

HR BASICS

Practical Guidance for Principals and Supervisors

Employee Concerns • Leave and Accommodations • Reporting • Ethics • Time and Attendance

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HR BASICS • AAEA

What School Leaders Need to Do

01 **Recognize**
warning signs

02 **Respond**
without making promises

03 **Record**
objective facts

04 **Refer**
to the right person

You do not need to
know every
legal answer.

Four Questions Before You Act

1

SAFETY FIRST

Is anyone in
immediate danger?

2

FACTS ONLY

What did I actually
see or hear?

3

DOCUMENT

Have I written
down the facts?

4

Who Owns The Next Step

Who needs to
know or act next?

Recognize risk and take the next responsible step.

FOUNDATIONS POLICY

Start with policy
and assigned roles.

Key Principle

Past practice does not replace current policy, contracts, law, or board authority.

Leader Checklist

- Know your board policies and employee handbook
- Identify who owns each HR function at your site
- Check the written source before acting
- Do not make commitments based on past practice

EXAMPLE

A teacher says, 'We have always dismissed ten minutes early to load the bus.'

That does not override a board-adopted policy change.

Get help before making a commitment based on past practice rather than current policy.



Write Facts Another Person Can Understand

INCLUDE

- What happened (observable facts)
- What expectation applied
- How the employee responded
- What happens next
- Dates, times, witnesses, direct quotes

AVOID

- Opinions or assumptions
- Medical diagnoses
- Legal conclusions
- Emotional language
- Hearsay without attribution

- Get help before issuing formal discipline or placing documentation in a personnel file.
- Avoid vague labels such as “bad attitude,” “insubordinate,” or “unprofessional” without describing the conduct.
- Write every record as though the employee, a hearing officer, or a jury may eventually read it.

CONSISTENCY

Treat Similar Situations Similarly After Comparing Facts

COMPARISON QUESTIONS

- Are the facts substantially similar?
- Is the employee's history comparable?
- Are there protected-class differences that could create a perception of bias?
- Was the same policy or expectation applied?

EXAMPLE

Two employees have excessive absences. One has approved intermittent FMLA.

The situations are not identical—compare the facts before acting.

Get help before applying discipline that differs significantly from how a similar situation was handled previously.

CONSISTENCY

Does not always
mean identical
outcomes.

Record and Pay All Time Worked

Focus: Nonexempt employees and off-the-clock work



SUPERVISOR DUTIES

- Know which employees are nonexempt
- Do not allow or ignore off-the-clock work
- If work happened, it must be recorded and paid
- Address authorization issues separately from payment

EXAMPLE

A paraprofessional stays 20 minutes after clocking out to finish a task.

The time must be paid. Address the unauthorized overtime separately.

Contact payroll or HR before withholding pay for any time actually worked.

Manage Patterns While Screening for Protected Issues



PAUSE BEFORE DISCIPLINE WHEN:

- Leave (FMLA, military, ADA)
- Disability or chronic condition
- Pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition
- Work-related injury
- Other protected information

Track patterns objectively. Apply policy consistently. Screen for protected reasons before acting.

Get help before disciplining attendance when a protected reason may exist.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Employees Do Not Have to Say "FMLA"

Supervisors should recognize possible leave signals and route them appropriately.

COMMON SIGNALS

- Hospitalization or surgery
- Pregnancy or prenatal appointments
- Chronic conditions requiring recurring treatment
- Mental-health treatment
- Caregiving for seriously ill family member
- Military-family needs

Listen • Do not promise or deny • Determine who is responsible

EXAMPLE

A teacher says, 'I need time off for my mother's chemo appointments.'

Route to district FMLA personnel.

Listen for a Work-Related Need Tied to a Condition

Employees do not need to use words like "ADA," "disability," or "reasonable accommodation."



