



## **Volunteer Handbook**

**2016 - 2017**

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## From the Executive Director

Welcome to Children First/Communities In Schools (Children First/CIS) of Buncombe County! I want to thank you for your interest in the success of the children in our county.

For more than 38 years, volunteers with Children First/CIS have been true partners in our programs and a valuable resource for the children we serve through our community and educational supports and advocacy work. By volunteering, you'll not only help strengthen the "generation of tomorrow," but also strengthen our community of today! Our programs would not be nearly as successful without community-minded people like you.

This guide will help you have the best possible experience as a volunteer. It answers frequently asked questions and gives information about the agency, our students, and your role as a volunteer with the organization. After an initial orientation, a Children First/CIS staff member at your placement site can answer most of your questions, but please feel free to contact **Jodi Ford, Outreach & Engagement Coordinator at 828-620-9091 or [Jodif@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:Jodif@childrenfirstbc.org)** any time you are in need of assistance.

Thank you for volunteering. I'm glad you've chosen to be a member of the Children First/CIS team - you are helping to create a community in which children can thrive!

Sincerely,



Allison Jordan  
Executive Director

## Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook has been produced to help you become a strong Children First/CIS volunteer. This book will share with you a little of our history, philosophy, practices, and policies, as well as all of the benefits we will provide to you as a valued volunteer.

No handbook can answer all the questions you might have about our programs. It is during our initial orientation session and through our Mind the Gap tour, which we ask all long-term volunteers to participate in, that we can better get to know each other and develop a harmonious relationship. Please do not hesitate to ask questions! A Children First/CIS staff member or Volunteer Coordinator will gladly answer any and all questions. You can reach the Outreach & Engagement Coordinator, Jodi Ford, at 828-620-9091 or [Jodif@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:Jodif@childrenfirstbc.org).

We believe you will enjoy the time you spend with our students. We depend on you – your success is our success! We ask that you read this handbook carefully to become familiar with our policies.

## The Importance of Mentors

It has been well established that mentors help pave the way for a brighter future for students, particularly those affected by poverty. Here are just three of the ways mentors can help:

- **High school graduation is an economic imperative in today’s global economy driven by knowledge and innovation.** Research has shown that mentoring has significant positive effects on two early indicators among high school drop-outs: high levels of absenteeism and recurring behavior problems. Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class.
- **Students who cannot read at grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are 4 times more likely to drop out of school.** Mentors can help engage students at a young age, and guide them towards a more successful and positive future.
- **Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking.**

The impact of the time you spend volunteering is enormous. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has calculated that a volunteer hour in North Carolina is worth \$23.07 to a non-profit organization. Last year, volunteers for Children First/Communities In Schools contributed approximately \$91,004 in volunteer hours to the organization.

## Personal and Professional Benefits of Volunteering

**Skill Development:** Volunteering helps you learn new skills, keep skills sharp, or use existing skills in new ways.

**Career Exploration:** Regardless of your age or career level, volunteering will introduce you to new professional paths. Volunteering can be an excellent way to learn more about a particular role or sector, workplace or office culture, or cause. Also, never underestimate the power of networking; volunteering offers the opportunity to cross paths—as well as, in many cases, quickly bond—with people from across your community, including many with whom you may otherwise not have had contact.

**Personal Growth:** Lifelong learning includes hands-on experiences as a volunteer which can teach you about issues ranging from adult literacy to public health to animal welfare.

**Socialize:** In addition to professional networking, volunteering can be a fun, meaningful way to make new friends. New to the community? Looking to branch out socially? Simply looking for something to do with new people? Volunteer and get to know others who care about the same issues that you do.

**Have an Impact:** Last but most certainly not least, volunteering is one of the best ways we know of to make a difference in your community. Whatever your passion, however you get involved, volunteering offers a way to have a real and lasting impact on the world.

### **About Children First/Communities In Schools**

Children First/Communities In Schools (CIS) is a local non-profit committed to advocating and empowering children and families living in poverty. This is achieved through education and direct services such as the **Family Resource Center at Emma**, our after-school **Learning Centers**, **Project POWER/AmeriCorps**, and **Student Support Specialists** in Emma, Claxton & Johnston & Estes Elementary School and Eblen Intermediate.



In addition to direct services, Children First/CIS engages in public policy advocacy campaigns to build opportunity for children and families. In response to the growing incidence of child poverty, Children First/CIS created The Success Equation, which unites community to reduce and prevent the incidence of poverty and its impact on children in Buncombe County.

Last year alone, we served 6% of the children living in Buncombe County with direct services, and 100% of the children in Buncombe County benefitted from our advocacy work.



### **Our Mission**

Children First's mission is to empower children and their families to reach their full potential through advocacy, education and services. The mission of Communities In Schools is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

## Our History

Originally created in the mid-1970's as Youth Services Action Group (YSAG), we were a collective voice for the needs of youth in our community. Children First was established in 1992 as a program of the United Way and merged with YSAG in 1998. In 2003, Children First then merged as the local affiliate of Communities In Schools and in 2013, was awarded official designation as a Nationally Accredited Affiliate Organization for Communities In Schools.

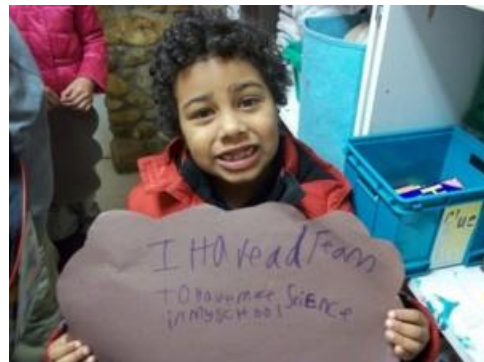


Through our direct services, advocacy and collaborative efforts, Children First/CIS weaves together community members, organizations, volunteers, and resources to provide services to the working poor and families in crisis living in disadvantaged communities of Buncombe County.

