**Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind (AFCB)**

**Student Handbook**

**Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind’s (AFCB) mission is to guide each student who is blind/low vision through the necessary skills and processes of adjustment to blindness so that the student can lead the independent, productive, and fulfilling life of his or her choice.**

**Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind**

**Birmingham, Alabama**

**256-493-3360**

[**www.aidb.org**](http://www.aidb.org)

**“Refuse to be average. Be limitless. Don’t soar as high as an eagle. Fly higher.” ~ AIDB President, Dr. John Mascia, Au.D.**

**About the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind (AFCB)**

The Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind (AFCB) is a residential program which assists legally blind adults with adjustment to blindness and is housed as part of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB). The AFCB has taken its inspiration from the Structured Discovery model of rehabilitation training which embraces nonvisual methods and a consumer-based philosophy. Our goal is to provide the most up-to-date training available to meet the needs of our consumers. We look forward to working with you to ensure that your vision loss will not prevent you from leading the productive and fulfilling life that you want to live.

**Our Philosophy**

Based upon the personal experience of thousands of blind persons throughout the country, the Center believes that given proper training and opportunity, blind people can compete effectively and on terms of equality with their sighted counterparts in all aspects of life. It has been found that the most progressive and beneficial training methods have been firmly grounded in Structured Discovery principles and methods.

Structured Discovery describes unique rehabilitation teaching paradigms substantially and recognizably different from traditional approaches of teaching individuals who are blind/visually impaired in that it is used to teach independence to individuals who are blind in a meaningful, robust, and life-long manner. Structured Discovery instructional services consist of nonvisual techniques, problem-solving strategies, experiential learning, and confidence-building experiences.  Socratic questioning, (i.e., the asking of strategic questions to guide the learner in solving problems), is heavily relied on, as is role modeling of nonvisual techniques which demonstrates their effectiveness while correcting misconceptions about blindness.  These teaching strategies are used across all areas of training, including cane travel, Braille literacy, home/personal management training, computer/access technology, seminars, and other activities which focus on coping with blindness and confronting attitudes about blindness.

**A number of very important components of our philosophy and practice are:**

1. Blindness is discussed and the word “blind” is used and stressed.  If you, as a student, are expected to accept yourself as blind person, you must understand that it is respectable to be blind.

2. All students are trained in nonvisual skills. You must use learning shades (blindfolds) and long white canes at all times during training classes and Center scheduled activities. The alternative skills being taught are not inferior but simply an alternative method of functioning. Should you not adhere to use of learning shades, you will be asked to sign a Learning Shades Contract and a staffing will be conducted with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Repeated “cheating” or “lifting of the shades” will result in a suspension or expulsion.

It is imperative that you come to recognize that the techniques and skills you are developing are the means by which you are successful and not because of any residual sight regardless of how slight. This is a fundamental element in you, as a student, accepting their blindness regardless of its actual onset.

  3. You are required to use long, non-collapsible white canes at all times, which are issued by the Center. As a student, you are not allowed to use sighted (or human) guide at any point during training. It is strongly encouraged that you wish to explore the use of a guide dog in the future, you first complete training (Students who already use a guide dog must still use the cane during all training classes and Center scheduled activities. Dogs must be kenneled or put on tie-down during training hours.  Students may work with their dogs during lunch and after hours.). Therapy dogs are also allowed, but paperwork certifying the pet for therapy use is required.

4. You will be enrolled in all training areas and will be required to participate in all Center scheduled activities.

5. All staff members have undergone comprehensive immersion in all areas of training in a Structured Discovery setting whether blind or sighted. This allows for all staff members to assist in solving problems, to provide informal counseling, and to talk about blindness in such a manner that promotes our core philosophical perspective that it is respectable to be blind and to use the techniques taught.

6. We believe that the part that role models play cannot be stressed enough. Therefore, many of our staff members are blind themselves and all efforts are made to expose students to other positive and competent role models in the community.

**Program Duration and Living Arrangements**

Our adjustment training program is 6 to 9 months in duration. You will live in our procured apartments, unless extenuating circumstances support a different arrangement. Such circumstances are evaluated by the Executive Director on a case by case basis, and advanced permission is required.  AFCB does not charge for rent or basic utilities such as water and electricity. All training fees are covered by the sponsoring agency and there is no cost to the student. However, AFCB does not provide Wi-Fi or Cable in your apartments. If interested in these services, you must set-up and pay for these services.  The cost of all personal miscellaneous items is your responsibility.

**How to Become a Student**

Anyone 18 or older wishing to receive training from AIDB’s Freedom Center for the Blind must seek sponsorship from a vocational rehabilitation counselor. If a prospective student does not have an open case, contact should be made with the nearest vocational rehabilitation office. We will be happy to make a referral to the appropriate office. If individuals currently reside in a state other than Alabama, we can also provide training with the sponsorship of that state’s rehabilitation agency. We do encourage all prospective students to tour our facility, familiarize themselves with our philosophy, and to discuss their individual needs with our Executive Director.

Once the determination has been made by the Executive Director, prospective student, and the rehabilitation counselor that AIDB’s Freedom Center is the appropriate training venue, the application process can be initiated. The following documents will make up the entire application:

• Enrollment application (to be submitted by rehabilitation counselor)

• Current vision report

• Current medical report/physical

• Psychological information (if relevant)

• Current Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)

• Verification of funding (to be submitted by rehabilitation counselor)

The AFCB admissions committee reviews all applications submitted.  If necessary, the committee will request additional documentation to clarify any questions the committee has. Once all documents are submitted and approval is secured from the admissions committee, a start date will be agreed upon by all parties and the prospective student may begin preparations to start the program.

**Intake**

Upon arrival, students must provide the following items:

• Medical insurance cards

• Social Security Number

• Emergency contact numbers (family)

• Contact information for physicians

• List of current medications, if applicable

• Information on pre-existing medical conditions, if applicable

**Program Policies**

**Daily Training Schedule**

A typical day of classes will include Cane Travel, Braille, Computer/Assistive Technology, Home/Personal Management, Seminar, Independent Study, Job Development, and Special Projects. Lunch will be scheduled from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. Also, seminar/group discussions will take place at least twice per week.  On field trip days, ordinary classes are replaced with activities to provide students the opportunity to further develop their skills and confidence in diverse and unfamiliar environments. All classes and scheduled activities are designed to emphasize the development of alternative skills, problem-solving, self-confidence, and a positive attitude toward blindness.

