



Choctaw County
School District
Opportunity Center

2023 – 2024

Dear Student, Parents/Legal Guardian:

The Choctaw County Opportunity Center handbook is designed to serve to as a tool for familiarizing students, parents, and guardians with the Center's established policies, rules, and regulations.

It is virtually impossible to write rules and regulations to adequately cover every detail on every subject. By using the official handbook, the Opportunity Center is attempting to eliminate as much confusion as possible, so the student's and the Opportunity Center's attention can be turned to education pursuits.

If there are any questions or problems, please feel free to call the Opportunity Center for clarification or discussion of the regulations or rules. The Opportunity Center's number is 285-9508.

Sincerely,

Corey Kelly
Administrator

STAFF

Corey Kelly	Administrator
Alison Brasher	Counselors
Marcy McGlothin	
Jerene Parker	
Emily Cade	
Susanne Crider	
Bradley O. Herod	Teacher
Courtney Coleman	Teacher

HOURS OF OPERATIONS

Choctaw County Opportunity Center

Monday-Friday

Choctaw students' arrival time is 7:20 a.m.; departure time is 3:10 p.m.

DEFINITION

Whenever "parent" appears in the handbook, it means "parent/legal guardian".

Opportunity Center Telephone #

(662) 285-9508

Parents/Legal Guardians:

This form certifies that I have had the opportunity to read the rules, regulations, and policies as set forth by the Choctaw County School Board in the 2023-2024 Opportunity Center Handbook.

I have had the opportunity to read the absentee rules stated in the handbook as well as the resident requirements. I am also aware that additional rules, regulations, and policies may be adopted if deemed necessary.

Student's Name _____ Grade _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Ph _____

Please sign and return this form when you come to the intake meeting which is scheduled for _____. Failure to attend the intake interview and sign the appropriate paperwork will result in your child not being able to continue in this school.

Student's signature

Date

Parent's signature

Date

The purpose of this handbook is to convey to students and parents the information concerning the operation of the Choctaw County Schools. The Choctaw County School Board hopes that this handbook will help you to understand the rules, regulations, and policies of your school.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

District 1: Mrs. Becky Orr

District 2: Mr. Clint Huffman

District 3: Mrs. Linda McDaniel

District 4: Mrs. Ommie Ashford

District 5: Mr. Mike Thomas

COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION:

Stewart Glen Beard, Jr.

The Choctaw County Schools are a county unit type of school system. This means that our school system is governed by an elected Board of Education from each of the five beats or units within Choctaw County. These citizens serving on the Choctaw County Board adopted a policies manual which is the legal basis for our operation for all Choctaw County Schools. The Choctaw County Opportunity Center operates under these adopted policies. The portion which applies to you directly is Appendix J entitled “Students” and Appendix I entitled “Instructional Program.”

A copy of this manual is located at Choctaw County Central Office. Please feel free to read it at any time. Portions of the manual have been included in your handbook for your convenience.

General School Rules and Due Process Procedures

The Choctaw County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability.

Contact the principal at the numbers below for section 504, ADA, Title VI, Title VII, and Title XI if you feel you are being discriminated against.

French Camp Elementary School	547-7102
Ackerman Elementary School	285-4052
Choctaw County High School	285-4101
Weir Attendance Center	547-7079
Choctaw County Opportunity Center	285-9508
Choctaw County Career and Technology Center	285-4152

Every effort has been made to make this handbook all-inclusive; however, if it becomes necessary, additional rules will be announced in the future.

If there are any problems concerning school-related policies at the school, please follow the proper chain of command: Contact the teacher first; the principal/administrator second; the Superintendent of Education third; and finally, the Board of Education. Please remember, however, that the School Board is a policy-making body and should be contacted as a last resort.

The School Board will not arbitrate on school-related policies unless the proper procedures have been followed.

According to the Safe and Drug-Free School federal law, a student survey and evaluation shall be conducted annually. The Choctaw County School System will conduct the survey(s) and evaluation(s) as required during each school year.

Parental/Legal Guardian Responsibilities

A law passed by the 1900 Mississippi Legislature requires that:

- A. Parents have financial responsibilities for the child's destructive acts against school property or persons;
- B. Parents may be requested to appear at school for a conference in the student's destructive acts; and
- C. Parents shall be required to attend scheduled discipline conferences.

Parents/Legal guardians who do not perform any of these required duties are subject to a misdemeanor.

Student Complaints and Grievances

In a democratic society it is important that students learn the following:

1. To practice effective means of resolving differences that may arise among students, teachers, administrators;
2. To reduce potential areas of complaints and grievances; and
3. To establish and maintain channels of communication between other students, staff, administrator and school.