## Our Programs and Services

Children First/CIS of Buncombe County is a not-for-profit organization that offers direct services to economically disadvantaged children, youth and their families. These services include:

**Family Resource Center at Emma** helps families in crisis with a food pantry, clothing closet, emergency financial assistance, parenting classes and a community garden.



**Learning Centers** that provides a safe haven for over 40 at-risk elementary school aged youth (living in a public housing complexes and a section 8 apartment complex) to receive homework help, a healthy snack, enrichment activities and also includes a parent involvement component along with a summer camp program.

**Project POWER/AmeriCorps Program** that provides mentoring and enrichment activities to over 1,000 at-risk youth living in Buncombe County.

**Student Support Specialists** at Claxton, Johnston, Emma and Estes Elementary Schools and Eblen Intermediate School connect students and their families to critical community resources that are tailored to their needs. This Coordinator tracks student progress through ABC+P- Attendance, Behavior, Curriculum and Parent Engagement.

**The Success Equation** unites the community to help alleviate the root causes of poverty, creating a community in which all children can thrive.

In addition to direct services, Children First/CIS also provides [advocacy and community education](#) to raise awareness of, and develop sustainable solutions to, issues affecting children and families and breaking down barriers of poverty.

## Needs Statement

**Currently, more than one in four (26%) children in Buncombe County live in poverty, and over half (54%) of the students in Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools are eligible for free and reduced lunch.** Research has linked child poverty with societal costs including academic underachievement, higher dropout rates, higher rates of teen pregnancy, higher costs of crime, and poorer overall health outcomes.



**Children First/CIS helps fulfill basic unmet needs for children and families living in the Pisgah View and Emma communities** – two poverty-stricken West Asheville communities. 100% of the families we serve are living in poverty with incomes below \$19,000/year for a family of four. Neighboring schools have historically had such high levels of poverty that they now offer 100% free lunch to all students. The families living in the two public housing communities served by our Learning Centers have an average income of less than \$6,000 a year for a family of four.

**Every year 1.2 million students drop out of school.** What that means is every nine seconds, a student in America loses his or her path to a better future. High school dropout rates for Asheville City Schools (4.8%) and Buncombe County Schools (4.65%) are slightly higher than North Carolina overall (4.27%).

**Food insecurity is a serious issue for residents of Buncombe County, many of them children.** In the past few years, the number of food insecure households has almost tripled. In 2008, the number of households receiving assistance soared from 8,995 to 20,810 households in 2015 with over 12,000 children experiencing food insecurity. Households have also seen a decrease in their food stamp allotment; on average a reduction of \$36 a month for a family of four. For one mother, this was the amount she spent on meat each month.

**Buncombe County's unemployment rate dipped to 4 percent, but that figure is not adjusted for seasonal fluctuations, such as temporary hiring for the holidays by retailers.** However, many people who are currently employed are underemployed - working at minimum wage and having to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. One in five American adults work in jobs that pay “poverty-level wages,” and the current minimum wage is lower, in inflation-adjusted terms, than it was in 1968.

In 2013, the median hourly wage for all 171,890 workers in the four-county Asheville metro area was \$14.41, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures. Workers' paychecks just don't go as

far as they used to. In real dollars, wages actually declined slightly after 2010, as housing costs have continued to climb. For a minimum wage earner, their annual earnings are only 18% higher than the Federal Poverty Level for an individual.

## **Children First/CIS Social Media Policy**

At Children First/Communities in Schools (“Children First/CIS”), social media is an important part of how we, as an organization, communicate with the public, our local and national partners, and with volunteers, advocates, and donors both present and prospective. We also understand that social media is an important part of the lives of our volunteers, providing an environment where they interact with family, friends and personal communities. Social media platforms including but not limited to personal blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, Google Plus, Yammer, Glass Door, and others, provide a mechanism to better understand and serve our communities and to enhance and improve our brand awareness. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media in regards to Children First/CIS we have established these guidelines for appropriate use of social media in regards to your role as a volunteer with Children First/CIS.

**Guidelines:** Carefully read these guidelines and Children First/CIS existing policies, and ensure your postings are consistent with these policies. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to termination of volunteer service.

- Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for Children First/CIS unless you are specifically authorized to do so. If Children First/CIS or its personnel are the subject of content you are posting, we highly recommend that you be transparent about the fact that you are a volunteer of Children First/CIS and make it clear that your personal views do not represent the views of Children First/CIS or its employees.
- Do not create a link from your blog, website or other social networking site to a Children First/CIS website without identifying yourself as a Children First/CIS volunteer.
- Maintain the confidentiality of Children First/CIS private or confidential information. Do not post internal reports, policies, procedures, internal business-related communications, or communications known to be protected by an attorney-client privilege.
- Do not post any information or rumors that you know to be false about Children First/CIS, employees, consultants, partners, donors, funders, volunteers, or advocates.
- Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news. If you make a mistake, acknowledge your error and correct it as quickly as possible. Avoid oversimplifying or sensationalizing issues; place your thoughts in context.



- Be sure to respect confidentiality of colleagues, clients, students and their families or fellow volunteers. Ask permission from Children First/CIS staff or fellow volunteers to post conversations that are meant to be private or internal.
- Do not post anything that is malicious, false, abusive, harassing, threatening, or defamatory about Children First/CIS, partners, donors, funders, volunteers, or advocates.
- **Do not post photos of children, parents, or families that are served through Children First/CIS educational or direct service programs on any personal social media platforms without consent from Executive Director or Outreach & Engagement Coordinator. It *is* allowable to “share” or “re-tweet” posts from Children First/CIS social media platforms.**
- If you encounter anything online that compromises the reputation of a colleague or the organization (examples: hate speech, illegal activity, unsafe or unethical conduct) please contact the Executive Director.

