



Maya Angelou Academy Handbook

2022-2023



"DO THE BEST YOU CAN UNTIL
YOU KNOW BETTER.
THEN WHEN YOU KNOW
BETTER, DO BETTER."

- Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou Academy (K-5)
3695 High Street
Oakland, CA 94619
(510)434-7990

Hours of Operation: 8:00am to 4:00pm

For more information about Seneca Family of Agencies, visit www.senecafoa.org

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SECTION I: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

While we understand that there are many possible paths that may have brought you to Seneca Family of Agencies, you are now a part of a community that is unlike any other educational environment you may have experienced. Driven by our mission to develop an outstanding and unconditional continuum of care for students who require support beyond what is currently available in their local public school, Seneca Family of Agencies has created an extensive array of services and programs that have significantly improved outcomes for thousands of children and adolescents with emotional, behavioral, and learning difficulties.

As you will experience in all parts of the program, the moral and ethical tone of the school is maintained by a commitment to Seneca's core values: Love and Compassion; Respect; Curiosity; Hope and Courage; and Joy. These values guide all policies, procedures, and ways of interacting with students and their families.

At Seneca Family of Agencies, we learn together in a warm, spirited, caring environment. Together, we celebrate the joys of new discovery and a sense of pride in each other's accomplishments. Our commitment to Seneca's core values can be seen in all aspects of our work with the students and families we seek to serve. Our goal is to foster a love of knowledge and enhance the wonder of learning with a rich and varied curriculum. Once you have come to know Seneca Family of Agencies, we believe you will agree with us that one of the greatest assets of the program is our staff. Through diverse styles and interests, they are able to provide a space that is healing, humanizing, and empowering for our students.

One of the fundamental expressions of our commitment to your student is our practice of “**unconditional care**”. Once you are a part of this community, we are committed to ensuring that your student receives the level of support necessary to experience success. We offer a robust academic program with intensive therapeutic support and a structured behavior modification program.

What makes Seneca Family of Agencies different?

Seneca Family of Agencies maintains an outstanding success rate for working with students who have been unsuccessful in other educational settings. Leading to this are the following components:

- We offer a high staff-to-student ratio.
- We develop strong, meaningful relationships with students.
- We provide clear expectations and a predictable, consistent structure.
- We strive to form a strong partnership with the key adults in each child's life.
- We meet each student at their current academic level and create individualized goals aimed at high levels of success.



Communication

It has been proven that students progress more rapidly when they see the connection between home and school. For this reason, classroom staff are eager to develop a working relationship with you. Each teacher has a voice mailbox for you to leave messages throughout the school day. Your student's therapist is also a great primary point of contact. We encourage you to let the classroom team know of any situations at home that may impact your child in the classroom so that we may best support him/her.

In the event of a significant incident, the staff will notify you within 24 hours.

School Events

While working to help our students successfully return to their home school, we strive to make their school experience as positive as possible. In efforts to do so, we plan many special, fun, and engaging events throughout the year. We will celebrate successes with formal awards ceremonies and graduation or promotional ceremonies.

- Back To School Night
- Trunk or Treat
- Fall Family & Staff Dinner
- Winter Wonderland
- Black History Month Celebration
- Talent Show/Poetry Slam
- Cultures of the World
- Art Show
- End of the Year Celebration
- Promotion Ceremony

Fieldtrips

To provide a well-rounded and engaging curriculum for our students, we schedule fieldtrips and community outings throughout the school year. Behavioral expectations to be eligible to attend a field trip are determined and posted at least a week before the trip. Permission slips are sent home with students and need to be signed and returned before the day of the fieldtrip for the student to attend. Some examples of fieldtrips we may go on are:

- Museums
- Science Centers
- Zoos
- Planetariums
- Aquariums
- Libraries
- Wilderness Hikes

Fieldtrips are meant to enrich our students' educational experience, but students often must meet specific behavioral expectations. Field trip attendance may depend on a student's eligibility, which may be determined by the staff team and family.

SECTION II: SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

School rules ensure safe and predictable learning environments.

Attendance

School attendance is vital to each student's achievement. Students who develop patterns of good attendance are much more likely to be successful both academically and socially.

Attendance Matters!

