

Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools® Program 2016 Program Operating Principles



I Can Make A Difference!

Self • Family • Community • Country • World
With Hope, Education and Action

The Children's Defense Fund's **Leave No Child Behind**® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF provides a strong, effective and independent voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and children of color and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investment before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown. CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by individual donations, foundation, corporate and government grants.

Children's Defense Fund: www.childrensdefense.org
Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools®: www.freedomschools.org
Inquiries: freedomschools@childrensdefense.org

CDF FREEDOM SCHOOLS® PROGRAM

In partnership with local churches, schools, colleges and universities, and community organizations, the Children's Defense Fund, through the *CDF Freedom Schools* program, connects the complex needs of children and families to rich community resources. The *CDF Freedom Schools* model incorporates the totality of CDF's mission to ensure every child a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. In summer 2015, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program operated in 189 program sites in 96 cities and 29 states (including Washington DC). Since 1995, more than 137,000 children have had a *CDF Freedom Schools* experience, and over 16,000 young adult staff members have been trained to deliver this empowering model.

Establishing and operating a *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* program is a challenging but very important undertaking. CDF believes that the following elements are necessary to ensure a high quality program. Please review each section carefully, as applications will be approved based on the degree to which the operating principles are addressed.

CDF FREEDOM SCHOOLS® PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Sponsor Organizations must be incorporated or be public entities with their own governing bodies. The sponsor organization will have full legal responsibility for operating the *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* summer program.

The *CDF Freedom Schools* summer program will operate a minimum of seven hours daily (suggested hours of operation are 8:00 am until 3:00 pm); five days per week (Monday through Friday); for six consecutive weeks. Sites must be safe and make children feel welcomed and valued. The facility must be able to accommodate the activities which take place in the *CDF Freedom Schools* program, including sufficient classrooms to provide private space for every 10 students, a large space for Harambee, meals, performances and other large group activities and office space with a telephone. Each *CDF Freedom Schools* program should be operated in a facility that is dedicated to the operation of the program for six continuous weeks.

It is the policy of the Children's Defense Fund to ensure equal opportunity for children to participate in *CDF Freedom Schools* programs and/or adults to be employed by *CDF Freedom Schools* sponsor organizations without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, family background, or any other characteristic protected by law. CDF prohibits and will not tolerate any such discrimination or harassment.

CDF FREEDOM SCHOOLS® INTEGRATED READING CURRICULUM (IRC)

The *CDF Freedom Schools* program affirms that reading is an important key to unlock the door to children's dreams and unlimited potential. The books on which the Integrated Reading Curriculum is based represent the work of the country's best authors and illustrators. The book list is comprised of approximately 80 titles, appropriate for children ages 5 to 18. Six weeks of lesson plans are developed for approximately half of the books to help staff and children reflect on the themes *I Can Make a Difference in: My Self, My Family, My Community, My Country, and My World with Hope, Education and Action*. The remaining titles make up the collection of site library books. These books provide a rich resource for recreational reading, read alouds, and research on history and community service projects. Whatever monetary constraints a program may face, the book budget must be a priority and always be fully funded. Only the *CDF Freedom Schools* national office may order all books and coordinate book delivery to our partner organizations. The issued curriculum guide is licensed for use during Freedom Summer 2016 only. It is non-transferrable, and no copies, electronic or otherwise, may be shared with others beyond licensee without written permission from the Children's Defense Fund.

CDF FREEDOM SCHOOLS® STAFFING

Sponsor organizations, also referred to as partner organizations, must provide adequate staff to operate the program. Each sponsor organization requires an executive director, project director, site coordinator(s) and servant leader interns. The ratio of children to interns must include one adult per every 10 children. If a partner

is able to afford the costs of an additional servant leader intern or “floater”, it will help to further support site operations.

Please Note: In preparation to operate a *CDF Freedom Schools* summer program, all key staff will be required to attend trainings scheduled throughout the months prior to summer operation. For these Orientation and Training meetings, each sponsor partner is responsible for all staff travel and lodging costs. Additionally, site coordinators and servant leader interns must successfully complete an intensive national training, the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute, held at the CDF Haley Farm.

Intergenerational leadership is a key element of the Leave No Child Behind® Movement. All staff members are expected to train and work together as a team and to share in the decision-making process. Creating a climate of open communication, cooperation, and especially mutual respect among the staff will help to create that same type of environment for children.