If you have any questions or need further guidance regarding this policy, please contact the Outreach & Engagement Coordinator at [JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org) or call 828-620-9091.

### **Children First/Communities In Schools Confidentiality Statement**

Respecting the privacy of our clients, donors, members, staff, volunteers and of Children First/Communities In Schools (Children First/CIS) itself is a basic value of Children First/CIS. Personal and financial information is confidential and should not be disclosed or discussed with anyone without permission or authorization from the Executive Director. Care shall also be taken to ensure that unauthorized individuals do not overhear any discussion of confidential information and that documents containing confidential information are not left in the open or inadvertently shared.

Volunteers and board members of Children First/CIS may be exposed to information which is confidential and/or privileged in nature. It is the policy of Children First/CIS that such information must be kept confidential both during and after volunteer service. Staff and volunteers, including board members, are expected to return materials containing privileged or confidential information at the time of separation from employment or expiration of service.

Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or privileged information is a serious violation of this policy and will subject the person(s) who made the unauthorized disclosure to appropriate discipline, including removal/dismissal.

Before you begin your assignment as a volunteer, you should be aware of the laws and penalties for breaching confidentiality. Although the agency is liable for your acts within the scope of your duty, giving information to an unauthorized person could result in the agency's refusal to support you in the event of legal action. Violation of the state statutes regarding confidentiality of records is punishable upon conviction by fines or by imprisonment or by both.

## **Volunteer Policies**

### **Complaint Policy**

If a volunteer has a concern, complaint or a serious issue with another volunteer or Children First/CIS employee or with Children First/CIS procedure or operation, you should not hesitate to bring it to the attention of a Children First/CIS staff member. If your complaint is about an employee, then please contact their supervisor or the Executive Director. If it is a complaint about the Executive Director, then please contact the Board of Directors President. You can call our main office at 828-259-9717 to get the contact information needed.

When a complaint is voiced, we will do our best to remedy the situation. While every volunteer may not be satisfied with every solution, we do value the input that volunteers provide and want to foster an environment where all volunteers feel comfortable reporting their concerns.

### **Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest is defined as an actual or perceived interest in an action that results in, or has the appearance of resulting in, personal, organizational, or professional gain. A conflict of interest occurs when a volunteer has a direct fiduciary interest in another relationship. The definition of conflict of interest includes any bias or the appearance of bias in a decision making process that would reflect a dual role played by a member of the organization or group.

The standard of behavior at Children First/CIS is that all staff, volunteers, and board members scrupulously avoid conflicts of interest between the interests of Children First/CIS on one hand, and personal, professional, and business interests on the other. This includes avoiding potential and actual conflicts of interest, as well as perceptions of conflicts of interest.

The purposes of this policy are to protect the integrity of Children First/CIS's decision-making process, to enable our constituencies to have confidence in our integrity, and to protect the integrity and reputations of volunteers, staff, and board members.

In the course of meetings or activities, volunteers will disclose any interests in a transaction or decision where they (including their business or other nonprofit affiliations), their family, and/or significant other, employer, or close associates will receive a benefit or gain. After disclosure, the volunteer will be asked to leave the room for the discussion and will not be permitted to vote on the question.

Volunteers are expected to refrain from giving the impression that the personal views and positions they express regarding economic, political or religious issues are those of Children First/CIS.

### **Crisis Management Plan**

All volunteers should be aware of the current crisis management plan established for the school(s), or after-school Learning Center where they volunteer and should be able to fully implement this

policy should the need arise. Please consult Learning Center or School Support Specialist for the crisis management policy.

### **Discipline**

Children First/CIS values a collaborative work environment and will attempt to respectfully resolve conflict or problem situations. However, our priorities are the safety and well-being of our students, volunteers and employees and the integrity of the organization. If a volunteer commits a dangerous or harmful act, he or she may be dismissed immediately and without warning. Volunteers who fail to adhere to the Volunteer Policies may face disciplinary action, including dismissal from service.

### **Harassment**

Children First/CIS strives to maintain an environment that is free of discrimination and all forms of harassment. Children First/CIS does not tolerate harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability in the workplace. Any volunteer who believes that a student or another volunteer is being subjected to harassment by another volunteer or Children First/CIS employee shall report such conduct to Children First/CIS staff. If your complaint is about an employee, then please contact their supervisor or the Executive Director. If it is a complaint about the Executive Director, then please contact the Board of Directors President. If you have a question as who to contact, please call our main office at 828-259-9717 and we will direct you to the appropriate staff member to register your complaint.

If an investigation confirms that harassment has occurred, corrective action will be taken. Children First/CIS forbids retaliation against anyone who has reported harassment or who has cooperated in the investigation of harassment complaints.

### **Liability**

Volunteers will provide assistance to students on school grounds, after-school Learning Center or other Children First/CIS locations and during the designated day and time assigned to them by the Children First/CIS staff member. If the volunteer is functioning within this capacity he or she will be free of liability under the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, Public Law 105-19. However, if the volunteer chooses to act outside of assigned tasks within the school setting by taking the student off school or Learning Center grounds and/or seeking the student outside the school day without express knowledge and permission from Children First/CIS staff, the volunteer is then acting as an individual and not in the capacity of a Children First/CIS volunteer. Children First/CIS will not be liable for a volunteer's actions under these conditions. In addition, volunteers are not covered under the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, Public Law 105-19 if they cause injury while operating a motor vehicle, or if the volunteer causes injury with willful, criminal or reckless misconduct or gross negligence.

