



# H. R. COMMUNICATOR

## SER-Niños Charter School SEPTEMBER, 2015

*"Committed to top-quality education. Our students' success is our primary concern. All that we do is centered on that goal."*



### SEPTEMBER'S BIRTHDAYS

- 9-03 Angela Ramirez
- 9-15 Thelma Lopez
- 9-18 Jialian Chen
- 9-19 Benilda Cuaresma
- 9-20 Covadonga Sanchez-Losada
- 9-25 Margarita DeLeon
- 9-26 Martha Tacam
- 9-26 Denis Juarez

Dear Teachers & Staff,



**Welcome!**

We hope you had a great summer. Our work together this past year brought progress on many fronts. Now, with the start of the 2015-2016 school year, we have new opportunities and challenges to improve the lives and futures of SER-Niños' students.

SER-Niños is committed to top-quality education. Our students' success is our primary concern, and all that we do is centered on that goal. For us to perform our duties effectively and to help our students be successful, it is important that each employee be aware of the policies and procedures related to his/her position.

Whether you have just joined our staff or have been at SER-Niños for a while, we are confident that you will find our school a dynamic and rewarding place in which to work, and we look forward to a productive and successful association. We consider the employees at SER-Niños to be one of its most valuable resources.

We are excited to introduce our new teachers and staff and look forward to working with them. Please welcome:

• Sunila Abraham	Teacher	Gulfton
• Murtuza Babrawala	Business Mgr.	Gulfton
• Yasmin Cardenas	Edu. Aide	Dashwood
• Juliann Jaramillo	Teacher	Alder
• Jamie Kline	Teacher	Alder
• Becky Long	Teacher	Gulfton
• Victor Martinez	Teacher	Alder
• Kristen Santana	Teacher	Dashwood
• Lieza Smith	Teacher	Alder

### SEPTEMBER'S HOLIDAYS & OBSERVANCES

- September 07 Labor Day
- September 11 Patriot Day/Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>
- September 13 Grandparents' Day
- September 23 Eid al-Adha (Fest. Sacrifice)
- September 24 Independence Day (Mexico)
- September 25 Native American Day

### ADP CLOCK IN/OUT...EASY!

- Go to [www.myadpresource.com](http://www.myadpresource.com)
- Log-in (Employee Login)
- Click on 'Myself'
- Click on 'Time Card'
- Click on 'Update my time card'
- Click on 'My Information'
- Click on the clock—to sign-in
- REPEAT PROCESS TO SIGN-OUT



**PAYDAY**  
5<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> of each month

**First Paycheck – September 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Health, Dental & Vision Insurance**  
Effective  
September 1, 2015

Let's make 2015-2016 a memorable and successful school year!

"I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again". By Stephen Grellett, 1773-1855

## SER-Niños Campus Information

### Alder (elementary school) Campus

Superintendent: Charmaine Constantine  
School Principal: Esther Villela  
5815 Alder St., Houston, TX 77081  
PH: 713-667-6145  
Fax: 713-667-0645  
Depts: IT, Nurse, Food Service Office, Administrative Services

### Dashwood (elementary school) Campus

Superintendent: Charmaine Constantine  
School Principal: Sheronda LeDoux-Oliphant  
5919 Dashwood Dr., Houston, TX 77081  
PH: 713-432-9400  
Fax: 713-432-9403  
Depts: Nurse, Parent Liaison, Parent Center

### Gulfton (middle school) Campus

Superintendent: Charmaine Constantine  
5610 Gulfton St., Houston, TX 77081  
PH: 713-592-6055  
Fax: 713-592-6190

Following Depts Located Middle School:

- Payroll/Finance/Business Office
- Human Resources
- Parent Liaison (for Alder & Middle School)
- Parent Center

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**H.R. Office @ Gulfton Campus**

Ofc. Hrs: 7am—4:30pm

Ph: 713-592-6055, x307

[gvillar@serninos.org](mailto:gvillar@serninos.org)

[www.serninos.org](http://www.serninos.org) – click Human Resources

**Contact @ Office during working hours**

**Contact via personal cell, evenings & wknds**

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### **All employees required trainings:**

- Sexual Harassment Training
- Bloodborne Pathogens Training
- Child Sexual Abuse Training

**DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2015**

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**NO Electronic Devices are to  
be used @ Work**



## SER-Niños Policies

SER-Niños Charter School is committed to top-quality education. Our students' success is our primary concern, and all that we do is centered on that goal.

Any employee who is not at work the **Friday before a holiday and the day after a holiday** does NOT get paid for the holiday.

### School and Office Hours

The school office is open from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Reporting time for teachers is from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Fridays. Elementary students report to school from 7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays. Middle school students report to school from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays.

### Dismissal Due to Inclement Weather

On days when HISD closes its schools for students due to inclement weather, SER-Niños shall be closed. Employees should watch news on television or listen to radio for HISD closing reports; there will also be a closing report for SER-Niños. Also, SER-Niños has a contact policy in place and each employee will receive a call to confirm our school closing.

