall be posted in the same fashion. However, in the event that another person from the same group home fills the second position, the third opening shall be filled in any manner.

Any employee who is awarded a vacancy is required to fulfill the employment commitment for at least 6 months.

## **Filling Open Shifts**

A list of substitute and part-time staff will be posted at each worksite by seniority. An employee can only be offered up to 2 shifts when filling open hours. This will avoid one staff taking the majority of the open shifts. All calls to fill open shifts will be documented for future use.

When a shift needs to be filled, employees will use the fill-in list to cover any open shifts. The fill-in list will consist of substitute and part-time employees. The first employee to take the shift or respond to the call will be awarded the shift with the exception of open shifts with a two week notice (ex: vacation, etc.) which will be allowed a 24 hour call back period. The next open shift will be filled by calling the next substitute or part-time employee on the list after the staff who took the last open shift. If no substitute or part-time staff is available, full-time employees will be the next group called.

A substitute or part-time employee may be skipped on the list if the shift that needs to be filled will put them into overtime. It is the employee's responsibility to monitor their hours and inform the manager that this will put them into overtime. All overtime must be approved by a manager.

Employees are responsible for finding their own coverage for time off requests by following the above procedure and completing a time off form. Once an employee agrees to fill a shift it does not have to be returned to the requesting employee for any reason. If for any reason the fill-in employee can no longer work the shift, they must find their own coverage based on this procedure.

## **Medication Certification Program**

For the health, safety and wellbeing of the individuals supported by our Agency, every employee who works in a direct support capacity must be certified by the State of Connecticut to dispense medications.

Participants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- High School diploma or GED
- No drug related convictions
- No Medication Certification may have been revoked in the past

Employees will be required to attend a 21-hour course and will be reimbursed by the Agency to attend the initial course. The candidate will complete the course within their first six months of hire, successfully pass the lab practicum, written exam and the on-site practicum with the Agency nurse.

Participants must attend 100% of the course.

*Passing scores:*

- Pass the written exam with a score of 80 or higher
- Pass the Laboratory Practicum by 100%
- Pass the On-site Practicum by 100% with Medication card in hand

An employee may take the next scheduled exam if they do not pass the initial exam. Failure to pass on the third attempt will result in discharge of employment.

Once all requirements for medication certification have been completed, the employee must wait to receive their card from DDS before they can pass the on-site practicum (Checklist A and B). Upon completion of the onsite practicum an employee will be able to administer medications at the site specific location and will need medication orientation to other group homes if applicable.

An annual practicum (Pass and Pour) is required by the Department of Developmental Services to keep your DDS Medication Card in compliance. Per State regulations this can be done within 30 days before or after the 1-year anniversary date of the medication certificate. It is the employees' responsibility to schedule the pass and pour with the Nurse and to notify the Manager to ensure medications are not passed on the scheduled date. Failure to complete the annual practicum within the designated time frame will result in a written warning to the employee and a licensing citation for the agency.

### ***Medication Card Recertification***

Re-certification is required every 2 years. The process can start up to 90 days before the medication certification expiration date and must be completed at least 4 weeks prior to employee's medication expiration date. Employees that fail to complete the recertification process prior to two weeks of their expiration date will receive a written warning. The re-certification process is a two part process as follows:

- The written test is administered by the Medication Coordinator for the agency which is the Director of Human Resources. You can schedule your exam through Therap or phone. You will be provided with study materials upon request. You must pass the exam with a score of an 80 or above.
- A practicum must be scheduled by the employee with their house Nurse.

If an employee fails the initial exam they may take a second exam after 24 hours. Should an employee fail the 2<sup>nd</sup> exam, DDS must give approval prior to taking the exam for a 3<sup>rd</sup> time. Failure to pass the exam on the third attempt will result in termination.

Failure to complete both parts of the re-certification process within the designated 90-day time frame will result in progressive disciplinary action as follows.

- *First Occurrence* – Employee will receive a written warning. Employees may attend the next available 21-hour course without reimbursement by the agency. Employees scheduled on third shift may be switched to another shift to accommodate the needs of the home.
- *Second Occurrence* – Termination of employment.

No employee can pass medications without a current medication certification card in hand.

## **Outside Employment**

Employees are permitted to engage in outside work and hold other jobs, subject to certain restrictions as outlined below:

- Activities and conduct away from the job must not compete, conflict with or compromise the interests or reputation of NERS.
- Outside employment must not adversely affect job performance and the employee's ability to fulfill all responsibilities to NERS including but not limited to, being mandated to stay on the job and cover a call out shift.
- Employees are not to solicit or conduct any outside business during paid working time with NERS.

Employees are cautioned to consider carefully the demands that additional work activities will create before accepting outside employment. Outside employment will not be considered an excuse for poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, refusal to travel and refusal to work overtime or different hours. If outside work activities cause or contribute to job related problems, normal disciplinary procedures will be followed.

In evaluating outside work, management and the Residential Director will consider whether the proposed employment may reduce the employee's efficiency in working for NERS. Employees will not receive authorization to report to work late or to leave work early in order to accommodate a second job.

Employees on an unpaid leave of absence due to (FLMA), utilizing paid benefit time due to (FMLA), workers compensation, and on short-term disability are prohibited from engaging in outside employment. Fraudulent use of benefit time will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **Performance Reviews**

Performance reviews are conducted at least once a year within 30 days of an employee's anniversary (hire) date. Your supervisor will conduct these reviews and schedule intermittent supervisions to discuss your performance.

Your review will include consideration of factors including but not limited to, quality and quantity of work, attitude, communication skills, teamwork, attendance, and initiative. The purpose of these reviews is to help you become aware of your progress, areas where improvement is needed and areas of strength.

During your review, your supervisor will implement, propose and list outcomes for the following year and you will have input into this process of the evaluation. An outcome should have a clear and measurable objective. Any areas on the evaluation where improvement is needed,

additional supervisions should be conducted. These supervisions will include time frames for improvement or further disciplinary action that may be taken.

### **Probationary Period**

Newly hired Employees shall be considered for a probationary period of six hundred-eighty (680) hours or one hundred eighty (180) calendar days, whichever comes first, from the date of employment, including time lost for sickness and other leaves of absence. During this time you will become familiar with your responsibilities, get acquainted with your fellow employees and determine whether you are satisfied with your job. You may be assigned to more than one house; however you will have one supervisor assigned to track your probationary period and your training. Also, during this time, your supervisor will monitor your performance. You will have scheduled supervision meetings with your supervisor and your first evaluation will be completed at the end of three months.

As the end of your probationary period approaches, an evaluation will be completed. To continue employment a satisfactory work performance must be attained. Passing your probationary period does not guarantee continued employment for any period of time.

If an employee applies for and accepts a new position within the Agency while on probation, a new probationary period will begin.

Employees will be able to utilize time off once they meet the 680 hour requirement as of your original hire date. This is a one-time requirement.

### **Schedule Changes**

Occasionally a change in work schedules may be required based on resident and worksite needs. If this occurs, the manager will meet with the affected employees and offer the positions to employees within the worksite according to employment status and seniority. Any open positions will be posted on Therap. The Agency will give employees a two (2) week notice of schedule changes.

### **Staff Meetings**

Staff meetings are part of the regularly scheduled hours for employees. Attendance is mandatory unless prior approval to not attend is obtained from the supervisor. A change of time, day or location of the meeting will be given to employees with as much notice as possible. Staff meetings that are cancelled for reasons outside the control of the employer will not be paid. Employees who have a staff meeting as part of their normal schedule will be allowed to work to make up the time missed for the meeting. Employees have the option to use earned time during the pay cycle with the supervisors' approval. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis, usually every other week. Children are not allowed at staff meetings unless prior approval from your supervisor is obtained. Staff meetings are an important tool to discuss and problem solve any issues of concern, plan for activities or appointments, provide pertinent trainings and more.

A record of these meetings will be documented. The meeting minutes will contain all staff present, be typed and reviewed at the next meeting or posted to be reviewed by all staff, each staff will initial after the review.

## **Staff Training and Development**

To ensure the safety of our residents and to help prevent accidents staff members who work direct care are trained for their positions. Employees will be provided with a training schedule on an annual basis by their supervisors, which will include times of training and location. It is the responsibility of the employee to attend required trainings on time and to obtain directions to training locations as needed.

