

counseling and social services, life and job readiness skills, and individualized instruction. The Next Step focuses foremost on preparing students to take the GED examination and attend college.

## Contact Page

| Contact                                                 | Email                                                                                                                     | Telephone                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
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| Taunya Melvin, Chief Operating Officer                  | taunya@nextsteppcs.org                                                                                                    | 202-905-7259                 |
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| Sesilia Conchola, Chief of Student Support & Engagement | sesilia@nextsteppcs.org                                                                                                   | 703-474-0919                 |
| Lincoln Employee Assistance Program (EAP)               | Visit GuidanceResources.com<br>(username: LFGSupport, password:<br>LFGSupport1), download the<br>GuidanceNowSM mobile app | 1-888-628-4824               |
| M. Anderson/C. Hawkins<br>Human Resources Department    | mariasuber@nextsteppcs.org<br>cameia@nextsteppcs.org                                                                      | 202-520-0406<br>202-899-6195 |
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## COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

### Equal Employment Opportunity

The Next Step is an equal opportunity employer. In accordance with applicable law, we prohibit discrimination against any applicant or employee based on any legally-recognized basis, including, but not limited to: race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, lactation, childbirth, reproductive health decisions or related medical conditions), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age (18 and over), national origin or ancestry, citizenship status, physical or mental disability, genetic information (including testing and characteristics), matriculation (e.g., being enrolled in a college or university or in a business, nursing, professional, secretarial, technical or vocational school), marital status, family responsibilities, personal appearance, veteran status, uniformed servicemember status, political affiliation, lawful use of tobacco products, unemployment status or status as a victim or the family member of a victim of domestic violence, a sexual offense or stalking or any other status protected by federal or local law. Our commitment to equal opportunity employment applies to all persons involved in our

operations and prohibits unlawful discrimination by any employee, including supervisors and co-workers.

### ***Complaint Procedure***

Any employee who believes they have been harassed, discriminated against or subject to retaliation by a co-worker, supervisor, agent, student, partner or vendor of The Next Step, in violation of the foregoing policies, or who is aware of such harassment, discrimination or retaliation against others, should immediately provide a written or verbal report to their supervisor, any other member of management or to Human Resources to report such incidents. After a report is received, a thorough and objective investigation will be undertaken. The investigation will be completed and a determination made and communicated to the employee as soon as practical. The School expects all employees to fully cooperate with any investigation conducted by the School into a complaint of proscribed harassment, discrimination or retaliation, or regarding the alleged violation of any other School policies, and during the investigation, to keep matters related to the investigation confidential.

If we determine that this policy has been violated, remedial action will be taken, commensurate with the severity of the offense. Appropriate action will also be taken to deter any future harassment or discrimination prohibited by this policy. If a complaint of prohibited harassment, discrimination or retaliation is substantiated, appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, will be taken.

The EEOC and the DC Office of Human Rights (DCOHR) will accept and investigate charges of unlawful discrimination or harassment at no charge to the complaining party.

### ***Protection Against Retaliation***

The School does not tolerate retaliatory practices. Please see the Anti-Retaliation Policy section of this document for details.

## **Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment**

The Next Step is committed to providing a work environment that is free of prohibited harassment. As a result, the School maintains a strict policy prohibiting sexual harassment and harassment against applicants and employees based on any legally-recognized status, as defined in the Equal Employment Opportunity section of this document.

The School's anti-harassment policy applies to all persons involved in its operations, regardless of their position, and prohibits harassing conduct by any employee of The Next Step, including supervisors, managers and nonsupervisory employees. This policy also protects employees from prohibited harassment by third parties, such as students, vendors, visitors, or temporary workers. If such harassment occurs in the workplace by someone not employed by The Next Step, the procedures in this policy should be followed. The workplace includes: actual worksites, any setting in which work-related

business is being conducted (whether during or after normal business hours), School-sponsored events, or School owned/controlled property.

### ***Sexual Harassment Defined***

Sexual harassment includes unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made a term or condition of employment; or
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment includes various forms of offensive behavior based on sex. The following is a non-exhaustive list of the types of conduct prohibited by this policy:

- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions (including repeated and unwelcome requests for dates);
- Offers of employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors;
- Making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances;
- Visual conduct: leering, making sexual gestures, displaying of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, websites, emails or text messages;
- Verbal conduct: making or using sexually derogatory comments, innuendos, epithets, slurs, sexually explicit jokes, or comments about an individual's body or dress, whistling or making suggestive or insulting sounds;
- Verbal and/or written abuse of a sexual nature, graphic verbal and/or written sexually degrading commentary about an individual's body or dress, sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, invitations, emails, text messages, tweets or other social media postings;
- Physical conduct: touching, assault or impeding or blocking normal movements;
- Retaliation for making reports or threatening to report sexual harassment.