**Exempt employees** are generally managers or professional, administrative or technical staff who ARE exempt from the minimum wage and overtime provisions. Exempt employees hold jobs that meet the standards and criteria established under the FLSA by the U.S. Department of Labor.

**Nonexempt employees** are employees whose work is covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). They are NOT exempt from the law's requirements concerning minimum wage and overtime.

### Weapons

**ZERO TOLERANCE.** No employee, other than one specifically authorized, is permitted to possess or use any of the weapons defined in Section 46.01 of the Texas Penal Code and Section 37.125 of the Revised Texas Education Code while on SER-Niños property, while working in the scope of assigned duties, or while attending any activity sponsored by SER-Niños.

### Sexual Harassment Policy Statement

SER-Niños is committed to ensuring employees are treated fairly and equitably in an environment free of intimidation and sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is an unacceptable form of behavior, which **will not be tolerated** under any circumstances.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

**AETNA HEALTH**  
**888-802-3862**

[www.myaetna.com](http://www.myaetna.com)

Rx: [www.aetna.com/formulary](http://www.aetna.com/formulary)

**REGISTER ONLINE**

**You will receive card in mail**  
**Individual ID #**

Two Options:

- PPO Basic-FREE Empl.Only
- PPO Step Up-\$68/month EO

100% FOR PREVENTIVE CARE

**GEORGE MCELROY**  
**BROKER**  
**281-999-4941**

**Questions, Assistance**  
**For Health, Dental & Vision**  
**AETNA, GUARDIAN, UNITED**

## DENTAL INSURANCE

**GUARDIAN DENTAL**  
**888-618-2016 (8am-7pm M-F)**  
[www.myguardiananytime.com](http://www.myguardiananytime.com)

**REGISTER ONLINE**  
**You will receive card in mail**  
**Individual ID #**

**FREE exam & teeth cleaning every 6 months**  
**Works on calendar year**  
**MUST go to in-network dentists**

Three options:

- **HMO Plan** – negotiated discounts from network dentists, fixed copay for each covered service
- **NAP Plan** (Buy-Up plan) – visit any dentist; but pay less out-of-network when you choose a PPO dentist
- **Value Plan** (Base Plan) – visit any dentist; but pay less out-of-network when you choose a PPO dentist; out-of-network benefits are limited to PPO fee schedule

## VISION INSURANCE

**UNITED HEALTHCARE VISION**  
**800-638-3120**  
[www.myuhcvision.com](http://www.myuhcvision.com)

**REGISTER ONLINE**  
**NO Card Sent for Vision**  
**Your ID is your Social Security No.**

**Exam once per year**  
**Works on calendar year**  
**MUST go to in-network doctor**

**Copy for exam: \$10**  
**Frames Allowance: \$130**

Lenses:

- **Standard: covered in full after co-pay + 2 follow-up visits**
- **All other elective lenses: at an allowance of \$105**
- **Necessary lenses: covered in full after copay**
- **Laser: Discount thru Laser Vision Network**

**Long Term Disability (LTD) Insurance** – Although SER-Niños does not offer long term disability insurance, at this time, many insurance companies sell long term disability insurance to individuals. In all short and/or long-term disability cases, you will need to complete applications for disability coverage and be certified by a doctor as unable to perform your normal job duties. If eligible, long-term disability insurance coverage provides benefits until a person turns 65 years old.

**Short Term Disability (STD) Insurance** – **AllState**, through its supplemental insurance, offers SER-Niños employees the opportunity to purchase it from them. In all short and/or long-term disability cases, you will need to complete applications for disability coverage and be certified by a doctor as unable to perform your normal job duties. Short term disability insurance coverage provides benefits for 6 months to 2 years, depending on which you purchase. AllState also **offers supplemental insurance** which you can purchase. **AllState representative: Gary Nething 832-755-2528 gknething@sbcglobal.net.**

**LegalShield Pre-Paid Legal**– A small monthly fee of \$18.95 gets you access to advice and counsel on an unlimited number of issues from attorneys. The Plan covers the member, spouse, unmarried dependents under 26 living at home, dependent children under 18. **LegalShield representative: Lamar Reynolds, 832-559-7908 reynoldsriskmanagement@earthlink.net**

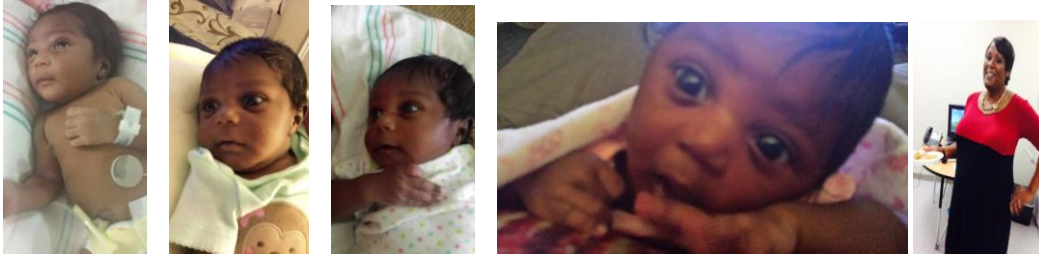
**403(b)** – A 403(b) plan for nearly all intents and purposes is about the same as a 401(k) plan. Nonprofits and other specific employers qualify for 403(b) status, which can save them money on the plan that they run. Just as with a 401(k) plan, you will have the option to choose to invest in conservative, middle or high-risk investments. **Representative: Jack Olson 713-972-1880 john.j.olson@ampf.com**