If an employee is unable to make a required training they must contact their supervisor as soon as possible. The supervisor will make a determination based on the employees' circumstance as to whether the employee can make up the training within the required timeframe or proceed with progressive discipline. Employees who are not in compliance with training may be suspended from work until they are retrained.

Trainings begin promptly as scheduled and employees who are late will not be allowed into the training class if it has begun.

The following trainings are required within thirty (30) days of hire and every two years thereafter:

- Signs and Symptoms of Illness (This is part of Medical Awareness)
- Communicable Disease Control (This is part of Medical Awareness)
- Basic Health/ Behavioral Needs of Resident Routines
- Routines of the Residents
- Emergency Procedures of the Residence

New employees who have not been trained in the above areas shall not work without other personnel on duty that have been trained in these areas.

The following trainings are required within six (6) months of hire and every two years thereafter unless otherwise noted. Training may be done more often as needed.

- First Aid for Accidents (This is part of Medical Awareness)
- Agency Policies and Procedures
- Planning and Provision of Services
- Behavioral Emergency Techniques (PMT is required prior to working in a behavioral home) (18 months) (Initial training will be required beyond 18 months)
- Blood Borne Pathogens/Infection Control – (OSHA) (Annually) (This is part of Medical Awareness)
- Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (Upon hire prior to working any shift and annually)
- HIPAA – Healthcare Privacy

- Prevention of Sexual Harassment – One time training
- Defensive Driving- One time training
- Winter Driving (Annually)
- DDS Fire Safety (Annually)
- DDS-ADA Video (Annually)
- Sensitivity/Team Building (Every 2 years)
- Water Safety (Annually)
- DDS Safety Alerts (Annually)
- CPR (Every 2 years)

There will be one staff person on duty per shift certified in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

### ***Trainer Qualifications***

Trainers must have current certifications on file to train CPR and PMT. A registered nurse will provide the medical awareness training. Trainers must be trained and approved to train prior to training other staff members. The Residential Manager will do trainings specific to the program site. The House Orientation packet will be completed and signed by both parties.

### ***Training Procedures***

Training may be done in a lecture format with the use of other materials as appropriate, (i.e., videos, reading materials) handouts, hands-on practice, discussion, game format, and role-play. Each new employee will be scheduled several shadow shifts with a seasoned staff member. The seasoned staff member will be required to assist with some of the hands on training such as personal hygiene routines, driving routines and training in community setting.

### ***Staff Development***

Additional training will be offered to promote staff development and enhance employee performance. Employees will be expected to attend these trainings when requested. When an employee is promoted or hired into another position appropriate training will be completed. This training will be coordinated by the employee's supervisor.

### ***Training Documentation***

Documentation of training will be kept at the main office. All training attendance will be documented on a signature sheet and will include the following: Title of Training, Dated, Title of Trainer, Program Site, Training Outline, Printed name of employee and employee signature.

### ***Trainings Outside of the Agency***

Employees must go through our initial new employee training, although, the agency will accept the following outside trainings for CPR, DDS Safety Alerts, DDS Fire Safety, Defensive Driving or Prevention of Sexual Harassment.

Thereafter, outside trainings by other agencies will be accepted by presenting a copy of the signature sheet which includes all the required information for the following trainings:

- Abuse and Neglect
- OSHA-Blood Borne Pathogens/Infection Control
- CPR
- Defensive Driving or Vehicle safety
- DDS Fire safety
- DDS Safety Alerts
- Prevention of Sexual Harassment

New employees who are medication certified are required to complete an on-site practicum with the Agency nurse at their primary work site within 30 days of hire and must be orientated to medications at each work site location prior to passing medications at the site. No employee can pass medications without their current medication certification card on them.

### **Transfers (Involuntary/Voluntary)**

The Agency may transfer an employee to another worksite whenever such transfer is necessary for the provision of proper resident care or for the carrying out of Agency programs and responsibilities. A permanent transfer will be considered when there is a problem between a resident and an employee or a matter of health and safety affecting one or all of the residents. The employer will take every reasonable measure to address the situation before imposing a transfer. A notice of two weeks will be given to an employee being involuntarily transferred to another worksite. Shadow shifts and orientation can be conducted within the two-week period.

The following steps will be taken in the order listed.

1. The employee may transfer to any available vacant position of their choice within the Agency with an equal number of hours or any full or part-time vacant position if no position with equal number of hours is available.
2. If there are no vacant positions, then the position of the least senior employee within the Agency with comparable hours will be transferred into the affected worksite and work the hours of that position.

A voluntary transfer can be initiated by an employee for a good and sufficient reason.

### **Overtime**

From time to time, you may be required to work overtime. For the purposes of determining which hours constitute overtime; only-actual hours worked in a workweek will be counted. This means that if you are on vacation or out of work for some other reason during a week, those hours not actually worked will not be counted towards your overtime calculation.

Overtime is paid to any nonexempt employee who works in excess of 40 hours in a week. Overtime is paid at a rate of one and one-half (1.5) times the employee's regular hourly rate of pay.

Mandatory overtime occurs when the supervisor or on call supervisor requires an employee to be mandated to work a shift that cannot be filled. Mandatory overtime is paid to non-exempt employees and does not need to meet the required 40 hours a week.

Mandatory overtime assignments shall be made by rotation among all unionized employees, starting with the least senior, unless the mandated assignment occurs while an employee is on duty. When overtime occurs on a holiday the holiday rate prevails, no additional overtime will be paid.

## **Pay Schedule**

Employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis every other Friday. You will be provided with a pay schedule upon hire.

## **ADP Portal**

The ADP Portal will enable you to review your current and historical payroll information 24/7. Employees will need to enroll to use this service, and will receive registration information upon hire. All you need is internet access and a web browser. If you do not have internet access you can utilize the agency's computers at the office or group home with authorization.

1. Go to <https://workforcenow.adp.com/public/index.htm>
2. Click on "Register Now"
3. Enter the Registration code which is: Nersinc-welcome

You will be prompted to complete a registration process during which you must answer a few security questions and select a password. Your password must contain 8 to 20 characters with a combination of letters and numbers.

*ADP Portal will allow employees to:*

- View, save and print images of paychecks and W-2s.
- Change direct deposit information
- Change limited personal information
- Access payroll history for loans, mortgages and other financial needs
- Perform "What if scenarios with the Paycheck Modeling feature"
- Receive e-mail notifications whenever new documents are ready for viewing

There are certain deductions we are required to make by law. Payroll deductions are itemized from your gross earnings. Federal or State laws require that we make deductions for Social Security (FICA), Medicare, Federal Income Tax, State Income Tax and any other legally mandated deductions (ie, wage garnishments). In addition, there may be deductions made for items that you authorize.

## **Wage Assignments and Garnishments**

The Agency is obligated to comply with any court ordered wage assignments or garnishments against your wages and will deduct such amounts as necessary. The Agency is legally required to process these orders and will not cease unless notified by court order or other legal process.

## **Direct Deposit**

The Agency requests that all employees use direct deposit versus paper checks. Through ADP, you may elect to have your paycheck electronically deposited into more than one account at any bank or credit union. When new information is created or changes are made to existing information, employees will receive a live/paper check for one pay cycle. Employees have the ability to make their own changes to their banking information through the ADP website, or they may process the request through Human Resources by using a paper form.

## **Time Recording**

Federal and State laws require that an accurate record be kept of the hours worked by all employees. Employees are required to record time worked by dialing into a phone system that is connected to our payroll system. Employees are required to clock in immediately upon arrival for their scheduled shifts.

Employees must use the house or fax phone when calling in/out, you cannot utilize your own personal phone, as the ADP system tracks what number the call is coming from. Any employee who is late to shift cannot stay beyond their scheduled shift to make up for their late arrival. Employees can view their punches on their online timecard with ADP.

Your paycheck will not accurately reflect the number of hours worked if you do not punch in/out on shift. If an adjustment is needed due to this error, payment will be delayed to the next pay date. Employees who on a routine basis miss clocking in/out, are late to shift or use their own personal phone to clock in will receive progressive discipline up to termination.

Employees are prohibited from entering a punch for a co-worker into the phone system. Dismissal of both employees will follow any breach in this policy.