- When students attend school, they are provided a space to heal individually and collectively in order to transform themselves, their community, and the world.
- When students attend school, they get better grades, score better on standardized tests and are more likely to go to college.
- It is our responsibility to teach students the importance of attendance now, so they are prepared for the future.
- It's the law. Parents and caregivers are responsible for ensuring that their children go to school. When parents are at work, students should be safe at school.

Parents Influence Attendance – Get involved and let us know if you need support!

- Plan family vacations for non-school days only.
- Schedule non-emergency medical and dental appointments after school hours.
- Make sure your child's school has your accurate daytime contact information, including cell phone number and/or e-mail address.
- Make sure your school is aware of any problems that may be causing your child to miss school.
- Every student is expected to attend school daily, unless there is valid justification for his/her absence (EC 48200).

Excused Absences

A student shall be excused from school when the absence is:

- Due to illness.
- Due to quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer.
- For the purpose of attending the funeral services of a member of his or her immediate family.
- For justifiable personal reasons including, but not limited to, an appearance in court, or observance of a holiday or ceremony of his or her religion.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence for reasons other than those listed above is deemed unexcused and will require the student to make up any work missed during their time out of class. Unexcused absences may also significantly impact your student's grade. Students who fall below our minimum attendance expectation may be discharged from the program.

Attendance Phone Calls

If your student is going to be absent from school, please call the school as soon as you know about this absence at **510-434-7990**. If you call during school hours, you can report the absence to the person on the phone. If you call before 8 am or after 4 pm, please leave a voicemail stating your name, the student's name, the date of the absence, and the reason for the absence. If we do not hear from a parent/guardian/care taker by 10 am, we will begin making phone calls in order to make sure that the parent/guardian/care taker is aware that their student is not at school and to determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

If you know in advance that your student will be absent, please alert your student's therapist or teacher of the upcoming absence, and our teachers will do their best to send work home with the student before his/her absence in order to help the student stay caught up with academic work.

COVID Procedures

As we continue to live with COVID in the picture, we continue to follow safety procedures to maintain students, families, and staff healthy while keeping services accessible in-person. We ask that parents/guardians/care takers continue to notify school staff if the student is experiencing any symptoms, there was a potential exposure, or a confirmed positive COVID test.

If the student arrives at school with 2 or more symptoms or fever, will be isolated to prevent other students from getting sick. At this time, staff will contact the COVID Response Team (CRT) for further guidance. CRT will ask for the student to be picked up, have a COVID test administered, and return when student is at least 24 hours symptom free and have obtained a negative COVID test result. The procedures are despite the student's vaccination status. As a reminder, the COVID test must be administered by a parent/guardian/care giver as they are not at the age to administer their own tests.

Dress Code

Students should always dress in appropriate school attire.

- Safe running shoes (no metal-toed or open-toed shoes)
- Active wear clothes that appropriately cover the body (no tank tops, bike shorts, or clothing with inappropriate graphics or language)

Personal Items

Students are not allowed to share money or trade personal items or possessions at any time.

We recommend not bringing any items of value to school. Without prior permission, students are not allowed to use any non-school items including toys, sports equipment, mp3 players, etc. Cellular phone use during school hours is prohibited. Items that are confiscated during school will be given back to the parents/guardians in the next family therapy session or another pre-arranged meeting.

Weapons or anything that could be used as a weapon will be taken from the student and will only be returned to the parent/caregiver in certain circumstances following a family meeting.

Technology

Learning is an ongoing interaction between students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Using technology within education can help augment the curriculum while allowing students to better learn and comprehend the material.

The use of technology resources is a privilege, not a right. Students and staff will be provided with an acceptable use agreement to make both students and staff aware of the responsibilities associated with efficient, ethical, and lawful use of technology resources. If your student violates any of the User Terms and Conditions named in the policy, privileges may be terminated, and disciplinary action could be applied. When applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved.

Students are responsible for:

- Using computers, laptops, iPads in a responsible and ethical manner.
- Obeying general school rules concerning behavior and communication that apply to computer, laptop, iPad use.

- Using all technology resources in an appropriate manner so as to not damage school equipment.
- Complying with trademark and copyright laws and all license agreements. Ignorance of the law is not immunity. If you are unsure, ask a teacher.

