



**NEW TECHNICAL COLLEGE
SUPPORT STAFF HANDBOOK**

WELCOME

College Address _____

College Phone & Fax _____

Key Contacts	Name	Address / Room	Phone
Local Union President			
Steward/Campus Representative			
UniServ Director			
Immediate Supervisor			
College President			
District Board Chair			

**Wisconsin Education Association
Council**

P.O. Box 8003
Madison, WI 53708
1-800-362-8034
1-608-276-8203 (fax)
<http://www.weac.org>
<http://www.weacm.org>
(members only)

WEA Trust

P.O. Box 7338
Madison, WI 53707-7338
1-800-279-4000
<http://www.weatrust.com>

National Education Association

1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
1-800-637-4636
<http://www.nea.org>





an NEA affiliate

WELCOME TO THE WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL!

Welcome to the Wisconsin Education Association Council and your new position in the Wisconsin Technical College System.

You're entering a position that truly makes a difference in the operation of Wisconsin's technical colleges. Education support professionals in the technical colleges interact with thousands of students, faculty, and campus visitors each and every year. You strive to ensure the smooth, safe and efficient operation of the technical colleges – one of Wisconsin's most important economic engines.

Together with WEAC's 98,000 members, you have an incredible impact on the future of our state! Collectively, WEAC members have the strength to accomplish common goals and uphold the Wisconsin Technical College System's proud tradition of excellence in technical education.

Please take an opportunity to review the information included in this handbook – it was assembled by your fellow WEAC members to provide helpful strategies you can employ in your first year and throughout your career in the technical colleges. And be sure to take advantage of the many other benefits and services provided by all levels of our union.

I hope that you consider becoming active in our union. There are a number of rewarding opportunities for you at the local, UniServ, or state level of our union. Remember, WEAC is a member-led organization; all levels of the association are dependent on active and engaged members.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary K. Bell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mary Bell
WEAC President





INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

Hello and welcome to your new position in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS)! As you have probably already learned, education support professionals new to the WTCS must quickly learn to cope with a wide range of pressures.

This handbook is intended to provide you with some resources and helpful hints to ease your transition into your new position.

Please remember, the handbook is not the only resource on which you can rely. No handbook – regardless of its quality – can replace regular interaction, collaboration and cooperation with your co-workers. Be willing to ask questions of your co-workers; you will quickly find they can provide you with a wealth of valuable information. Consider seeking out experienced co-workers that have similar job assignments. You will be glad you did.

Some districts have formal orientations or programs for new employees. These programs can be quite valuable. You may want to use this handbook with the district's program.

ABOUT THE WTCS

Wisconsin's 16 technical college districts are the state's primary provider of career and technical education. The system equips its extremely diverse student body with real-world, hands-on training in more than 300 educational programs. Technical college districts also play an important role in local economic development by delivering customized training courses for incumbent workers.

The system prides itself on being one of Wisconsin's most important bridges to the work force. It retrains dislocated workers; updates the skills of working adults; and provides high school graduates with the practical training they need to find high wage employment. In doing so, it strengthens our communities and contributes to the general health of our economy.

After attending the WTCS, students go on to form the very backbone of the Wisconsin economy; they are Wisconsin's health care professionals, police and firefighters, computer technicians and manufacturers. In 2005-06 alone, over 19,300 students graduated from the WTCS in a broad range of fields. Innumerable Wisconsin employers count on WTCS graduates to remain innovative and competitive.

ABOUT UNIONS

The system offers two types of 2-year associate degrees. All districts offer Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree programs. The AAS degree places a heavy focus on occupational and technical training and less emphasis on general education. There are currently three districts, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Madison Area Technical College and Nicolet Area Technical College, which offer a 2-year college parallel program that focuses heavily on general education credits and typically culminates with graduates transferring to a 4-year institution.

In addition to the 2-year degree programs, the technical colleges offer one and two-year technical diplomas, apprenticeship programs, adult basic education courses and a wide variety of community education classes.

In all, the system typically enrolls well over 400,000 students.

Most educational support professionals in Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges are represented by unions. Full-time faculty in the technical colleges are also represented by unions.

A union is an organization that allows you, the employee, to actively participate in the decisions that affect your employment.