**Cane, Slate & Stylus and Learning Shades**

All Freedom Center students must use a long white cane at all times. In addition, you must use learning shades from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and during all Center-sponsored activities including evenings and weekends. Should you lose your learning shades, you will be given another pair. Should that pair be lost, you will have to purchase a third pair at a cost of $10. If you lose/break your cane more than once, you will have to purchase another at a cost of $25; you will be provided an allotment of 9 extra cane tips. If you continually lose your cane tips, they are $2 each. Staffers will teach you where to find resources to order cane tips. Similarly, if you lose your slate and/or stylus, you will be charged $10-$12, depending upon the component lost.

As you are in an adjustment to blindness training and are learning and building proficiency in nonvisual skills, you are highly encouraged to use your canes during the extended day and on weekends. AFCB is not liable for injuries or incidents that occurred due to your failure to use your canes or other tools provided by AFCB.

**Attendance Policy**

Training will take place from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. You must be punctual for all classes and prepared to engage in your training for the entire duration of each class. Some activities may also be scheduled during evenings and weekends. You must participate in all scheduled classes and activities unless you have a medical excuse or prior approval from the Executive Director. Poor attendance or poor attitude may jeopardize your enrollment.  Doctors’ visits must result in a written note excusing you from class. Transportation to doctors’ appointments is not provided and is your responsibility.

Acquiring proficiency in blindness skills and building confidence requires consistency and dedication.Therefore, you are expected to be in class on a regular basis. The program requires you to be in class at least 80% of the time, meaning you may only miss two days per month.  As AFCB aims to emulate a working environment, this is the same type of policy found in most employment handbooks. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary actions.

If you are frequently absent due to illness, AFCB reserves the right to request additional medical documentation. Frequent absenteeism/interruptions may be grounds for program interruption/termination to enable you to address any issues that interfere with training.

You may not return home during the first month of training, except in emergencies, and in cases where a major holiday falls within that time period. The Executive Director must be notified prior to any student leaving the program.

**Holidays**

AFCB will be closed for some major holidays, with lengthier breaks for Thanksgiving/ Christmas/New Year’s Day. During these breaks, not only will the Freedom Center be closed, but the student apartments will also not be available and therefore alternative housing must be secured. The Freedom Center is not responsible for finding housing for students. Apartment keys will be collected by the Residential Manager or other available staff members. Should a student refuse to submit their key – or have duplicate keys made – the lock will be changed and you will incur the cost. You will be given adequate time in which to make all necessary arrangements. Transportation during holiday breaks is your responsibility.

**Inclement Weather**

The AFCB follows the Birmingham City School System’s closures as they relate to inclement weather. If Birmingham City Schools are closed, classes will not be held. Each student apartment is equipped with an emergency weather radio. Please do not disable these emergency radios. If the emergency radio alert sounds and you hear that there is a tornado warning, please take shelter in your bathroom or previously determined locations. Wear shoes and have your cane with you so that you can move quickly in the event of an emergency. Meteorologists recommend getting into the bathtub and/or covering your head with a helmet or pillow. Please keep food and water on hand in case of an emergency.

**Helping Others**

As an adjustment to blindness training center, you may experience opportunities to help or mentor fellow students.  If you are called upon to mentor a fellow student, do so in a manner like how your instructors teach you.  Assist your fellow students in the manner of a lesson, wherein your companion discovers the means to do more for themselves.  Helping others without them learning only fosters dependency, not empowerment.

**Electronic Equipment and Cell Phones**

No personal electronic equipment, including the use of a cell phone, is to be used during class time unless specifically for a class assignment.  Cell phones will be allowed, but cannot be turned on during class hours unless given explicit permission from an Instructor. In addition, at AFCB, all skills are practiced outside of respective classes. Therefore, unless given permission, do not use voice-assisted technology or dictation including or not limited to Siri, OK Google, ALEXA, etc., to complete tasks on the phone. This prevents you from developing proficiency in using screenreaders on their phone. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Students will be given assignments to be completed in and outside of class. Throughout one’s training, students will be responsible for completing homework assignments. These additional assignments are essential to improving and refining one’s skills. Students are responsible for completing all assignments. In addition, all assignments are to be completed solely by the student unless otherwise stated. This means students cannot use outside assistance in any form, including but not limited to family, friends, Chat GPT and other AI programs, etc.

**Dress Code**

Appropriate attire must be worn at all times. You will be asked to return home to change if they come to classes or activities in inappropriate clothing. Some general guidelines are:

Clothing should be neat and clean;

Clothing should be modest and not either sheer or revealing;

No under garments should be visible;

Shorts should fall below any over-sized shirts;

Logos should not be offensive; and

Dresses, shirts, and shorts must be finger-tip length.

It is recommended that you wear sneakers as there will be a great deal of walking each day. If other shoes are worn, they must not be backless (The only exception is when wearing flip-flops for swimming outings.).

Good personal hygiene must be practiced including hair.

**AFCB Residential Apartments**

The AFCB apartments are a vital part of the AFCB program for blind persons.  You will have a roommate and will be living with other blind persons who are also learning to adjust successfully to blindness.  Skills learned at Center classes and practiced in the apartments will help you learn faster and build your self-confidence.

You will benefit from participating in the AFCB residential program in several ways:

1. Sharing an apartment with another blind person and living in the general community helps build self-confidence and promotes personal empowerment.

2. You will have the opportunity to build relationships and friendships with other blind students by spending time together with fellow students after class, by sharing experiences and by learning from each other.

3. You will receive additional blindness training in your apartment from the Residential Manager that reinforces what you learn in the Center training.

4. You will live in the community with neighbors who are part of the public and you’ll learn to engage with them as a blind person and can change public misperceptions about blindness and blind people.

5. You will have the opportunity to develop your travel skills as you shop, eat at restaurants, engage in recreation activities and ride the bus.

6. From your first day, you will discover from staff and fellow students, who serve as positive blind role models, that life as a blind person can be so much more than you have ever imagined.  Your learning experience is enriched and reinforced as you attend center classes and practice what you learn at the apartments.

**What to Bring**

Please bring the following items as these items are not provided in the apartments.

Sheets – BEDS ARE FULL SIZE

Blanket(s)

Bedspread/Comforter

Pillow(s)

Pillowcases

Towels

Washcloths

Bathrobe

Clothes & hangers (neat, appropriate attire for classes; casual clothes, exercise, swimming, or camping; clothes for activities such as church, parties, etc.)