Executive Directors are responsible for entering into the Summer Agreement with the Children's Defense Fund; securing funds, space, liability insurance, meals for program operation; organizing a local community advisory committee or other vehicle for community support. In conjunction with the project director and site coordinator, the executive director recruit, hire, manage, and supervise staff. Executive directors also are responsible for the oversight and management of the program to ensure that its *CDF Freedom Schools* program is in full compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and standards (including fire, safety, health, licensing, civil rights, disability access, and employment), as well as all CDF guidelines. The executive director must provide employees with a written document that includes an explanation of compensation, attendance policy and expectations that will govern their summer employment with the organization. Executive directors must provide first aid training for all staff and work with project directors and site coordinators to convene a mid-point retreat for staff. New executive directors must attend the ***CDF Freedom Schools Orientation and Training Meeting*** at CDF Haley Farm on **Wednesday, February 10 through Friday, February 12, 2016**. Participants should arrive on the evening of Tuesday, **February 9** and depart at 2:00 pm or later on Friday, **February 12**. Sponsor organizations are responsible for all travel and lodging costs associated with attending this mandatory training.

Project Directors must be at least twenty-one years of age and have completed at least one year of college. Project directors are responsible for maintaining communication with the *Children's Defense Fund's Freedom Schools* national staff; recruiting, hiring and managing local staff; day-to-day supervision of site coordinators and servant leader interns; making arrangements for national and local staff training events; and meeting weekly with the site coordinator(s) and servant leader interns. In collaboration with the executive director, project directors assist in securing a location for the site. **Project directors must be identified no later than February 16, 2016**, and all new project directors must attend the ***CDF Freedom Schools Orientation and Training Meeting*** at CDF Haley Farm on **March 10 - 13, 2016**. Participants should arrive in the evening of Wednesday, **March 9** and depart 2:00 pm or later on Sunday, **March 13**. Sponsor organizations are responsible for all travel and lodging costs associated with attending this mandatory training.

If a sponsor organization hires an Ella Baker Trainer to serve as a new project director, that person must attend March Orientation and Training at the expense of the sponsor organization.

Site Coordinators must be at least twenty-one years of age and have completed at least one year of college. Site coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the program model is implemented correctly. Site coordinators also are responsible for the management of the day-to-day activities of the site, ensuring servant leader interns have necessary materials and supplies for the classroom and children. Site coordinators are key to maintaining team spirit among the local staff and must conduct debrief sessions at the end of each day. During the debrief sessions, site coordinators should provide technical assistance and supportive feedback to the servant leader interns on all aspects of their work. Site coordinators, or other designees, should design and coordinate parent workshops. Site coordinators and project directors should maintain open, friendly communication among parents, staff, and executive directors. **Site coordinators must be identified no later than February 16, 2016**, and new site coordinators are required to attend the ***CDF Freedom Schools Orientation and Training Meeting*** at CDF Haley Farm on **March 10 - 13, 2016**. Participants should arrive in the evening of Wednesday, **March 9** and depart 2:00 pm or later on Sunday, **March 13**. Sponsor organizations are responsible for all travel and lodging costs associated with attending this mandatory training.

All site coordinators (regardless of the number of years in that role) must attend the *CDF Freedom Schools* National Site Coordinator Pre-Training and June Training. Sponsor organizations will be responsible for travel costs associated with this mandatory June training.

If the sponsor organization hires an Ella Baker Trainer to serve as a site coordinator, the sponsor organization must identify an assistant site coordinator to manage site coordinator responsibilities during week two of national training. This person may be an advanced intern.

Servant Leader Interns should be 19-30 years old, have completed at least one year of college, and have plans to complete the college degree. Servant leader interns are primarily young adults and recent college graduates who play a key role in the *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* program. Servant leader interns are responsible for a maximum of ten students and serve as teachers during classroom activities. A majority of servant leader interns should be from the local community or attend a local university; however, including interns from other parts of the country enriches the summer experience. Servant leader interns must be mature, smart, and responsible and operate with integrity. They should be selected for their energy and enthusiasm, their ability to engage children and their willingness to work hard with a spirit of servant leadership. **Servant leader interns must be chosen by April 12, 2016 and those who are serving for their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years must attend the CDF Freedom Schools June National Training.** Sponsor organizations are responsible for travel costs associated with this mandatory training. Through the program, servant leader interns have access to further leadership development activities, legislative updates, and networking opportunities geared toward continued direct service and advocacy on behalf of children.

LOCAL TRAINING

Local Trainings are conducted by the sponsor organization prior to and after June National Training. Sponsor organizations are expected to conduct local training for their project directors, site coordinators, and servant leader interns before the site coordinators and servant leader interns travel to the June National Training. At this time, the servant leader interns are advised of what to expect at June National Training and are given instruction on CDF and the high standards of service to which they are called. Following national training, a post-training session should be conducted in conjunction with the site opening, classroom set-up, child enrollment, and parent/family engagement. Workshops on positive discipline, non-violent conflict resolution, parent/family engagement, first aid, emergency evacuation plans, responsibilities in recognizing child abuse, evaluation and data collection, and other important topics should be discussed at the local training.

AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

During summers at local program sites, afternoons consist of fun, educational activities that enhance the IRC and the *CDF Freedom Schools* model of cultural enrichment, family engagement, intergenerational servant leadership, community involvement, conflict resolution, and social action. Activities may include arts and crafts, dance, music, field trips, sports, rehearsal for finale, and social action and community service projects.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND SOCIAL ACTION

In choosing sponsors, CDF seeks organizations that have a demonstrated record of responding to the needs of children and families in their communities. The *CDF Freedom Schools* program stresses civic engagement through social action projects designed to help children, parents, staff, and community partners realize that they can make a difference. In addition to guiding children through the lessons of the Integrated Reading Curriculum, servant leader interns are responsible for engaging the entire community in local and national social action projects that include, but are not limited to: rallies, town hall meetings, letter writing, phone and email campaigns to local and national legislators, voter registration drives, health and immunization projects, etc. Participants will be encouraged and empowered to continue service, advocacy and leadership as a part of CDF's Leave No Child Behind[®] movement after the summer *CDF Freedom Schools* program has ended. Partners will be provided with a Social Action Administrative Handbook for use at their program site(s).

PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Parents and caregivers are important partners in their children's education and must be offered the support and skills they need to help their children succeed. They are required to demonstrate their daily commitment to the program and to their children's education and development by becoming actively involved. Parents and caregivers are invited to serve as read aloud guests during Harambee; to assist in the classroom, with afternoon

activities, on the playground, and at mealtime; to plan and chaperone field trips; and to support their children's social action and community service projects. Parents and caregivers also are required to participate in weekly workshops focused on the educational and social development of children, parenting, CDF initiatives, and other activities that build parent empowerment and family success.

NUTRITIOUS MEALS

If children are to have a *Healthy Start* in life, they must eat nutritious meals and snacks and develop healthy eating habits. *CDF Freedom Schools* programs must provide two nutritious meals (e.g., meals that meet or exceed USDA Daily Requirements for children) and a snack each day the program is in operation. Programs can satisfy this requirement in a variety of ways, such as collaborating with local school districts, using the USDA Summer Food Service Program, or contracting with private or community providers of meals. CDF will provide an orientation to the USDA Summer Food Service Program to all new staff.

EVALUATION

CDF Freedom Schools sites and sponsors are expected to fully participate in various assessment and evaluation activities, such as site visits, surveys, debriefings and research studies conducted by or on behalf of the Children's Defense Fund. The information and analyses obtained through these activities help us to improve and expand programs, provide guidance and support for sites, raise funds to sustain and enhance the program, document the impact of the model, and provide information for sponsor organizations to assist in fundraising. Sponsor organizations also are expected to monitor their local programs to assess overall effectiveness in meeting stated goals for children, parents and servant leader interns. Timely submission of attendance and enrollment data, end of program reports, and other requested information to the *CDF Freedom Schools* national office is required.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

The sponsor organization's executive director (or his/her designee) is expected to immediately inform the national staff of any changes in personnel or programming (e.g. staffing, number of children served, new hires, terminations, dates of operation, etc.). **Failure to do so in a timely manner will jeopardize the partnership between CDF and the sponsor organization.** In turn, the national office maintains regular communication with *CDF Freedom Schools* sponsors through the *CDF Freedom Schools* website and email. Postal mail is utilized for large mailings only. **Site staff members are encouraged to check email regularly for updates from the national office at freedomschools@childrensdefense.org.**

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Securing and maintaining financial resources is essential to a high quality *CDF Freedom Schools* program. Programs must be able to operate at **no charge** to families. In 2016, the estimated cost for fees payable to the Children's Defense Fund for a site serving up to 50 children (6 staff) is approximately \$14,250. This covers comprehensive services provided by CDF throughout the year including National Training participation, books, materials, curriculum development, and assessment. **Partners are expected to make two payment installments for the total amount due, the first 50% by March 1, 2016 and the remainder by April 11, 2016. Those who have not made full payment by April 11 will not be permitted to attend the mandatory June National Training.** Other operational costs not payable to CDF include salaries, supplies and equipment, meals, field trips, travel, administrative expenses and local training. The total financial commitment differs at each site. For questions, please contact Allison Merfeld, Senior Research and Program Operations Manager at 202-662-3589 or email at amerfeld@childrensdefense.org.