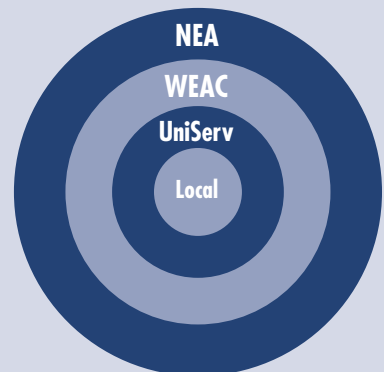
Employees in a unionized workplace collectively bargain, or negotiate, the terms and conditions of their employment with the employer. The contract resulting from these negotiations defines the benefits, salary, working conditions, and protections afforded you through your employment in your technical college district.

Unions enforce the terms of the collective bargaining agreement through process that involves neutral third-party arbitrators, meaning that disputes over the interpretation of the contract will be resolved fairly.

Unions are not solely involved in contract negotiations and enforcement. Unions engage in a wide variety of other activities to support and protect the welfare of the membership; to foster professional development; and to advocate for public education. The union supports members' interests through public relations, political action, legal advocacy, and professional development.

You are represented by a local union that is affiliated with the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC), a state-wide union of over 95,000 public education employees. WEAC, in turn, is affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA), the nation's largest education union. Your local union also belongs to a UniServ, a group of local unions that assists with collective bargaining, grievance representation and numerous other activities.

Membership in your union is extremely important. Membership shows your employer that union representatives have the support and backing of those they represent. Membership gives you a voice in the decisions made by your union. Membership also makes you eligible for the host of individual financial products and services offered by WEAC, NEA and the WEA Trust – the insurance and financial services company that serves WEAC members.



WHO WE ARE

Educational support professionals (ESPs) in Wisconsin's technical colleges are important members of the college community working in a wide variety of job classifications. ESP bargaining units in the technical colleges are made up of one or more of the following groups of employees:

Administrative Support

– Administrative support personnel are often described as the very backbone of the college. Clerical employees are responsible for the essential – but often tedious – tasks that keep colleges running: scheduling, duplicating, procurement, budgeting, payroll, data entry, reception, etc. Like most workplaces, the colleges would quickly grind to a halt without competent and devoted administrative support staff.

Custodial, Maintenance & Skilled Trades

– Custodial, maintenance and skilled trades employees are responsible for maintaining a safe and clean learning environment. They often serve as “jacks-of-all-trades”, doing everything under the sun. Servicing the school's heating & ventilation system, clearing snow, cleaning college facilities, “pest control”, fixing leaks, performing electrical and carpentry work – custodial, maintenance and skills trade staff somehow seem to do it all.



Student Services – In the technical college system, certified counselors often are members of faculty bargaining units rather than a college's ESP unit. However, other student services personnel, such as academic support staff, disability specialists, workforce development staff, and library services personnel are frequently members of ESP bargaining units.

Technical Services – College campuses have sophisticated information technology needs

and are therefore highly reliant on skilled technical services employees such as data base operators, web designers, audio-visuals specialists, and programmers. The complexity of tasks technical services employees juggle on a daily basis can be astonishing, as can be the demands placed on their time.

Lab/Educational Assistants – Lab and educational assistants serve an important roll in the classroom, assisting students and instructors with a variety of tasks – prepping materials; cleaning tools; assisting with instruction; assisting students with developmental, emotional or learning disabilities; and performing various clerical tasks.

Questions

WHO DO I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS ON...

Your district likely has a great deal of contact information in directories and on its website. However, sometimes navigating these sites can be time-consuming. Use this sheet to create a quick reference guide to help you get your issues resolved quickly and efficiently.

Topic	Contact Person	Phone
Adds/drops		
Administrative software (e.g. PeopleSoft)		
Certification issues		
Class rosters		
Copies or printing		
Counseling services		
Credit transfer & articulation agreements		
Disability services		
Email setup; troubleshooting		
Employee benefits		
Enrollment and course registration		
Facilities and maintenance requests		
Financial aid issues		
Grades (turning in; changing)		
Information technology troubleshooting		
Instructional technology (e.g. Blackboard)		
ITV (Instructional Television)		
Library and media services		
Multicultural services		
Online instruction		
Payroll		
Professional development		
Purchasing		
Scheduling computer lab time		
Scheduling rooms		
Security		
Student assessment		
Student services		
Supplies and materials		
Textbooks		
WIDS (Worldwide Instructional Design System)		



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Below is a list of information you should be acquainted with. Some pieces of information are more critical than others. However, you should at least be familiar with how to find this information should the need arise.