Student activities strictly prohibited while in school:

- Illegal installation or transmission of copyrighted materials
- Any action that violates existing school policy or public law
- Sending, accessing, uploading, downloading, or distributing offensive, profane, threatening, pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit materials
- Internet/Computer Games
- Spamming-Sending mass or inappropriate emails
- Gaining access to other student's accounts, files, and/or data
- Vandalism (any malicious attempt to harm or destroy hardware, software or data, including, but not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses or computer programs that can infiltrate computer systems and/or damage software components) of school equipment will not be allowed
- Transmission or accessing materials that are obscene, offensive, threatening or otherwise intended to harass or demean recipients.
- Violation of applicable state or federal law will result in disciplinary action.

Student Searches

The California Education Code allows school officials to conduct searches of students under certain circumstances; searches are based on reasonable suspicion. If a student has engaged in conduct that causes a trained staff member to have *reasonable suspicion* that the student has committed, or is about to commit, a crime or has violated statutory laws or school rules, the staff member may conduct a search of that student that is not excessively intrusive, and is done out of sight of other students.

Leaving Campus

Students of any age should not leave campus without permission. Students may be physically prevented from leaving when safety concerns exist. To further ensure their safety, we will notify families if a child continues to attempt to leave, and may notify the local sheriff or police department as a last resort if determined this step is needed to maintain the safety of the child.

CPS Reporting

As legally mandated reporters, Seneca Family of Agencies' staff must report any allegations or suspicion of child abuse to Child Protective Services, regardless of our personal opinions. Seneca Family of Agencies does not conduct child abuse investigations, as this is the role of CPS. In many circumstances, we attempt to involve the family when we are required to notify CPS; however, CPS dictates what information we can release.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Seneca Family of Agencies strives to maintain a safe and welcoming learning environment that is free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other inappropriate verbal, visual, written or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Seneca Family of Agencies recognizes that sexual harassment can cause embarrassment, feelings of powerlessness, loss of self-confidence, reduced ability to perform schoolwork, and increased absenteeism or tardiness.

To promote an environment free of sexual harassment, any staff person shall take appropriate actions to respond to accusations of sexual harassment by students or staff members. This may include removing vulgar or offending graffiti, establishing school rules, and providing staff in-service or client instruction

and counseling as needed. Staff shall discuss this policy with students in age-appropriate ways and shall assure them that they need not endure any form of sexual harassment. The sexual harassment policy will be reviewed with clients annually.

Students or staff members are encouraged to immediately report incidents of sexual harassment to a therapist, teacher, or supervisor. Complaints of sexual harassment shall be promptly investigated in a way that ensures the privacy of all parties.

Bullying in Schools

Bullying is when someone hurts or scares another person repeatedly. The behavior is never appropriate and is intentional. This repeated and hurtful act includes name calling, inflicting physical pain, exclusion, public humiliation, hurtful pranks and defacing one's property. Bullying involves an imbalance of power. The innocent one being bullied feels alone, depressed, and scared, and feels they have nowhere to turn.

Bullying includes:

- Calling someone hurtful and derogatory names
- Spreading lies and bad rumors about someone
- Being mean and teasing someone
- Hitting, punching, shoving, spitting and physically hurting someone
- Social exclusion or isolation ... not including someone in a group
- Getting certain kids or teens to "gang up" on others
- Having money or other things taken or damaged
- Being threatened or being forced to do things

Bullying also can happen on-line or electronically. Cyber-bullying is when kids or teens bully each other using the Internet, mobile phones or other cyber technology. This can include:

- Sending mean text, e-mail, or instant messages
- Posting nasty pictures or messages about others in blogs or on Web sites
- Using someone else's username to spread rumors or lies about someone
- Stealing someone's password and spreading rumors about someone else (making it seem like that person is the Cyber-bully)

We believe that everyone has the right to be who they are without bias or judgment. We recognize the insensitivity, bias, bigotry and ignorance is prejudice and discrimination. We expect our students to honor and respect everyone ...no matter what their beliefs, abilities, race, culture, sexual identity, or other characteristics are. We expect our students to be kind and considerate of others and their feelings. We are all different, yet we share a community! We share the joys of being fair and tolerant and making our shared communities and world a better place.