If you are working in a location other than your primary location, you must complete a transfer in the system for each new worksite location. The manager will provide you with this location number and explain the procedure. Any employee taking on additional shifts that lead to working more than 40 hours in a work week must inform the supervisor of any overtime hours prior to accepting the open shift. Mandated overtime must be coded by the manager who is mandating the employee to stay beyond their shift. Employees cannot mandate themselves if a co-worker calls out of a shift.

## **Leaves of Absence**

### ***Administrative Leave***

Employees may be placed on an administrative leave of absence. This leave may be with or without pay. Paid leaves will be for regularly scheduled shifts only and not additional shifts that employees may pick up.

An administrative leave may occur for the following reasons:

- Protection of residents while an investigation is being conducted.
- As part of the disciplinary procedure (This leave may be deemed a suspension.)
- When the employer determines that the employee's job performance is impaired due to physical or mental health reasons.

### ***Bereavement Leave***

All employees with regularly scheduled hours of 30 or more shall receive their regular rate of pay for three (3) working days of absence in the event of the death of a spouse, parent, parent-in-law, sister/brother-in-law, daughter/son-in-law, child, step-child, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren or any other person who is living in the employee's household. The three days should be taken within a reasonable time of the death or funeral.

The employee should notify their supervisor immediately. The Bereavement Leave request form must be completed and submitted to supervisor. If the employee is unavailable to complete the form the manager will submit it in their absence. An employee may request additional time off with the supervisor's approval. This use of time may be paid if the employee has accrued earned or pool time.

### ***Connecticut Family Violence Leave***

Employees are eligible to take up to twelve (12) days of unpaid leave per calendar year if they are victims of family crimes. This leave may be taken by employees to help "family or household members" who are victims of family violence. Employees must provide seven (7) days' notice for foreseeable absences.

### ***Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)***

Federal and Connecticut laws require employers with at least 50 employees to provide family and medical leaves of absence for eligible employees. State, Federal or both of these laws may apply to a leave. Where both laws apply, the leave provided by each must be taken concurrently (at the same time). This policy will be interpreted to comply with the law(s) that apply to Family and Medical leave. Under the federal law ("FMLA"), an eligible employee may take up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave within a 12-month period. Under the Connecticut law ("CFMLA"), an eligible employee may take up to sixteen (16) weeks of unpaid leave within a two-year period. Our policy incorporates both of these laws.

*FMLA Leave Policy* - Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) may be taken for up to 24 weeks within a two-year period. The two-year period will be measured starting from an employee's first day of leave. If an employee has exhausted all paid time, the Agency will continue to pay the employer portion of the employees' health insurance while on approved leave; however, it is the responsibility of the employee to submit the employee's payment portion to the business manager within two weeks of the payment due date to continue coverage.

*Eligible Employees* – To be eligible for the leave, an employee must have worked for the Agency for at least 12 months and have worked 1,000 hours during the 12 months prior to the leave.

Full-time, Part-time, or Substitute employees may be eligible for FMLA leave as long as the above requirements are met.

*Reasons for Leave* - Family/medical leave may be used for the following:

- (1) The birth and care of a newborn child (must be taken within 12 months of the child's birth)
- (2) The adoption or placement of a child or foster care and to care for the newly placed child (must be taken within 12 months of the placement)
- (3) To care for a "covered relation," which includes your spouse, partner, child, parent, or, under CFMLA, parent-in-law when that person has a serious health condition
- (4) To care for your own serious health condition
- (5) 26 weeks of leave will also be provided within a 12 month period to care for a covered service member of the Armed forces, National Guard or Reserves who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of active duty.

*Maternity Leave* – Pregnant employees shall be eligible for an unpaid maternity leave but may utilize their earned time and extended time, (effective the date of birth or date of disability) in lieu of non-paid leave. By the end of the third (3rd) month of pregnancy, such employees shall notify the employer verbally of the expected date of delivery and the estimated date on which they intend to begin their maternity leave.

By the end of the sixth (6th) month of pregnancy, such employees who desire to continue working shall provide the employer with a statement from their attending physician certifying the expected date of delivery, their physical ability to continue working and the date up to which they are permitted to work. Maternity leave will be granted for a period not to exceed nine (9) months and will be covered under the family medical leave policy for up to 24 weeks.

*Disability Leave* – Employees who are disabled due to non-job-related injury or illness may be eligible for six (6) months unpaid disability leave. Employees may utilize their earned time and extended time, effective the date of disability, in lieu of non-paid leave. In all

cases of disability, a medical certificate is required prior to, and upon return from the disability leave. Employees who are eligible for disability insurance can utilize their accrued time not to exceed 100% of their average income.

*Notice of Leave* – Employees are required to give the Agency as much notice of leave as possible. Where the need for leave is foreseeable, you should contact the Human Resources with at least thirty (30) days advance notice. Where the need for leave is not foreseeable, you must contact your supervisor within two business days except in extraordinary circumstances.

*Medical Leave Certification* - If you are requesting leave because of your own or a covered relation's serious health condition, the appropriate health care provider must complete medical certification concerning the nature and expected duration of the injury or illness. You may obtain a Medical Certification Form from the Human Resource Coordinator.

*Required Use of Paid Leave* - Family/Medical leave is an unpaid leave, unless the employee has accrued Earned time or extended time, which then may be used concurrently during this leave in accordance with Agency policy. The substitution of paid time for unpaid family/medical leave time does not extend the length of the leave provided by the law.

*The End of Your Leave* - At the end of your leave, you will return to work and to your former position or one with similar pay and status in accordance with state and federal law. If you are medically unable to perform your original job upon the expiration of your leave entitlement, you may be transferred to a position more suitable to your physical condition if such work is available.

If your leave is due to your own serious health condition, you must provide medical certification that you are fit to resume work. An employee who fails to provide the Return to Work Medical Certification will not be permitted to resume work until it is provided. Should you not return to work at the end of your leave your employment with the Agency may be terminated.

### **Jury Duty Leave**

If you should be called to serve on a jury panel, please notify your supervisor within 24 hours after receiving your jury duty notice. All employees who are scheduled for 30 hours per week or more will be paid their regular wages; In accordance with current Connecticut law, you will not suffer any loss of pay the first 5 days of jury duty leave. This does not include “on call” jury time when employees are able to be at work.

After the 5th day, the state pays a daily rate per day of service. The check received by the employee for jury duty should be submitted to payroll. The Agency will reimburse employees for jury duty with respect to their regular wages or salary up to 8 hours, if the employee has completed their probationary period.

To be paid for jury duty leave, the Agency will require proof of your attendance. While on jury duty leave, the Agency expects that you will come to work on any day you are released from jury duty before 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

### **Military Leave**

Employees will not be paid for military leave but may utilize earned time. Health Insurance benefits will be paid up to 31 days of military service.

Employees who return from military service in the United States armed forces, the Military Reserves or the National Guard shall have and retain their rights of reinstatement, seniority, earned and extended time, layoffs and compensation in accordance with applicable laws, and length of service pay increases. In order to be credited for this time you must submit a copy of your discharge papers (DD-214) to Human Resources.

Employees are required to give timely notice of their military service except as required by military necessity. This includes a calendar of scheduled military trainings.

### **Other Leaves**

Leaves of absence without pay for other reasons may be granted on an individual basis at the discretion of the Agency.

#### **Procedure for Requesting Other Leaves**

If you desire an unpaid leave of absence of five (5) days or more that is not covered by the FMLA Policy, submit a request in writing including the following information:

- (a) Period for which leave is desired
- (b) Reason for leave
- (c) The dates on which the initial leave is anticipated to begin and to be completed.

The request must be submitted to the employee's Supervisor who will then recommend approval or disapproval of the leave. The Executive Director will grant final approval for other leaves.

### **Union Dues or Fees**

Employees who work in the position of Residential Instructor are protected under the bargaining agreement between the agency and New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199. Employees may choose to be members of the bargaining unit by paying the applicable dues and initiation fees. Should an employee choose to not become a member of the Union, the employee will be required to pay agency fees/initiation fees. The Agency fees will be calculated at 90 % of the dues schedule and the employee will not be eligible to vote in Union elections, however the employee will be represented by the Union pending any grievances.

Union dues and fees are deducted upon written authorization of the employee or paid directly to the Union by the employee. Union deductions begin the first pay period following the completion of employees first 30 days of employment. The union fixes the monthly dues and fee amount.

