

# LCSSU

## Employee Handbook



# 2018-2019

# School Year

Handbook adopted by LCSSU Executive Board  
August 27, 2018

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**LIVINGSTON COUNTY SPECIAL SERVICES UNIT**

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Dwight #232

Graymont #425

Cornell #426

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# **LIVINGSTON COUNTY SPECIAL SERVICES UNIT PERSONNEL MANUAL**

## **ORGANIZATION/ ADMINISTRATION**

As established in 1967, the Livingston County Special Services Unit provides a variety of services to its member school districts in Livingston County. Over the past decade, LCSSU has firmly established itself as one of the leading special education organizations in Illinois. LCSSU provides outstanding programs for students with disabilities and has provided statewide leadership in a number of areas including Response to Intervention (RtI), autism training and high quality alternative programming. LCSSU is widely acknowledged for its outstanding personnel and positive relationships with its eleven-member school districts.

LCSSU is recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education as the legal entity responsible for special education programming in 11 member districts and for helping to develop educational cooperative programming in all member districts. For special education programs, LCSSU is responsible for: (1) monitoring its member districts to ensure compliance with Federal and State regulations in programming for approximately 1100 students with disabilities; (2) providing technical assistance to member districts; and (3) serving as an extension of each district by providing program options for students with more severe disabilities.

LCSSU provides administrative services through its Central Office staff for all member districts. Compliance with IDEA and state rules is coordinated by LCSSU. LCSSU serves as the special education link for its member districts to the Illinois State Board of Education.

The LCSSU Executive Board is similar in structure and function to a local school district board of education and is the governing body of LCSSU. The Director is responsible to this board. Membership consists of Superintendents (or their designee as approved by the Local Education Agency school board) from all member districts and the Superintendent of the Regional Office of Education. The ROE serves as fiscal agent for the cooperative. Its purposes are to: (1) approve minimum standards for delivering services and programs consistent with Federal and State laws, and (2)

establish general policies governing LCSSU operations.

**LCSSU PROFESSIONAL  
EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**

LCSSU formally recognizes the Professional Employees Association IEA/NEA, which is affiliated with the National Education Association. The Livingston County Special Services Unit IEA/NEA is the exclusive and sole negotiation representative for non-administrative certified staff.

**STAFF COMPOSITION**

Employees assigned to member districts provide services and technical assistance to assist staff and maximize services for students. These employees include social workers, psychologists, contracted occupational therapists and physical therapists, speech pathologists and district supervisors. LCSSU teachers, teachers' assistants, and specialized certified staff are employed to provide services at the elementary, junior high, and high school specialized school programs for students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities. In 2003, SAILS, a program to educate students with communication disorders/autism was also established. Also in 2003, the LCSSU school Crossroads Academy was established to further community involvement with LCSSU programs.

LCSSU collaborates with member districts to develop and provide educational services in the least restrictive environment so that all students with disabilities will reach their maximum potentials to become responsible and productive citizens.

**BELIEF STATEMENT**

**Vision of Schools in Livingston County**

Education is directed at all aspects of human development (emotional, social, and intellectual) so that each student will become the best citizen of which she or he is capable, with a motivation for life-long learning. We, as a community, are committed to providing a nurturing and healthy environment in which all students can learn.

**Mission of the Livingston County Special Services Unit**

1. The educational needs of all students are identified and addressed by providing a broad range of high quality services.
2. The knowledge and skills of educators, parents, students and

**BELIEF STATEMENT**  
(Contd.)

the community are utilized and expanded as they collaborate efforts and ideas to design, implement, evaluate and maintain effective educational programs.

3. Programs are developed that promote healthy and nurturing environments and address the emotional, social and intellectual needs of students.