A. Step One

1. A student with a grievance shall present it in writing to his/her principal, who shall discuss it with him/her as soon as possible and attempt to work out a satisfactory solution within the policies and regulations of the District.
2. If such a hearing is not held within five (5) days, or if a decision is not given within five (5) days of the hearing, the aggrieved student may proceed to step two.

Step Two

3. If the grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student in step one, or if a condition mentioned in A-2 above exists, the student can file in writing the grievance with the Superintendent of Education.
4. If the grievance is not filed within ten (10) days of the hearing at level one, the grievance shall be considered resolved.
5. Within ten (10) days after receipt of the grievance, the Superintendent shall meet with the student to resolve the grievance. He/She shall give his decision within ten (10) days of the hearing.
6. If such a hearing is not held within ten (10) days, or if a decision is not given within ten (10) days of the hearing, the aggrieved student may proceed to step three.

Step Three

7. If the grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student in step two, or if a condition mentioned in B-4 exists, the student may file in writing the grievance with the secretary of the Board of Education.
8. If the grievance is not filed with the secretary of the Board of Education within ten (10) days of the hearing at level two, the grievance shall be considered resolved.
9. Within ten (10) days after receipt of the grievance, the Board, in concert with Superintendent, shall schedule a hearing on the grievance.
10. The Board shall render its decision within fifteen (15) days of the hearing.

Visitors

Parents/Guardians are welcomed to visit the Opportunity Center. However, to assure the safety of students, all visitors, including parents or guardians, must sign in at the Opportunity Center upon arrival on campus. If you desire to spend time in the classroom, you must coordinate this through the Opportunity Center Administrator, who will then notify the teachers at the Opportunity Center. The Opportunity Center has limited space, and it must be determined that such a visit will not interfere with the educational process. All visitors must sign in and out and state the reason for the visit.

Purpose

To provide an educational program for students in grades 3-12 who have demonstrated by their behavior that they cannot function properly in the regular educational program and for students identified in MS Code 37-13-92.

Only the following categories of students may be assigned to the Opportunity Center:

1. Students who have documented history of repeated discipline problems;
2. Student who commit acts which endanger the life, health or welfare of students and/or staff;
3. Students who commit acts which substantially disrupt the educational process.
4. Students identified in MS 37-13-92;
5. Students who violate relevant sections of the disciplinary code.

Referrals to the Opportunity Center must be based upon a documented need for placement by the school, parent/legal guardian or custodian.

Student Placement

The principal, after consultation with the student's parents/legal guardian, teachers, and guidance counselor, may recommend to the Superintendent that a student be assigned to the Opportunity Center for discipline. This recommendation shall include the following:

1. The student's class schedule and grades;
2. Documentation of the student's discipline history;
3. Documentation of discipline measures used for the student in the past;
4. Documentation that the student and the student's parents have been notified of the recommendation and have been afforded the due process rights required by *Goss v. Lopez*.

Requirements of *Goss v. Lopez*

1. Oral or written notice of charges.
2. An explanation of the evidence supporting.
3. An opportunity for the student to present his/her version.
4. If the student's presence endangers persons or property or threatens to disrupt the educational process, the student may be removed immediately, but items 1, 2, and 3 should be observed as soon as practical.

If the Superintendent agrees with the principal's recommendation, the student will be assigned to the Choctaw County Opportunity Center.

If a student commits an act, which endangers persons or property or threatens to substantially disrupt the educational process, the principal, with concurrence of the Superintendent, may immediately assign the student to the Opportunity Center without observing the requirements of *Goss v. Lopez*, but such requirements should be observed as soon as possible. The parent/legal guardian of the student who has been

recommended to be assigned to the Opportunity Center may request to appear before the School Board to request that the student not be assigned to the Opportunity Center.

After a student is placed in the Opportunity Center, the student or parent/legal guardian may request regular counseling services.

The school shall provide counseling regarding proper school behavior unless objected to in writing by the parent/legal guardian.

Reassignment from the Opportunity Center to the Regular Classroom Program

A student with a 45 day placement in the Opportunity Center will be reviewed at two-thirds of the time served for consideration of early release. A committee will meet to evaluate the student's progress and decide if the student will be released or finish out the remainder of the 45 day placement. This committee will consist of the Opportunity Center Teacher, the Opportunity Center Administrator, and the principal and school counselor from the referring school. If the majority of the committee agrees, the student will return to the referring school for a probationary period of 9 weeks. Any referral of a severe nature during the probationary period can result in automatic placement at the Choctaw County Opportunity Center. An accumulation of any three referrals during the transition period will result in automatic placement at the Choctaw County Opportunity Center for a 45-day placement without the option for early release. The administration at each school will be given the opportunity to review each student's progress and determine if the student will start the following school year on the regular campus or remain at the Opportunity Center.