**Information provided by <http://www.stompoutbullying.org>

Preparing for Emergencies

Seneca Family of Agencies works diligently to ensure that our school community is prepared for an emergency. Every school has a detailed Emergency Plan that provides guidance for the school staff. In addition to conducting regular drills, each school stocks emergency supplies to sustain students and staff in the event of a major emergency.

What can parents do to be better prepared?

Parents can be better prepared for an emergency by doing the following:

1. Visit your child's school and ask about what will happen during an emergency.
2. Make sure that your child's Emergency Contact information is current and correct.
3. Instruct your child to take all emergency drills seriously. Regularly review home and school emergency procedures with your child.

Responding to Emergencies

If there is an emergency, parents should remember that schools are among the safest buildings in the community. As required by the Field Act, California public schools are built to a higher standard than other public buildings; therefore, schools will generally not sustain the same damage as residential or commercial buildings. If you have questions about the Seneca Family of Agencies Emergency and Disaster Plan, please do not hesitate to ask your child's teacher, therapist, or site administrator.

Please remember that students will only be released to a person whose name is listed on the student's Emergency Card. Parents must make sure that the Emergency Contact Information is current and correct.

Health and Well-Being

Medication

Parents/caregivers should notify Seneca Family of Agencies immediately if their student needs to take medication, including inhalers, at school. A pharmacy-labeled bottle containing the current dosing instructions is required and the nursing staff or school principal can provide guardians with the required forms to fill out. A nurse or trained staff member will administer all required medications and keep a log. Please be aware that students are not allowed to be in possession of medication of any kind, including over-the-counter medication, on the school bus or at school. Medication refills should be brought to campus by parents/caregivers rather than the student. If there is a change in medication, please notify the campus nurse immediately. You will need to sign a new medication form and bring in a new prescription bottle with the new label.

Immunizations

In accordance with California law, parents of students at Seneca Family of Agencies are required to update students' immunizations and provide new copies to the school for review. As required by law, students who do not have updated immunization records on file at the school may be excluded from school until such records are received. Our staff will communicate with you regularly regarding the need for updated records. Please provide us with all necessary information so that your child's enrollment at school is not jeopardized.

Vision and Hearing

As a routine part of our program, Seneca Family of Agencies partners with the school districts to provide all students with vision and hearing screenings. When students first enroll in our program, we determine if they need a screening. If they are, either our nursing staff or district personnel will perform the screenings. Students' results will be reported during their Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Should we find that a student did not pass her/his screening, you will also be notified in writing so that you can follow up with your child's doctor.

If you do not wish for your student to participate in these free hearing and vision screenings, you can contact us at any time. Please call the school and ask for the nursing department to request that your child be excluded.



SECTION III: THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Our goal is to engage our students to invest and transform themselves, their community, and the world!

Educational Overview

At Maya Angelou Academy, highly qualified Special Education teachers provide a culturally responsive and differentiated instruction aligned to Common Core Standards to assist students in accessing grade level curriculum. Teachers emphasize community, while using technology and classroom counselors to provide small group instruction and academic intervention to support and challenge students. Our focus is on identity development, collective healing, and increasing skill levels in reading, writing, and math to build each students' confidence in their capabilities towards the pathway of their choosing.

Commitment to Social Justice

All of our Seneca Non-Public Schools are committed to combatting the inequities that exist within education and mental health. The education we provide engages in culturally relevant and responsive practices where students learn and discuss power dynamics in relationship to oppressive systems and ideologies around race and it's intersections (class, gender, sexuality, etc...). Our team further engages in decolonizing therapeutic practices to honor our students and families' experiences, cultures, histories, and identities. With a social justice lens and a commitment to collective liberation, we hope our students become agents of change for themselves, their communities, and the world.