Effective January 1, 2017 the maximum bi-weekly union dues payment will not exceed \$36.46 with the minimum being \$11.54. In the event, an employee works for more than one employer within the bargaining unit and exceeds this amount they are entitled to a refund of union dues payable by the union. Dues or fees are based on the employees' hourly base pay and the hours paid in a week. The deductions occur on a bi-weekly basis.

### **Union Initiation Fees**

The initiation fee of \$50.00 will be deducted in installments based on the bargaining unit agreement. Employees who currently contribute to the bargaining unit through another employer, or have worked for a unionized agency within the past 12 months, will not have to pay the \$50.00 initiation fee. The employee must note this on the initial authorization card upon hire.

### **Political Action Deduction**

Employees may choose to become a political action member. The Political Action deduction will be allocated to local, state and federal political activities as authorized by the Executive Board of the Union. This deduction is on a volunteer basis and is taken upon completion of an employee's signed authorization form.

## **Benefits and Service**

The following sections summarize the benefits the Agency currently provides for employees. Please note that the benefit descriptions contained in this handbook are merely highlights of the programs and benefits provided. These plans are described in greater detail in the summary plan descriptions and official plan documents. In the event of any conflict, the official plan documents will govern.

Additionally, the Agency or its designee retains full discretionary authority to interpret the terms of the plans, as well as full discretionary authority with regard to administrative matters arising in connection with the plans for non-union employees. The Agency or its designee may modify or eliminate any benefits or programs it currently provides, as well as increase the cost to employees of such benefits and programs. This discretionary authority extends to all issues concerning benefit eligibility and entitlement to non-union employees. Benefits for Union employees are paid for by the Agency and governed and administered by the Health Benefit Fund of District 1199.

The benefits differ between Union and Non-Union Employees and are listed separately within the handbook.

## **Benefits for all Employees**

### ***Employee Assistance Program (EAP)***

New England Residential Services Inc. recognizes that at some point employees may have personal or health concerns that can cause problems in their lives at home or at work. Therefore, N.E.R.S. provides a free program to all employees through Solutions. To contact the EAP call 1-800-526-3485 to speak to a counselor; a licensed mental health professional is provided by phone 24/7. Further information can be found on the solutions website at [www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com).

The EAP programs are confidential and can be used for a wide range of problems including: stress, debt resolution, depression and anxiety, marital problems, parenting, bereavement, substance abuse prevention and/or treatment, referrals to local community resources and health and wellness issues.

The goal of the program is to provide easy access to professional help, so that employees can address their problems in the early stages before they become too difficult to manage.

Health Insurance providers are another resource to obtain mental health and substance abuse assistance. If you have health insurance, on the back of each member's card is a toll free number for assistance. Information can also be found through the Connecticut Info line by calling 211, although 211 is a phone based service it also provides a web site at [www.infoline.org](http://www.infoline.org) for many different resources including child care options, energy assistance, housing and support groups.

### ***Civil Union and Same Sex Marriage Benefits***

The state enacted a civil union law in 2008 that provides same sex couples with some of the same rights and responsibilities as marriage under state law. This Agency provided benefits for domestic partnerships prior to the new law but health insurance carriers now require documents to confirm eligibility.

### ***Holidays***

The following holidays are observed by the Agency each year. The main office will be closed on these days:

New Year's Day	Martin Luther King Day
Presidents' Day	Memorial Day
Independence Day	Labor Day
Columbus Day	Thanksgiving Day
Veteran's Day	Christmas Day

Should an official holiday fall on a Saturday or Sunday, non-union employees have the option of observing the holiday on either the preceding Friday or the following Monday. The Main office will be closed on holidays that fall during the week. Should a holiday fall on the weekend, a call to the main office will determine the whether or not the agency will be open. Holidays are recognized on the actual day for union employees.

Union employees will receive double time for work performed on the majority of the holidays, with the exception of the following holidays: Columbus Day, Presidents' Day and Labor Day, these holidays will be paid at time and a half.

If an employee is out on a leave of absence covered under the FMLA or Article 18, that employee will not be paid holiday time while on such leave.

### ***Workers' Compensation***

If you should suffer a work related injury, you will be protected through our workers' compensation insurance policy. This program is paid entirely by the Organization and provides payment for medical expenses as well as weekly compensation benefits.

Upon injury you must immediately notify your supervisor and you must call the Workers Trust Telecare number to report the injury.

**Trust TeleCare:           (866) 730-1143           24 Hours/7 Days a Week**

**For life-threatening injuries call 911**

Failure to report an accident may result in a delay or a rejection of workers' compensation benefits.

If an employee chooses to seek treatment from a physician not listed in the provider directory, they may be putting their workers compensation claim in jeopardy and may be responsible for the cost of their own treatment.

The Agency reserves the right to require an employee to return to work on a light duty work program in accordance with a doctor's certification, if suitable work is available within the Agency. An employee's job position will be held up to a maximum of twenty-four (24) weeks. The Agency will continue to pay an employee's portion of health insurance while on approved leave. Family Medical leave will run concurrently during a workers compensation leave. Therefore, no additional leave will be granted beyond the twenty-four (24) weeks.

### ***Social Security and Medicare***

During an employee's working years, both the employee and NERS contribute to government funds to provide future retirement benefits for each employee. NERS matches the employee's contributions which are deducted from each paycheck for both Social Security (FICA) and

Medicare. Under certain circumstances, you and/or your dependents may be eligible for these benefits before retirement. (See the Social Security website for early benefit guidelines)

### ***Voluntary Life Insurance and AD&D (Accidental Death and Dismemberment)***

Active employees who are regularly scheduled to work at least 20 hours per week (with the exception of seasonal, temporary or contracted employees) qualify to participate in Voluntary Life and AD&D benefits. If you purchase coverage, you may also purchase coverage for your eligible dependents.

- You are eligible for coverage the 1st of the month following 30 days of employment.
- The guaranteed issue amount (without medical proof of eligibility) for each employee under age 70 is \$100,000. However, the benefit may be purchased in lower increments of \$10,000, and up to a maximum of \$300,000. Amounts exceeding the guaranteed amount will require Evidence of Insurability by completing a health information form.
- This benefit is also offered to spouses of covered employees. The guaranteed issue amount (without medical proof of eligibility) for spouses under age 70 is \$50,000. The benefit may be purchased in lower increments of \$10,000, up to a maximum of \$150,000; however, a spouse's benefit may not exceed 50% of the employee's enrolled amount. Amounts exceeding the guaranteed amount will require Evidence of Insurability a health information form.
- You may select coverage in the amount of \$10,000 for children 14 days of age up to 26 years old.
- This benefit is portable at an adjusted cost to you should you leave employment with NERS.

Contact the Human Resources to provide you with the appropriate enrollment information, rates and forms.

## **Benefits for Union Employees**

### ***Medical Insurance Coverage- Union Employees***

NERS currently provides coverage for union employees who work at least 20 hours per week. Coverage is based on an employee's wage class. If you're in Wage Class I and currently earn a weekly income of \$490.44 or work 33.25 hours, you're eligible for all benefits. If you're in Wage Class II or III, you're eligible for only certain benefits. There is no initial cost to the employee for individual or family coverage. However, charges will be incurred when the benefits are utilized. Costs for out of network doctors will be higher. Contact your Care Coordinator for annual deductible amounts.

**Medical Insurance Coverage- Union Employees (Cont.)** Your dependents may also be covered if you average 30 hours per week or meet the minimum weekly amount. When you need to determine your wage class or you or a member of your family needs care, call the eligibility department of the fund office at 860-728-1100 to find out whether you or your dependents are eligible for benefits. You may also contact your Care Coordinators at 1-888-212-0232.

Health Insurance premiums are paid for by the Agency directly to the union fund. There is no cost per pay period to the employee for individual or family coverage, However, There is a cost to the employee when they utilize the insurance. This cost depends on the doctors network status, whether they are in network or out of network. Contact your Care Coordinator for the annual deductible amounts.

Details of the plan, including coverage limitations, inclusions and other costs to employees are contained in the quick guide to benefits booklet you receive when you become eligible for the plan.