Backpack (medium sized)

Alarm clock

Rain gear (umbrella, coats, boots)

Cotton Bandanas or Headbands

Shoes (comfortable walking shoes and dress shoes)

Toiletries and grooming items – blow dryer, curling iron, etc.

Medications (must be able to self-administer)

Medical supplies (talking glucometer, talking blood pressure monitor, etc.)

**Suggested optional items:**

Laptop computer, television, stereo, funds to open local checking account if desired, and initial supply of groceries.

NOTE:  Many of the above items can be purchased with personal funds upon arrival at the local Wal-Mart, one of several used furniture stores, and local grocery stores.  If a student chooses to ship items prior to arrival, please confirm shipping information with the AFCB Executive Director.

**Air Conditioners**

Having air conditioners in your apartments is a luxury.  They are to make your living experience at the AFCB Apartments more comfortable.  However, running them for long periods of time can get expensive.  We ask that you limit the use of the air conditioners unless it is necessary.  Please make sure you keep them off while you are not in your apartments and especially while you are in classes.

**Apartment Cleanliness**

You are responsible for keeping your apartment neat and clean. Respect your home by keeping common areas of the building and grounds clean and trash-free.  Promptly report leaking faucets and toilets, broken or damaged appliances for repair.  Increased damages resulting from your neglect in informing the Residential Manager of such a need may be billed to you.

Although individuals in their personal life may choose to hire a professional cleaner or have family and friends help with cleaning, students are at AFCB to gain blindness skills for independent living. Therefore, students themselves are responsible for the cleaning of their own apartments. No student may have other students, family, outside help, or hired services to clean for them. Doing so will result in disciplinary action.

**Apartment Inspections**

Apartment inspections will be conducted at least twice per month. AFCB staff will accompany you to inspect your apartment. You will be asked to address any cleanliness issues in your apartment that evening. Staff will accompany you for a secondary follow-up inspection to ensure that all issues have been properly addressed. Your instructors will accompany you for an on-site apartment review to address any instructional needs. You are responsible for maintaining a clean and organized apartment. Repair or replacement of damaged property, such as furniture or fixtures, will be your financial responsibility.

**Cleaning Supplies**

Select cleaning supplies will be provided by AFCB. If other cleaning supplies are preferred, they must be purchased at your expense.

**Garbage**

You are responsible for taking trash to dumpsters on the property. AFCB staff will orient you to their location upon arrival. Garbage dumpsters are for removal of household trash only.  Break all boxes down flat.  Bulk items will be hauled away at your expense. Likewise, AFCB reserves the right to dispose of any student belongings remaining in a student’s room or common area seven (7) days after the student has left the AFCB program.

**Laundry**

Each student apartment contains a washer and dryer for your use. You will learn how to use these machines in home management and as part of your activities with the Residential Manager. Each machine should be labeled upon your arrival. However, sometimes the labels fall off. If your machines are not labeled or you have questions about their use, please contact the Residential Manager.

**Cable TV**

Although cable TV is available in the student lounge (Apartment 147), AFCB does not provide it for student apartments. Cable TV is available through Spectrum. Contact them for prices, available channels and to arrange installation.  You are responsible for installation expenses and monthly service charges.  Arrangements must be made in advance with the Residential Manager so that the installer will have access to the apartment and relevant parts of the building.

**Telephone**

Telephones are not provided.  Please arrange to have your own mobile phone available.

**Inventory**

Following your orientation to the apartment and its contents you will sign off on an inventory form.  When you move out of your apartment, the same list will be checked to assure that the apartment’s contents are undamaged and in place.  If you break, lose or damage items in your apartment, you are responsible for replacing them prior to leaving the program.

**Keys**

You will receive an apartment key on your first day.  Do not duplicate your apartment key or give it to anyone.  There will be a charge for replacing lost keys.  Apartment door locks are not to be changed or added. You must return apartment keys to the Residential Manager when leaving the premises due to graduation, program withdrawal, termination, or extended absence.

**Mail**

Please have mail sent to you in care of the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind at the following address:

Student Name

C/O Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind

220 34th Street

Birmingham, AL 35222

**Money**

The AFCB will cover the cost of confidence-building and training activities. However, you should plan to bring $100 per month in order to participate in evening/weekend activities they plan with other students and/or the Residential Manager. You also receive an AIDB-issued debit card with $50 per week or $200 per month for groceries and personal hygiene items.  You may not purchase alcohol or tobacco with these funds. If you have health conditions affecting what you can eat such as Diabetes, you cannot use AFCB funds to purchase items that exacerbate or worsen such health conditions. You must provide receipts for all debit card purchases to the Residential Manager each week. These allowances are not intended to cover costs that are not associated with training at AFCB, and will only be provided for those students adhering to all attendance policies.

**Personal Property**

Personal property shall be stored at the residence at the student’s own risk.  AFCB is not responsible for loaned, lost, or damaged items. You may wish to get renters’ insurance. See section on liability.

**Liability**

DoMar Properties, the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind, and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind are not liable for loaned, lost or damaged personal belongings on the AFCB property, at the Birmingham Regional Center, or during travel for confidence-building activities. You may obtain renter’s insurance at your expense if you wish.

**Medical Issues**

Neither the Center nor the apartments have medical staff.  Students requiring medical care should contact their doctor or the nearest walk-in clinic or emergency room.  Students using injectable medications must have a safe way to dispose of needles.  Disposing needles unprotected into trash is not acceptable.  If a sharps container is not available, please use a liquid laundry detergent container. Students with a medical condition that prevents them from participating fully in classes for an extended period are expected to return home until they are well enough to participate fully in all training activities.

**Residential Manager**

A Residential Manager is on-call after-hours and is available to assist should you have an emergency.  The Residential Manager also provides instruction in the areas of orientation, shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry, on-site group activities and assists students with the organization of community activities.

**Emergencies**

Emergency procedures will be covered as part of your orientation and at regular intervals.  All resident students participate in practice evacuation drills.  In the event of a fire, crime or medical emergency, call 911, BEFORE calling the Residential Manager or other assigned emergency response personnel.