### ***Other Types of Harassment***

Prohibited harassment also includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal conduct including taunting, jokes, threats, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs based on an individual's protected status;
- Visual and/or written conduct including derogatory posters, photographs, calendars, cartoons, drawings, websites, emails, text messages or gestures based on an individual's protected status; and
- Physical conduct including assault, unwanted touching or blocking normal movement because of an individual's protected status.

### ***Complaint Procedure***

Any employee who believes they have been subjected to prohibited harassment or retaliation by a co-worker, supervisor, manager, student, visitor, vendor, partner or temporary worker of The Next Step, or who believes another individual has been subject to such conduct, should report it immediately. Employees are encouraged to report concerns, even if they relate to incidents in the past, involve individuals who are no longer affiliated with The Next Step, or concern conduct occurring outside of work if it impacts the individual at work.

Complaints can be made verbally, or in writing, to the highest-ranking supervisor or manager or to Human Resources. Employees are not required to report any prohibited conduct to a supervisor or manager who may be hostile, who has engaged in such conduct, who is a close associate of the person who has engaged in such conduct, or with whom the employee is uncomfortable discussing such matters.

Employees are encouraged, but not required, to communicate to the offending person that the person's conduct is offensive and unwelcome. Any supervisor or manager who receives a complaint of harassment or retaliation must immediately report the allegation to Human Resources.

After a report is received, a thorough and objective investigation will be undertaken. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent practical and permitted by law. Investigations will be conducted as confidentially as possible and related information will only be shared with others on a need-to-know basis. The investigation will be completed and a determination made and communicated to the employee as soon as practical. The School expects all employees to fully cooperate with any investigation conducted by the School into a complaint of proscribed harassment, discrimination or retaliation, or regarding the alleged violation of any other School policies, and during the investigation, to keep matters related to the investigation confidential.

If a complaint of prohibited harassment or discrimination is substantiated, appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, will be taken. If a complaint cannot be substantiated, the School may take appropriate action to reinforce its commitment to providing a work environment free from harassment.

The EEOC and DCOHR will accept and investigate charges of unlawful discrimination and harassment at no charge to the complaining party. The nearest office of the EEOC and DCOHR can be found in your local telephone directory or online at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov).

### ***Manager's Responsibility***

All supervisors and managers are responsible for:

- Implementing this policy, which includes, but is not limited to, taking steps to prevent harassment and retaliation;
- Ensuring that all employees under their supervision have knowledge of and understand this policy;
- Promptly reporting any complaints to Human Resources so they may be investigated and resolved in timely manner;
- Taking and/or assisting in prompt and appropriate corrective action when necessary to ensure compliance with this policy; and
- Conducting themselves, at all times, in a manner consistent with this policy.

Failure to meet these responsibilities may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### ***Protection Against Retaliation***

The School does not tolerate retaliatory practices. Please see the Anti-Retaliation Policy section of this document for details.

### ***Good Faith***

The initiation of a good faith complaint of harassment or retaliation will not be grounds for disciplinary action, even if the allegations cannot be substantiated. Any individual who makes a complaint that is demonstrated to be intentionally false may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

### ***Support for Individuals Impacted by Harassment or Retaliation***

The School will strive to assist anyone who has been subjected to unwelcome harassment or retaliation to feel more comfortable in the work environment. Such assistance will be determined based on the needs of the employee, with support from their direct supervisor and guidance by the School's human resources department.

### ***Disability and Accommodation***

To comply with applicable laws ensuring equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, The Next Step will make reasonable accommodations for the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability who is an applicant or an employee, unless undue hardship and/or a direct threat to the health and/or safety of the individual or others would result. Any employee who requires an

doubt concerning the proper application of this policy, they should promptly discuss the matter with the school officials listed below and refrain from exercising responsibility on the School's behalf in any manner that might reasonably be considered to be affected by any adverse interest:

Juan Carlos Martinez, Acting Executive Director, [juancarlos@nextsteppcs.org](mailto:juancarlos@nextsteppcs.org)

Taunya Melvin, Chief of Operations, [taunya@nextsteppcs.org](mailto:taunya@nextsteppcs.org)

Maria Suber-Anderson, Human Resources Director, [mariasuber@nextsteppcs.org](mailto:mariasuber@nextsteppcs.org)

Failure to disclose the fact of a conflict or potential conflict may constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

This policy in no way prohibits employee affiliations or activities that are protected under applicable federal and local laws, including but not limited to any activity that is protected under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act, which includes the right of employees to organize collectively and to speak with others about their terms and conditions of employment.