- Campus/building hours
- Your district's calendar
- District policies and procedures (consult district policy guide and/or collective bargaining agreement)
For example:
 - Accommodation of religious beliefs
 - Affirmative action
 - Campus safety
 - Closing of facilities
 - Computer and internet usage
 - Discrimination
 - District email
 - District mail
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Emergency procedures (e.g. fire; tornado; building security; first aid)
 - Employee ethics
 - Enrollment changes – adds; drops; etc.
 - Parking regulations
 - Personal illness and/or leave policies
 - Purchasing/procurement
 - Referrals – Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA); English as a Second Language (ESL); special needs; learning resource center or skill labs.
 - Sexual harassment
 - Solicitation and distribution of material
 - Student discipline
 - Telephone usage
 - Travel and expenses
- Professional development opportunities
- Employee benefit enrollment deadlines and requirements

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING YOUR FIRST DAYS

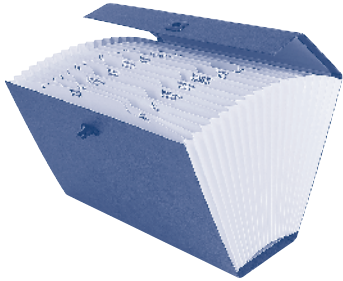
Your first few weeks on the job may be a bit overwhelming. There will be a great deal of information for you to take in while you're adjusting to your new position and new surroundings. With all your new responsibilities, it is understandable if you forget to ask an important question or two.

Here is a list of questions that can help you gather the information you need to get off to a great start in your new job:

- Who is my immediate supervisor?
- What is my work schedule?
- What is my job description?
- What is the payroll calendar and how can I sign up for direct deposit?
- How do I sign up for employee benefit programs like health insurance and when must the forms be completed by?
- How do I get a copy of my collective bargaining agreement?
- How do I obtain the supplies and equipment I need to do my job?
- How do I request vacation, personal leave and sick leave?
- Do employees wear identification badges and, if so, how do I get one?
- Is there a probationary period and, if so, how long is it?
- How can I get training or professional development?
- Where should I park?
- How are breaks scheduled?
- When is my first evaluation?
- Does the college have an employee handbook?
- Are there any workplace hazards and how should I protect myself?
- Is there any safety gear I'm required to wear?
- Will I be trained in emergency procedures? What should I do if someone is hurt?
- Where are first aid kits, fire extinguishers, emergency exits?
- What should I do if I see students fighting?
- What are the college's overtime policies?
- How do I gain access to my personnel file?

If you have a question, do not only ask your supervisor. Ask a union representative or cross-check the information you receive from your supervisor with your collective bargaining agreement. The answers to the above questions (and others) are extremely important – be sure you receive correct and consistent responses.

EMPLOYMENT PAPERS FILE



Technical college educational support staff personnel should keep an “Employment Papers” file that includes documents relating to your employment. Use this checklist to begin your file. Remember to keep your file in a safe place and update it regularly.

- Your letter of employment
- Your collective bargaining agreement
- Your job description
- Transcripts of all college coursework completed
- Records of job-related seminars, workshops, or conferences you attend
- Records related to your health and dental plans (e.g. plan summaries; copies of benefit enrollment forms)
- Records relating to retirement benefits
- Records related to other employment benefits (e.g. district-provided life insurance)
- Leave records - if your college has electronic leave tracking, periodically print out a copy showing accumulated leave.
- Letters of reprimand or letters of praise
- Employment-related correspondence to or from your supervisor or other administrators
- Employee evaluations
- Documentation of professional awards, commendations or honors you receive
- District calendar
- Copies of your work schedule
- Receipts for employment-related expenditures
- Your written record of any incident that may lead to disciplinary action or that may increase your liability (include date, time, persons involved, your description of the incident and the resolution)
- Copies of local grievance rulings that may affect your position
- Proof of membership in your local union, WEAC and NEA

YOUR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

Educational support staff in 15 of the 16 technical college districts are organized into local unions that collectively bargain – or negotiate – their wages, hours and working conditions with their employers (the technical colleges’ district boards). The collective bargaining agreement (CBA) is the employment contract that results from these negotiations.