**Weekends**

During the first thirty (30) days of training, you are expected to remain at the apartments. If you violate this policy, the thirty (30) days will start over. Thereafter, students are free to leave the Center on weekends when no mandatory activities are scheduled. If you plan to be away, please inform the Residential Manager of the approximate day/time of your departure and return. If you plan to use one of your two leave days, please inform the  Executive Director at least five days in advance.

**Visitation**

Students may have visitors at times when the Freedom Center is not engaged in training activities. However, no overnight guests are permitted. Residents are responsible always for the reasonable conduct of their family members and guests.  Resident’s guests shall have due regard for the comfort and enjoyment of the other residents.  We ask that guests leave the AFCB apartments by 9:00 p.m. (Sundays through Thursdays) and by midnight on Fridays and Saturdays or when the next day is a holiday.  Guests may not visit before 4:30 p.m. on weekdays, nor may they remain in the apartment when the student host is not present.  Guests may not possess apartment keys.

Family and friends are welcome to visit during your first 30 days. We ask that family and friends not cook, clean, do laundry, shop or do other tasks that you are expected to do on your own.  You are here to learn how to live on your own as a blind person, and receiving help from others only impedes your learning.

**Transportation**

AFCB will provide bus passes to you for travel throughout the Birmingham area. You are responsible for costs associated with transportation via Uber, Lyft, taxicab, or other means. The use of paratransit is prohibited during training, unless required due to a temporary injury or documented disability which prevents you from getting to a bus stop. AFCB is not responsible for the cost of your transportation on weekends, during holidays, or upon program graduation, withdrawal, or termination. Such transportation is the student’s responsibility.

**Reassigning Apartments**

To provide the most harmonious and well-balanced roommate assignments it may be necessary at times to switch apartments.  Though it is AFCB’s desire to maintain your personal comfort, adjustments at times may be necessary, sometimes with short notice.  Your understanding and cooperation are most appreciated.

**Windows**

All residents must exercise strict care to close all open windows when it rains.  Any damages sustained by other residents or the owner’s property resulting from failure to observe this provision shall be remedied by the negligent resident.

**Utilities**

Water, electricity and air conditioning are utilities that are provided for you while living at AFCB Apartments.  Please be mindful and turn off the A/C and other electrical appliances when not in use.

**Smoke Alarms**

Repeated beeps signal that the battery is running low and needs replacement.  Please inform the Residential Manager if the batteries need replacing. Quarterly smoke alarm tests will be conducted.

**Toilets**

Toilets and related apparatus shall not be used for any purpose other than that for which they were constructed.  Any damage resulting to them from improper usage may be billed to you.

**Smoking**

Smoking is not permitted in any AFCB buildings. Please dispose of your cigarette butts appropriately. Receptacles have been placed outside the training apartments and are available for placement outside student apartments upon request.

**Noise**

Social gatherings are encouraged if they do not infringe on the rights of others. Quiet Time for the apartment is between 10:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. Reduce the volume of radios, televisions and all other sound producing equipment. Respect neighbors when using stereos and TV’s.

**Barbequing**

Outdoor cooking is strictly prohibited on balconies, walkways or in other areas dangerous to you and your neighbors.

**Nail Holes, Hardware and Adhesives**

Any alteration to the apartment by way of carpentry, painting and staining the walls, floors or woodwork and application of adhesive materials is not permitted without the Property Management Company’s written consent.  Wallpaper, contact paper or any adhesive material shall not be used on cupboards, cabinets and closets.  Drawers are to be lined with non-adhesive shelf paper.  Nails or screws of any size are not to be driven into the woodwork, walls, or ceiling, not even for picture hanging.  Nail holes are not considered normal wear and tear, and will result in the painting of the apartment at the vacating student’s expense.

**Pets**

Pets of any kind are strictly forbidden in the building except for guide or service animals.

**Service Animals**

Though the AFCB features the use of the long cane, guidedogs and other certified service animals will be accommodated.  Your guide dog may stay in your apartment. Guide dogs may be worked after class hours and on weekends, except for any Center activities that may occur. Students using guide dogs will be held responsible for incidences of excess wear and tear, special cleaning and insect infestation.

Emotional support and service animals will be accommodated with strict limitations, proper documentation, and prior communication.

**Prohibited Items**

Because AFCB’s focus is on alternative techniques of blindness, personal vehicles are not permitted. Closed caption televisions and other magnifying equipment is also not permitted during training. Pets are not permitted.

**Drinking**

It is the State of Alabama’s policy that alcoholic beverages not be consumed on State property.  This restriction extends to the AFCB apartments. The AFCB apartments are wholly paid for by the State of Alabama, and, as such, are considered State Property.  Alcoholic beverages are not to be consumed in the AFCB apartments or within the common elements of the apartment building for students as well as their guests.  Nor should alcoholic beverages be stored on the premises.  Alcohol consumption by under-aged students is strictly forbidden under any circumstances.

**Illegal Acts**

Unlawful activity will not be permitted in your apartment,  on premises, or any period of time you are a participant in the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind regardless if in-state or out-of-state.  Participation in drug-related or other illegal activity recognized by state of Alabama will result in immediate disciplinary action and prosecution under applicable Alabama and Federal laws.  For reasonable cause, the Executive Director or his/her designee reserves the right to search your apartment without you present; additional witness will be secured.

**Prohibited Behavior**

Sexual contact between students or between students and staff is strictly prohibited. Failure to comply with this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Each student is expected to behave in such a manner as not to adversely affect the training of other students or cause harm to themselves or anyone else.

Unless invited, students are not allowed to enter the apartments of AFCB students, the Residential Manager, or other residents in the complex.

Overnight guests are not allowed and may jeopardize enrollment.

AIDB and by extension, the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind, is a tobacco free environment. You may not smoke inside apartments. You must smoke outside and place their cigarette waste in the approved receptacles provided. Under no circumstances should you place cigarette waste in plastic bags or plastic garbage receptacles. There is a designated smoking area at the Center and apartments and that area is the only place where tobacco products can be used.

No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the training premises or in student apartments.

The use or possession of illegal drugs/drug paraphernalia will result in immediate termination from the program.  If suspected use, you may be drug tested.

If you engage in any unlawful activities - under any circumstances -  you will be subject to immediate dismissal from the program.

No firearms or weapons of any kind are allowed on Freedom Center or apartment premises.

Students who inflict either physical injury or verbal abuse upon other students or staff members may be terminated from the program.

Sexual harassment among students or staff is not tolerated and may result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Any other behavior which places others or the program at risk may result in the student being dismissed.