**Goals of the Livingston County Special Services Unit**

1. All students are educated in their home school with appropriate supports to ensure success.
2. Problem solving teams are implemented in every school through technical assistance and support by the LCSSU staff.
3. An assessment system is implemented which provides appropriate data for planning, implementing, and evaluating effective intervention programs.
4. A written plan, which is developed through a combined effort by the LCSSU staff and member school districts, provides educational opportunities and support for parents and students.
5. Partnerships are created within the community to help students reach their educational goals.

**Full Education Opportunity Goal**

The Livingston County Special Services Unit (LCSSU) and its member districts are committed to providing free, appropriate public education to all children with disabilities aged three through twenty-one who are residents in the Special Services Unit as defined by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Livingston County Special Services Unit will seek and identify children with disabilities, aged birth through two, through child find activities and a cooperative arrangement with existing private programs which provide instructional services to such children. The Livingston County Special Services Unit Executive Board formally adopted this goal in April, 1990.

**COOPERATIVE**

**STRUCTURE/  
BACKGROUND**

The Livingston County Special Services Unit (LCSSU) Executive Board is made up of the Superintendent of each member district and the Superintendent of the Regional Office of Education. Approving all policies, expenditures, personnel actions, annual budgets and services offered by the Livingston County Special Services Unit, Pontiac, are the responsibility of this Executive Board.

The Livingston County Special Services Unit shall annually collect the following information:

1. The number of children with disabilities aged birth through twenty-one years in need of special education and related services;
2. The number of children with disabilities receiving special education and related services; and,
3. The number of children with disabilities in need of improved services.

The Livingston County Special Services Unit shall annually collect the following information regarding the facilities, personnel, and services necessary to accomplish the full educational opportunity goal, including regular class, resource room, special class, special school, private day and residential schools and facilities, public residential facilities, and home-bound instructional settings:

1. The number of children with disabilities,
2. The number of teachers,
3. The number of related services personnel,
4. The cost of personnel,
5. The number of transportation units, and
6. Transition Needs Assessment.

The Director of Special Education shall be responsible for ensuring that the full educational opportunity goal is fully achieved within the prescribed timeframes and shall take whatever actions are necessary to that end.

Employees have the following responsibilities in addition to those in their job description:

1. To read, understand, and abide by LCSSU policies and procedures

**EMPLOYEE  
RESPONSIBILITIES**

and the provisions of the Illinois School Code as pertaining to the employee's current position.

2. To report to their immediate supervisor as soon as possible after learning that the employee has, or may have, a communicable disease.
3. To report to the immediate supervisor any instances of known or suspected child abuse/neglect of students in LCSSU-Operated Programs. The employee's responsibility is to also ensure that the report was formally made to the proper authority.
4. To inform the immediate supervisor as far in advance as possible as to any anticipated absence from work, including the request for personal days.
5. To ensure constant and appropriate supervision of all students for whom staff are responsible from the time the students arrive at school until they depart.
6. To avoid making recommendations to parents or other non-employees regarding a student's educational needs or program, such as approaches, services and delivery systems, that have not been recommended at an eligibility conference.

### **Sick Day Procedures**

When an employee is ill they are required to contact the Director, or leave a voice mail for the Director at the LCSSU central office. They also need to contact the LCSSU central office and their assigned school, or request the central office to contact the school for them. Sick day paperwork is to be completed as soon as possible upon their return to work.

It is the absent employee's responsibility to telephone the LCSSU central office and report the absence. Failure to report the absence may result in disciplinary action. All sick days are reported to the TRS and IMRF systems, and in some cases to the LCSSU sick bank.



## **HEPATITIS B VACCINE**

Hepatitis B vaccine is offered to all employees who have the potential to come into contact with diseases transmitted through broken skin or to come in contact with other contagion. These immunizations are offered at no cost to LCSSU employees. It is strongly advised that prior to agreeing to these immunizations, the employee consults with a physician. The employee may then provide the Director with a written request to receive the series of three immunizations. Employees may receive the immunizations at no cost every ten years, as these immunizations are only effective for ten years. Upon request, the Director will also provide staff with information regarding blood-borne pathogens.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LCSSU EMPLOYEES ASSIGNED TO MEMBER DISTRICT BUILDINGS**

### **Sign-in Procedures at School Sites**

Each LCSSU employee, when visiting a member district program site must sign in and out of the building. This is required for the employee's professional accountability and documentation of services provided. Additionally, in cases of emergency, LCSSU administration may need to contact the individual employee.