NPS Academics

The Academic Services at Seneca's Nonpublic Schools (NPS) acknowledge the existence of the opportunity gap and the inequitable schooling practices that our students have experienced, and we seek to address these challenges through our programming. The academic programming at each NPS builds a rich educational environment that is:

- **Equitable:** schedules, coursework, and pedagogical approaches are highly individualized and take a culturally responsive lens that acknowledges and celebrates our unique students
- **Integrated:** our schools provide opportunities to accelerate students' academic development in concert with their social-emotional and personal development
- **Innovative:** our programs and structures are innovatively designed to disrupt student cycles of failure in public schools through collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking

- **Empowering:** we support students in developing their own agency by building skills in self-advocacy, leadership, and effective communication – all in preparation for life outside of school

Every class at each Seneca NPS is designed to address the duality of state content standards and students' IEP goals, which address learning differences while supporting students in feeling connected, safe, and driven to improve.

Make-Up Work

At times, students may fall behind in completing academic work. Students may be asked to complete missing work during non-academic times to improve their ability to master concepts. If we recognize a pattern of work-avoidance we will work with the team, and possibly with their families to create an intervention plan to help them reengage in the academic work.

Homework

Occasionally, your child may be asked to complete work at home. Homework is used to target specific learning-areas and to reinforce expectations and accountability for your young learner. Feel free to call the teacher with any questions.

Quarterly Reports / Report Cards

You will receive quarterly updates on your student's progress, achievements, and efforts in both academic and behavioral areas, including IEP goal areas. If you have questions or concerns about this report or about your student's progress more generally, please schedule a time to speak with your student's teacher or the principal.

Transitioning to Public School

From the moment your child enters Seneca Family of Agencies, discussions will begin around his/her transition back to a less restrictive environment. Extensive planning will be ongoing as the student masters the skills necessary to be successful in the public-school setting. Seneca Family of Agencies prides itself on developing highly supportive transition plans that are designed to offer as much support as needed once a child has demonstrated success while at Seneca.

Each school district will plan the transition differently depending on the student's age and level of services needed, with the ultimate goal of 100% transition back to the public-school campus.

Testing and Assessment

Throughout the school year, your child's teacher will be administering short teacher-created assessments to collect data on your child's understanding and progress. Twice a year, the teacher will be administering norm-referenced assessments such as STAR Literacy assessment to measure your child's learning. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your child's teacher or that administration team. In addition, Standardized State Testing is administered in accordance with state regulations and IEP accommodations.

Students' Right to Confidential Communication

Seneca Family of Agencies ensures that students have the right to private and confidential communication with members of the IEP team at the student's discretion. Students can contact members of the IEP team who are not at the school site by phone during appropriate times of the day. Upon intake, the members of the IEP team are reviewed with the student. Students are informed of their right to contact a member of this team at any time, and the proper way in which to do so. At the end of each academic term, teachers review progress towards IEP goals, and the policy is reviewed again with each student.

FERPA: Overview and Annual Notice of Parent and Eligible Student Rights

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)¹ is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA also gives parents certain rights regarding their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he, she, or they reach the age of 18 or attend a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are called *eligible students*.

Your rights under FERPA include the right to:

- **Review educational records.**
You have the right to access and review the student's educational records.
- **Request changes to records they believe are inaccurate.**
You have the right to request that we, the school, correct educational records that you believe are inaccurate or misleading. If we decline to make the desired change, you have the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if we still decline to make the desired change, you have the right to add a statement to the educational record sharing your perspective.
- **Know which records can be disclosed without their consent.**
Generally, we must have written permission from you in order to release any information from the student's educational record. However, FERPA allows us to share these records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions²:
 - School officials
 - School transfers
 - Audit purposes
 - Coordination of financial aid
 - Organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of the school
 - Accrediting organizations
 - Judicial orders
 - Health and safety emergencies
 - State and local authorities within a juvenile justice system

Additionally, we may disclose, without consent, *directory information*. However, we must tell you about directory information and give you time to request that we not disclose any directory information. This document serves as your notification.

Directory information includes a student's:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Date and place of birth
- Honors and awards
- Dates of attendance

We will not disclose directory information within the first two weeks of enrollment. Please notify us upon enrollment or at any time during enrollment if you do not want us to release directory information.

The information in this entry is based on the U.S. Department of Education's (USDOE) overview of FERPA.

*For more detailed information, please visit
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.*

¹ 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99

² 34 CFR § 99.31



SECTION IV: THE THERAPEUTIC PROGRAM

The therapeutic program is a fundamental component of our services at Seneca Family of Agencies. All students are offered individual, group, and family therapy.

