

CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Guidelines for Professionalism in the Workplace and Prevention of Workplace Violence

The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage and foster constructive working relationships among all regular and temporary School District employees (certified, classified and substitutes, regardless of position or work location) to support a positive and effective work environment. All staff members are expected to maintain the highest level of professional, moral and ethical standards in their interactions with others.

Responsible Staff Relationships Guidelines

Professionalism in the workplace is the practice of ensuring mutual respect and civility toward all members of the school or community. All employees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes productive communication, job satisfaction, productivity and minimal absenteeism and turnover.

All interactions and relationships among staff members should recognize and guarantee freedom from discrimination and harassment. CCSD Policy GAEB prohibits discrimination and harassment based upon race, age, gender, gender identity, genetic status, past or present protected military service, pregnancy, color, religion, national origin, disability, or other protected status. CCSD Policy GAEB provides protection from harassment and Policy GAE (2) details the process to address such complaints at the lowest level of administration in order to quickly and efficiently resolve all such matters. These policies ensure that no employee will be subject to retaliation or reprisal for making a good faith complaint or for participating in an investigation. The Cherokee County Board of Education recognizes the responsibility to ensure safe and healthful working conditions; CCSD Policies GAEB and GAM detail that commitment to safety and staff drug-free workplace rights and responsibilities. In addition, CCSD Policy GAMB provides details related to the possession and use of weapons on school district properties pursuant to Georgia law.

Additionally, according to the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators, an educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession. Unethical conduct is described as that which impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his/her employment position, and includes engaging in inappropriate relationships with co-workers. CCSD Policy GAG permits the employment of qualified relatives of employees as long as such employment does not create an actual or perceived conflict.

Employees of the School District have the right and responsibility to:

- Expect that conflicts will be addressed respectfully
- Work in an environment free from harassment, abuse or threatening behavior
- Communicate in a respectful manner (voice volume and tone, free of profanity)
- Receive assistance in job performance and satisfaction

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORKPLACE (Continued)

It is the School District's position to support responsible staff relationships; to take affirmative action to prevent unwanted conduct from occurring; and to address all such reported incidents in a fair, impartial and expedient manner. Any behavior that creates a climate of violence, hostility, or intimidation will not be tolerated, regardless of origin.

Unprofessional Conduct

Unprofessional conduct in the workplace may include the following examples, by definition:

Discrimination: Unfair treatment based on bias, prejudice, inequity, intolerance or favoritism

- Promotion based on friendship
- Any unequal treatment based on protected status

Harassment: Unwanted, offensive, and/or intrusive verbal or physical behavior that is perceived to be linked to a legally protected category (i.e. gender, ethnicity, disability)

- Displaying offensive pictures/objects
- Unwanted physical advances

Bullying: A pattern of aggressive behavior toward someone weaker or more vulnerable

- Deliberate exclusion of others from group activities
- Spreading malicious rumors or gossip

Retaliation: Deliberate harm to another in response or revenge for a perceived harm

- Threatening to impugn supervisor in the community for personal unsatisfactory performance evaluation
- Behavior or conduct that constitutes an act of reprisal, retaliation, or making a false accusation against any student, stakeholder, or employee of the school district.

Boundary Invasions: An act or omission by a school employee that has the potential to improperly impair the working relationship

- Unacceptable conduct that invades another's personal space, such as unwelcome touching, hugging, kissing, asking for dates, or intrusive questions about another's private life or body
- Conduct that gives the appearance of impropriety, such as communication of sexually explicit materials, banter, jokes or innuendos of an inappropriate nature

This list is not all-inclusive. It is the reasonable perception of the person who is being harassed or bullied, not the intent of the harasser or bully that determines the difference.

Acts or threats of violence in the workplace.

Acts or threats of violence include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and situations:

- Violent or threatening physical contact (including fights, pushing, and physical intimidation)

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORKPLACE (Continued)

- Direct or indirect threats
- Threatening, abusive, annoying or harassing communications including but not limited to phone calls, text messages, or emails
- Possession of a weapon in violation of School District Policy GAMB
- Destructive or sabotaging actions against the School District or employees' personal property
- Stalking or aggravated stalking
- Violation of a valid restraining order, protective order, family violence order or similar document issued by a court having jurisdiction
- Threatening acts or abusive language that leads to tension within the work environment or places an employee or others in fear of bodily harm

Any person who makes substantial threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on School District property will be removed from the premises or workplace environment as soon as is reasonable and practical under the circumstances and shall remain off School District premises pending the outcome of a supervisory review or an investigation authorized by the Superintendent of Schools.

Reporting Violations of Professionalism Guidelines

All School District employees who witness, have personal knowledge or reasonable suspicion of, or experience an occurrence of unprofessional conduct including acts or threats of workplace violence, are required to report such to their immediate supervisor(s). If the immediate supervisor is unavailable or involved, the staff member will report to the building or worksite administrator or supervisor. If the building or worksite administrator is unavailable or involved, the employee should report to the Division of School Operations or to the Division of Human Resources.

All Cherokee County School District employees (regular and temporary) are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the highest level of professionalism at all times. Therefore, violations of these guidelines, unprofessional conduct, a reported act or threat of workplace violence, or failure to report a violation of these guidelines could, depending on the severity of the incident and/or other relevant considerations result in reprimand, suspension, termination of employment, loss of professional certification and criminal charges or other penalties.

An employee who obtains an order issued by a court having jurisdiction, which lists School District premises as being a protected area, must provide to their immediate supervisor a copy of the order. The School District understands the sensitivity of the information requested and will attempt to maintain confidentiality of the information and respect the privacy of the employee(s), limiting the disclosure of information to appropriate staff and/or agencies.

Training

School District employees are required annually to review important policies, deemed District Critical Issues, to ensure a safe school/safe staff workplace environment.