1. Each LCSSU employee assigned to work in a member district building must be cognizant of each assigned building's policies and procedures on life safety issues, special medical needs, student suicide, student discipline, issues regarding serious situations such as student pregnancy, student drug and alcohol abuse, and dispensation of medication for students.
2. Generally, when a student is enrolled in a special education program located in a member district, the building procedures where the student is educated take priority over home district or LCSSU procedures.
3. LCSSU employees work a LCSSU calendar which is as close as possible to being in agreement with each assigned building calendar. However, regardless of a member district's calendar and hours of operation, each LCSSU employee is still required to work the number of LCSSU contracted days and hours of contracted service. When a LCSSU employee believes

there is a conflict in the employee's calendar or hours scheduled, the employee should immediately contact the LCSSU supervisor for a decision or adjustment.

4. LCSSU employees in member district buildings are expected to participate in as many of the building and/or district professional development activities as possible. The LCSSU employee's supervisor will be able to schedule with the employee the appropriate training activity to attend when LCSSU and the member district schedule different activities on the same day.

All LCSSU psychologists, social workers, vocational personnel, occupational therapists, speech pathologists and other related service professionals assigned to member district programs must provide monthly data logs to the Director. Building principals and LCSSU Program Supervisors can review or receive a copy as needed.

## **HIRING PROCEDURES**

LCSSU seeks to employ and retain highly qualified and dedicated individuals at all times. Such employment and retention is done without regard to age, creed, gender, national origin, religion, or disability.

All new employees must submit a physical exam, report, or physician statement at their expense within 30 days of employment. This physical must indicate the employee is able to perform at the required job functions and is free from communicable disease.

The employee may be required to obtain a second physical examination, if considered necessary, at LCSSU's expense.

All applicants are required by law to authorize a criminal background investigation. Discovery of certain criminal convictions are state mandated grounds for immediate dismissal. New employees must also demonstrate proof of U. S. citizenship.

All new employees are required to attend all introductory, orientation, professional development meetings, and specialized training sessions, workshops, and some parent/teacher meetings as part of their new assignments.

Personnel records are maintained in the Director's office for all LCSSU employees. Access to one's records may be arranged by appointment only during the hours the central office is open. Access to an individual's personnel file by persons other than the employee is strictly controlled.

## **EVALUATION PROCEDURES**

All LCSSU staff are evaluated following the principles of pre-established mutual goal setting which includes the observation of activities and clear communication between the supervisor and employee. Tenured certified teachers are evaluated every other school year. All other certified and non-certified staff are evaluated each school year.

## **TENURE**

All certified employees, first employed by LCSSU after January 1, 1998, are eligible for tenure (continued contractual services) after four years of full-time employment with LCSSU in the certified position. Tenure formally begins when the certified employee reports for work on the first day of the employee's fifth year of full time employment. Employees hired prior to December 31, 1997, were made eligible for tenure after completing (at that time the state standard) two years of satisfactory full-time employment. Any employee hired after October 31, of any school year, does not have that year counted toward tenure. The Illinois School Code recognizes a full year of service of an employee as one who has begun service prior to November 1<sup>st</sup> of any school year.

Part-time certified personnel, administrative employees, and educational support personnel, regardless of the number of years employed at LCSSU, do not obtain tenure.

## **SALARY ENHANCEMENT**

Individuals represented by the negotiated IEA/NEA agreement will receive increase per the current contract. All employees must be employed for a minimum of 100 days full time during a proceeding school year in order to receive a full year's credit.