Assessment

In collaboration with our students and their caregivers, the treatment team undertakes a comprehensive assessment process in order to identify strengths and resources, needs and concerns, and possible pathways for success. We utilize the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) to help guide our assessment process, and clinicians write a clinical formulation summarizing treatment issues. Although we conduct formal assessments according to specific time-lines, we also view assessment as an on-going process and continually seek to refine and enlarge our understanding of our students and their circumstances.

Plan Development

Based upon the assessment, we work with our students and families to craft a highly individualized treatment plan based upon the principles of positive behavioral intervention, relational dynamics, and ecological support. The treatment plan provides a framework for daily intervention, and we formally review and revise it at regular intervals. Micro-level treatment planning and adjustments also occur on an ongoing basis via treatment team meetings, family planning meetings, treatment reviews, etc.

Collateral Services (Including Family Therapy)

Through every stage of the treatment process, we endeavor to fully engage care givers, family members, and other key figures in the child's life. We seek to strengthen students' networks of relationships and community supports such that students have both the "roots and wings" needed to successfully transition from our services. Our staff maintain close communication with the important people in each student's life, and our clinicians offer regular family therapy to each family.

Individual and Group Rehabilitation Services

We strive to seamlessly integrate our therapeutic services with the academic program. Throughout the school day, mental health staff deliver interventions in support of students' individual treatment plan goals and address behaviors and emotions as they arise "in vivo." By counseling and coaching students in their educational environment, we maximize the relevance and transferability of the new skills and capacities they are developing. Interventions staff employ include positive reinforcement, behavioral cueing, teaching and rehearsing skills, conflict resolution, individual and group counseling.

Crisis Intervention

Some of our students struggle with self-regulation, aggression, and self-harming behaviors. When our attempts at prevention and early intervention fail, staff utilize crisis intervention procedures in accordance with our proprietary Ahimsa Model³ to provide safety and help students de-escalate.

Individual Therapy

Our Master's level licensed or registered clinicians offer each student regularly-scheduled, weekly individual therapy sessions, supplemented with additional check-ins as needed.

Group Therapy

Students typically participate in group therapy once to twice a week. Master's level clinicians facilitate the groups, often with the additional support of bachelor's level counselors. The process and content of group therapy depends on the needs and treatment plan goals of the participants. Some groups may follow a structured curriculum, while others utilize a more open-ended process. The group setting provides valuable peer interaction and feedback, enabling students to develop problem-solving strategies and skills necessary to manage and address their individual challenges.

Case Management

Our clinicians provide case management services as needed to facilitate the utilization of community resources and supports.



SECTION V: THE BEHAVIORAL PROGRAM

Safety and community allow students to learn and grow!

At Seneca Family of Agencies, we believe that the foundation of a strong learning environment stems from students feeling safe and humanized. In order to provide this, it's important for our students to understand our structure and boundaries.

Our behavioral system is made up of the following two components:

1. A humanizing classroom community that provides students with feedback about their individual progress on an immediate and continual basis in a respectful, nurturing and caring manner;

³ Ahimsa Manual available upon request

2. Training for students in restorative practices to repair harm from peer-to-peer conflict and/or community damage

Safety and Physical Management

Seneca Family of Agencies provides a highly structured and humanizing environment through developing a strong community within our classrooms and the whole school. We hold high expectations of students to invest in themselves and their growth not only academically, but therapeutically, behaviorally, and social/emotionally. These expectations are also held with how they interact and develop compassion for others. Through counseling and reflection, students discuss their behaviors and learn to problem solve with their peers and community. Students are also regularly rewarded for appropriate behaviors and offers to alternatives to problematic behaviors.

There are times when students do not respond to the restorative practices and positive reinforcements, and in such cases, Seneca Family of Agencies uses a series of progressively restrictive intervention, up to and including physical management. Staff members are trained to use the least restrictive procedure necessary to always maintain safety. Physical management is only used when all other interventions have been unsuccessful or if students present an imminent danger to themselves or others. Physical management is not implemented unless it can be implemented safely by fully trained staff members committed to safely intervening with a child. Our policy is to notify the parent/guardian the same day of when a significant incident has occurred.