Deliberate violation of any AIDB or AFCB policy may result in dismissal.

**Withdrawal from the Program**

Prior to leaving AFCB, you must turn in apartment keys, debit cards, and any other AFCB property to the Residential Manager. You must complete an apartment inventory with the Residential Manager to ensure that all items provided by AFCB remain in the apartment. Students withdrawing from the program must vacate AFCB apartments within 48 hours. Students must have alternate housing. AFCB is not responsible for finding alternate housing.

**CONCLUSION**

In Alabama, we believe that the right to choose your own blindness training center is the first step toward independence. At the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind, we view vision loss as a barrier that might block our path but not a road block. We find alternate ways to get around it. Blindness does not have to be a tragedy and the skills training you can acquire will be a turning point on your journey to independence.  Do you believe that a blind person can become a doctor, lawyer, engineer or an accountant? If you said yes to the previous question, then you believe in the abilities of the blind. Here at the AFCB we know that the sky is the limit and possibilities abound but you can’t reach them unless you take that first step and choose the program which is best for you.

“Structured Discovery training will give you the tools you need to live the life you want” ~ Former NFB State President, Joy Harris

This student guide represents the cooperative effort of the students, staff and administration of the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind, as well as assistance from sister agencies across the country.  This Guide is intended to provide information sufficient to make your stay at the AFCB a safe and enjoyable one.  If you have questions or suggestions for improvement of this guide or the program in general, please contact the AFCB Executive Director. The AFCB Executive Director has the right to change the guide and will let the residents know immediately.  Thank you for choosing to participate in the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind Program.

This guide was written with the assistance of the following rehabilitation centers for the blind: Blind Inc., Ho`Opono New Visions Adjustment to Blindness Program, The Colorado Center for the Blind, The Louisiana Center for the Blind and The Nebraska Center for the Blind.

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**Disciplinary Options/Actions**

Disciplinary actions are at the discretion of the Executive Director and Instructors. Some examples of disciplinary actions are outlined below to provide students with an idea of what to expect; however, additional disciplinary actions may occur dependant on the circumstance.

Students who have an outside party clean their apartment will clean the Center classrooms for one week outside of class and/or on the weekends.

Students who miss in excess of two days per month without a doctor’s excuse must work with their individual Instructors and/or Executive Director to make up the work within one week’s time. Failure to do so and/or repeated unexcused absences will result in possible interruption, short-term suspension or termination.

Students who use voice-assisted technology or dictation including but not limited to Siri, OK Google, ALEXA, etc., to complete tasks on the phone and/or use the phone in a manner that goes against the Structured Discovery philosophy, will be required to put their phone in a basket prior to starting class and will be provided the device again at class end.

Students who participate in an illegal act or activity recognized as illegal in the state of Alabama will be charged appropriately in tandem with AIDB Security and local law enforcement and will be terminated until charges are dropped and/or the case is dismissed. If convicted, the individual may not return to the Center. If additional information is needed, AIDB’s Policy and Procedures can be shared with the student and will be covered at some point during their program in Seminar.

AIDB is a weapons-free campus and weapons of any kind are not allowed. Students found with weapons will have their program terminated. AIDB’s Policy and Procedures can be shared with the student and will be covered at some point during their program in Seminar.

Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind

PROGRAM GUIDE AND AGREEMENT

SIGNATURE PAGE

I have read the ALABAMA FREEDOM CENTER FOR THE BLIND (AFCB) PROGRAM GUIDE AND AGREEMENT and agree to abide by the Guidelines contained therein.

I understand that upon graduation, I will be expected to vacate the AFCB apartments within 48 hours. If suspended or expelled from the program, I may be expected to vacate within 24 hours. I understand that the AFCB will be closed for an extended period during the Christmas holiday and for shorter times for other holidays, during which time the apartments are closed. The AFCB is not responsible for paying my travel, nor finding me housing following graduation, suspension/expulsion, withdrawal, or during center closures.

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**Addendum of AIDB Policies**

1: Sexual Harassment Policy

2: Anti-discrimination Policy

3. Title IX

4. Employee Conduct in Staff-Student/Client Relationships

5. Employee Conduct in Staff-Student/Client Relationships

6. Alcohol and Drug Free Work Place

7. Tobacco Policy

8. Work/School Violence Policy

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

It is the policy of Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind to provide a work and educational environment for students/clients, faculty, and staff which is free of illegal discrimination, including all forms of sexual harassment, intimidation, and exploitation. Harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Neither employees nor students/clients shall engage in conduct constituting sexual harassment. Sanctions against employees for violation of this policy may include verbal or written warning, reprimand, transfer, suspension, or termination of employment. Any actions taken against an employee or student/client will be subject to the applicable grievance procedure rights of the employee or student/client as stated in the AIDB Policies and Procedures Manual or appropriate student handbook. Sanctions against students/clients will be outlined in the appropriate student/client handbook. The AIDB Human Resources Director is the Title IX Coordinator.

Sexual harassment is defined to include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. The advances, requests, or conduct have the effect of interfering with performance of duties or creating an intimidating, hostile, or otherwise offensive work environment;
2. Submission to such advances, requests, or conduct is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or education; or
3. Submission to or rejection of such advances, requests, or conduct is used as a basis for employment or educational decisions affecting the individual.

To help prevent sexual harassment, AIDB will distribute this policy to all units of the institution, including staff and student handbooks and will process complaints of sexual harassment in the following manner:

Any student/client or staff member who feels that he/she is being sexually harassed should follow these procedures:

1. In circumstances in which the student/client or employee thinks that he/she will not be jeopardizing his/her personal safety, job, or academic standing, he/she should communicate clearly to the offender that the behavior is not welcomed and should cease immediately. If the student/client or employee does feel jeopardized by such a confrontation, he/she should go to step 2.
2. If the harassment does not cease, the student/client or employee shall report the complaint to his/her supervisor or Principal/Dean of the school. A student/client will discuss the incident with his/her counselor or supervising teacher.  If the offender is a Supervisor/Principal/Dean, or if the individual is uncomfortable in talking with the Supervisor/Principal/ Dean, the student/client or employee shall report the complaint to the Director of Human Resources.
3. The supervisor receiving the complaint of sexual harassment shall initiate the process for an immediate investigation. The completed investigation shall be reviewed by the Principal/Dean and the President or his designee for prompt and appropriate action, if warranted.
4. A written response to the employee’s or student/client’s complaint will be provided to the complainant by the supervisor within 45 days of the date of the complaint.  The report will be placed in a confidential file in the Human Resources Department.