### **Mandatory Reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Children First/CIS seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for all children receiving our services. Our goal is to prevent the children served by Children First/CIS from incidents of

misconduct and to protect them if there is a suspicion that such incidents have taken place. In the state of North Carolina, according to mandatory reporting requirements, every individual is responsible for reporting any suspected child abuse and it is illegal to not report child abuse. This state law overrules the policy of any employer or institution. **If you suspect abuse, contact a Children First/CIS staff member immediately.**

### **Personal Appearance**

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of everyone and affect the professional image Children First/CIS presents to stakeholders and visitors.

During business hours or when representing Children First/CIS, volunteers are expected to present a clean, neat, and tasteful appearance. When on school property, Children First/CIS volunteers must adhere to the dress policies established by the relevant school district.

### **Safety**

Children First/CIS wants to ensure that our students, volunteers and employees remain safe and injury-free at all times. In order to guarantee that accidents are avoided whenever possible, we expect our students, volunteers and employees to refrain from horseplay, careless behavior and negligent actions. It is the Children First/CIS policy to maintain a safe and secure working environment for everyone involved.

Volunteers must observe safety precautions for their safety and for the safety of others. Any hazards or potentially dangerous conditions must be corrected immediately or reported to a Children First/CIS staff member.

If you are involved in an accident, you must comply with the following procedure:

- Report the accident to your supervising Children First/CIS staff member or the Outreach & Engagement Coordinator immediately
- Obtain pertinent information from the staff member concerning where to seek medical treatment
- Obtain the necessary medical treatment
- Fill out an Accident Report and submit to the Program Director, regardless of the severity of the injury

### **Screening and Background Checks**

Pre-service screening will be performed on all volunteers working with children on behalf of Children First/CIS. The pre-service screening process includes completion of a written application and a criminal background check.

Completion of a comprehensive background investigation is required for all volunteers and is a requirement for continued service with the organization. Additionally, background investigations will be repeated no less than every three years after the initial screening process. Screening procedures will be completed prior to permitting volunteers to have direct contact with students.

### **Supervision**

Volunteers under age 18 must provide a signed letter of consent from a parent or legal guardian before undergoing certain screening measures. In addition, such volunteers will be under the supervision of an adult at all times.

### **Tobacco Free Workplace**

Any and all tobacco products are strictly prohibited at any time while on duty and in the presence of students, either on or off Children First/CIS grounds. Any and all tobacco products are strictly prohibited in the following areas:

- In any building, facility, or vehicle owned, leased, rented or chartered by Children First/CIS;
- On any school or youth center grounds and property – including athletic fields and parking lots – owned, leased, or rented or chartered by Children First/CIS; or
- At any school-sponsored or school related event on-campus or off campus.

### **Violence in the Workplace**

Children First/CIS desires to provide a work environment that is free from intimidation, threats or violent acts. This includes, but is not limited to, intimidating, threatening or hostile behaviors, physical abuse, vandalism, arson, and sabotage, use of weapons, carrying weapons of any kind onto Children First/CIS or school property or any other act which is inappropriate to the workplace. In addition, jokes or offensive comments regarding violent events are not acceptable and may result in termination from the volunteer program. Volunteers who feel they have been subjected to, or observed any of the behaviors listed above are requested to immediately report the incident to the Children First/CIS staff.

### **Weapons Policy**

**Children First/CIS prohibits all weapons on Children First/CIS property, including after-school learning centers or school property or at any Children First/CIS -sponsored event.** This includes visible or concealed weapons, even those for which the proper permits have been obtained- this includes toys that are violent in nature and appearance. The only exceptions to this policy are law enforcement officers, security guards and persons who have been given written consent by Children First/CIS or the school district.

## Volunteer Code of Conduct

- Please use child appropriate and positive language. We want our children to be surrounded by positive words and actions, so cursing, foul language, saying “stupid”, “dumb”, or “shut up” will not be tolerated.
- If you are ever uncomfortable about a situation, please involve a Children First/CIS staff member.
- Our behavior guidance is based on healthy, positive behavior from our children and staff, so Corporal punishment such as hitting or any other forms of physical punishment is prohibited. Please alert Children First/CIS staff if you witness children hitting another child. If you see a staff member hitting a child, please report it immediately to Executive Director at 828-259-9717.
- Establish boundaries with the children. You are a role model and mentor, not a peer.
- Adults working with students must have their hands visible at all times.
- Please do not bring in outside food or drinks, and eat when and what the children are being served. Chewing gum is not allowed in our schools or after-school Learning Centers.
- The children deserve your full attention, so please be completely present while working with the children and do not check your cell phones or play games on electronic devices.
- The giving of individual gifts to a child is discouraged. If you want a specific child to receive a gift please discuss this with your supervising Children First/CIS staff member. This can be done privately away from the other children or brought to the child’s home. Gifts of any kind must be approved by the Children First/CIS staff member.
- If you suspect abuse or neglect of a child, notify the staff privately or report it to Child Protective Services. If you suspect a staff member is abusing or neglecting a child, please contact Allison Jordan, Children First/CIS Executive Director at 828-259-9717 immediately.
- **If you are going to be late or not able to attend your site for any reason, please call your site leader using one of the phone numbers on page 16 to let them know of your delay or absence.**

## Directions to the Learning Centers

### Pisgah View Learning Center

**Pisgah View Apartments 16 C & D Stewart Street, Asheville, NC 28806 Phone number: 828-629-9097**

***\*GPS will take you to the wrong place!\* Use these directions:*** Take I-240 or Haywood Rd. to West Asheville. Turn onto Hanover Street (next to the I-240 overpass) at B & B Pharmacy. Go straight through a few intersections. At the stop sign, turn left onto Stewart Street. Continue to follow Stewart Street until it curves to the right (do not go in the one-way street to the right). We are at: 16 C & D, Stewart Street. You will see an AmeriCorps posters (Large A) in the windows.