Your collective bargaining agreement is an extremely important document. The CBA spells out in great detail the contractual employment rights and benefits you have as an employee of your technical college district. You are strongly encouraged to review your contract. You will not know if your rights as an employee of the district have been violated without an understanding of the CBA.

New educational support personnel should review the entire collective bargaining agreement. In particular, pay close attention to sections on:

Salary

The technical college collective bargaining agreements all contain salary schedules – typically a matrix of columns and rows.

Salary schedules are made up of a mix of different salary rates that correspond to different years of service and salary ranges. Movement through the salary schedule occurs as employees increase their years of service and/or advance from one salary range to another.

Your union also typically negotiates a general salary increase – a per cell adjustment to the entire salary schedule.

In addition, your collective bargaining agreement may contain premium payments for working the second or third shift. This payment is usually a per hour payment added to your base rate of pay.

Some collective bargaining agreements also include longevity payments for workers that have attained a certain length of service. Longevity payments are usually annual or monthly lump sum payments, not adjustments to your base rate of pay.

Benefits

Your local union has negotiated a number of fringe benefits for you and your co-workers, such as medical and dental insurance. You should review your contract to determine which benefits your district offers. You should also examine any district-provided

materials that describe the benefits that have been negotiated.

Determine which benefit programs you will enroll in. Fill out and turn in benefit enrollment forms immediately upon your employment.

Probationary Status

Your collective bargaining agreement may require the completion of a probationary period. Probationary employees are new educational support professionals that must work for a specific length of time before being granted permanent status.

The length of the probationary period and other contractual language pertaining to probationary employees vary from district to district, so it is important that you review your contract to be certain of the conditions that apply to your probationary period.

Probationary employees are strongly encouraged to review all contractual language concerning their



YOUR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT, continued



probationary periods. Be sure you understand your employment status and your rights clearly.

Evaluation, Discipline and Personnel Files

Be sure to understand when and how you will be evaluated. Contracts vary with respect to the methods used to evaluate employees and the frequency with which evaluations are conducted.

Contracts typically stipulate that evaluations cannot be placed in an employee's personnel file without the employee first reviewing the document.

Also examine your contract's discipline and dismissal language. While we certainly hope it will not happen to you, employee discipline and dismissal is a fact of life. Your collective bargaining agreement contains specific provisions that govern the district's use of discipline and the dismissal of employees.

Employee evaluations will be addressed in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Work Schedules

Your collective bargaining agreement contains important information about your work year, work week and work day. Most contracts contain specific language about how your schedule is to be determined.

It is important that you take time to review this information to ensure that your work schedule conforms to the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement.

You should, for example, review the collective bargaining agreement for information on work breaks, your lunch period, overtime, when overtime rates are paid, how your schedule is established and when modifications to your work schedule are permitted.

Grievances

The grievance procedure is a formal process the union and employer use to resolve disputes stemming from the collective bargaining agreement. The process typically has several steps whereby the dispute is heard internally by administrators with differing levels of authority. Ultimately, if a contract dispute cannot be solved internally, the grievance procedure provides for an impartial third party – an arbitrator – to issue a binding decision on the issue.

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell if the contract has been violated. What is a contract violation and what isn't? Talk to your union's leaders and your more experienced co-workers if you suspect something isn't right. They have the experience to help you answer your questions about the contract.



Some new educational support professionals may find it intimidating to report a grievance. This is natural, especially for those that don't have previous experience with unions. However, remember that the grievance procedure is in place to protect your rights as an employee of the district. Both the union and the district recognize the grievance procedure as a legitimate way to resolve employment disputes. Employees that are unwilling to use the dispute resolution tools available to them may continue to have their rights violated.

New educational support professionals should be aware that certain timelines exist in the contract's grievance procedure. So, you should speak with your fellow union members promptly about potential contract violations.