We are governed by and adhere to Education Code Section 56521.1 that outlines how schools utilize and respond to emergency interventions. If students require repeated physical management, we will work with you and other members of the treatment team to discuss their behaviors, assess our current plans and consider additional options which may be appropriate; this could include scheduling a treatment team meeting or scheduling an IEP meeting and discussing whether to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment and/or revise the Positive Behavioral Intervention Plan. If restraints continue to be required and the attempts to implement new plans have not been effective, then Seneca Family of Agencies will include the family and school district in discussions regarding the appropriate fit of the program to meet the student's needs.

Deflection Pads and Seclusion

Some programs with young clients may also utilize approved deflection pads, mats, or similar safe items as a tool to protect staff and avoid restraint when a client is being aggressive toward staff. A staff member may choose to hold a pad to block aggressive blows or kicks from a child, when the following guidelines are followed:

- Any pads or other items used for this purpose must be approved by the Program Director. Pad must be semi-firm to minimize danger to the child. Staff should be thoughtful that materials used do not present a suffocation risk.
- The staff member must hold the pad against their body to absorb blows. The staff member should not move toward the child with their body or move the pad toward the child. The staff member should remain stationary or back away from the child while holding a pad.
- The staff member should continue to use crisis communication techniques as described in the Ahimsa Training Manual while using the pads.
- If the staff member uses a pad in the doorway of a room to prevent the child from leaving the room, this would qualify as seclusion and all procedures for the use of seclusion as outlined in the Crisis Intervention Policy must be followed.
- Pads may also be used to protect students who display self-harm behavior such as head-banging against the wall, including during a restraint when a designee is present to monitor the safe use of the equipment.

- If a child is able to grab a hold of the pad and attempts to pull it away from the staff member, staff should not become engaged in a conflict with the client to pull the pad away from them. The staff member should remain stationary and attempt to keep the pad against their own body. If the situation escalates the child or if the staff member is unable to continue to hold the pad safely against their own body, the staff member should release the pad and attempt to back away if possible.
- Pads should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes at least weekly or when visibly dirty.
- For students who may be triggered by use of these pads, the treatment team should decide if their use is appropriate and should include in the child's individual plans any restrictions of use and any emotional needs for staff to consider.

Maya Angelou Academy maintains the following additional guidelines for the use of deflection pads:

- For deflection physical aggression, Maya Angelou Academy staff will use program director-approved beanbags. Beanbags must be without a zipper or have the zippers locked.
- For the use of seclusion or to reduce risk of self-harm behaviors such as head-banging, Maya Angelou Academy staff will use program director-approved firm/semi-firm mats such as gym mats.
- Crisis communication and counseling should always be used during crisis situations, including the use of deflection pads for any purpose.
- Beanbags and mats will be cleaned regularly with disinfectant cleaning materials.

Maya Angelou Academy maintain "sensory classrooms" where students can go when escalated to access sensory de-escalation tools. Each of these sensory classrooms contains several small "nooks," or contained areas where students can be separated from each other. If a student in a nook becomes escalated, or if a student who is escalated is escorted to a nook, staff may decide to use the nook as a seclusion space to prevent the client from exiting the nook into the larger sensory classroom area, for the purposes of maintaining safety. Staff may stand in the doorway and utilize their own bodies or deflection pads to prevent clients from exiting or may use designated large mats to block the entryway. In either case, all procedures for the use of seclusion, including notification of and obtaining an order from a Licensed Practitioner.

If large mats are used, staff must adhere to the additional following protocols:

- Any mat used must be approved by the Program Director for this purpose and must be semi-firm to prevent suffocation risk and injury the client.
- The mat should be placed flat along the outside of the entryway to initiate seclusion. The mat should not be used inside the room to create a smaller seclusion space. Deflection pads may be used inside the nook to deflect physical aggression.
- When possible, best practice is for at least two staff to be present to manually secure the mat against the walls adjacent to the doorway. One staff should act as the lead in the intervention, communicating with the client, while the other staff acts as the neutral designee to maintain safety. In cases where two staff are not available, one staff member may secure the mat after making an assessment that the mat can be appropriately secured without presenting a safety risk to the client or staff.
- The mat must not be held in place in such a way that it will prevent egress by the student if staff move away.
- If at any time, the use of the mat becomes unsafe (e.g. the child wedges their arms, legs, or any body part between the mat and the wall or begins to climb over the mat) staff will release and remove the mat. Staff should reassess the choice of intervention to maintain safety and/or call for support.