### Woodridge Learning Center

**Woodridge Apartments 26-F 61 Bingham Rd. Asheville, NC 28806 Phone number: 828-629-9098**

Take Patton Ave away from downtown, toward West Asheville. Turn right on Louisiana Avenue (at the K-Mart and Wachovia bank). After the railroad tracks, at the light, turn right onto Emma Road (there isn't a sign). Go past the mobile home park on the left and turn left onto Bingham Road (sign is crooked). Then turn right onto Keith. You will make a curve to the right and make a left at the Woodridge sign into the apartment complex. The Learning Center is the third brick building on the right in the apartment marked with a sign that says "Community Center." There is an AmeriCorps symbol (large A) and a Children First/CIS window sign.

**Deaverview Community Center, 275 Deaverview Rd. Asheville, NC 28806:** Take Patton Avenue away from downtown. Pass Leicester Highway and Johnston School Rd. Pass the Groce Funeral Home on the right. Turn right (after the bank) onto Deaverview Rd. Go past the intersection with Ample Storage and turn into the parking area of the rock bldg. on the right. This is the Deaverview offices and Community Center. **Phone number: 828-216-8241**

### **Directions to Family Resource Center for Volunteer Orientation or other volunteer opportunities**

***37 Brickyard Road, Asheville 28806 on the campus of Emma Elementary. Do not depend on GPS. It will get you to the campus, but not the specific modular unit that houses the FRCE***

- From Patton Avenue, turn north onto Louisiana Avenue (next to Kmart shopping center).
- Cross the railroad tracks and continue straight on Louisiana.
- Go to top of the hill. You will see crossing signs and a pedestrian crossing.
- Turn left into the entrance of Emma Elementary School. The sign says Bus Entrance Only, but it is OK to use this entrance as long as you go slow and are mindful that there could be children playing in the lot.
- Head right towards the community garden.
- Ahead, you will see two portable buildings. The brown trailer furthest from the parking lot is the Family Resource Center. Go up the wooden ramp that runs parallel to the Garden.

### **Addresses of schools with Children First/CIS Student Support Specialists:**

- Claxton Elementary School 241 Merrimon Ave., Asheville 28801
- Emma Elementary School 37 Brickyard Road, Asheville NC 28806
- Eblen Intermediate School 59 Lees Creek Rd., Asheville 28806
- Estes Elementary School 275 Overlook Rd, Asheville 28803
- Johnston Elementary School 230 Johnston Blvd., Asheville 28806

## Contact Information

- **Outreach & Engagement Coordinator:** Jodi Ford – 828-620-9091  
[JodiF@ChildrenFirstBC.org](mailto:JodiF@ChildrenFirstBC.org)
- **Learning Center Coordinator:** Barbara Norton – 828-778-2073  
[BarbaraN@ChildrenFirstBC.org](mailto:BarbaraN@ChildrenFirstBC.org)
- **Pisgah View Site Phone**– 828-620-9097
- **Woodridge Site Phone** – 828-620-9098
- **Student Support Specialist at Johnston:** Thomas Priester- 828-407-7515  
[ThomasP@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:ThomasP@childrenfirstbc.org)
- **Student Support Specialist at Claxton & Pisgah View:** James Love- 828-407-6685  
[JamesL@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:JamesL@childrenfirstbc.org)
- **Student Support Specialist at Estes Elementary:** Megan Trasport 828-785-0518  
[MeganT@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:MeganT@childrenfirstbc.org)
- **Student Support Specialist at Eblen Intermediate:** Dani Wilber 828-216-8241  
[DanielleW@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:DanielleW@childrenfirstbc.org). Dani also runs the homework club for 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders out of Deaverview Community center and Woodridge learning Center on Thursdays & Fridays
- **Children First/CIS Main Office:** 828-259-9717/ 50 S. French Broad Ave. Rm. 246 Asheville 28801

## How to set up an account on the Children First/CIS Online Portal

1. Click on the **VOLUNTEER** button at [www.childrenfirstcisbc.org](http://www.childrenfirstcisbc.org)
2. Fill out the form and create a login and password
3. Log into your account using your new username and password at [www.childrenfirstbc.z2systems.com/np/clients/childrenfirstbc/login.jsp](http://www.childrenfirstbc.z2systems.com/np/clients/childrenfirstbc/login.jsp)  
**If you've forgotten your username or password, please contact Jodi Ford at [JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org) or 828-620-9091 – we're here to help!**
  - On the dropdown menu that says “What would you like to do,” click “Volunteer”
  - Indicate any projects in which you are interested by checking the box next to the project (Volunteer Learning Center at Pisgah View, etc.)
  - Click “Apply”
  - Your information will automatically be filled in. If everything is correct, click “Submit”



## How to enter your Volunteer Hours on the Children First/CIS Online Portal

**How to enter your volunteer hours:** You can access these hours and use them for your data and records.

- **Log into your account using your new username and password by clicking here!**
- Click on **“My Projects”** in the dropdown menu.
- Select Learning Center at Woodridge under Projects
- Click Time Sheets.
- This will bring up the My Time Sheets page. You can view and **Edit** existing time sheets or create new time sheets for their assigned projects by clicking **New Time Sheet**.
- Enter your time for the week
- Click **Save Time Sheet**, and that will allow you to continue entering hours onto your time sheet for the rest of the year.

## Mentoring Basics

### Getting to Know the Students

- Be certain that you and the students know what name you would each to be called. We ask that all students call adults by a surname, for example Mr. Bob or Ms. Annie. We do not use street nick names at Children First/CIS.
- Refrain from judging and making assumptions.
- Talk about less personal things in the beginning.
- Ask questions that cannot be answered with a “yes” or a “no” to generate conversation and connection with a student.
- Be willing to share your own life experiences – successes and failures!
- Don’t be afraid to share why you are interested in becoming involved as a volunteer.
- Find experiences/interest that you and your student have in common

### Communication Skills

- Acknowledge listening with responses or body motion
- Exercise emotional control
- Refrain from making extreme statements
- Maintain soft eye contact
- Listen without giving approval or offering solutions
- Ensure that you understand what is said or felt
- Respond in your own natural way
- Encourage dialogue if you need more information
- Look for other clues such as tone of voice, facial expression, or gestures
- Listen for ideas and feelings, not just for facts

## Recognize Learning Styles

### Auditory Learner

**How to spot one:** tells jokes, tells interesting stories, knows all the words to songs, remembers names and not faces, talks constantly, interrupts, willingly contributes to conversation.