During the course of your career, your supervisor may give you instructions that you feel are a clear

violation of the collective bargaining agreement. If this occurs, remember this fundamental rule:

OBEDY NOW – GRIEVE LATER

This rule means that instructions are to be obeyed when they are given. If you believe an order violates the collective bargaining agreement, a challenge can be filed through the grievance procedure after the instructions are carried out.

As with any rule, there are some exceptions to “obey now, grieve later”. For example, you can legitimately refuse to do work:

- if you reasonably believe the work order will endanger you or someone else
- if the work is illegal (e.g. you can refuse an order to commit a crime).

In most other circumstances, employees that fail to comply with a supervisor's directive risk being guilty of insubordination – which could result in discipline or discharge.

If you are given an order you feel is a clear violation of the contract, you should calmly and concisely state your case to your supervisor. Your supervisor may not be aware of the rights you're entitled to under the collective bargaining agreement. However, do not push the issue – obey the order and contact your union representative as soon as possible to report the grievance. Be sure to carefully remember – and, as soon as possible, record – the details of the incident.

YOUR RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION

It is extremely important to remember that you have the right to union representation if you suspect a meeting with a supervisor could result in disciplinary action.

In an important case decided by the US Supreme Court (National Labor Relations Board vs. J. Weingarten, Inc.), employees were found to be entitled to union representation in any meeting in which the employee reasonably believed disciplinary action could result.

If a meeting takes a turn into an inquiry, an accusation of wrong-doing, or an actual reprimand for misconduct, respectfully interrupt and assert your Weingarten Rights by stating:

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I request that my union representative be present at this meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.”

When you assert your Weingarten Rights, the meeting should stop, pending the attendance of your union representative. If the inquiry does not stop, ride out the illegal meeting by saying a little as possible. Contact your union representative immediately.

Please note that your employer is not required to inform you of your right to have a union representative present at a disciplinary meeting. *You must ask for representation.*

*You are **strongly** encouraged to ask for union representation if you feel a meeting with your administration may lead to disciplinary action!*

EMPLOYEE EVALUATION DOS AND DON'TS

During your employment, you will likely be evaluated several times. These evaluations are extremely important – they are the main record of your performance as an employee of the district. Evaluations provide your employer with a formal framework to offer feedback and advice on how well you are carrying out your assigned responsibilities. Performance evaluations can also lay the groundwork for discipline if performance and productivity problems persist. It is therefore extremely important that your evaluation be a complete and accurate reflection of your actual performance.

It is a good idea to keep copies of your performance evaluations, your job description and letters/email about things you've done well in your employment papers file. Doing so will provide a helpful reference for future evaluations.

Job evaluation DOs:

- Do review your job description prior to your evaluation meeting and make mental notes of ways in which you've achieved your performance expectations.
- Do remain calm and collected.
- Do take your own notes.
- Do clarify exactly what will be included in the written evaluation.
- Do actively participate in your evaluation by requesting to include your own materials – letters of praise; thank you notes; positive comments – in the evaluation record.
- Do discuss ways the supervisor/college can provide the support needed to accomplish future performance objectives.
- Do contact your union representative IMMEDIATELY if you sense that the evaluation could result in disciplinary action.

Job evaluation DON'Ts:

- Don't accept inaccurate information about your performance. If your evaluation contains inaccuracies about your performance, request the record be corrected.
- Don't agree to ambiguous or unclear performance objectives that could be difficult to measure or hard to follow. Performance objectives should be reasonable and measurable.
- Don't assume that positive comments about your performance will appear on the evaluations. Take a proactive approach and request that awards, commendations, and positive comments be reflected in your evaluation.
- Don't act hostile or confrontational.
- Don't identify or agree to deficiencies.
- Don't signify agreement by signing the evaluation. If you have to sign the agreement, clearly indicate that your signature DOES NOT indicate agreement – rather, indicate your signature merely means you've received the evaluation form.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Your job description is an extremely important document – it is your written work identity. A job description is a formalized statement of the duties, qualifications, and responsibilities of a job. Such descriptions are based on information obtained through a process known as job analysis.

Job descriptions identify a specific job with precision, describing its scope and content. They may include information on the expectations and responsibilities of the job; working conditions; the knowledge and skills needed to do the job; and relationships with other positions and employees.