## **Whistleblower Policy**

The Next Step requires its directors, officers, employees and volunteers to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities within the organization. As representatives of The Next Step, employees must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling responsibilities and must comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

The purpose of the Whistleblower Policy is to create an ethical and open work environment, to ensure that the organization has a governance and accountability structure that supports its mission and to encourage and enable directors, officers, employees and volunteers of the organization to raise serious concerns about the occurrence of illegal or unethical actions within the organization before turning to outside parties for resolution.

Notwithstanding anything contained in this Whistleblower Policy to the contrary, this Whistleblower Policy is not an employment contract and does not modify the fact that all employees of the organization are employees at will. Nothing contained in this policy provides any director, officers, employee or volunteer of the organization with any additional rights or causes of action not otherwise available under applicable statutory law.

### **Reporting Responsibility**

All directors, officers, employees and volunteers of The Next Step have a responsibility to report any action or suspected action taken within the organization that is illegal, unethical or violates any adopted policy of the organization ("Violations").

Anyone reporting a Violation must act in good faith, without malice to the organization or any individual in the organization and have reasonable grounds for believing that the information shared in the report indicates that a Violation has occurred. A person who makes a report does not have to prove that a Violation has occurred. However, any report which the reporter has made maliciously or any report which the reporter has good reason to believe is false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

### **No Retaliation**

No one who in good faith reports a Violation or who, in good faith, cooperates in the investigation of a Violation shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequences. Any individual within the organization who retaliates against another individual, who has reported a Violation in good faith or who, in good faith, has cooperated in the investigation of a Violation is subject to discipline, including termination of employment or volunteer status.

If you believe that an individual who has made a good faith report of a Violation or who has, in good faith, cooperated in the investigation of a Violation is suffering harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequences, please contact Human Resources, the Executive Director or any other member of the administration with whom you feel comfortable.

### **Reporting Process**

All directors, officers, employees and volunteers should address their concerns relating to a Violation to any person within the organization who can properly address those concerns. In most cases, the direct supervisor of an employee or volunteer is the person best suited to address a concern. However, if the reporter is not comfortable speaking with his/her supervisor or is not satisfied with the supervisor's response, the individual is encouraged to contact Chair of the Board or speak to anyone in management that s/he feels comfortable approaching.

The Next Step encourages anyone reporting a Violation to identify himself or herself when making a report in order to facilitate the investigation of the Violation. However, reports addressed to an individual within the organization may be submitted on a confidential basis and reports may be submitted to the Chair of the Board anonymously by sending a written statement.

### **Board of Trustees**

A supervisor, manager or board member is required to notify the Executive Committee of the Board of every report of a Violation. The Executive Committee will notify the sender and acknowledge receipt of a report of Violation within five business days, but only to the extent the sender's identity is disclosed or a return address is provided.

The Executive Committee is responsible for promptly investigating all reported Violations and for causing appropriate corrective action to be taken if warranted by the investigation.

Department Heads and CAO, in turn, report to all of the following:

Juan Carlos Martinez, Acting Executive Director, 202-246-3916

Taunya Melvin, Chief Operating Officer, 202-905-7259

Jose Reyes, Building Manager, 202-768-6847

No reentry to the building will be permitted until an official all-clear notification is given.

Employees should review this policy and the evacuation procedures and notify the Chief Operating Officer if they believe they might require an accommodation or assistance in order to comply with these procedures in the event of an emergency.

## **Drug-Free Workplace**

The School strives to provide a safe environment for employees and others and to minimize the risk of accidents and injuries. Accordingly, each employee has a responsibility to co-workers and the public to deliver services in a safe and conscientious manner. Continuing research and practical experience have proven that even limited quantities of illegal drugs, abused prescription drugs or alcohol can impair reflexes and judgment. This impairment, even when not readily apparent, can have catastrophic consequences. Moreover, studies have shown that impairment by controlled substances may last long after the user believes the effects to have worn off. The School has adopted a policy that all employees must report to work and remain completely free of illegal drugs, abused or nonprescribed prescription drugs and alcohol.

### ***Drug Use/Distribution/Possession/Impairment***

The School strictly prohibits the use, sale, attempted sale, conveyance, distribution, manufacture, purchase, attempted purchase, possession, cultivation and/or transfer of illegal drugs or other unlawful intoxicants at any time, and in any amount or any manner, regardless of occasion. "Illegal drugs" means all drugs whose use or possession is regulated or prohibited by federal, state or local law. These include prescription medication that is used in a manner inconsistent with the prescription or for which the individual does not have a valid prescription. Marijuana remains illegal as a matter of federal law and therefore the use of marijuana and marijuana products is prohibited by this policy. The School will accommodate individuals who are medically certified to use marijuana by their home state where required to do so by law, but in no case may an employee use or possess marijuana or marijuana products at work or during work time or work while impaired.