**ADP Employee Service Center (ESC): 1-800-416-6131**

Dedicated hotline where you can get fast answers to your questions and assistance with a wide range of benefits and payroll related concerns. Representatives are available Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm.

# SER-NIÑOS' FAMILY NEWS

Meet new member of our SER-Niños Family, **LAILA NOEL SANI!**



This big-eye beauty is the beautiful daughter of teacher Ms. Harris-Sani at the Gulfton campus. She was born June 16, 2015 during tropical storm Bill and came in weighing 5 lbs., 9 oz., 19" long. Congratulations to the proud parents!



**this summer!**

**Congratulations to Ms. Erika Mejia who became a U.S.A. citizen**

**Meet Ms. Rodon's twins, PAUL & SEBASTIAN, new members of our SER-Niños Family! Congrats!**



**Mr. & Mrs. Caggins, elementary music teacher at Alder campus, vacationed in New York City this summer where they went to the tapping of The View, among other talk shows, and even saw the Broadway show, Chicago! The Caggins visited museums, churches, and historical sites and brought home lots of pictures to share.**



**Congratulations to Ms. Stubbs, special ed teacher at Alder campus, on the birth of her bundle of joy, ABRIELLE JOY, born July 1, 2015! She's a big-eye beauty born with plenty of hair and beautiful face. Abrielle Joy's siblings are very excited! Baby pictures will follow.**



# SER-NIÑOS' FAMILY NEWS

Smiley face Kage, is Ms. Falls' handsome and happy baby boy.



**Solicitations, Distributions and Posting of Materials** - SER-Niños prohibits the solicitation, distribution and posting of materials on or at school property by any employee or nonemployee, except as may be permitted by this policy. The sole exceptions to this policy are charitable and community activities supported by SER-Niños management and school-sponsored programs.

**24-Hour**  **HOTLINE**  
1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)



**RECYCLE For A Better Tomorrow!**



Please send me your suggestions, articles, recipes, tips, stories, kid's pictures, anything you'd like to share and/or is important to you, anything you'd like to see published in our H.R. Communicator newsletter. The next **deadline for the October 1<sup>st</sup> issue is September 25<sup>th</sup>.**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

1. **Are charter schools permitted to charge tuition and fees?**

An open-enrollment charter school may not charge tuition (except for certain pre-kindergarten classes). A charter school may only charge the same fees that a traditional public school may charge. [Texas Education Code \(TEC\) §11.158\(a\)](#) lists allowable fees.

2. **Must a charter accept any student?**

As a general rule, charter schools are open enrollment and must accept any student who applies. There are exceptions though. A charter is only allowed to serve students in the grades in its approved charter. The school may also only accept students who live in the charter's approved geographic boundary. A charter also will have a cap on the total number of students it may serve.

3. **Are charter schools required to provide meals to students?**

The charter must provide meals if 10% of the students qualify for free or reduced breakfast. [TEC §33.901](#) requires the school provide a breakfast program for qualified students.

4. **Are charter schools required to provide transportation to students?**

A charter school does not have to provide transportation for students unless it is a condition in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

5. **What are the requirements for student/teacher ratio and class size for charter schools?**

Charter schools are not subject to [TEC Sections 25.111 and 25.112](#) that state such guidelines for districts. Instead, the charter for the school sets any student-teacher ratios or class size limitations.

6. **My charter school requires that students buy uniforms. Is this okay?**

Yes.

7. **Are the teachers at open-enrollment charter schools required to be certified?**

It depends. Teachers at an open-enrollment charter school must have at least a baccalaureate degree unless they are a special education or bilingual education/ESL teacher. These teachers must also have state certification. The governing body of a charter holder may set the qualifications for teachers at a standard above what state law requires.

8. **Is a charter school required to have a full-time school nurse?**

No. Charter schools are not required to hire a school nurse. If a charter school does hire a nurse, that person is not required to be a full-time employee or to be full time at any one location. If a charter school wanted to hire only one person as a nurse, that person must be an RN because an LVN is not allowed to work without supervision.

9. **Must charter schools provide a minimum teacher planning period like traditional public schools do?**

Because [Texas Education Code \(TEC\) §21.404](#) does not apply to charters, the decision whether or not to have planning periods is a local issue. Even so, if the school's charter states it will provide a teacher planning period, it must do so.