POSSIBLE SIGNALS

- 'I'm having trouble with...' + condition
- Schedule changes tied to treatment
- Difficulty after injury or diagnosis
- Medication side effects affecting work

FIRST STEP

- Acknowledge the concern.
- Do not promise a particular accommodation—but do not discourage or dismiss the request.
- Request medical documentation.

EXAMPLE

A custodian says, 'My back makes it hard to lift the heavy trash bags.'

This may be an accommodation request. Route to HR.

Get help before denying any request that might be tied to a medical condition.

Limit Information and Watch for Changed Treatment



KEEP CONFIDENTIAL

- Medical information (diagnoses, treatments, accommodations)
- Complaints and investigation details
- Student records and matters

RETALIATION RISKS

- Schedule changes after a complaint
- Exclusion from meetings
- Sudden or unexplained increased scrutiny or documentation
- Gossip, threats, negative references
- Discipline after protected activity

Get help immediately if you suspect retaliation has occurred or is being perceived.

Professional Duties Extend Beyond the Classroom



Applies to: in-person, online, after-hours, activities, and use of district resources

Student Boundaries

- Private messages with students
- Favoritism
- Secrecy

Professional Integrity

- Gifts to/from students or families
- Conflicts of interest
- Dishonesty in records

Public Trust

- Misuse of funds or property
- Testing irregularities
- Substance or arrest issues

Report up immediately. Get help before confronting an employee about suspected violations.

If you observe, reasonably suspect, or receive a substantiated allegation of an educator's Standard 1 violation, an ethics complaint must be filed within 24 hours. Follow your district's reporting protocol immediately.

MANDATED REPORTING

Report First. Do Not Investigate First.

WHEN A STUDENT DISCLOSES:

- Listen without leading questions
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Report to the hotline immediately
- Document what was said (direct quotes)
- Notify per district protocol
- If disclosure also suggests educator misconduct, supervisors must separately evaluate the 24-hour Standard 1 ethics-reporting requirement.

URGENT: If a child is in immediate danger, call law enforcement first, then the hotline.

Telling a supervisor, counselor, SRO, or superintendent does NOT replace a reporter's legal duty.

No HR Department? Assign the Responsibilities.



1

Who is Responsible

Assign each HR function to a specific person

2

BUILD SUPPORT

Identify external resources (colleague, attorney, co-op, AAEA)

3

SEPARATE ROLES

Avoid one person handling complaint, investigation, decision

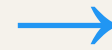
4

USE CHECKLISTS

Create step-by-step guides for recurring HR tasks

What Is the Next Responsible Step?

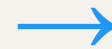
Employee requests a different chair because it is “more comfortable.”



ASK

whether related to a condition or work limitation

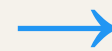
Teacher says recurring treatment will cause intermittent absences.



ROUTE

to FMLA personnel

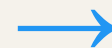
Paraprofessional worked 45 minutes after clocking out.



RECORD / PAY

time; address authorization separately

Student discloses possible abuse and asks you not to tell.



REPORT

immediately; do not investigate first

1. Pause before making a promise.
2. Report the concern before conducting your own investigation.
3. Consult before making a high-risk decision.

Safety • Facts • Documentation • Consistency

**Good HR judgment is recognizing risk,
protecting people, and taking the
next responsible step.**

THANK YOU

Thank You

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RESOURCES

ARKANSAS-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

Arkansas Department of Education

Code of Ethics & 24-Hour Standard 1 Reporting

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/educator-effectiveness/plsb-professional-ethicsdiscipline>

Arkansas Department of Human Services

Child Maltreatment Reporting

<humanservices.arkansas.gov/divisions-shared-services/children-family-services/how-to-report-child-abuse-neglect/>

FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE

U.S. Department of Labor

FMLA Employer and Employee Guidance

<dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla>

U.S. Department of Labor

Hours Worked Under the FLSA

<dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/22-flsa-hours-worked>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

ADA Accommodations

<eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/reasonable-accommodation-and-undue-hardship-under-ada>

General educational guidance only. Always consult current law, district policy, assigned HR personnel, and legal counsel before taking action.