

Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools[®]

Program Operating Principles 2009



Children's Defense Fund



I Can Make A Difference!

Self ✧ Family ✧ Community ✧ Country ✧ World

Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools

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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. While each *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* program is unique, all *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* programs are a part of a greater *CDF Freedom Schools* Movement. In summer 2008, there were 132 sites across 62 cities and 24 states serving nearly 9,000 children and staffed by nearly 1,000 Servant Leader Interns. Since 1995, over 70,000 children have had a *CDF Freedom Schools* experience, and over 7,000 college students, and 1,500 adult site coordinators and project directors have been trained to deliver this powerful 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 needed to ensure a high quality summer *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* 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**

The *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools* summer program will operate a minimum of seven hours each day (suggested hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.); five days per week (Monday through Friday); for six consecutive weeks¹. 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; office space and a telephone; and safe outdoor areas where children can play. Each *CDF Freedom Schools* program should be operated in a facility that is dedicated to the operation of the program for six continuous weeks.

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 writers and illustrators. The book list is comprised of approximately 80 titles, all of which have been reviewed and found to be 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, Family, Community, Country, and World*. The remaining titles make up the collection of on-site library books. These books provide a rich resource for recreational reading, read-alouds, and research on history and community service projects. Whatever monetary restraints a program may face, the book budget must be a priority and must always be fully funded. The *CDF Freedom Schools* national office orders all books and coordinates book delivery to our partner organizations.

STAFFING

Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools partner organizations must provide adequate staff to operate the program. Each partner organization requires an Executive Director, Project Director, Site Coordinator(s) and Servant Leader Interns to operate a site. *CDF Freedom Schools* programs serve a minimum of 50 children, and the ratio of children to Interns must not exceed 10:1. Hiring one or two

¹ Returning Sponsors may continue to operate a five-week program until a six-week program is sustained.

extra Servant Leader Interns is highly recommended. Please note: in preparation to operate a *CDF Freedom Schools* summer program, all key staff will be required to attend meetings scheduled throughout the months prior to summer operation. All new Executive Directors are required to attend our February Orientation and Training meeting at CDF's Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, TN from Friday, February 20 through Sunday, February 22, 2009. All Project Directors and Site Coordinators are required to attend our March Orientation and Training at CDF's Alex Haley Farm from Thursday, March 26 through Sunday, March 29, 2009. For both of 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, convened at the Children's Defense Fund Alex Haley Farm.

Intergenerational leadership is a key element of the Leave No Child Behind® Movement. All staff is 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 mutual respect among the staff will help to create that same type of environment for children.

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 sponsoring organization's Executive Director is responsible for entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Children's Defense Fund; securing funds, space, and meals for program operation; organizing a local community advisory committee or other vehicle for community support and in conjunction with the Project Director and Site Coordinator recruit, hire and manage 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. 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 (or their designee) are expected to attend the *CDF Freedom Schools* Orientation and Training Meeting at Haley Farm on February 20 – 22, 2009. Sponsor Organizations are responsible for all travel and lodging costs associated with attending this mandatory meeting.**

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 January 20, 2009, and are required to attend the *CDF Freedom Schools* Orientation and Training Meeting at Haley Farm on March 26 - 29, 2009. Sponsor Organizations are responsible for all travel and lodging costs associated with attending this mandatory meeting.**

SITE COORDINATORS are responsible for ensuring that the *CDF Freedom Schools* program model is implemented properly. 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 *CDF Freedom Schools* staff and must conduct debrief sessions at the end of each day. During the debrief sessions, Site Coordinators should

provide technical assistance and feedback to the Servant Leader Interns on all aspects of their work. Site Coordinators, or other designee, should design and coordinate parent workshops. Site Coordinators and Project Directors should maintain open communication among parents, staff, and Executive Directors. **Site Coordinators must be selected no later than February 27, 2009.** All Site Coordinators are required to attend the *CDF Freedom Schools* Orientation and Training Meeting at Haley Farm on March 26th - 29th, 2009. Sponsor Organizations are responsible for all travel and lodging costs associated with attending this mandatory March meeting. All Site Coordinators (regardless of the number of years he/she has been a Site Coordinator) must attend the *CDF Freedom Schools* National Site Coordinator Pre-Training and June Training, May 27th – June 7th, 2009 at Haley Farm. Sponsor Organizations will be responsible for travel costs associated with this mandatory June meeting.

SERVANT LEADER INTERNS are college-aged² 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 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 17, 2009** and are required to attend the *CDF Freedom Schools* National Training at Haley Farm on May 31st – June 7th, 2009. Sponsor Organizations are responsible for travel costs associated with this mandatory meeting. Servant Leader Interns are welcomed into the Children's Defense Fund's Youth Leadership Network for Children (YLNC), the youth service and leadership development arm of CDF. Through this CDF initiative, 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 PRE & POST NATIONAL TRAINING is conducted by the sponsor organization prior to national training. The national office will provide materials, training, and technical assistance to ensure that all Servant Leader Interns are prepared for the rigor and high expectations that characterize the June national training. 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 site wide positive discipline, non-violent conflict resolution, parent/family engagement, first aide, emergency evacuation plans, responsibilities in recognizing child abuse, evaluation and data collection, and other important topics should be discussed.

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, parental engagement, intergenerational 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.

² 19-30 years of age or have completed at least one year of college or employment (paid or volunteer). Servant Leader Interns may not be high school students.

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 and must 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.

PARENT/FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Parents and other family members are important partners in their children’s education and must be offered the support and skills they need to help their children succeed. Parents are required to demonstrate their daily commitment to the program and to their children’s education and development by becoming actively involved in the *CDF Freedom Schools* program. Parents and other family members are invited to serve as read aloud guest during Harambee; to assist in the classroom and 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, or a representative of the household, 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.

EVALUATION

CDF Freedom Schools sites and sponsors are expected to 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 *Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools* 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. Project Directors are responsible for submitting Servant Leader Intern and child assessments, mid program reports, end of program reports, and other relevant data to the *CDF Freedom Schools* National Office.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

The Sponsor Organization's Executive Director (or his/her designee) is expected to inform the national staff of any changes in personnel and programming (e.g. staffing, number of children served, date 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 is encouraged to check email regularly for updates from the national office.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Financial resources are essential to a high quality program. *CDF Freedom Schools* programs must be able to operate at no charge to families and should serve no fewer than 50 children. In 2009, the estimated cost for fees payable to the Children's Defense Fund for a site serving 50 children (6 staff) is \$9,450. These fees offset the cost for national training, the IRC Guide, IRC books, site library books and books for children's personal libraries. Other operational costs include salaries, supplies and equipment, meals, field trips, travel, administrative fees and local training. The total financial commitment differs at each site. The estimated total cost for sites serving 50 children is approximately \$58,000. For questions, please contact Wylie Chen, Senior Manager for Operations and Accountability, at 202-662-3588 or email at wchen@childrensdefense.org.