Assignments and Daily Activities

The Opportunity Center Director and staff will monitor students.

If the student does not follow the instruction of the staff, they will be placed in the cubicle for discipline & the posted cubicle rules will apply. Students will receive instructional material based on the objectives identified by their regular teachers. Certified teachers will provide daily tutoring. All grades will be sent back to the student's home school for each grading period. Each student will be assigned weekly work, that work is due at the end of the school week. Work that has not been done will be graded accordingly, if an assignment is incomplete the work that is done will be graded and what is not done will be graded as wrong and the points will be taken off the assignments grade. Work that the student refuses to do will result in zeros and cannot be made up. Each student will also be required to complete a course that will help strengthen themselves in many other areas including improving self-esteem, building friendships, resisting peer pressure, achieving, and setting goals, and getting along with others.

Transportation

Transportation will be provided by the Choctaw County School District. If a student drives to school, he or she must make arrangements with the Opportunity Center Administrator for a parking assignment.

Upon arrival at the Opportunity Center, students will go directly to their assigned room. Students are **NOT** to be at any other place on the Choctaw County High School Campus. Students attending should arrive at the Opportunity Center no earlier than 7:20 A.M. Parents picking up students before 2:00 P.M. will have to make up additional time.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Students assigned to the Opportunity Center will **NOT** be allowed to participate in or attend any extra-curricular activities in the Choctaw County School District during their assignment. Students will also not be allowed to attend any extra-curricular activity in which a Choctaw County School is involved. This includes all ballgames (home or away), proms, beauty review, etc. Students may not participate in any sports or practice.

Violation of this rule will result in an additional five (5) days for each infraction. After a student completes his/her assignment they may resume these activities.

Attendance

Absences:

- A. An **excused absence** will only be given for a lawful absence as defined by the Mississippi Code. Section 37-13-92, paragraph 4. A lawful absence is defined as:
1. Illness or injury of the student;
 2. Death or serious illness in the family;
 3. Isolation ordered by the county health officer or State Board of Health;
 4. Medical or dental appointment with prior approval by the principal, except in case of an emergency;
 5. Subpoena by a Court;
 6. Event required by student's or parent's religion.

In lieu of providing satisfactory documentation that the absence is a lawful absence, a maximum of three absences per semester will be accepted as an excused absence with a parent note. All additional days require satisfactory documentation or satisfactory evidence that the absence is a lawful absence.

- B. An unexcused absence will be defined as any absence which does not meet the requirements listed in this policy.

Truancy Laws

The school is warranted to contact the attendance officer after a student has five (5) unexcused absences. The parent will be contacted by the

attendance officer and will also receive written notification outlining the consequences for the absences.

After twelve (12) unexcused absences, the attendance officer will petition the court for excessive absences.

Any student whose family receives assistance (Food stamps or AFDC), after two (2) unexcused absences a DHS referral is made by the attendance officer and assistance may be cut by 25%.

Students are allowed three (3) parent notes/excuses per semester. If a student has already used these three excuses at his/her home school, a medical doctor or funeral note must be presented to excuse additional absences. Each unexcused tardy will result in an additional day to the student's assignment. Each excused absence will be made up. A student will serve the number of days assigned to him/her.

Emergencies

The Opportunity Center operates on a CLOSED CAMPUS POLICY. No student assigned to this Opportunity Center is allowed the privilege of leaving early unless there is an extreme emergency. The parent/legal guardian must first call the Opportunity Center to notify the school of the reason for the student's need for an early dismissal or emergency leaving. The students will be permitted to leave the campus only if signed out by a person on their sign out list. Students can be signed out in the office at the Opportunity Center. To assure the safety and welfare of all students and personnel, the Opportunity Center doors are locked to prevent access from the outside but allow students/staff to exit. If a student has any medication, he or she must follow the procedures listed in the Choctaw County Handbook. In case of an emergency, Opportunity Center personnel will notify parents.

Lunch

Lunch will be provided by the Choctaw County High School Cafeteria. Students will eat their lunch in the Opportunity Center. Those who display behavior problems or have not completed their work will not be allowed to go to the cafeteria to make their lunch selection.