## **SICK LEAVE/SICK LEAVE BANK/ PERSONAL DAYS**

Sick leave, sick leave bank and personal days are outlined in the negotiated IEA agreement. LCSSU employees not represented by the IEA association may receive up to two personal days per year based on the terms of their contract and this will be indicated in individual contracts. LCSSU employees may participate in a Sick Leave Bank which is operated by a committee of the Director and LCSSU staff.

Full-time certified employees are allotted sick days as outlined under the IEA contract. Part-time staff receives allowable sick days as determined by the percentage of work time. Ten month non-certified personnel receive 12 sick days per school year. Twelve month non-certified personnel and administrators are allowed 15 sick days per school year.

Sick days may be used for purposes of a physician's appointment (whether or not sick) or illness to any of the following family members: parents, spouse, brother, sister, children, grandparents, grandchildren, parent-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and legal guardians. After three consecutive days are used, due to personal illness, the LCSSU employee may be required to furnish a physician's statement of treatment.

**FRINGE BENEFITS**

Funding for health insurance programs is made available to full time employees by the executive board. The full health insurance benefit is only available to full time employees. If the employee works less than full time, the benefit is allowed based on the percentage of employment.

**EMPLOYEE INJURIES**

If you are injured on the job, you must complete an accident report form and submit it to your supervisor as soon as possible. You should request all witnesses who observed the accident to send a written incident report to the Director. If you visit a physician or clinic for treatment be certain you inform the healthcare facility that the injury happened on the job. Do not use your personal health insurance. All job injuries are covered by the Workman's Compensation system through which LCSSU has coverage. All medical bills should be submitted to the Director.

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

LCSSU strives to be in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Employees who wish to file a grievance that LCSSU is not in compliance with this federal law must do this in writing to the Director. Within 10 days the employee will receive a response to the grievance.

**EMPLOYEE LIABILITY INSURANCE**

LCSSU provides liability insurance coverage for its employees. This includes complete coverage for costs resulting from false accusations of misconduct and wrongful acts committed during school duties. Liability insurance also covers LCSSU employees who are wrongfully accused of

being responsible for any injury to a student or damage of property. In any legal issue, LCSSU liability insurance will not cover intentional wrongful acts committed by employees.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
ACTIVITIES**

Certified staff covered by the negotiated agreement may have professional development involvement per the current agreement. Individuals not covered by the negotiated agreement are allowed to attend various professional development activities per the Director's approval. All employees who attend professional development programs are expected to share professional training information with their supervisor and team members.

**TRAVEL/MILEAGE/  
MILAGE CLAIMS**

To receive reimbursement for professional in-state travel written approval is needed by the LCSSU Program Supervisor and Director. According to Illinois State Board of Education Business Fiscal Services formal guidelines under Section 2.120; in-state travel is considered "if an employee travels in Illinois and to nearby states in the conduct of official duties, reimbursement for such travel shall not exceed 50 miles beyond the boundaries of Illinois." Therefore, travel to cities within 50 miles of the Illinois border are not considered out-of-state travel and do not need ISBE approval for employee reimbursement.

To begin each work day, the employee may file for mileage to their starting work location based on the shorter distance of either the mileage from the employee's home address or from their assigned office location to the scheduled worksite location to begin the work day. During the work day, travel from worksites will be reimbursed based on the LCSSU chart of distances between worksite to worksite.

At the end of the work day, mileage will be based on the shorter distance of the end of the day worksite to either the employee's home or to their assigned office location. Mileage reimbursement will be adjusted annually at the IRS rate in effect on August 1. Mileage claims **must** be turned in on a monthly basis. This allows for accurate expenditure reports to the state and accurate billings to our member districts. Individual circumstances may be considered by the Director.

Conferences and meetings outside our LCSSU offices will be reimbursed based on mileage from the employee's office location or from the employee's point of departure whichever is less costly to the organization. Reimbursement costs

for participation at professional meetings for registration is fully reimbursable with the approval of the LCSSU Director. Daily meals at the professional development activities may not exceed a total of \$30.00 for each day.