Employees are also prohibited from having any such illegal or unauthorized controlled substances in their system while at work.

Included within this prohibition are lawful controlled substances that have been illegally or improperly obtained.



### ***Alcohol Use/Distribution/Possession/Impairment***

All employees are prohibited from distributing, dispensing, possessing or using any beverage or medicine containing alcohol while at work or on duty and from coming onto School premises, reporting to work, or working with alcohol in their systems. Furthermore, lawful off-duty alcohol use, while generally not prohibited by this policy, must not interfere with an employee's job performance.

### ***Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs***

This policy does not prohibit the possession and proper use of lawfully prescribed or over-the-counter drugs. However, an employee taking medication should consult with a health care professional or review dosing directions for information about the medication's effect on the employee's ability to work safely, and promptly disclose any work restrictions to a supervisor or Human Resources. Employees are not required to reveal the name of the medication or the underlying medical condition.

The School reserves the right to transfer, reassign, place on leave of absence or take other appropriate action regarding any employee during the time the employee uses medication that may affect the ability to perform safely. The School will comply with all requirements pertaining to providing reasonable accommodations to the extent required by applicable law.

Marijuana remains illegal as a matter of federal law and therefore its use or possession violates this policy. The School will endeavor to accommodate individuals with disabilities but will not accommodate the use of medical marijuana at work or excuse other policy violations related to medical marijuana.

### ***Counseling and Rehabilitation***

Employees who voluntarily seek help for substance abuse (self-referral) by contacting the School will be provided an opportunity to pursue counseling and rehabilitation. The School will make available to these employees information about counseling and rehabilitation services. An employee who is receiving counseling and/or treatment for substance abuse may use available vacation, sick leave, or, if eligible, family and medical leave. Health insurance often covers the costs of such services, but costs not covered must be paid by the employee. The employee cannot return to work until released by a treatment provider to do so, and upon receiving a negative result on a return-to-work drug and/or alcohol test (as appropriate for that individual). In addition, the employee may be asked to submit to follow-up testing for a period following the return to work.

An employee's decision to seek help voluntarily will not be used as a basis for disciplinary action, although the individual may be transferred, given work restrictions or placed on leave, as appropriate. A request for help is considered voluntary only if it is made before the employee is asked to submit to any drug or alcohol test or is discovered to have otherwise violated this policy.

## **School's Right to Search**

The School wishes to maintain a work environment that is free of illegal drugs, alcohol, firearms, explosives or other improper materials. To this end, the School prohibits the control, possession, transfer, sale or use of such materials on its premises to the extent permitted by applicable law. We require the cooperation of all employees in administering this policy.

Desks, lockers and other storage devices are provided for the convenience of employees but remain the sole property of the School. Accordingly, they, as well as any articles found within them, can be inspected by any agent or representative of the School at any time, either with or without prior notice.

In addition, to ensure the safety and security of employees and customers, and to protect our legitimate business interests, we reserve the right to question and inspect or search any employee or other individual entering or leaving School premises or job sites. The inspection or search may include any packages or items that the individual may be carrying, including briefcases, handbags, knapsacks, shopping bags, et cetera. If a non-exempt employee is present during any search or inspection, the employee must report the time spent during the search or inspection as working time.

These items are subject to inspection and search at any time, with or without prior notice. We also may require employees to agree to reasonable inspection of their personal property and/or person while on the job or on the School's premises. The individual may be requested to self-inspect their personal property or person by displaying the contents of any packages and/or turning out their pockets, etc., in the presence of a representative of the School, typically a management employee of the same gender. The School will not tolerate any employee's refusal to submit to a search.

## **Cameras and Video Surveillance**

For purposes of workplace safety and security and to prevent theft and other misconduct the School has installed video surveillance cameras in work areas.

If there is any reported incident of theft, trespass, workplace violence, employee misconduct or any type of safety violation (hereafter collectively referred to as "security incidents"), the School will utilize its surveillance equipment as an investigatory tool. The School will also make use of its surveillance equipment to deter any future security incidents.

The School also reserves the right to actively monitor, through its surveillance cameras, any areas for safety reasons (to protect against equipment failure, breakage, or accident) or confidentiality reasons (to protect documents or other proprietary information).

Although the video surveillance described in this policy is intended to monitor for security incidents and other safety reasons at the School, it is possible that such surveillance may monitor activities not related to the School's business.