10. **Must open-enrollment charter schools have written employment contracts?**

No. State law does not require that charters enter into employment contracts with professional employees. Instead, the governing body of the charter holder makes this decision. They may also set their own salaries for professional employees.



## **ANTIHARASSMENT POLICY**

### **Sexual Harassment will NOT be tolerated at SER-Niños!**

SER-Niños is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, SER-Niños expects that all relationships among persons in the office will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice and harassment. It is the policy of SER-Niños to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty or status as a covered veteran. SER-Niños prohibits any such discrimination or harassment.

**Definitions of Harassment** - Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state and local laws. For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal, written or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law or that of his/her relatives, friends or associates, and that a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group and that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace, on school time or using school equipment via e-mail, phone (including voice messages), text messages, tweets, blogs, social networking sites or other means. SER-Niños is committed to ensuring employees are treated fairly and equitably in an environment free of intimidation and sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is an unacceptable form of behavior, which will not be tolerated under any circumstances. All complaints of sexual harassment will be treated seriously and promptly, with due regard to confidentiality. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who breaches the policy.

**Individuals and Conduct Covered** - These policies apply to all applicants and employees, whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow employees or someone not directly connected to SER-Niños (e.g., an outside vendor, consultant or parent). Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and business-related social events.

## 4 Ways to Focus When Your Mind's Not in the Mood By Paul Jarvis

Attention implies singularity. As in, if you're paying attention to lots of things—that's not truly paying attention. It's an understatement that focusing on one thing at a time can be difficult. But it's kinda the big key to succeeding at work and in life. It's hard to do anything, let alone do it well, if you can't concentrate on it. The good thing about focus is that it's a learnable skill. You can start teaching yourself by checking out these four surprisingly simple approaches.

**1. Do One Thing at a Time - What's Stopping You: Technology** - A study done by Larry Rosen, PhD, at California State University looked at how long students could pay attention to a specific task. The average length of time they could concentrate on what they were studying? Three minutes. The culprit? Technology. Every time something bings, beeps, or flashes, you're no longer 100% focused on what you were doing.

**The Fix: Turn Off Your Notifications** - With that in mind, the next time you sit down to focus, turn off your notifications for Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, email, Dropbox, Tinder—that's right, every last one. In the two years since I've killed all notifications on my devices (except phone calls—but thankfully those rarely happen), I've managed not to miss or forget anything. Your likes, tags, comments, and messages will all still be there when you're ready to look. Try it, even for a day or just a few hours. Turn off anything that breaks your attention, including your Wi-Fi if possible. And then (hopefully) you'll notice that the world didn't stop when the notifications did. But you did happen to get a lot more accomplished.

**2. Group Similar Tasks - What's Stopping You: Your Job Involves a Variety of Tasks** - Let me guess: You wear a lot of hats at work. That's the norm now. Tom DeMarco, co-author of a book about productivity called *Peopleware: Productive Products and Teams*, states that it can take 15 minutes or more to regain the same intense focus or flow as before the interruption. So, every time you switch tasks, your brain needs at least that amount of time to get back into the work. If you switch tasks just four times in a morning, that's an hour of total focus you've lost.

**The Fix: Batching Your Work** - "Batching" builds off the idea of only working on one kind of task at a time. By "batching" the work you have to accomplish, you don't have to constantly shift gears. So, grouping all the writing I have to do into a morning means I can write five to six articles in one fell swoop. Perfect. Then I'll typically spend the afternoon programming websites for clients, moving my brain into that mode for hours at a time.

**3. Focus on the Present - What's Stopping You: Daydreaming** - Paying attention to the work at hand, instead of daydreaming about what will come of that work, is always a challenge. Too often, we get sucked into imagining that what we're working on will become the next big thing or go viral or make us millions. While it's a nice thought, it's also not getting you any closer to making it a reality.

**The Fix: The Pomodoro Method** - The Pomodoro method is the notion that short, but laser-focused, bursts of attention lead to much greater productivity. It's simple—you set a timer for 25 minutes, you turn off or silence all other distractions, and you work on a single task. When the time's up, you can take a short break before moving onto another task. The more attention I pay to what I'm working on, the faster (and better) it gets done. Instead of thinking about all the items on your list and getting stressed or simply getting lost in thought, try to think about just the one at hand.

**4. Give Yourself a Break - What's Stopping You: You Think You're a Robot - Too many** productivity tips don't take this into account: We need to sleep, eat, take breaks, and move. As humans, our attention spans need variety, and we can't always control our thoughts or motivations. No matter how motivated or focused you are, you can't stay that way forever.

**The Fix: Act Like a Human** - Studies back this up. Whether you're taking nature walks, doing five minutes of stretching, or sitting on the porch and drinking coffee (instead of slurping it while compulsively working), all of those breaks contribute to being able to focus better. That's it. No special programs, secret life hacks, or pricey apps. You simply need to give your brain a task, space, and rest—it will reward you for it by gifting you with productivity.