Job descriptions not only describe certain positions, they are also closely tied to employee evaluations. The information contained in the job description should serve as an important basis of your employee evaluation. As an employee of the district, you should be evaluated on elements formally recorded in your job description.

Job descriptions also play an important role in salary administration. Salary schedules are typically based on a job classification system – a system for determining how jobs relate to one another. Job classification is intended to be an equitable, unbiased process based on the analysis of jobs. Job descriptions are often used to group common positions into classes and salary ranges.



Most technical college collective bargaining agreements have processes for reviewing job descriptions and job classifications. Collective bargaining agreements also often give employees the right to request the reclassification of their position to a different pay range.

You should pay attention to how your job description relates to the actual job duties you perform. Changes in your duties could result in reclassification of the job you perform. Periodically ask yourself:

- Have the tasks you perform become more complex?
- Are your actual job duties more difficult or are working conditions more dangerous than your job description indicates?

- Are you performing certain tasks more frequently than your job description indicates?
- Do you actually have more responsibility than your job description would lead one to believe?
- Has your job changed in any other substantial way?

You should take notes about changes in your job to establish a written record of the changes.

Contact your union representative if you feel your actual job duties differ significantly from your job description. Such action could result in reclassification to a higher pay range.

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Education support professionals are exposed to a variety of safety and health concerns stemming from their work environment. Repetitive movements, prolonged exposure to awkward postures, eyestrain, poor air quality, manual lifting and bending, and potential contact with hazardous materials are just some of the health and safety risks facing educational support professionals.

New ESPs should be aware of the range of safety and health dangers that confront them and request training and equipment to help minimize incidences of workplace injuries. Here are a few common workplace safety and health problems.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome – Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is pain and dysfunction in the hand, wrist and forearm caused by repetitive hand and wrist movements. The disorder most often afflicts frequent users of computer keyboards. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome can be minimized if employees are provided with adjustable computer and office equipment. Keyboards, monitors, chairs, and desks should be modified to be ergonomically correct.

Tips You Can Use:

- When typing, keep your hand in a straight line with your wrist. Avoid positions that hyperextend the wrist.
- Employees that perform repetitive tasks with their hands, wrists and fingers should perform stretching exercises and take frequent breaks.
- Use ergonomically correct equipment such as wrist rests, roller balls and split keyboards. Make sure your chair, desk, monitor and keyboard are at the proper height.
- Grip tools and objects such as pencils and steering wheels as loosely as possible.
- Use good posture when working at computer workstations.

Back Strain – ESPs can develop back problems by sitting for long-periods of times in uncomfortable positions. Employees should be provided with brief breaks throughout the day to stretch and move around. Rotations among tasks can also help to prevent strain.

Tips You Can Use:

- Frequent computer users can reduce back and neck strain by properly adjusting their monitors. The center of your monitor should be about 5 to 9 inches below your line of sight.
- Request an ergonomic chair. If one is not provided, purchase a lumbar pillow to place in your chair for extra lower-back support.
- Use a foot-rest (a telephone book would do) to improve leg circulation and reduce pressure on your back.
- Use good, upright posture.
- Stand up and stretch frequently.

Employees can also develop back strains by lifting heavy objects. Employees should be trained in proper lifting techniques and be provided with the proper equipment to assist heavy lifts.

Tips You Can Use:

- Pre-plan your lift. Know where you are going before lifting an object.
- Use proper lifting techniques. Lift with your legs. Keep the weight of the object you are lifting close to the body and avoid twisting movements by turning hips and shoulders in unison.
- Lift and carry heavy objects with the assistance of another. Begin and end the lift action at the same time; equally distribute weight as best as possible; communicate with your lift partner.
- Use a stepladder or sturdy stool to reach overhead items instead of reaching and stretching to get an object.
- Use a handcart or other lifting device to assist with heavy objects.
- Put the object you are lifting down if you feel awkward or uncomfortable.

Eyestrain – Prolonged use of computer monitors and improper lighting can result in eyestrain and headaches. Experts recommend reducing glare, properly adjusting your monitor, and taking brief breaks to help reduce eyestrain.