All mileage claims, conference and general travel, must be approved by a LCSSU Program Supervisor and the Director. Mileage and seminar costs will **not** be reimbursed after three months from the actual event. At the end of every fiscal year, (June 30<sup>th</sup>), all mileage, seminar and other related costs must be received by the Director by June 30<sup>th</sup> for an employee to receive reimbursement.

**WORK HOURS/  
TRADE TIME/  
CALENDAR**

LCSSU employees who are assigned to member districts, must give assurances they will be able to arrive at their scheduled worksite no later than 8:00 a.m. on assigned work days, whether the worksite is the LCSSU central office, Pontiac; or our satellite office, or any regularly assigned school program in Livingston County.

Trade time is periodically available with the approval of the Director. An employee on occasion may need to arrive early or stay later than normally scheduled to earn or make use of trade time. Considerations are always given to meet an employee request to have reasonable flexibility in work hours, particularly in an emergency or a family concern.

All LCSSU employees must work the daily contracted hours. Employees cannot work unassigned days or through lunch, and leave work early without prior approval first from the Director. Employees under the negotiated agreement have 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. as their contractual hours. All others have 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. hours.

LCSSU Central Office and the school programs' annual calendar is coordinated with member districts as much as possible. LCSSU employees are hired to work regularly scheduled hours similar to those work hours of member school districts. Certified staff covered by the negotiated agreement work a 190 day calendar.

For any LCSSU employee covered by the current negotiated agreement, it is the administration's responsibility to honor the collective bargaining agreement. However, LCSSU employees are asked to make every reasonable effort to attend meetings scheduled by school districts requiring LCSSU

employees' participation in staffings. LCSSU staff must be cognizant that often parents and district staff are working before or after their normal hours in order to attend these meetings. Consideration is always given that LCSSU staff may have personal or family situations which do not allow them to be available at certain times due to the distance from the employee's home or the LCSSU office. It is hoped that staff attend these meetings in the spirit of cooperation and flexibility to best meet the needs of students and the staff who often need to provide instruction throughout the day and are only available at certain timeframes before and after the school day.

### **CROSSROADS/LCA/SAILS SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

LCSSU employees who are assigned to the school programs; Crossroads, LCA, SAILS I and SAILS II must give assurances they will be able to arrive at their scheduled program by their assigned times. Variances may occur in these scheduled times due to changing arrivals and pickup times. Times may vary for certain staff based on supervision needs.

**Sick day procedure:** When a school employee is ill, they are required to contact one of the school principals or school secretary directly.

### **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

All staff are to follow the LCSSU telephone tree system for all emergency closings. This system will provide assurance that all employees are notified when schools, offices, and LCSSU are closed for the day. Please consult with your supervisor on any specific procedures directly related to your assignment for that day. For closings due to weather or emergency situations, the discretion of the LCSSU Director will be used.

If LCSSU staff are in a school which is having an emergency closing or an early closing for the day, staff should use discretion. If a staff member is assigned to work with students and those students are unavailable, the staff member may decide to return to the LCSSU offices, work with staff in the assigned building if staff are remaining, work at another assigned school, or simply go home depending on their workload and travel distances. Staff should contact their supervisor regarding the decision on where they should be working during these situations.

Staff are encouraged to use their best judgment if hazardous weather conditions exist and it is inadvisable to drive long distances. Staff should consult with the program supervisor and proceed

with the safest actions in regards to their personal traveling and safety during inclement weather.

**DRESS CODE**

All LCSSU employees are expected to dress in a professional manner. It is understood that if an employee is working closely with students who have a potential to require physical interventions, it may be necessary to wear more casual, comfortable clothes for safety reasons, yet appropriate to the school environment. This includes footwear that allows for easy movement and provides support and ample coverage to heels and toes for safety purposes. LCSSU staff are requested to always be sensitive to the individual dress codes of each school they serve as they are representing the school district, and also Livingston County Special Services Unit.