**Dental Insurance Coverage - Union Employees**

As part of the medical benefit program, the Agency currently provides dental benefits through Delta Dental to Union employees and their dependents in Wage Class I. Employees in Wage Class II or III are not covered. When you or a member of your family needs care call the eligibility department of the fund office at 860-728-1100 to find out whether you or your dependents are eligible for benefits.

Dental Insurance premiums are paid for by the Agency directly to the union fund. There is no cost per pay period to the employee for individual or family coverage. There is an annual deductible cost and the maximum coverage limit is \$1,000 per person per calendar year.

**Vision Care - Union Employees**

The Agency currently provides a vision care program for eligible employees. If you're in Wage Class I or II you and your dependents are covered. If you're in Wage Class III, only the employee is covered. The coverage is currently provided by Davis Vision and includes one eye exam. When you or a member of your family needs care call the eligibility department of the fund office at 860-728-1100 to find out whether you or your dependents are eligible for benefits.

**Short Term Disability - Union Employees**

This benefit is paid for by NERS- To be eligible for disability payments, a member must meet all eligibility requirements and be actively employed at the time of the disability. The disability must be caused by a non-work related injury, illness or a pregnancy and the person must be under a physician's care. Under the Family and Medical leave policy, employees who are absent for one (1) week or more must submit medical documentation. The Agency will continue to cover an employee's health insurance while on an approved leave.

Eligible employees work an average of 20 hours per week. All claims for disability must be filed within 30 days of the start of the illness or injury. There is a 15 day unpaid waiting period, during

which accrued earned and extended time may be utilized. Payments will start on the 16th day of the disability and will continue until you can return to work or when the maximum 26 week period within a 52-week period is exhausted whichever comes first. You must work at least 13 weeks between disabilities to be eligible for a new period of disability for a new condition.

The amount of your disability is based on 60% of your average earnings up to a maximum of \$300.00 per week. Employees may utilize accrued time to cover the difference between their regular wages and the amount received from disability benefit

### ***Life Insurance and AD&D- Union Employees***

Life insurance is paid for by the Agency. The benefit you receive is based on your wage class and provided through the Union Welfare Fund. During the first year of employment, a union employee is covered up to \$2,000. Thereafter, coverage is based on an employee's wage class as follows:

Wage Class I = equal to annual earnings up to a maximum of \$25,000  
Wage Class II = \$4,000  
Wage Class III = \$2,000

Employees under wage class I are covered for non-work related accidents resulting in loss to hands, feet or loss of sight. For more information refer to the union summary plan of benefits.

### ***Meal and Break Periods***

State law indicates that no person shall be required to work for more than seven and one-half (7 1/2) or more consecutive hours without a break of thirty minutes for rest or meal periods. Our employees are compensated for all hours worked and are exempt from the above law. The exemption to this law which applies to the Agency states that an employer with less than five (5) employees on shift at a single work place is required to compensate the employees for break and meal periods. Refer to State Statutes, Section 31-51ii, (C)-3.

As an employee, you are paid for thirty (30) minutes for rest or meal periods as you are considered to be on duty at all times.

On an approved recreation outing by the manager, employees will be reimbursed for food according to the following guidelines. (Note: New rates effective 9-1-19)

Breakfast = 0                      Lunch = \$10.00 *plus tip*                      Dinner = \$15.00 *plus tip*  
*(Tip amount is reimbursable up to 20%)*

All reimbursements must accompany a receipt. Any amount above these guidelines will be paid by the employee. Snack type food will be an allowed expense during meal time but not in addition to meals.

### ***Paid Time-off (PTO) – Union Employees***

*Earned Time:* We all need time to get away from the job and relax. That is why the Agency provides paid time off for its employees. This time away from work is intended to be used for illness lasting one week or less, vacation and personal time. Our plan is based on length of continuous service with the Agency. You should submit requests for time off thru the ADP online Portal. Conflicts concerning time off and vacation requests will be resolved in a fair manner by the manager.

*Earned Time Eligibility:* Public Act 11-52 mandates employers to provide paid sick leave to employees. The Agency has incorporated these provisions into the earned time policy. Union employees accumulate earned time on actual hours worked to a maximum of forty (40) hours. This is for employees who are regularly scheduled each week. This does not apply to per diem or temporary workers. Hours accrued begin the date of hire into an eligible position of part time or less, part time more or Full time. Employees may not utilize this time until the completion of 680 hours of employment. This is a one-time requirement even if there is a break in service, all hours worked for the agency will count towards the 680 hour requirement.

*Accrual Rate:*

- *Part-time (20 hours or less):* 2.5 % -remains the same throughout employment
- *Part-time (20 hours or more):* 5% - remains the same throughout employment
- *Full-time (35 hours or more):* 5%- the first three years , 6.94% on forth (4<sup>th</sup>) year

Vacations will be approved by your manager according to the needs of the work site. Employees can view their current accrual balances online through the ADP Portal.

*Earned Time Usage:* Employees may carry over up to 80 hours of accrued earned time each year. Anything exceeding 80 hours will be forfeited. Employees must use earned time for all time off, except when two employees swap shifts within a payroll period and it's approved in advance by management. Should an employee terminate employment all earned time balances shall be paid with the exception of instances where the employer views the discharge as gross misconduct. Employees who fail to provide the Agency with a two week notice of their voluntary resignation forfeit all unused earned time.

*Extended Time for Union Employees:* This time away from work is intended to be used by union employees for illnesses that exceed one week of consecutively scheduled work hours. A doctor's certificate is required in order to use extended sick leave. Failure to supply satisfactory medical documentation to the Agency will result in leave without pay.

*Extended Time for Union Employees (Cont.)* Extended hours begin to accrue after six (6) months of employment accrue extended time at the rate of 2.3% for employees regularly scheduled at least 20 hours per week and up to a maximum of 40 hours. The maximum accrual rate for eligible employees is 80 hours. Employees who have accrued over 80 hours of extended sick time shall not lose those hours. Once Employee has received extended sick time hours over the 80 hour maximum, the 80 hour maximum shall apply to that employee. Employees will not be paid for unused extended time upon separation of employment. Employees who are absent because of the need to care for a seriously ill primary family or household member (ex; mother, father, child, spouse) will be able to access their extended time based on the above guidelines. In all cases of illness or injury you are required to notify your Supervisor of your absence as soon as possible. Failure to report absences may result in discipline up to and including termination of employment.

### **Pension - Union Employees**

The Agency currently contributes (8%) of eligible employee gross wages into the Union Pension Plan. There are three kinds of employment service vested, credited future and credited past that will affect the amount and entitlement of your pension. You have the right to a pension after you have worked a five (5) years for an employer that contributes to the Pension Fund on your behalf. You earn one year of vesting service if you work 1,000 hours or more in a calendar year for the agency. You may also earn vesting service if you are on an approved leave of absence. This includes military service if the required documentation is submitted.

You earn one month of credit towards your pension for every month that you work 20 hours or more in a week-this is credited service. You may have credited past service if you worked for the Agency before it started contributing to the fund. Credited Service is used to determine the amount of your pension. You can apply for early retirement benefits on the first of the month after you reach age 55 if the service requirements have been met. Normal retirement benefits begin at the age of 65 or if the service requirement have been met.

For more information about the pension plan, contact the Pension Department of the Fund Office at 1-800-227-4744 or 860-728-1100. You may want to request a copy of the official plan document and summary of benefits. This document is clear and easy to read.

### **Benefits - Non-Union Employees**

#### **Medical Insurance Coverage- Non-Union**

The Agency currently provides health insurance coverage for non-union employees who are scheduled to work at least thirty (30) hours per week to participate in its health insurance plan. You become eligible for health insurance coverage on the first day of the month following 30 days of employment. Plan options change annually and will be provided in an open enrollment meeting.

The agency has established a Health Savings Account (HSA) for employees for medical insurance with a high deductible health plans. This account is intended for the purpose of paying medical expenses associated with a high deductible health plan. Employees may participate at a tax savings to them. Also, the Agency may also contribute to an employee's HSA account. Contributions to the savings account ends upon employee separation.

For details of the current plans, including coverage limitations, inclusions and other costs to employees are contained in the employee benefits overview which can be obtained through Human Resources.