## **Ten Commandments of Work Ethics**

**The First Commandment - Thou shalt not criticize thy boss** - This is one workplace ethic that has remained sacrosanct over the ages. The boss is always right. Okay, he or she might be an insufferable lout, but as long as you are working with them, they are always right. With changing times, bosses are becoming more accessible to their employees. Some of them even love taking inputs from their workers and improve their businesses. But, it is advisable to keep your mouth shut until asked.

**The Second Commandment - Thou shalt not rub thy colleagues the wrong way** - You cannot avoid befriending your colleagues at your workplace. Just be sure that you do not indulge in activities that create a bad impression of yourself on your colleagues. Folks at work can hamper your own prospects nowadays. Put in a genuine good word when they deserve it, and do not criticize when they err. That way you will never go wrong.

**The Third Commandment - Thou shalt not comment on thy colleagues' personal affairs** - Respect your colleagues' private space and they will respect yours. Even if a colleague breaks out about their family affairs or romantic shenanigans with you, try not to be overzealous in offering advice. Most probably, they may just want a set of ears to listen to them.

**The Fourth Commandment - Thou shalt not compare thyself with thy colleagues** - This breach of ethics in the workplace has happened ever since Cain and Abel started farming for their father Adam. In the machinery of your workplace, all employees are differently-sized cogs in the wheel. Everyone has been assigned a post in the organization because of some unique talent. That means you should not compare yourself with how others work. Don't ever begin cribbing with your employers when someone gets a promotion and you don't. It will certainly happen with you if you deserve it.

**The Fifth Commandment - Thou shalt not be noseey** - In today's workplace environment, one of the biggest work ethics is to keep your nose stuck in your own affairs. Do not involve yourself in assignments meant for others, and never show off that you can do a particular job better than them. Instead, try excelling in the work assigned to you. If you show off your superiority to others, your colleagues will think of you as too pompous, and your boss might even reprimand you for not sticking to your own work.

**The Sixth Commandment - Thy attire shalt speak for itself** - Let your attire match your status, and do not break the dress code of work; however, flimsy it might be. It helps when you are dealing with outside clients. Wearing a semi-formal attire is what one must stick to.

**The Seventh Commandment - Thou shalt not bring thy family in thy workplace** - An unwritten rule of workplace ethics is that you will never bring your family to visit your workplace, unless they are invited.

**The Eighth Commandment - Thou shalt invite thy colleagues to thy homestead** - You must keep your family out of the workplace as much as possible, but it is good work ethics to invite your colleagues over to dinner sometime. You can bond there and even do some constructive planning together. But, you must not be hasty and invite everyone. Take your time, understand how friendly the people in your workplace are, and then subtly begin the invitations. It is of course understood that you should not have any vested interests in inviting your colleagues (or superiors) over.

**The Ninth Commandment - - Make your work get noticed.** Inform the right people that it is your work in advance. A subtle approach is required to make your presence felt in the workplace. At the same time, you should always acknowledge your subordinates' good work, especially if they are creative people working for you. Creative minds work better when fed on praise. And that works both ways.

**The Tenth Commandment - Thou shalt always keep thyself informed** - The final rule of ethics in the workplace is to always be informed about what is going on in your business. It does not pay if you are the one always sitting mute below the corner in the front office, or if you are the one dozing shamelessly, when a business talk is going on. People will think funny about you if you suddenly pop up and ask them about what's going on. If you are informed about your workplace affairs, it will also help you to behave better and put up a generally good impression at the workplace.

## Reporting Child Abuse Q&A



### Q. Will the person know I've reported him or her?

**A.** Your report is confidential, and it is not subject to public release under the Open Records Act. The law provides for immunity from civil or criminal liabilities for innocent persons who report even unfounded suspicions, as long as your report is made in good faith. Your identity is kept confidential.

### Q. What if I'm not sure?

**A.** If you have reason to suspect abuse, but are not positive, make the report. If you have any doubts about whether or not it is abuse, call the hotline. They can advise you on whether the signs you have observed are abuse.

**Q. What are Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation?** **A.** **Abuse** is mental, emotional, physical, or sexual injury to a child or person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities or failure to prevent such injury. **Neglect** of a child includes failure to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter and/or medical care; and/or leaving a child in a situation where the child is at risk of harm. **Neglect** of a person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities that results in starvation, dehydration, over- or under-medication, unsanitary living conditions, and lack of heat, running water, electricity, medical care, and personal hygiene. **Exploitation** is misusing the resources of a person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities for personal or monetary benefit. This includes taking Social Security or SSI (Supplemental Security Income) checks, abusing a joint checking account, and taking property and other resources.