Student Conduct

Personnel in the Opportunity Center must always provide direct supervision. Once a student is assigned to the Opportunity Center, discipline will be referred to the Opportunity Center. Good behavior is expected of every student enrolled at the Opportunity Center. This school is designed to give students who have been removed from the regular program an opportunity to stay in school and continue studies in the regular subjects. Therefore, it is a privilege for the student to attend this alternative program. Any student who makes it difficult or impossible for studying and learning to take place will be subject to expulsion.

Good citizenship is based on respect and consideration for the rights of others. Students are expected to conduct themselves in such a way that the rights and privileges of others are not violated. Students are required to respect school authority and to conform to school policies, regulations, and rules. Failure to comply with these rules and policies will result in additional days added to the assigned time or expulsion.

When students misbehave or violate school regulations, they will be subject to disciplinary action. Any student who starts a disturbance or fight (or who participates in one) on any school property will be transported by the police to the police station and charges may be filed. Parents/legal guardian may pick these students up at the police station. Fighting will result in three-day suspension & twenty additional days added to the student's placement for the first incident, if a second fight occurs the student/students will be recommended for expulsion. NO student will be allowed to intimidate another student or staff. Any student

harassing or intimidating other students or staff will be charged with assault. When a student is expelled for fighting, law enforcements and youth services will be notified.

All students must refrain from the use of profanity or verbally abusive language while on this campus. Insubordination and/or verbal abuse to teachers or staff will not be tolerated. Students who violate this rule will be assigned up to five additional days per offense.

Any student, who uses, sells, buys, or possesses illegal drugs or alcoholic beverages at school will be turned over to law enforcement and be expelled from school. **THE OPPORTUNITY CENTER IS SUBJECT TO THE USE OF DRUG DOGS TO ASSURE NO DRUG TRAFFIC IS TAKING PLACE.** Students are not allowed to use or possess tobacco or tobacco products on the school premises. Any student who is found with tobacco or tobacco products will be subject to additional days added to their assigned time as stated in the Choctaw County Student Handbook. Students are not permitted to carry or otherwise have weapons including, but not limited to: guns, knives, box cutters, chains, etc. on any school campus. Any student who threatens to use a weapon or any object that could be harmful to another person will be turned over to law enforcement and expelled from campus.

Personal Belongings

To secure students' personal belongings, the Opportunity Center expects students to abide by the following guidelines since this school has no student lockers.

Students should adhere to the following:

1. Leave Cell Phones and other Electronic Devices (CD players, MP3 players, I-Pods, laptops, cameras, radios, games, etc.) at home. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the confiscation of the item(s). Arrangements must be made by the parent/guardian to pick these items up at the Choctaw County Opportunity Center.

2. No backpacks/bags are allowed. Any container brought to carry personal items must be given to a staff member upon arrival at which time it will be inspected for contraband. If a student needs a personal item from the container during the day a staff member will retrieve that item.
3. No hats, caps, grooming devices, or head coverings of any kind are to be worn in Opportunity Center building. Girls may wear headbands or scarves not to exceed 2 ½” in width and in good taste. Headgear will not be allowed on campus. Jackets with hoods will not be allowed in the Opportunity Center classrooms. This includes hooded sweatshirts.

Personal Appearance Regulations

Students assigned to Opportunity Center are required to comply with Choctaw County School District dress code. Failure to comply with CCHS dress code will result in a warning & correction of attire for the first offense, the second offense will be considered insubordination & will count towards expulsion.

Students assigned to the Opportunity Center are not allowed to wear hairstyles, clothing, symbols, etc. associated with group/gang/cult membership. The Opportunity Center is a neutral zone; therefore, no group/gang/cult activity (behavior, dress, symbols, signs, language, etc.) will be tolerated at this school since the students’ attention must be turned to education pursuits.

Choctaw County Opportunity Center Discipline Steps

Unless otherwise stated in the Opportunity Center Handbook, days will be added for each infraction to correlate with the days in the Choctaw County Assertive Discipline Plan. Be aware that the following steps are for infractions committed on the Opportunity Center (see pages 19-22 of the Choctaw County School District Student Handbook) will accelerate this step process.

**** On this plan only infractions Step 3 or higher are placed on the discipline steps towards expulsion.**

1st Infraction:

2nd Infraction:

3rd Infraction:

4th Infraction: One day out of school suspension.

Upon returning from OSS:

1st Infraction:

2nd Infraction:

3rd Infraction:

4th Infraction: Three days out of school suspension.

Upon returning from OSS:

1st Infraction:

2nd Infraction:

3rd Infraction:

4th Infraction: Expulsion