### **Dental Insurance Coverage - Non-Union**

As part of the medical benefit program, the Agency currently provides 100% coverage for dental benefits to employees for single person coverage. Eligible employees work a regular schedule of at least thirty (30) hours a week. Employees requiring additional coverage for a spouse or family must contribute the remaining cost. Plan options change annually and will be provided at an open enrollment meeting.

The maximum coverage limit is \$1,250 per person per calendar year. See the employee benefits overview for complete plan details. Employees are eligible for coverage on the first day of the month following 30 days of employment.

### **Vision Care - Non-Union**

Vision care is provided through your medical plan. Routine eye exam are covered by your plan based on your age and if you wear glasses or contacts.

### **Short Term Disability - Non-Union**

Short Term Disability benefits are provided by the agency for regularly scheduled employees working 20 hours or more weekly. Coverage begins on the first day of the month following thirty (30) days of continuous service for employees actively working at the time of disability. The disability must be caused by a non-work related injury, illness or pregnancy and you must be under a physician's care. The Agency will continue to pay an employer portion of health insurance premiums while on this approved leave.

Benefits start on the first calendar day of the disability period for non-work related injury or a serious illness that results in immediate hospitalization. There is a 7 calendar day unpaid waiting period for illness during which pool time will be utilized. Payments will start on the 8th day of the disability and will continue until you can return to work, or until the maximum 13 week period has been reached.

The amount of your disability is based on 60% of your pre-disability average earnings, up to a maximum of \$900.00 per week. Refer to the summary of coverage for more detailed information.

### **Long Term Disability - Non-Union**

The Agency provides a Long Term Disability (LTD) plan for non-union employees regularly scheduled to work at least 20 hours or more. LTD Insurance is provided by the Agency and is paid to the employee after ninety (90) days of continuous disability. Details of the plan are described in the group plan booklet and in the summary of coverage.

### **Retirement Plan - Non-Union**

To help employees save for retirement years, the Agency currently maintains a 403(b) Savings and Retirement Plan for eligible employees. An eligible employee is regularly scheduled for at least 20 hours per week. The Agency will make a matching contribution up to 5% of employee earnings per calendar year. You may contribute more than 5%; however anything above 5% will not be matched. Refer to your 403 (b) plan document for maximum annual contribution limits. To be eligible for the 5% match, an employee must work for the agency at least one (1) year. Any discretionary amount will be distributed to employees even if they do not contribute to a 403(b) account or into a money market fund. For more information about the Savings and Retirement Plan or to make changes or withdrawals to your existing account, please contact the Director of Human Resources.

Agency matching contributions and non-elective contributions are based on the vesting schedule below:

- 0-2 years = 0%
- 2-3 years = 20%
- 3-4 years = 40%
- 4-5 years = 60%
- 5-6 years = 80%
- 6+ years = 100%

Employees hired prior to July 1, 2018, are vested at 100% in all contributions.

### **Pool Time Paid Leave - Non-Union**

Pool time paid leave is intended to be used for illness, vacation and personal time. An employee will receive pool time accruals on their hire date, then after on their anniversary date on a pro-rated basis through the fiscal year. Pool time is accrued at the beginning of each fiscal year.

Accruals are based on length of service with the Agency. Part-time employees scheduled for twenty (20) hours or more will receive this benefit on a pro-rated basis. Pool time can be utilized after 6 months of employment or at the discretion of the supervisor. Employees can view their balances and request time off through the online ADP portal.

*Eligibility:* employees will receive pool time based on the following schedule:

Rates are based on Length of Service and Date of Hire	Number of weeks received at hire and the beginning of fiscal year
Upon hire up to 2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 = 80 hours
2 <sup>nd</sup> year up to 5 years	3 = 120 hours
5 years up to 10 years	4 = 160 hours
10 years through 14 years	5 = 200 hours
15 years and up	6 = 240 hours

*Usage:* Employees may carry over up to 80 hours of accrued time each year. Anything exceeding 80 hours will be forfeited. Employees terminating employment who have pool time balances shall be paid on a pro-rated basis, except in instances where an employee is terminated. Employees who fail to provide the Agency with a two (2) week notice of their voluntary resignation forfeit all unused pool time. Employees absent for one (1) full day or more must use pool time. (Less than a day will not require the use of time)

## **Employee Conduct and Work Rules**

Employees are expected to adhere to Agency Policy and operate within certain parameters of conduct at all times. It is expected that an employee's conduct will reflect favorably upon the Agency and its workforce and that each employee will abide by all work rules and policies.

### **Standards of Conduct**

All employees are expected to follow these rules. Violations will subject employees to discipline up to and including termination. The following are examples of prohibited conduct:

- Theft or attempted theft of property
- Violence, fighting or other disorderly conduct
- Falsification of agency records or employment application
- Failure to fully and truthfully disclose all facts related to a workers' compensation injury
- Insubordination
- Immoral, indecent or unlawful conduct
- Deliberate destruction of, or damage to, Agency property
- Careless waste of materials or mishandling of supplies or equipment
- Failure or refusal to comply with the zero tolerance alcohol and drug policy
- Carrying or possessing a weapon of any kind on Agency property
- Gambling or soliciting gambling on Agency property
- Failure to report abuse and neglect of residents
- Sleeping on the job
- Violation of any Agency policy
- Leaving individuals in a vehicle unattended or improperly supervised
- Violation of safety regulations including driving regulations
- Misuse of the Agency's tax exempt status for personal purchases
- Taking residents to staff homes or other places of employment without prior approval.
- Abusive or threatening language or behavior
- Excessive tardiness and absenteeism, including- leaving shift early without prior approval
- Failure to report an absence
- Cell phone use while on shift
- Creating or failure to report hazardous or unsafe conditions
- Conducting personal business on company time
- Removal of Agency records without proper authorization
- Clocking another employee in or out
- Any activity that disrupts the workplace, affects productivity or disparages another's reputation

### **Attendance and Tardiness**

As an employee, your regular attendance and punctuality are crucial to the smooth operation of this agency. The failure to meet this obligation jeopardizes the agency ability to fulfill its purpose and responsibilities to the individuals in our care. Therefore, excessive absenteeism or tardiness will result in discipline up to termination of employment. If it should become necessary for you to be absent due to illness or emergency, you are required to contact your supervisor and an employee at the worksite no later than 4 hours before the start of your shift. When you call out on a weekend you must inform the staff on shift at your worksite and the on-call supervisor at 860-316-7535. Leaving a message on voice-mail or by text is not sufficient notification. An employee of the Agency must be notified of the call out. When calling out you must inform your supervisor of the reason for your absence and the date you expect to return to work.

This Agency does not tolerate unexcused absences. An excused absence means that you have requested and received your supervisors permission to be absent for a certain day. An unexcused absence is an absence that has not been approved by your supervisor. Supervisors are responsible for approving computerized timecards of their staff and will notice if a pattern of lateness or absenteeism is occurring, any pattern of unexcused absenteeism over a period (i.e. calling out on a regular shift, or on a certain day of the week, or on a consistent basis) will result in discipline. Excessive absenteeism will be considered when an employee has three or more unapproved absences within a two month period. Although you will occasionally have good reasons for being absent or tardy, excessive or chronic absenteeism and/or tardiness is not acceptable.

### **Changes in Personal Data**

The Agency must have an accurate record of your personal data. You should immediately report any of the following changes in your personal or family status to the Director of Human Resources as these changes could affect income tax withholding and insurance benefits, etc.:

- Change in marital status including legal separation (if relevant)
- Legal change of name
- Marital or family status change
- New home address
- New telephone number
- Birth or death in family (if relevant)
- Dependent children reaching age 26, or other change in dependent status
- Emergency contact information
- Changes in beneficiary

An employee also has the ability to edit some of this information themselves through their ADP portal under employee profile.

The Agency will not be held responsible for outdated or inaccurate information on file.

### **Computer Usage, E-Mail and Therap**

All employees utilizing the Agency's computer systems (including all hardware and software components) and electronic communications are expected to adhere to the Agency's computer usage guidelines contained within the ***Acceptable Use, Email, and Therap*** policies. These can be found within the ***Policy and Procedure Manual***.