**How to teach one:** teach him/her to talk through tasks, encourage him/her to spell out loud, play rhyming games, provide audiotapes and record lessons, pair him/her with a visual learner, create study groups

### Visual Learner

**How to spot one:** likes to look at books/pictures, loves to look at orderly things, finds objects other have lost, sees details, find place in a book readily, likes to work puzzles, watches the teacher's face for cues, remembers faces and forgets names, has difficulty understanding oral directions

**How to teach one:** give visual directions and demonstrations, play matching games, provide charts and graphs, use maps and map legends, color code information, use dictionaries, teach with rulers, number lines or color transparencies, or make flashcards

### Tactile/Kinesthetic Learner

**How to spot one:** explores environment, needs concrete objects as learning aids, like to be physically close to others, wants to touch/feel everything, enjoys doing things with hands, writes everything out, moves constantly

**How to teach one:** use manipulative, use writing, write on large surfaces like chalkboards and sidewalks, allow movement during learning, take frequent movement breaks, and provide concrete objects for counting/sequencing/categorizing, break things into steps/stages.

## About the Learning Centers

The Children First/Communities In Schools (CIS) Learning Center is a safe haven afterschool program that provides academic assistance, healthy snacks and enrichment activities for up to 40 at-risk elementary aged children from 2:30-5:00 pm Monday through Thursday. The Learning Centers strengthen the connection between student, school, parent and community, which is a key element in helping an at-risk child succeed in school and prepare for life. Research demonstrates that poor academic achievement, as early as elementary school, is one of the strongest predictors of a student dropping out during high school. The Learning Centers' emphasis on homework assistance, enrichment activities, and healthy nutrition are proven elements to promote a student's success.

The Learning Centers are located in Pisgah View, a public housing community, and Woodridge, a Section 8 apartment complex. Nearly half of the families are single family head of households with an average income of \$8,200 per year.

The program is in its ninth year and is unique in that it is free to participating families. The Learning Centers are located in the communities in order to alleviate transportation barriers. It also provides holistic help to families through parent involvement and emergency assistance, and includes a Summer Camp program. Community members are placed in each of the Learning Centers to provide homework assistance and a mentoring relationship.

A strong component of the Learning Centers program is the partnerships with other organizations such as the ABYSA soccer league, Happy Body Yoga, Horse Sense of the Carolinas, FEAST cooking classes, and LEAF Schools and Streets, which brings resident artists to the centers to teach theater arts, dance and music. These partnerships provide opportunities otherwise unavailable to the children.

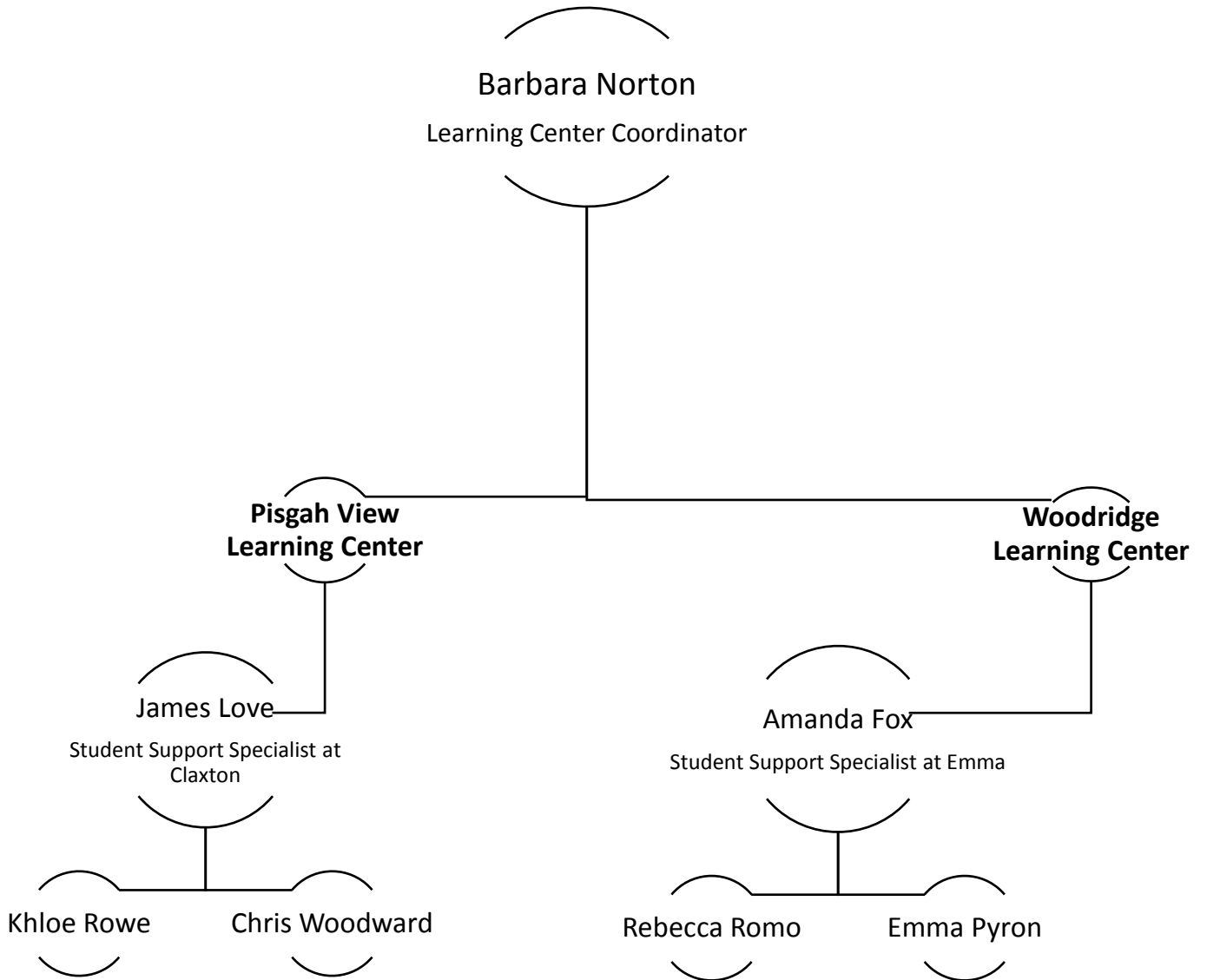
The staff includes a Learning Center coordinator, who has strong relationships with the parents and teachers of Learning Center students, and Project POWER/AmeriCorps members, who work in the neighboring elementary schools in the morning or with the student's family and at Learning Center sites in the afternoon.