### Q. What will I be asked?

**A.** Information helpful to have on hand when filing an abuse report (if known) includes:

- Name, age, and address of the child or person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities
- Your name and contact information
- Brief description of the situation and the child or vulnerable adult
- Current injuries, medical problems, or behavioral problems
- For a child: Parents' names and names of siblings in the home
- For an adult: Names of relatives in or outside the home and name of perpetrator
- Explain how you know about the situation

### Q. What does making a report confidentially mean?

- DFPS staff is required by law to keep the reporter's identity confidential when the reporter is making a report of possible abuse, neglect or exploitation of children or the elderly and adults with disabilities. Providing your name and contact information allows field investigators to ask follow up questions of you, if needed, to insure quality investigations are performed and client safety is maintained to the extent possible. Your identity as a reporter may be revealed only to a judge or law enforcement personnel in certain situations.

### Q. What does making a report anonymously mean?

- Making reports anonymously means you do not provide your name and contact information when you make the report and field investigators are unable to contact you. When you make a report anonymously, you are not given a reference number for your records. Anonymous reports are not accepted via the internet reporting site.

### Q. Why can't I make an anonymous report via the Internet?

- You can make an anonymous report online. Though providing us with your identity helps if someone in DFPS needs to communicate with you regarding the situation you reported to work together in protecting children, adults with disabilities and persons who are elderly.

**Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400**



## Professional Code of Ethics for Teachers

by Stacy Zeiger, Demand Media

### **Teachers must help all students learn, even the difficult ones.**

Because they have a daily influence on the lives of children, teachers are often held to high standards. In the midst of all of their responsibilities, they're required to serve as strong role models and demonstrate ethical behaviors as they interact with students, colleagues, parents and others. Developing and following a professional code of ethics helps make sure teachers act in a professional and ethical manner at all times.

**Working with Students** - A teacher's job is to provide a quality education to all students. A professional code of ethics must address this fact, stating that teachers must not show favoritism or discriminate against students. Teachers also must interact with students appropriately, not taking advantage of students in any way, bullying students or putting them down. Contact with students outside of the classroom or school building must be kept to a minimum and must focus on school-related activities and events.

**Student Safety** - In addition to a teacher's job to help all students learn, a professional code of ethics also addresses a teacher's responsibility to keep students safe. Teachers must abide by all school and classroom safety procedures to ensure student safety. It's also a teacher's responsibility to report instances of bullying and harassment. If a teacher suspects cases of abuse or neglect, or a student confides in a teacher in cases of abuse or neglect, the teacher is required to report it to the proper authorities, even if the student requests otherwise.

**Professional Practice** - Teachers must maintain ethical behavior in professional practice by accurately representing and maintaining certifications, licenses and other qualifications. Applying for a teaching certificate with false information or lying about meeting the requirements to renew the certificate can lead to a loss of teaching privileges. In addition to qualifications, teachers must practice ethical behavior when it comes to reporting grades and handling assessments. Misrepresenting grades or altering student responses on assessments can lead to criminal charges and the loss of a job.

**Working with Colleagues** - In a school, teachers must collaborate with administrators, fellow teachers and other employees in order to provide a safe and positive learning experience for students. A teacher must follow the direction of administrators, even if rules or expectations seem unreasonable, in order to avoid undermining an administrator's authority and to set a positive example for students. When disagreements arise between teachers, they must handle the disagreements in private and refrain from talking negatively about colleagues in front of students. In addition, teachers must engage in appropriate relationships with colleagues, keeping personal feelings and adult behaviors out of the school.

**Interacting with Stakeholders** - Aside from colleagues, teachers have a responsibility to interact positively with parents and other stakeholders in a child's education. Contact with parents must be kept professional, free from arguments and physical contact. If a teacher has an issue with a parent, another teacher or administrator must be present during all meetings. Teachers also must avoid being unduly influenced by parents and other stakeholders when it comes to students' grades or other school-related matters.

**Best Practices for Teachers** - The following are some best practices: If you witness another teacher doing something unethical: 1) Make factual notes about what you saw. 2) Report the behavior or actions to the principal or other immediate supervisor. The district will investigate.

**Recommendation:** Avoid placing yourself in compromising situations.

Remember: **You are required by law to report child abuse.**

## LEGALLY SPEAKING...

**What is an Excused Absence?** - An excused absence from work is typically an absence that an employee schedules in advance and was approved by our Superintendent. For example, jury duty, surgery, appointments, funerals, military service or vacation are considered to be excused absences because they cannot be scheduled during work hours.

Sick time and other paid time off, as well as unforeseen circumstances like family illness or a death in the family, also count as excused absences as long as the employee follows the proper procedure for notifying our Superintendent that they will not be at work.

In order for your time away from work to count as an excused absence, it's important to notify our Superintendent before an absence, so she can reorganize the workload for the day. Even if an employee is sick or has paid time off, scheduling an absence in an as timely manner as possible is required by most employers. Employers appreciate employees scheduling appointments after work and/or weekend.

An unexcused absence from work is an absence that was not prescheduled or approved by the employee's supervisor. Employees who violate organization policy regarding notification of missing work may be warned and or terminated from the organization, as well as employees who abuse it.