#### *Electronic communications*

Email, computers, voicemail and other information systems are not to be used in any way that may be disruptive or offensive to others. Any such transmission of communications containing offensive material, (i.e. sexually-explicit images, messages or cartoons, and anything that may be construed as harassment based on actual or perceived race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs or any other protected class) is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. The electronic communication systems are to be used for Agency business only and should not be used for personal matters unrelated to your job. The Agency may access its electronic communications systems and obtain the communications therein without notice to users whenever the Agency deems it appropriate to do so. **Accordingly, users should have no expectations of privacy and their computer activity may be monitored.** The agency may choose to obtain such access for reasons including, but not limited to; maintaining the system, preventing or investigating allegations of system abuse or misuse, assuring compliance with software copyright laws, complying with legal and regulatory requests for information and insuring that the Agency operations continue appropriately during an employee's absence. No one is permitted to gain access to another employee's electronic communication system messages without appropriate authorization. All electronic communication system passwords must be given to the Office Manager and the right to access all electronic communication system files at any time is retained by the Agency. Use of passwords not given to the Office Manager is prohibited. Violation of this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination of employment.

### **Confidentiality**

During your employment you may have access to information about Agency business and/or personal information about the people who receive our services. It is imperative that this information is kept strictly confidential and that the privacy and confidentiality of all information is protected. NERS is committed to complying with all applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations and all employees are expected to be in compliance with such laws and regulations. At all times do not share confidential information regarding business partners, vendors or customers. Confidentiality applies to the individuals supported by you, your co-workers and Agency business. Talking about people, for any reason other than official business, is considered a violation of that person's right to privacy. Being considerate of others and their rights assures high quality services, relationships and professionalism within the Agency. Discussing sensitive subjects concerning individuals, staff and home or agency outside of work or with anyone not connected to the Agency in an official capacity, is unprofessional and detrimental to the wellbeing of everyone involved. Individuals not involved in this field or in a

Professional capacity with the Agency are not bound by the rules of confidentiality. A violation of the Agency rules of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Confidentiality is reviewed on an annual basis as part of Abuse and Neglect Training. Employees who breach confidentiality will be subject to progressive discipline.

To comply with this section of the Employee Handbook you will be required to sign an Employee Confidentiality Statement at the time of hire.

### **Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics**

All employees of New England Residential Services Inc., shall exercise good faith in all matters and transactions regarding his/her duties, the Agency operation and Agency property. No employee shall use his/her position the knowledge gained from it for personal benefit or use this position or knowledge gained from it in such a way that a conflict may arise between the interest of the Agency and that of the employee. In situations where doubt arises, full disclosure of all facts regarding the transaction in question shall be made to the Executive Director by the employee. An employee of the Agency or their family shall not accept gifts, favors, entertainment, and consideration of any kind from any outside company or individual doing business for competing with the Agency, under circumstances from which improper influence might be implied. The acceptance of small items valued less than \$50 are allowed. No employee shall disclose or use information relating to the Agency's business, clients or employees for personal advantage. The appearance of impropriety is to be avoided by each employee of New England Residential Services. Employees who violate this code of ethics may be subject to sanctions and disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment.

### **Dress Code and Personal Appearance**

As an employee of NERS, you are also a representative of the Agency in the eyes of the public. Our community gains a lasting impression of our Agency from the appearance and decorum of our employees. All employees should be mindful of this responsibility. Therefore, it is important that you report to work properly groomed and dressed in a manner consistent with the nature of the work you will be performing.

Your personal neatness, hygiene and proper attire are required and expected. All clothing should be clean, without holes or rips and have an appropriate appearance. Clothing that is too tight, revealing or tattered is not acceptable. Jewelry should not be worn at any worksite where there is a chance of aggression. Tattoos that could be considered offensive to others shall be covered.

Employees will not be permitted to wear the following to work or to any Agency trainings:

Tank or Halter tops	Dangling earrings
Low-riding Pants/Shorts	Rings
Hoodies	Bracelets
Flip-Flops or Clogs	Necklaces
Slippers	Facial jewelry

No open toed shoes (Sandals) or bare feet	Pins
Sunglasses (In house)	

Management reserves the right to determine when the dress code has been violated and may send any employee home to change their clothes or appearance. The time spent away from work will be unpaid.

Should any employee require a religious accommodation under this policy, the Human Resources Department must be consulted prior to the granting of an accommodation to the employee.

### *Fingernails*

- All staff are to keep their nails natural, short, clean and healthy.
- Nail length shall not exceed ¼ inch.
- Artificial nails are prohibited for all individuals providing direct and indirect patient care.
- Nail polish where permitted must be in good repair and not chipped, cracked, worn away or peeling.
- Nail polish that is not in good repair must be removed.

Staff found to be in violation of this policy will be asked to remove their artificial nails/nail polish and/or be suspended without pay until their fingernails are in compliance with this policy. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Employment of Relatives and Significant Others**

Relatives and significant others of employees may be eligible for employment with NERS at the Agency's discretion. This is only permitted if the individuals involved do not work in a direct supervisory relationship, or in job positions in which a conflict of interest could arise. It is the responsibility of all employees to inform the Human Resource Director or Executive Director of any relationship, either related or non-related, that may constitute a conflict of interest in the workplace. Employees who begin a dating/romantic relationship while employed must promptly inform the Director of Human Resources.

### **Financial Accountability**

N.E.R.S. is a tax exempt agency. As such a tax exempt card is to be used by employees when purchasing items for the agency. This card is not to be used for your personal purchases nor the purchases of the Residents as their purchases are taxable. As an employee, part of your responsibility will be to handle money from an Agency petty cash fund and/or from personal funds belonging to the residents. A receipt must be submitted for all purchases. A petty cash receipt must be completed and attached to the store receipt for each purchase; it should include date, amount and description of the purchase, and initials of the resident. Both staff and manager will need to sign the receipt. All receipts must be submitted within 5 days of purchase to the designated location at each worksite. The mishandling of funds, unaccounted receipts or misuse of money may result in progressive disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **No Smoking Policy**

Smoking is strictly prohibited in and around homes, offices or vehicles, except for specifically designated outdoor smoking areas which contain a fire proof receptacle for disposing cigarette butts. Non-use of the proper receptacles can lead to licensing citations by State inspectors.

### **Notice Concerning Monitoring**

The Agency may at times monitor certain employee communications and activities to maintain a safe, secure and hostile-free environment.

The following are monitoring methods that may periodically be reviewed, however, monitoring is not limited to the following areas:

- Telephone usage
- Voicemail messages
- Computer usage
- Internet usage
- Travel destinations and speed
- Entertainment expenses
- Recording and/or reviewing employee usage of business equipment but not limited to photocopiers, fax machines, postage meters and printers
- Unannounced visits by managers at any time, to monitor employees' alertness on shifts and/or employees presence at the work site as scheduled.

*Electronic Monitoring:* The Agency may conduct other types of electronic monitoring including the use of video and/or audio monitors not identified above where:

1. It is necessary for safety and security outside of the home;
2. There is an increase in Allegations of Possible Abuse and/or Neglect;

3. The Agency reasonably believes an employee or employees are violating the law, Agency policy, the legal rights of all individuals to live and work in a hostile free environment;
4. Alternate methods to address concerns and find solutions have been unsuccessful

The use of video/audio surveillance will require guardian consent and must be reviewed and approved by the Human Rights Committee for each situation. The footage will be viewed by the Executive Director, or a Designee in his absence. Frequency of viewing will be based on the rationale at hand and will be included in each consent and HRC approval.

The identified areas of need will then be addressed programmatically for the benefit of all, specifically in areas of Health and Safety. The footage will be kept in a secure location, and maintained for a maximum of six months following the monitoring period.

*Potential Disciplinary Action:* It is understood that supporting employee discipline is not the primary reason for the use of video and audio monitoring. However, available footage may be used to this end in the following circumstances:

1. A complaint received that leads to an investigation, and footage may demonstrate whether the employee engaged in the alleged conduct.
2. The complaint/allegation is in writing, unless extenuating circumstances are clear and the complainant is unable to submit in writing.
3. The footage reveals a blatant violation of Agency Policy which poses potential safety concerns for the individuals who reside in the home.
4. The Employee has been given the opportunity to review the footage in the presence of Union representation (unless waived in writing) prior to Disciplinary Action. The footage will not be distributed to employees or Union representatives as this is a clear violation of HIPPPAA privacy requirements.
5. If training has resulted from the Employer viewing the video/audio footage and the same infraction occurs in subsequent footage.
6. Disciplinary action up to and including termination will occur if video and/or audio surveillance is tampered with.