### **Summer Camp**

The Learning Centers Summer Camp provides learning and enrichment opportunities the children would not otherwise experience. Summer Camp is for six weeks, nine hours per day, for the children who attend our Learning Centers. This program is free of charge and may be the only program available to these students due to the lack of transportation, caregiver language barriers and challenges, and finances of their caregivers.

Summer Camp includes excursions to local waterfalls, rivers, and hiking trails, and activities such as rafting, mountain biking, and hiking. Included in the camp is an overnight camping trip. The campers also make regular trips to the Pisgah Center for Wildlife, where they perform stream investigations and explore wildlife with a trained guide along with various other science and nature programs. For many of the children, this is their first experience in the wilderness, even though it is only minutes away from where they live. They have weekly swim and dance lessons at the Jewish Community Center, and participate in arts enrichment with LEAF In Schools and Streets. An academic component is included with required journal writing and reading at least two days a week. This is to help prevent the "learning loss" that typically happens during the summer months.

# Learning Center Staff Members



## Role of Volunteers in Learning Centers

The main responsibilities of volunteers at our Learning Centers are snack preparation, child supervision, homework assistance, and clean-up. Volunteers will be asked to participate in all of these activities. If you are uncomfortable with any of the tasks that you are asked to complete, pull a staff member aside and notify them. They will assign you other duties.

We try to match the skills and interest of our volunteers with the needs and opportunities of the Learning Centers. If you are unsatisfied with your position at a Learning Center, please let the Volunteer Coordinator or Learning Center Coordinator know and we will try to make suitable changes.

Because of our commitment to our mission and quality programs, we ask all long-term volunteers to attend our in depth “Mind the Gap” tour in order to become acquainted with our wider organization. Please contact Kaitlyn Breiten, Resource Development Coordinator, at 828-259-9717 or [KaitlynB@ChildrenFirstBC.org](mailto:KaitlynB@ChildrenFirstBC.org) to schedule a tour.

## Dress Code

Please wear comfortable clothes. Tennis shoes or flat shoes are helpful when playing games outside.

Please no ripped or dirty jeans, t-shirts with alcohol or drug paraphernalia, halter tops, midriffs, or cleavage/undergarments showing.

## Calendar and Closings

If schools are closed for holidays, teacher workdays, early release, or inclement weather, the Learning Centers are also closed.

- Woodridge Learning Center, Johnston & Emma Elementary and Eblen Intermediate will close if the Erwin District of Buncombe County Schools is closed or releases early for weather.
- Pisgah View and Claxton Elementary will close if Asheville City Schools are closed or release early for weather.

The Volunteer Coordinator will email a reminder to volunteers in these occasions, but it is also the volunteer’s responsibility to stay abreast of the Learning Center calendar. Additional copies of the calendar are available by emailing Jodi Ford at [JodiF@ChildrenFirstBC.org](mailto:JodiF@ChildrenFirstBC.org).

If you will not be able to volunteer on your assigned day (due to illness, vacation, etc.), please notify Jodi Ford by email ([JodiF@ChildrenFirstBC.org](mailto:JodiF@ChildrenFirstBC.org)) or phone (828-620-9091). This helps the leaders plan for activities, and the Learning Center Coordinator arrange for additional assistance at the site if needed.

## Learning Center Schedule

The Learning Centers are open Monday through Thursday from 2:30 – 6:00 p.m. throughout the school year.

We ask volunteers for a minimum commitment of one hour a week for three months, the most important time being between 3:00 – 4:00, to assist the children with their homework

### Approximate Daily Schedule (Woodridge/Pisgah View):

3:00/3:30 pm: Students arrive on the bus, put down their book bags, wash their hands, and receive a snack.

3:30/4:00 pm.: Students split up into homework groups. Staff and volunteers are paired with one to two children or small groups to help with homework.

4:00/4:30 pm: Students begin enrichment activities, which could include Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association soccer, music or dance with LEAF Schools and Streets, games, or art projects.

5:00/5:30 pm: Pick up time.