Suspension and Expulsion

Seneca uses its core values to guide all decisions related with the care and education of children and youth. Given our commitment to unconditional care, Seneca has made the decision to limit the use of suspension and/or expulsion as a regular component of our restorative practices or disciplinary process whenever possible. It is our opinion that the school environment is a more productive setting for students than alternative options they may have during a suspension or expulsion period. We do, however, follow the disciplinary process of the school districts that we collaborate with regarding behaviors that warrant further disciplinary action according to state policy, such as assault or possession of a weapon on campus.

SECTION VI: GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Grievance Procedure

When Seneca Family of Agencies students or their families have concerns regarding the treatment they are receiving, there are several steps that they can take to address these. We will work together to the best of our ability to find a solution.

Verbal Complaints

- You can talk about your complaint with your therapist and/or your county case manager. If you do not know how to reach your county case manager, you can ask any staff person to help you.
- If you still have complaints or problems with the treatment that you or your family members are receiving, you can talk to the Director or Principal, who will work with you to find a solution to your concern.

Written Complaints

- Use the “formal grievance/complaint form” attached to this packet if you feel that your concern is still not being addressed, or if you do not want to talk about your complaint with Seneca Family of Agencies staff.
- If you need help filling out this form, you can either ask a staff person or family member to help you, or you can ask your county case manager for help. You can also tape record your complaint.
- Once the Program Director reads this form, s/he will meet with you and/or your family members. A group of specially chosen people may review your complaint and decide whether extra time is needed to address your concern(s). You and/or your family may or may not be involved in this meeting.

If you are not satisfied with any of these choices, you can appeal to Seneca Family of Agencies’ Executive Director. A staff person can help you contact this person, if necessary. You can also call or write your case manager.



Written Grievance / Complaint Form

Use this form if you do not want to talk about your complaint with any Seneca staff person or if you are not satisfied with staff members' response to your complaint. If you need help filling out this form, you can ask a staff person or family member to help you. You can use the back of this form if you run out of space. Once you have finished filling out this form, you can either:

1. Give it to a Seneca Family of Agencies staff person, who will forward it to your Program Director. The Program Director will review it within 48 hours. The Program Director will then meet with you and /or your family members. A committee of specially chosen people may review your complaint and decide if extra time is needed to discuss and, if possible, solve your complaint. You and/or your family may or may not be involved in this meeting.

OR:

2. Send it to your county manager or county complaint/grievance contact person. If you do not have the address or phone number for this person, you can ask a Seneca Family of Agencies staff person to get it for you.

Name of Student: _____ Date: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security#: _____

Name of Legal Guardian or Conservator:

Seneca Family of Agencies Program Name:

1. What is your complaint:
2. What have you tried to do to solve this problem?
3. How do you think this problem could be solved?

Student Signature: _____

Name of person who filled out this form

Relationship / Staff position if different than student

SECTION VII: SCHOOL INFORMATION

Contact Information

3695 High Street
Oakland, CA 94619
Phone: 510-434-7990
Fax: 510-434-7991
Email: maaadmin@senecacenter.org

maabbcommunity.weebly.com

Monica Mile
Program Director/Principal
(925) 519-0872
monica_mile@senecacenter.org

Veronica Arellano Castro
Assistant Director
(510) 495-5318
veronica_ac@senecacenter.org

Stephanie Marshburn
Clinical Supervisor
(510) 975-0268
stephanie_marshburn@senecacenter.org

Marcel Anderson
Program Manager and Site Safety Officer
(510) 292-7896
marcel_anderson@senecacenter.org

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY EVACUATION, STUDENTS AND STAFF WILL
RELOCATE TO:**

LAUREL CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

3825 California St.

Oakland, CA 94619

Director: Caroline Jones

Tel. (510)531-6226