**Can You Get Fired for Calling in Sick?** - Being sick is no fault of your own - but unfortunately, you can still be faulted for it at work. In the majority of circumstances, an employer can fire employees who miss time from work due to illness, as workers in the state of Texas are employed "at will".

**When You Miss Too Much Work** - Workers who are periodically absent due to illness are the least protected category of employees. Adequate attendance is understandably a requirement for successfully carrying out most jobs, and unless you've arranged some sort of sick leave agreement with your boss, if you miss a significant number of days, it will reflect poorly on you. Your employer may also take disciplinary action.

**FMLA Coverage** - Covered employers (typically employers of over 50 workers) must provide eligible employees up to 12 weeks of **unpaid FMLA leave** during any 12 month period. FMLA has provided eligible workers with **unpaid time off** to meet family responsibilities, such as caring for a new baby or an adopted child, looking after a sick child, spouse, parent, child or husband back from military duty, or if you have a serious illness.

**Who's Eligible:** An **FMLA eligible employee** is an employee who has been employed for their employer at least 12 months, **worked at least 1,250 hours over the past 12 months**, and work at a location where the organization employs 50 or more employees within 75 miles.

**Holidays** - Organizations are not required to close for holidays. In addition, if the organization closes for a holiday they are not required to pay workers holiday pay for the day or to pay overtime or holiday pay for working on a holiday. However, organizations may have policies that provide for holiday pay or paid time off. It is NOT mandated by law.

The reason that **holiday pay and time off isn't mandated** is because the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does not require payment for time not worked, such as vacations or holidays. Holiday benefits are generally an arrangement between an employer and an employee, as part of the organization's policy.

## LEGALLY SPEAKING...Continues

**Paid personal leave is not required by federal law to be offered to employees. Employers are not required to pay employees for time not worked**, but many organizations offer a benefits package that includes some combination of paid holidays, sick days, and personal days to their employees.

**Can employers ban personal cell phones at work? Employees don't have the legal right** to carry cell phones at work and employers can require them to place the phones and other electronic devices—like music players and cameras—away (lockers, etc.) or drop them at reception area when they get to work until the end of the work day.

**Exempt Employee Travel.** If you are an **exempt employee** (salary), you are not entitled to any extra compensation for job-related travel. No extra pay is required by law. An exempt employee can be required to work when and where the employer directs.

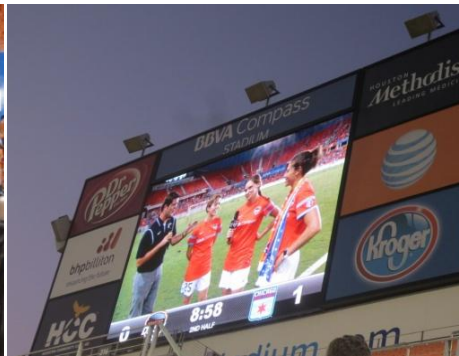
**Right to Monitor** - All school-supplied technology and school-related work records belong to the school and not to the employee. SER-Niños may monitor use of school-supplied technology. Inappropriate or illegal use or communications may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

### Inspections

Employers have the right to inspect all portions of its premises for drugs, alcohol or other contraband. All employees, contract employees and visitors may be asked to cooperate in inspections of their persons, work areas and property that might conceal a drug, alcohol or other contraband. Employees who possess such contraband or refuse to cooperate in such inspections are subject to appropriate discipline up to and including discharge.

## Houston Dynamo & Houston Dash

**As all employees are aware of, Houston Dynamo & Houston Dash regularly offer us game tickets. Following are pictures Ms. Zell took at the July game when 72 of our employees and their families attended:**



**As always, I'll let all employees know, via email, when SER-Niños is offered tickets!**



## The Best Time to Book to Save Big on 2015 Holiday Travel *Jo Piazza* Managing editor

Book now and you will have more money to spend on presents this year. It may be hard to start thinking about Thanksgiving and Christmas while we're still basking in the lazy days of summer, but the holidays will be here before you know it — and the best time to book is next week!

Today, the global travel search site Skyscanner revealed that the best time to book flights for 2015 holidays is in August. "During that time travelers can save nearly 5.5 percent on Thanksgiving travel, close to 19 percent for Christmas and almost 15 percent for New Year's Eve," according to the Skyscanner report. Not ready to book just yet. Here are some other good times to book for each holiday.

**Thanksgiving:** Booking the week of September 14 could save an average of 4 percent, while booking just two weeks prior to Thanksgiving may save an average of 3.8 percent. **Christmas:** Booking the weeks of August 31 or September 28 may save an average of 12.7 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Or book the week of November 2 for a possible 4.8 percent savings.

**New Year's Eve:** The weeks of September 14 and 28 could save travelers an average of 8.5 percent, and booking the week of December 14 can save an average of 6.3 percent.