The right of confidentiality of all parties will be respected insofar as it does not interfere with the institution’s legal obligation or ability to investigate the complaint or to take corrective action when it has been established that misconduct has occurred.

**AIDB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

It is the policy of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) to provide a work and educational environment for students/consumers, faculty, and staff that is free from discrimination against any individual or group. This is a **“zero tolerance”** policy, and prohibits all forms of discrimination because of race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, color, socio-economic status, or marital/family status. Discrimination is a violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.  Neither employees nor students/consumers shall engage in conduct constituting discrimination. Disciplinary action may be up to and including termination and will be in accordance with applicable laws.

Any actions taken against an employee or student/consumer will be subject to the applicable grievance procedure rights of the employee or student/consumer as stated in the AIDB Policies and Procedures Manual or appropriate student/consumer handbook. The AIDB Human Resources Director is the Title IX Coordinator.

Discriminatory conduct or practices include but are not limited to:

* Prejudice or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment.
* Harassment on the basis of race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, color, socio-economic status, or marital/family status.
* Retaliation against an individual for: filing a charge of discrimination, participating in an investigation of discrimination, or opposing discriminatory practices.
* Employment decisions, particularly the denial of promotion or hiring, based on stereotypes or assumptions about the abilities, traits, or performance of an individual of a certain race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, color, socio-economic status, or marital/family status.
* Denying employment opportunities to a person because of marriage to or association with a person of a particular race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, color, socio-economic status, or marital/family status.

Discrimination may be defined to include but is not limited to the withholding or granting of rights or privileges based on race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, color, socio-economic status, or marital/family status. Discriminatory behavior may include but is not limited to any unwelcome verbal or physical conduct when:

* That conduct has the effect of interfering with performance of duties; or
* That conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or otherwise offensive work environment.

 Non-discriminatory practices that may help to ensure diversity of the workforce may include but are not limited to:

* Considering all qualified applicants for employment without regard to race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, color, socio-economic status, or marital/family status.
* Writing job descriptions so that all qualified individuals have equal opportunity to apply.
* Providing all employees with the resources (training, funding, tools, equipment, etc.) that are required to do their jobs, regardless of their race, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, color, socio-economic status, or marital/family status.

To help prevent discrimination, AIDB will distribute this policy to all units of the institution, including putting it in staff and student/consumer handbooks and wherever AIDB policies are posted, and will process complaints of discriminatory behavior in the following manner:

Any student/consumer or staff member who feels that he/she is being discriminated against should follow these procedures:

1.   In circumstances in which the student/consumer or employee thinks that he/she will not be jeopardizing his/her personal safety, job, or academic standing, he/she should communicate clearly to the offender that the behavior is not welcome and should cease immediately. If the student/consumer or employee does feel jeopardized by such a confrontation, he/she should go to step 2.

2.  If the discrimination does not cease, the student/consumer or employee shall report the complaint to his/her Supervisor or the Principal/Executive Director of the school. A student/consumer shall discuss the incident with a person in authority. If the offender is a Supervisor/Principal/Executive Director, the student/consumer or employee shall report the complaint to the Director of Human Resources.

3.  The person in authority receiving the complaint of discrimination shall initiate the process for an immediate investigation. The completed investigation shall be reviewed by the Principal/Executive Director and the President or his/her designee, for prompt and appropriate disciplinary action, if warranted, up to and including termination.

4.  A written response to the employee’s or student’s/consumer’s complaint will be provided to the complainant by the supervisor within 45 calendar days from the date of the complaint. The report will be placed in a confidential file in the Human Resources Department.

The right of confidentiality of all parties will be respected insofar as it does not interfere with the institution’s legal obligation or ability to investigate the complaint, or to take corrective action when it has been established that misconduct has occurred.

**Title IX**

Prohibition of Discrimination - In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681, et seq.), AIDB strictly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex or gender in its education programs and activities, including sexual harassment as defined by law and AIDB policy. This prohibition of discrimination extends to employment and admissions policies and procedures. Sexual harassment reports or complaints should be filed and reviewed under AIDB's student sexual harassment policy. All other complaints of sex or gender discrimination under Title IX will be filed and reviewed according to the AIDB's applicable complaint and grievance procedures. Inquiries about Title IX or its implementing regulations may be referred to AIDB 's Title IX Coordinator, or the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Title IX Coordinator - The President is authorized and directed to designate a Title IX Coordinator, whose duties will include, but not be limited to, receiving and responding to Title IX inquiries and complaints.

GBEBB

**EMPLOYEE CONDUCT IN STAFF-STUDENT/CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS**

**Policy Statement**

 All Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) staff must maintain the highest level of professional conduct and

propriety in their dealings with other employees and students/clients currently served at AIDB and also with other

employees.

**Definitions**

* Student/Client: any individual who is a client, student, patient, or resident being served by AIDB.
* Staff Member: any current employee of AIDB, whether full or part-time or contractual in nature.
* Professional Conduct: conduct, actions, and/or demeanor which is consistent with the lawful and proper implementation of AIDB’s policies, practices, and procedures.

**Professional Conduct**

**Professional expectations of staff include, but are not limited to, the following:**

* Serving as a positive role model;
* Striving to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for students/clients;
* Promoting positive, educational and rehabilitative relationships with students/clients entrusted to their care;
* Complying with all standards of care or treatment required by law, rules, policies, guidelines, and procedural and written directives, as applicable.

**Rationale for Prohibiting Specified Behavior and Personal Relationships**

**Specified behavior and personal relationships are prohibited in order to:**

* Uphold professional responsibility of staff to students/clients and families who participate in programs at AIDB;
* Maintain safeguards for staff, students, clients and their families;
* Minimize the likelihood of students/clients forming dependency or inappropriate sexual relationships with staff and/or employees;
* Maximize the likelihood that students/clients and their families will recognize that they are respected as individuals.

**Prohibited Behavior**

**Prohibited behavior includes:**

* The cultivation or promotion of social relationships between staff and students/clients outside the boundaries of all legal requirements and professional employee conduct;
* Engaging in or promoting romantic or sexual relationships of any kind, lawful or otherwise; between staff and students/clients and/or students/clients with other students/clients.
* Use of language or disparaging comments or actions that could be interpreted as derogatory, defamatory, threatening or insensitive to any student/client.