**STUDENT/STAFF  
SEXUAL HARRASSMENT  
REPORTING SUSPECTED  
ABUSE**

Schools, like society in general, are becoming increasingly aware that sexual harassment of male or female employees potentially exists in any work environment. LCSSU takes a strong stand against sexual harassment of students or staff.

Any allegation of sexual harassment will be investigated immediately by the LCSSU Director, and by other public investigative authorities as necessary. Program Supervisors will provide staff with the necessary information for staff, parents students to be aware of sexual harassment issues and LCSSU policies of reporting such accusations and administration's response to these allegations.

All LCSSU staff suspecting any such abuse of students should immediately report the suspected abuse to the LCSSU Director/School Administrator for a review of the information before any reports are filed with investigative agencies.

**VISITORS TO  
LCSSU CLASSROOMS**

All visitors including parents and guardians of students to the LCSSU classrooms must provide 24 hours of notice to the program supervisor prior to the desired date of the visit. If a parent wishes to confer with a staff member an appointment must be made.

**EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

As stated in the Illinois School Code Section (5/10-22.4): School/cooperative employees may be dismissed for conduct in, or out of the work place, which may be detrimental to the organization and instruction of students.



**NON-REIMBURSABLE PURCHASES**

Purchases of professional or classroom materials for any LCSSU or district program will not be reimbursed to the employee without signed prior approval by the program supervisor and the LCSSU Director. All purchases by teacher and/or professional supplies must be made with a purchase order including written pre-approvals of the LCSSU program supervisor and Director.

**TECHNOLOGY**

When assigned a computer, staff are to sign an agreement to follow the Code of Conduct in Technology. Certain computer data information needs to remain confidential due to personnel matters, fiscal, and legal information. Therefore, employees may only use the computers to which they are assigned or have coded password access.

**FERPA/HIPPA**

LCSSU Administration and employees' procedures and practices are in full compliance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. These laws protect the confidentiality of all school and medical records related to the provision of special education services provided to students and their families.

Annually LCSSU provides updated training to ensure compliance with these federal laws.

**HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

LCSSU takes great efforts to ensure that staff work in well maintained, safe buildings. Any related concerns by staff should be reported immediately to the LCSSU Director.

All LCSSU operated buildings are in compliance with environmental standards as established by state agencies.

Written requests to review the most recent environmental study of LCSSU operated facilities will be honored within five work days with photocopies of the management plan provided at reasonable costs.

**TUITION WAIVERS & REIMBURSEMENT**

Often when student teachers or other professional interns are supervised by LCSSU staff (no cost) tuition waivers are received by LCSSU in appreciation. The LCSSU supervising professional is given first opportunity to accept the tuition waiver. If the supervising professional refuses the tuition waiver, this waiver will be offered to the LCSSU staff member who is next on the list of LCSSU staff

requesting a tuition waiver. List sign-ups are available in the LCSSU central office.

Employees may be reimbursed for graduate courses subject to the following conditions: 1) reimbursement will be 100% of the tuition costs of the approved graduate courses up to twelve (12) per contract year at a rate of 20% per year over five years; 2) courses must be in the employee's area of responsibility and/or must contribute to the employees' growth and must receive approval of the Director; 3) courses must be from an accredited university; 4) transcripts certifying satisfactory completion with a course grade of "B" or better must be provided to be eligible for reimbursement within (30) days after completion of the course.

## **STUDENT RECORDS**

Under State and Federal laws, student records may only be reviewed by the student (if of legal age), identified parents/guardians and professional staff working with the student.

Records are not to be taken from the LCSSU premises without the employee informing LCSSU administration. This is normally accomplished through completion of the records sign-out sheets, with assurances the records will be returned as soon as possible.