**How can four passengers who booked the same flight, on the same day at the same time, end up paying four different fares?** Welcome to the (possible) future of personalized pricing. Imagine a time in the distant future when you and two of your friends are invited to a wedding in Myrtle Beach, S.C. You log on to your frequent flier account with AnyJet Airlines, and seeing that you have a Greenwich, Conn., zip code, the airline assumes that you're wealthy and charges you \$398 for your fare (unfortunately, despite your tony zip code, you're actually a modestly paid schoolteacher). At the same time, your friend and fellow wedding invitee who lives in a nearby, less-affluent zip code is also booking the same flight to the same wedding; she's quoted a lower fare of \$310. And when the third member of your trio logs on to purchase his ticket, the airline sees that he's a frequent business traveler who's already taken 15 flights this year. It assumes that he's an easy sale and socks him with a \$410 fare.

Welcome to the world of "personalized airfares" or "personalized pricing," whereby the amount you pay for a flight is no longer just a number based on impersonal factors such as when and where you're flying or when you booked your ticket. In this possible future, your airfare could be based on who you are, and each fare would be different for everyone — even people booking the same flight at the same time. The airlines may soon target passengers with personalized airfares that could take the fun out of booking online.

You may not have to imagine that scenario for much longer; some airline industry insiders believe that personalized airfares are coming. Last week at the annual meeting of the International Air Transport Association (IATA, an airline industry lobbying group), one Spanish airline executive reportedly said it was inevitable that airlines would soon start using personal data to charge some passengers more than others. And while no major air carriers have yet announced such pricing changes, more than a few experts think it's only a matter of time. "Absolutely" is Airways News senior analyst Vinay Bhaskara's answer when asked if personalized pricing is inevitable. "This is something that will enable airlines to increase their revenue." (At that aforementioned IATA meeting, airlines also announced that they had increased their 2015 profit projection to \$29.3 billion, which would be a nice boost from last year's \$19.9 billion profit.).

## 2015 HOLIDAYS

September 7	Monday	Labor Day
September 13	Sunday	Grandparents' Day
September 14	Monday	Rosh Hashana
September 23	Wednesday	Yom Kippur
September 24	Thursday	Eid al-Adha
September 25	Friday	Native American Day
October 2	Friday	Mahatma Gandhi Jayanthi (India)
October 12	Monday	Columbus Day
October 15	Thursday	Muharram
October 16	Friday	Boss's Day
October 31	Saturday	Halloween
November 1	Sunday	Daylight Saving (End)
November 1	Sunday	All Saints Day
November 11	Wednesday	Veterans' Day (USA & Diwali, India)
November 26	Thursday	Thanksgiving
November 27	Friday	Black Friday
November 30	Monday	Cyber Monday
December 17-14	Thursday	Chanukah/Hanukkah
December 25	Friday	Christmas Day
December 26-Jan 01	Saturday	Kwanzaa
December 31	Thursday	New Year's Eve

### SER-Niños Information [www.serninos.org](http://www.serninos.org)

Alder (elementary school) Campus

Superintendent: Charmaine Constantine

5815 Alder St., Houston, TX 77081

PH: 713-667-6145 Fax: 713-667-0645

Dashwood (elementary school) Campus

Superintendent: Charmaine Constantine

School Principal: Esther Villela

5919 Dashwood Dr., Houston, TX 77081

PH: 713-432-9400 Fax: 713-432-9403

Middle School Campus

Charmaine Constantine

5610 Gulfton St., Houston, 77081

PH: 713-592-6055 Fax: 713-592-6190

H.R. Office Information: Ph: 713-592-6055, x307 Personal Cell: 832-606-4047 [gvillar@serninos.org](mailto:gvillar@serninos.org)

Ofc. Hrs: 7am - 4:30pm *Feel Free to call or text my personal cell phone after working hours.*

**Cell phone is NOT answered during working hours.**



Email me pictures of your kids, grandkids, celebrations, graduations, anniversaries...Please let me hear from you; email, text, phone, note; it's easy.

## PAY DAY: 5<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> OF EACH MONTH

### BENEFITS CONTACTS

<b>HEALTH INSURANCE:</b>	<b>George McElroy</b>	<b>281-999-4941</b>	<b><a href="mailto:geomcelroy@earthlink.net">geomcelroy@earthlink.net</a></b>
<b>SUPPLEMENTAL INS:</b>	<b>Gary Nething</b>	<b>832-755-2528</b>	<b><a href="mailto:gknething@sbcglobal.net">gknething@sbcglobal.net</a></b>
<b>403(b):</b>	<b>Jack Olson</b>	<b>713-972-1880</b>	<b><a href="mailto:john.j.olson@ampf.com">john.j.olson@ampf.com</a></b>
<b>LEGAL SHIELD:</b>	<b>Lamar Reynolds</b>	<b>832-559-7908</b>	<b><a href="mailto:reynoldsriskmanagement@earthlink.net">reynoldsriskmanagement@earthlink.net</a></b>
<b>T.R.S. BENEFITS:</b>	<b>General Office</b>	<b>800- 223-8778</b>	<b><a href="http://www.trs.state.tx.us">www.trs.state.tx.us</a></b>