**Types and Explanations of Prohibited Behavior**

**Personal Relationships**

* No staff shall have relationships with students/clients currently being served by AIDB, beyond acceptable professional job duties or relationships included as exceptions noted in the Staff-Student/Client Visitation and Employment Procedures.
* No staff shall have social contact with current students/clients in a setting that is not AIDB sponsored, endorsed, and/or approved by supervision or administration.
* There shall be no visits or placement of students/clients in an AIDB staff member’s home unless prior approved in writing by unit supervisor or designee, Vice President and President in accordance with Staff-Student/Client Visitation and Employment Procedures.

Cross-Reference:  Exceptions noted in Staff-Student/Client Visitation and Employment (AIDB, GBEBB-P)

**No Staff Shall Engage in Sexual Conduct of Any Type**

* There shall be no physical contact or conduct of a sexual nature between staff and students/clients.
* There shall be no activity implied or otherwise by a staff member that may have the effect of intimidating, provoking or encouraging a student/client to engage in an act of sexual intimacy or sexual communication with a staff member or with another student/client.

Cross Reference:  AIDB Policies and Procedures: Sexual Harassment Policy (GBAA); Abuse/Neglect Reporting and Prevention (JLF); Staff-Student/Client Visitation and Employment (GBEBB-P)

**No Staff Shall Cause Physical Injury**

No staff member shall commit any act, encourage or provoke another to act, in any manner that causes or may cause physical injury to students/clients.

**No Staff Shall Cause Emotional/Psychological Injury**

No staff member shall commit any act, encourage or provoke another to act, in any matter that causes or may cause emotional/psychological injury to students/clients including using language or other forms of communication to degrade, threaten or intimidate students/clients.

**Issues of Concern and Reporting**

Employees and/or staff shall notify and consult with appropriate supervision as to any questions or situations which may arise as it concerns the effective and proper implementation of this policy. Supervisory and administrative personnel will assist and provide guidance to any staff member as to the professional and successful adherence to this policy.

Any staff member with suspicion and/or knowledge of a potentially inappropriate relationship between staff and students/clients must report immediately in accordance with AIDB Abuse/Neglect Reporting and Prevention Policy to the Department of Human Resources, the Principal/Unit Director and Manning Hall administration.  A written report should be submitted in a timely fashion within 72 hours of the event.

For information concerning students/clients age 18 and older, staff will report to their immediate supervisor.  The immediate supervisor will report in writing within 72 hours of the event to their unit supervisor and to Manning Hall Administration.

**Consequences**

Any employee/staff member who does not adhere to this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and possibly including dismissal and/or prosecution, if applicable.

**EMPLOYEE CONDUCT IN STAFF-STUDENT/CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS**

**Policy Statement:**

Staff members are instructed to maintain appropriate relationships with students and/or clients. Positive role

modeling is the professional responsibility of staff to the students, clients, and families who participate in

programs at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.

Residential programs are unique in that staff interact with students after routine school hours. Due to this, certain

guidelines have been established.

**Visitation in Staff Homes**

Students enrolled in programs at the Alabama School for the Blind, Alabama School for the Deaf, or the Helen

Keller School of Alabama who are invited to a staff member’s home for a special outing must have written

permission from the parent or guardian and prior approval from the respective Principal, Vice President and

President. Overnight visitation by the students in staff member’s homes is permitted but not encouraged. Staff

members must obtain approval for overnight visitation from the Principal, Vice President and President.  Visitation

should be scheduled only under unusual or special circumstances, (i.e., Department of Human Resources needs an

emergency placement, student’s parent makes arrangement, staff have children who attend one of our programs

and take children home, parents/guardians fail to pick up student when program closed). Overnight visitation also

requires prior written permission from the parent or guardian.

These procedures regarding home visitation also apply to clients enrolled at the E. H. Gentry Technical Facility who

are minors:  namely, prior approval from the Principal. Staff members are advised to make the Dean aware of any

planned home visitation. This may be restricted by the Dean if it is determined to be in the best interest of the

student, in consideration of his or her social/psychological well-being.

**Student Employment by Staff**

All students attending programs at the AIDB 18 years old or under are required to have work permits signed by

their parent or guardian and prior approval from the respective Principal in order to work after school or on

weekends for staff members. Clients attending EHG over the age of 18 may also work for staff members under

these same guidelines but are not required to have parental/guardian permission.

Although no set fees are established, student pay should reflect the nature of the work done. When providing

student work opportunities, the following guidelines should be observed:

1. Staff members are responsible for contacting students or clients and obtaining approval through the appropriate contact person at either the Student Development Office or the Extended Day Program Office. The contact person will ensure that the students or clients have written parental permission for performing work when appropriate. Scheduling for work time should be arranged at least 24 hours in advance.
2. Work should be scheduled so as not to interfere with the student’s or client’s instructional program, dormitory duties or other responsibilities.
3. Permission to work off-campus is a privilege and will be revoked if a student or client abuses this right or is confined to the campus for disciplinary reasons.
4. Staff members employing students or clients through meal time are responsible for providing those meals.
5. Staff members are encouraged to use as many different students or clients as possible so that more students are provided work opportunities.
6. For visitation or employment, staff members should not be alone at their homes (or only with small children) with students.  This is to provide maximum safety for students, staff, and AIDB.

An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting

gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

* Insuring that the institutional privileges are not used for personal gain.
* Insuring that school policies or procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

* Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local governing body.
* Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there appears to be a conflict of interest.
* Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the Principal/Executive Director.

**Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace**

Illegal drugs and alcohol in the workplace are a danger to us all. They impair safety and health, promote crime, lower productivity and quality, and undermine public confidence in the work we do. The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind will not tolerate the illegal use of drugs in accordance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988. In order to be considered a responsible source for the award of federal contracts, the Board of Trustees of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind authorizes and directs the President to develop and implement procedures necessary to provide for a drug-free and alcohol-free workplace. These procedures shall meet the requirements of state, federal, and local laws under the guidelines which follow:

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind will:

1. Notify all employees in writing that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, trafficking, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the AIDB workplace, and specify the actions that will be taken against employees for violation of such prohibitions. The term "controlled substance" means any drug listed in 21 U.S.C. 812 and other federal regulations and includes "legal drugs" which are not prescribed by a licensed physician.
2. Establish a drug-free and alcohol abuse awareness program to inform employees about the dangers of drug abuse in the workplace: any available drug counseling, rehabilitation, and employee assistance programs; and the penalty that may be imposed on employees for drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace.
3. Notify the employee that as a condition of employment under a federal grant, the employee will abide by the terms of the written statement provided, and will notify AIDB administration of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace no later than five days after such conviction.
4. Notify the appropriate federal agency within ten days after receiving notice from the employee or otherwise receiving actual notice of such a conviction.
5. Take one of the following actions within 30 days of receiving notice with respect to any employee who is so convicted: take appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination; or require such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance program approved for such purposes by a federal, state, or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.
6. Make a good faith effort to continue to maintain a drug-free and alcohol-free workplace through implementation of all the provisions of this policy.