### **Personal Property**

Your personal belongings are your responsibility at all times. Please ensure that personal articles of value are secured. The Agency assumes no responsibility for an employee's personal property including money, cell phones, articles of clothing and vehicles. The Agency will consider reimbursement for personal property that is necessary to perform the job (glasses), which may be damaged during a documented behavioral incident.

*Inspections of Personal Property:* The Agency maintains a work environment that is free of controlled substances, alcohol, weapon or other illegal or inappropriate materials. The Agency prohibits the possession, storage, transfer, sale, solicitation or use of such materials

on its premises. The Agency expects and requires your cooperation in administering this policy. The Agency reserves the right to inspect packages carried on or off of the premises and may request that all personal items brought into the workplace be in transparent bags.

### **Safety**

You are expected to be safety-conscious at all times and to assist the Agency in finding unsafe conditions that might cause an accident or create a fire hazard. You should report any unsafe conditions to the Health and Safety representative at your worksite or to your Supervisor. Training is provided by the agency to help employees prevent accidents. Some of the training provided is Fire safety, Driving Safety, PMT training, Emergency procedures for each home and Medical Awareness training. Please review the specific section on trainings for more detailed information.

The Safety Committee meets every quarter to review any safety issues or concerns.

### **Telephone Usage/Personal Phone Calls**

Personal use of the house telephones during working hours should be limited to emergencies only and be less than 5 minutes. Cell phones must be turned off during direct support shifts and during all staff meetings or trainings. At no time can an ear piece be utilized with a cell phone during work hours. Misuse of any phone for personal calls will be grounds for disciplinary action.

## **General Guidelines**

### **Benefits Continuation (COBRA)**

Federal law, known as COBRA, may allow employees and their dependents who are covered by our health insurance program to temporarily continue that coverage following certain qualifying events (such as termination of employment) when health coverage would otherwise end. A representative from the union benefits department or Human Resources will describe COBRA continuation rights in greater detail upon your separation.

### **Bulletin Boards**

The Agency will post important information such safety materials, upcoming events and notices required by law on bulletin boards in the main office and at each work site location. Only authorized personnel are permitted to post, remove or alter any notice on the bulletin board and only notices authorized by the agency and pertaining to agency business are permitted. It is your responsibility to check the bulletin boards regularly for information.

## Employee Separation

**Termination:** Termination of employment is an inevitable part of personnel activity within an agency. The following are the most common circumstances under which employment is terminated:

**Resignation:** Voluntary separation initiated by an employee. Employees will receive their final payment on the next scheduled payday. This will include any accrued earned time or pro-rated pool time if a two (2) week notice is received. Substitute employees who do not work for a period of 60 days or more will be removed from the agency records and their lack of work will be viewed as a voluntary resignation, unless a written request for time off is approved.

**Discharge:** Involuntary separation initiated by the agency. Employees will receive their final payment within 48 hours of their discharge. This will include any accrued earned time or pro-rated pool time as long as the discharge is not viewed as gross misconduct. An unemployment notice will be completed indicating the reason for discharge.

**Lay-off:** Involuntary separation initiated by the agency that is not due to disciplinary reasons. Employees will receive their final payment immediately upon separation. This will include any accrued earned time or pro-rated pool time. An unemployment notice will be completed indicating lay-offs as the reason for discharge. Some benefits may be continued at the employee's expense if the employee so chooses.

**Notice:** When resigning it is the employee's obligation to provide the agency with a minimum two (2) week notice, submitted in writing. Adequate notice gives the agency time to advise you of your benefits and to secure a replacement. Employees who fail to provide the agency with a two (2) week notice when resigning will not be paid for accrued earned/pool time upon termination.

## Grievance Procedures

Should an employee and his/her supervisor fail to resolve a dispute, a meeting with the Human Resource Director and/or union representative can be requested by either party prior to any formal grievance. The employee may file a grievance upon any dispute between his/her supervisor. The agency utilizes a 3-step grievance procedure as follows:

**Step One:** A grievance should be filed by a union representative within ten (10) working days of the incident that is being disputed. The supervisor will give the aggrieved employee a written response within ten (10) working days after the date of receipt of the grievance.

**Step Two:** If the dispute is not settled at the first step, a grievance meeting will be held with the parties involved. The meeting should be set up within five (5) days after the aggrieved employee receives the supervisor's answer. The Human Resource Director shall hear the grievance and shall respond within five (5) working days of the meeting.

Terminations and suspension grievances shall be filed at Step 2 of the grievance procedure.

**Step Three/Arbitration:** In the event the grievance is not resolved at Step 2, it may be referred to arbitration. The Union shall file notice of arbitration upon the employer within five (5) working days after receipt of the employers' response to the Step 2 hearing.

The Union and Employer may engage in all attempts to resolve the matter before or after the demand for arbitration has been filed. The award of arbitration shall be final and binding on both parties. Any grievance or dispute shall be considered settled or waived in the event either party does not adhere to the time for filing of a grievance, replying thereto, or proceeding to the next step in the grievance procedure. Either party may request an extension of time limits, but this must be mutually agreed to in writing.

### **Personnel Records**

Personnel records will be maintained for all employees and will be located at the main office. The personnel file is accessible to employees and supervisors by appointment and will be provided within two (2) business days. No disciplinary material will be placed in an employee's file unless the employee has had an opportunity to sign it and has received a concurrent copy. An employee has the right to attach his/her own views to any disciplinary record in his/her file. Employees shall receive a copy of their supervisions and performance evaluation.

### **Return of Equipment/Supplies**

Prior to the end of the last day of work the employee must return all agency equipment and property to their supervisor or to Human Resources. This includes, but is not limited to, the return of computers, identification cards and keys.

### **Visitors**

Family and friends of the residents may visit the home with or without notice. A phone call prior to the visit can be requested by the Residential Manager to ensure the most convenient time and day of the visit. Residents can visit the homes of friends and family when invited and staff may accompany each person upon request. Prior approval from the Residential Manager must be received for any other visitors. To help provide safety and security on the agency's premises. Prior approval must be given to individuals who wish to take the residents into the community and a destination and return time must be determined. All guidelines communicated by staff must be followed by the individual requesting approval. Restricting unauthorized visitors helps maintain safety standards, protects against theft, ensures security of equipment, protects confidential information, ensures the safety of personnel and clients on the premises and avoids potential distractions and disturbances.

You should notify your supervisor if an unauthorized individual is observed on the agency's premises. Off duty employees are only permitted on the premises to address a work related issue or with permission from management.

### **Whistleblower Policy**

It is the intent of New England Residential Services, Inc. to adhere to all laws and regulations that apply to the organization. The underlying purpose of this policy is to support the organization's goal of legal compliance. The support of all employees is necessary to achieve compliance with various laws and regulations. If any employee reasonably believes that some policy, practice or activity of New England Residential Services, Inc. is in violation of law, a written complaint must be filed by that employee with the Executive Director or the Board President. All complaints by Whistleblowers will be handled with sensitivity, discretion and confidentiality to the extent allowed by the circumstance and the law. Generally this practice means that whistleblower concerns will only be shared with those who have a need to know in order to conduct an effective investigation.

New England Residential Services, Inc. will not retaliate against an employee, who in good faith, has made a protest or raised a complaint against some practice of New England Residential Services, Inc., or another individual or entity with whom New England Residential Services, Inc. has a business relationship, on the basis of a reasonable belief that the practice is in violation of law, or a clear mandate of public policy. New England Residential Services, Inc. will not retaliate against an employee who discloses or threatens to disclose to a supervisor or public body any activity, policy, or practice of New England Residential Services, Inc. that the employee reasonably believes is in violation of a law, rule, or regulation mandated pursuant to law, or is in violation of a clear mandate of public policy concerning the health, safety, welfare, or protection of the environment. However, whistleblowers must be cautious to avoid baseless allegations, which are allegations made with reckless disregard for their truth or falsity. People making such allegations may be subject to disciplinary action and or legal claims by individuals accused of such conduct.

#### **Contact Information:**

**Chet Fischer, Executive Director      (860) 347-9633 Ext. 103**

**Betty Matteo, Board President      (860) 347-1469 Ext. 150**