## Volunteer Daily Activities

### When You Arrive

- **Sign in to the volunteer log.**

*We use this data for our grants to continue to receive funds for our wonderful program, and by signing in, you help us demonstrate the impact of our program in this community. Thank you for your cooperation!*

- **Put on a name tag.**

*Name tags are located in the volunteer log binder. Please wear this every time you come in until all of the children know your name. They see many volunteers throughout the week, and it is difficult for them to remember all of the different names. If you would like the children to wear name tags, please let the LC Leaders know.*

- **Store your personal items in a secure place at the Learning Center.**

*This area should be pointed out during your orientation. Please ask a Learning Center staff member if you are ever unclear on where to store your personal items. Note: If you will not need an item during the afternoon, it is always a good idea to leave it in the trunk of your locked vehicle.*

- **Check in with a Learning Center staff member.**

*Staff will give you a quick overview of the day's agenda. You should also review the white board for a listing of the day's activities.*

## What Now?

**Snack Preparation:** Wash your hands before preparing a snack! Preparation usually involves mixing up juice or putting water into pitchers, getting out napkins, or counting out snacks. Ask a staff member for guidance on which snacks to prepare.

**Interact positively with the children.** Ask them questions about what they are doing, respond with praise to their accomplishments, and compliment their work and their behavior if it is positive. If a child is having behavior issues, please alert a Learning Center staff member.

**Homework Help:** All children are expected to do homework. If they say they do not have any, ask to see their homework folder.

- If a child asks for help, make sure they are asking about a specific question they have tried first.
- Have the child read the question out loud and guide them to solve it. It is sometimes tempting to do their homework for them – resist the urge!
- Keep children on task and double check their work to make sure it is completed and done correctly.
- If there is a place in the homework log for your signature, sign your name and write Children First/CIS to verify the child has completed his/her homework. If no one in the Learning Center understands the homework, note that in the log and state that the child tried their best. Please let a staff member know so they can contact the teacher.

**Clean Up:** Clean up as you go, and encourage the children to pick up after themselves. Cleaning can include putting away supplies and games, wiping down all surfaces, sweeping the floor after the children have left, washing dishes or taking out the trash. If you enjoy cleaning, feel free to clean anything before the children have arrived or after they leave.

Ask a Learning Center staff member if there is anything you can do. If you see they are too busy to respond, or are dealing with a behavior issue, please feel free to look around and do whatever you feel needs to be done, whether it is cleaning, setting up for the next activities, or interacting with a child.

Always display a positive attitude! Participate in activities! Be stilly! We want to create an encouraging atmosphere!

## When You Leave

When you are ready to leave, make sure the child you are working with is integrated back into the group. Let a staff member know you are leaving, either verbally or by catching their eye and waving, but do not feel like you must wait for their permission to leave.

**Sign out of the volunteer log.** Please know, even if a staff member is too busy or distracted to say thank you, that you are very much appreciated! You are vital to the success of the children in the program, and we could not do this work without you!

## Learning Center Rules

While we never expect volunteers to punish students for their actions, we do expect them to know and enforce certain Learning Center rules, which help ensure the safety of students, staff, and volunteers. Therefore, please be familiar with the following rules, and be kind but firm when enforcing the rules. If you are ever unsure or uncomfortable enforcing rules, please let a staff member know. They will gladly help!

- Students are expected to do their homework.
- No violence, threats of violence, or rough housing.
- No destruction of property.
- No foul language or demeaning comments to others.
- Students are not allowed in the kitchen.
- Students are not allowed in file cabinets, art supply cabinets, sports equipment closets, etc.
- A student must tell you if s/he is leaving the room for any reason, including for a bathroom break. They may not just get up and walk out of the room.
- If you see a child wandering around the Learning Center, ask him/her where they are going, and help lead them back to their group.
- A student may never leave the Learning Center alone while the center is operating.
- When it is time for the students to go home, a child 8 years of age or younger must be accompanied by an adult, older sibling, or person designated by the parent. Enforcing this is not the responsibility of the volunteer, but it is good to know.
- It is always greatly appreciated when volunteers bring in snacks or food, but we ask that you please ask the Learning Center staff first, as another snack may have been prepared. It is also important that there is enough food for all of the students.
- Never be alone with a child. **Keep doors open** if you are in a room with a group of children. **Do not allow a child to sit in your lap.** Ask them gently to sit in their own chair.
- **No knives, guns, swords, or weapons are allowed at the Learning Center at any time.** This includes toys. If you are in need of a knife as a tool or for food preparation, please discuss with the staff. Knives are to be used by adults only. They are located in the kitchen, well above the children's arm lengths in the dish cabinets. Please make sure any knives used for these purposes are put back in their designated storage location and not left out on counters, desks, or in reach of a child at any time.



## Volunteer Code of Conduct

- Use child appropriate language. Cursing, foul language, saying “stupid”, “dumb”, or “shut up” will not be tolerated.
- If you are ever uncomfortable about a situation, involve a staff member.
- Corporal punishment, meaning hitting or any other forms of physical punishment, is prohibited.
- Establish boundaries with the children. You are a role model and mentor, not a peer.
- Adults in the Learning Center must have their hands visible at all times.
- Do not bring outside food or drink. Chewing gum is not allowed in our Learning centers.
- Do not use cell phones, ear phones, etc. while volunteering. Tune into the children, not technology!
- The giving of individual gifts to a child is discouraged. If you want a specific child to receive a gift please discuss this with the LC Leader. This can be done privately away from the other children or brought to the child’s home. Gifts of any kind must be approved by the LC Leader.
- If you suspect abuse or neglect of a child, notify the staff privately or report it to Child Protective Services. If you suspect a staff member is abusing or neglecting a child, please contact Barbara Norton, Learning Center Coordinator, at 828-773-2073, immediately.

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## Volunteer Agreement

**By signing below, I am acknowledging that I have read the Children First/CIS Volunteer Handbook and understand the contents and agree to comply with the policies of Children First/CIS as stated in the Volunteer Handbook.**

**Please detach this portion and either email a scanned copy with your signature and date to [JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org) or bring to your Volunteer Orientation.**

**Please call Jodi Ford at 828-620-9091 or email [JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org](mailto:JodiF@childrenfirstbc.org) if you have any questions or need more information.**

X \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Volunteer**

**Date**