SAFETY AND HEALTH, continued

Tips You Can Use:

- Relax eye muscles by looking at a distant object for a few seconds every 5-10 minutes.
- Eyeglass wearers may benefit from VDT glasses – glasses specially designed for frequent computer users.
- Orient your computer monitor so as to minimize glare.
- Blink more often to avoid dry-eye problems; for significant problems ask your doctor about eye drops or artificial tears.
- Place a copy stand immediately adjacent to your monitor at the same height and distance as the monitor.
- Clean your monitor frequently.

Chemicals & Hazardous Materials – ESPs need accurate information about all chemicals and hazardous materials they handle. A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) provides information on such substances. Your college should have a MSDS for every chemical used.

Tips You Can Use:

- Read labels and follow directions when using potentially hazardous chemicals.
- Consult Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for hazard information. Know where MSDSs are located.
- Gloves, eye protection and other safety equipment should always be used when working with hazardous materials.
- Use chemicals in well-ventilated areas. Wear appropriate respiratory protection when airborne chemical concentrations cannot be controlled.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or chew gum in areas where chemicals are frequently used or stored.
- Always wash hands after working with hazardous materials.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you experience symptoms of chemical exposure such as light-headedness, burns or rashes.

Blood-Borne Pathogens – Blood and other body fluids can contain many different types of organisms that can cause several serious diseases. ESPs such as custodians and health & student services personnel risk occupational exposure to these organisms. Of particular concern are the Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C viruses and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). ESPs may also come in contact with fungal infections, viral and bacterial respiratory infections, and parasitic infestations.

ESPs need current and complete information about these pathogens and the supplies necessary to protect themselves against exposure. Comprehensive training is also important. Employees should seek out district-provided training opportunities and request any necessary health and safety equipment.

Tips You Can Use:

- Treat all blood and body fluid as if it is infected.
- Wear gloves when in contact with blood or body fluid.
- Wash hand frequently. Wash immediately after coming in contact with blood or body fluid.
- Consider keeping a small, travel-size bottle of hand sanitizer gel in your work space or with you.
- Report an occupational exposure to blood or body fluid to your supervisor or administration as soon as possible. Contact your doctor.
- Talk to your doctor about a Hepatitis B vaccine.

Indoor Air Quality – Contaminated indoor air is not only unpleasant, it can be downright dangerous. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists indoor air quality as the country's number one environmental health concern.

Indoor air quality suffers when college facilities have poor ventilation; when levels of outdoor air contamination are high; as humidity and temperature fluctuate; and when building occupants engage in certain activities or use certain products. In recent years, as buildings have become "tighter", indoor air quality has become more of an issue.

SAFETY AND HEALTH, continued

Indoor air quality problems may result in a host of non-specific symptoms (e.g. headache; nausea; dizziness; sinus congestion and coughing) rather than clearly defined illnesses.

Custodians are likely the employees that suffer most frequently from illness or injury related to exposure to air quality contaminants. These employees must therefore receive the training and resources necessary to address this important health and safety issue.

Tips You Can Use:

- Use windows and doors to help increase fresh air and improve air circulation.
- Pay attention to your health. Persistent headaches, fatigue, nausea, dizziness, respiratory problems or other conditions may be a sign of poor air quality.
- Report water leaks, condensation and drips. Prolonged dampness in certain areas could result in mold formation.
- Use chemicals, cleaning product and other air contaminants in well ventilated areas.
- Encourage the use of non-toxic cleaning products.

Trips, Slips, Cuts and Falls – Accidents happen; they are a fact of life in the workplace. But a mix of common senses and good work practices can reduce the number of inevitable accidents and/or reduce the severity of accidents that do happen.

Tips You Can Use:

- Floors should never be slippery or cluttered and traffic areas should be clear of trip hazards. Wiring and electric cords should not be run across high-traffic areas.
- Non-slip surfaces should be used in high-traffic areas. Employees should be permitted to wear non-slip shoes. Steps and ramps should have handrails and non-slip surfaces.
- Contact your facilities department if you see standing water, ice, curled mats or carpet, loose tiles, uneven surfaces or other hazards.
- First aid kits should be readily accessible and property stocked.

- Desk draws and file cabinets should always be closed when not in use.
- Fully close staples; use care when using paper cutters, knives and scissors.
- Store all tools and power equipment properly.
- Use common sense and look out for your co-workers.