**TOBACCO POLICY**

In recognition of mounting concerns over the effects of smoking and the use of tobacco and nicotine related products on the health, productivity and morale of students, clients and employees, the Board of Trustees directs and authorizes the President to implement a no-tobacco policy under the guidelines which follow.

The use of tobacco and nicotine products of any kind including but not limited to electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, battery-powered vaporizers, etc. is prohibited on the campuses of the Alabama School for the Deaf, Alabama School for the Blind, Helen Keller School of Alabama and the Regional Centers. The use of tobacco products of any kind by employees is prohibited at all times in the presence of students and at official activities of AIDB. The use of tobacco products of any kind is prohibited on all property of AIDB except it may be permitted where designated on the campuses at E. H. Gentry Technical Facility, Alabama Industries for the Blind (AIB) Campus, the Physical Plant Department, the Transportation Department, and Base Supply Centers. The President shall be authorized to grant exceptions to this policy as deemed appropriate.

 The unit administrator for the E. H. Gentry Technical Facility, the AIB Campus, the Physical Plant Department, and the Transportation Department may designate an outdoor area for the use of tobacco products. Such areas must be designated as such with appropriate signage.

 AIDB will comply with all Federal, State and Local laws and ordinances regarding the use of tobacco products.

**POSSESSION OF FIREARMS AND WEAPONS**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to promote a safe school and work environment for students, staff and the public.

All companies and individuals contracting with AIDB shall insure that their agents and employees shall comply with this policy.  Such contracting entities shall advise their employees of this policy and shall not permit an individual who has violated this policy to continue to work on AIDB property.

All future contracts requiring the presence of the contractor’s employees on AIDB property shall reference this policy and contain an agreement to comply with this policy.

**GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

No student or nonstudent, including adults and visitors, shall possess, use or distribute a weapon while on property owned or operated by the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.  AIDB will act to enforce this policy and to discipline or take appropriate action against any individual who violates this policy.  Any requests for exemptions must be in writing and approved by the President.

Weapons Defined: A weapon is defined as any object, device or instrument designed as a weapon or through its use is capable of threatening or producing bodily harm or which may be used to inflict self-injury, including but not limited to any firearm, handgun or long gun, i.e. sport rifles and shotguns used for hunting, whether loaded or unloaded; air guns; pellet guns; BB guns; explosives; fireworks; mace and other propellants; stun guns; tasers; ammunition; poisons; hand grenade, missile, incendiary device; switch-blade knife, gravity knife, stiletto, sword, dagger; any club, baton, billy, black-jack, bludgeon or metal knuckles; and other objects that have been modified to serve as a weapon.

No person shall possess, use or distribute any object, device or instrument having the appearance of a weapon and such objects, devices or instruments shall be treated as weapons including, but not limited to, weapons listed above which are broken or non-functional, look-alike guns; toy guns; and any object that is a facsimile of a real weapon.

No person shall possess, use or distribute two (2) or more components of a weapon or make representations that such components could be used to construct a weapon, regardless of the truthfulness of such representations.

Exemptions: Implements of work, (i.e. box cutters and other tools) deemed necessary for an employee to carry out his/her job responsibilities and are duly authorized by AIDB supervision, are exempt.  It shall be the responsibility of each authorized employee to safeguard their respective implements of work and to be accountable for the location of such implements.

**Policy**

It is the policy of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind that all campuses, properties, and regional centers owned or operated by AIDB be gun-free and – weapon-free. This policy applies to all students, clients, employees, and visitors with the exception of person(s) employed by a public safety agency and certified by the State of Alabama to possess a firearm, acting in an official capacity, and any security personnel employed by AIDB and granted said authority.

For the purposes of this policy, AIDB does not recognize the right of any person(s) who may possess a State of Alabama or other lawful concealed weapon and/or hunting permit to secure in a vehicle or otherwise possess any weapon as defined by this policy while on any AIDB owned or operated property.

It is the policy of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind that no person, unless authorized, shall possess on his or her person, use, display, or brandish any mechanical device capable of discharging a projectile by gas, cylinder or other means on any campus, property, or regional center owned or operated by the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.

Any person having reason to believe that this policy is being violated or may be violated shall make an immediate report to their Principal or Supervisor who shall immediately make a report to the President.  The failure to make such a report shall be deemed a violation of this policy with such person being subject to discipline as provided herein.

**Violations**

Any employee or visitor violating this policy is subject to discipline by AIDB, including possible dismissal, and/or prosecution under statutes of the State of Alabama as well as any applicable city ordinances.

Any AIDB student violating this policy will be subject to suspension or expulsion in accordance with guidelines of the "Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994" and related Alabama state laws.

# WORKPLACE/SCHOOL VIOLENCE POLICY

The goal of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) is to provide an educational and work environment for students/clients, faculty, and staff that is nurturing, safe, and free from violence.  This policy establishes **“zero tolerance”** for any and all threats and acts of violence at any AIDB campus, property, or event.

AIDB administration and management is committed to working with staff, students, consumers, and constituents to promote a work/learning environment free from violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior.

 The President of AIDB will establish procedures to assure compliance with this policy.  Students/clients who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including expulsion.  Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment.  Violators of the policy also may be subject to criminal charges.

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Notice Concerning Critical Incident Reporting

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) requires that its contractors/service providers make every reasonable effort to ensure the safety of the individuals served through its programs.

To report an incident or situation that you feel may lead to serious injury or death to a GVRA client or participant, please contact Sharon Angel at:

Telephone: (470) 763-6274

 Fax: (404) 206-5074

Email: Sharon.angel@gvs.ga.gov