Violent Student Behavior – Unfortunately, violent behavior does occur – albeit infrequently – on college campuses. Your college likely has certain procedures to follow if you witness violent behavior. These policies should be followed.

Here are a few basic practices that should be taken in all cases:

- Call for assistance, send someone for help, or call 911 if an altercation is out of control.
- Disperse any crowd in the area.
- Try to remove or push aside items from the area — this reduces the risk for further injury or harm and helps eliminate their use as a weapon.
- Contact supervisors and administrators as soon as possible, describe the situation to them and ask that they support your actions.

If you are the victim of violence:

- Call for help immediately!
- Seek medical attention immediately. Insist on a medical diagnosis and, if necessary, medical treatment.
- Report all injuries to the college administration, the local police when necessary, complete an accident or incident report, and/or file charges when appropriate.
- Contact your union president and/or your UniServ Director. Your representatives can help you document the incident and file the appropriate paperwork.
- Always record the time, date and summary of what happened as completely and as soon as possible. Report immediately to your supervisor.

PRIVATIZATION

Today, many public sector employers, including technical college districts, contract with private-sector firms for work previously performed by public sector employees. The practice – know as privatization, contracting-out or outsourcing – is a considerable threat to public sector employees, including ESPs. Public sector employees from around the country have lost family supporting jobs with good benefits, replaced instead by the employees of private contractors.

Advocates argue privatization brings “market forces” to bear on the public sector. Contracts for services are awarded through a competitive process to the lowest bidder, resulting in savings for the public-sector – or so the argument goes. This can be a compelling claim, especially when budgets are tight.

However, privatization has a host of dangers. Contracting out can actually cost more, not less, than keeping public-sector services in house. Costs related to administering the contract, training personnel and monitoring results are often not taken into account when weighing the decision to privatize a service.

In addition, public sector entities may be unable to reassume certain services if something goes wrong. This is particularly true with sophisticated services such as information technology. Public sector entities can therefore easily become “locked in” to contracts with certain private service providers. Some contractors will “lowball” the original contract and then raise prices substantially once the public sector entity is dependent on the contractor.

The quality of services can, and often does, suffer when contracted out to a private provider. The main objective of private sector companies that compete for public sector work is profit maximization. This frequently leads to cutting corners. Private contractors often pay low wages; provide inadequate benefits; have high employee turnover; and provide limited supervision.

Employees should be aware that some public sector employers threaten privatization of services to achieve certain bargaining goals.

The first step to fighting privatization is making sure administrators, technical college board members and others within the campus community fully understand the valuable role educational support staff serve. Unfortunately, technical college district leaders are often unaware of the important work that ESP do.

You should contact your union president and your UniServ Director if you hear about any plans to privatize college services.

MAINTAINING PRIVACY

Many educational support professionals regularly collect, record and analyze information such as student records, financial aid data and employee records. Much of this information contains confidential data that is protected by privacy laws. It is important that educational support professionals realize that some of the data they work with on a daily basis is sensitive personal information.

Important federal and state laws govern what sort of information can and cannot be released to the public. For example, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that requires an educational institution to maintain the confidentiality of any student educational record. Under FERPA, student identification numbers, students' grades and students' class ranks are all confidential data. FERPA does allow for the release of "directory" information, such as students' names, telephone numbers and addresses.

The Freedom of Information Act; the Wisconsin Public Records Act; the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act; and individual college confidentiality policies also have implications on the sharing of data.

It is important that ESPs understand that some information they work with is private and other information is available to be released publicly.

Here are some tips for educational support professional who work with confidential records:

1. Confidential data must be kept private – treat this information with a high degree of discretion.
2. Follow your college's information request protocol – forward information requests to your district's legal custodian of records.
3. Do not release information to the public, members of the media, or parents until you're able to consult with a supervisor to determine if the requested data is confidential.

4. Follow your college's information security policies. For example, change your computer passwords when requested; update virus protection and security patches when advised; do not open suspicious emails; do not share your computer password; delete unneeded confidential information from your computer; etc.
5. Do not discuss individual students unless your job duties require it.
6. Protect confidential information in all its forms. If you are not permitted to release information in written or electronic form, do not release it verbally.



33 Nob Hill Road
P.O. Box 8003
Madison, WI 53708-8003
(608) 276-7711 | 800.362.8034

weac.org

