

# Professional Code of Conduct Policy for Employees, Contractors, Graduate Students and Volunteers

This Professional Code of Conduct Policy complies with and is made pursuant to Section 22-85.5 of the *Illinois School Code*, as applicable for Illinois nonpublic therapeutic day schools.

All employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will exhibit the highest ethical best practices and personal integrity and are expected to maintain high professional standards in their school relationships. The success of students in school relies on safe learning environments and healthy relationships with school personnel. It is imperative that staff maintain a professional relationship with students at all times and that staff-student boundaries are defined and adhered to in order to protect students from sexual misconduct by staff and staff from the appearance of impropriety.

The Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators is incorporated into this Professional Conduct Policy and is included below.

All employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment

All employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect any other employee, contractor, graduate student, volunteer, current school student, or any other person that works externally or internally with any aspect of our program or operation.

All employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their supervisor or the LSSC Human Resources Director.

All employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will report any suspected abuse or neglect of any employee, contractor, graduate student, volunteer, current school student, or any other person that works externally or internally with any aspect of our program or operation.

All employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will accept their personal responsibility to protect any employee, contractor, graduate student, volunteer, or current student from all forms of abuse.

## **Professional Code of Conduct**

The following policies are intended to assist employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with LSSC staff, students, parents, donors, external vendors, and the general public. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, please contact your supervisor or LSSC's Human Resources Director.

The organization provides our students and other recipients of our services with the highest quality services available. We are committed to creating an environment for staff, students, and others that

that are receiving our services that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

Abuse of any kind will not be tolerated and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from this organization. The organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require an investigation. This Professional Code of Conduct outlines specific expectations of employees, contractors, graduate students and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

Staff, students, parents, donors, external vendors, and the general public will be always treated with respect.

Employee conduct including, but not limited to, the following may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

- Sexual harassment of a student by an employee;
- The willful or negligent failure of an employee to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect as required by the *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act* (325 ILCS 5/1 et seq.);
- An employee's engagement in "grooming" as defined in 720 ILCS 5/11-25 or grooming behaviors;
- An employee's violation of boundaries for appropriate school employee-student conduct
- An employee's engagement in "sexual misconduct" as defined in 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5 (defined below); and
- A violation of this Professional Code of Conduct Policy, any employee conduct standard stated herein, including those standards of the Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators, or the failure to report a violation of these standards.

Due to our population of students, employees are expected to recognize and consider the age and developmental and functional level of each individual student the employee serves at all times.

Staff, students, parents, donors, external vendors, and the general public will be treated equally regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, age, gender, or religious preference.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will adhere to uniform best practices of displaying affection as outlined by the organization.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will avoid affection with staff and students that cannot be observed by others.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will adhere to uniform best practices of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by our organization.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will not stare at or comment on anyone else's bodies.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with students or others they are providing direct service to including therapy, testing and training.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of students.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on our organization's property or when in the presence of other staff, students, parents, donors, or external vendors.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will only give gifts in accordance with organizational policies.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will comply with our organization's policies regarding interactions with students, parents, donors, external vendors, and others that are receiving services from any entity of LSSC outside of our programs.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will adhere to organizational policies regarding electronic communication and social media in the LSSC employee Handbook.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will adhere to organizational policies regarding working one-on-one with students in a private setting.

Employees, contractors, graduate students, and volunteers will not abuse students, parents, donors, external vendors, and others that are receiving services from any entity of LSSC outside of our programs in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:

*Physical abuse: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints*

*Verbal abuse: degrading, threatening, cursing*

*Sexual abuse: inappropriate touch, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations*

*Mental abuse: shaming, humiliation, cruelty*

*Neglect: withholding food, water, shelter*

LSSC will not tolerate any mistreatment or abuse. In addition, LSSC will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying per both schools' and

LSSC's anti-bullying policies as detailed in our employee Handbooks, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all members of the LSSC staff, students, contractors, vendors and the external community including parents, outside agencies and the general public. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

*Physical bullying: when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, or pinching. Physical restraints conducted by staff trained with TCI and in accordance with the O-School's behavioral intervention policy is not considered physical bullying.*

*Verbal bullying: when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful name.*

*Nonverbal or relational bullying: when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.*

*Cyberbullying: the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs*

Employees and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, other adults, or Consumers to a supervisor or LSSC Human Resources Director at 773-420-2884.

Employees and volunteers will report allegations or incidents of abuse to the proper state authority. Please refer to the specific guidelines of your state regarding mandated reporting.

All employees are expected to maintain a professional relationship with students and uphold appropriate boundaries at all times by complying with the following guidelines and standards at a minimum:

Comply with the following Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators, adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education:

- ***Principle 1: Responsibility to Students.*** The Illinois educator is committed to creating, promoting, and implementing a learning environment that is accessible to each student, enables students to achieve the highest academic potential, and maximizes their ability to succeed in academic and employment settings as a responsible member of society. Illinois educators:

- Embody the Standards for the School Service Personnel Certificate (23 Ill. Adm. Code 23), the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (23 Ill. Adm. Code 24), and Standards for Administrative Certification (23 Ill. Adm. Code 29), as applicable to the educator, in the learning environment;
  - Respect the inherent dignity and worth of each student by assuring that the learning environment is characterized by respect and equal opportunity for each student, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, language or socioeconomic status;
  - Maintain a professional relationship with students at all times;
  - Provide a curriculum based on high expectations for each student that addresses individual differences through the design, implementation, and adaptation of effective instruction; and
  - Foster in each student the development of attributes that will enhance skills and knowledge necessary to be a contributing member of society.
- ***Principle 2: Responsibility to Self.*** The Illinois Educator is committed to establishing high professional standards for their practice and striving to meet these standards through their performance. Illinois Educators:
- Assume responsibility and accountability for their performance and continually strive to demonstrate proficiency and currency in both content knowledge and professional practice;
  - Develop and implement personal and professional goals with attention to professional standards through a process of self assessment and professional development;
  - Represent their professional credentials and qualifications accurately; and
  - Demonstrate a high level of professional judgment.
- ***Principle 3: Responsibility to Colleagues and the Profession.*** The Illinois Educator is committed to collaborating with school and district colleagues and other professionals in the interest of student learning. Illinois Educators:
- Collaborate with colleagues in the local school and district to meet local and state educational standards;

- Work together to create a respectful, professional and supportive school climate that allows all educators to maintain their individual professional integrity;
  - Seek out and engage in activities that contribute to the ongoing development of the profession;
  - Promote participation in educational decision making processes;
  - Encourage promising candidates to enter the education profession; and
  - Support the preparation, induction, mentoring and professional development of educators.
- ***Principle 4: Responsibility to Parents, Families and Communities.*** The Illinois Educator will collaborate, build trust, and respect confidentiality with parents, families, and communities to create effective instruction and learning environments for each student. Illinois Educators:
- Aspire to understand and respect the values and traditions of the diversity represented in the community and in their learning environments;
  - Encourage and advocate for fair and equal educational opportunities for each student;
  - Develop and maintain professional relationships with parents, families, and communities;
  - Promote collaboration and support student learning through regular and meaningful communication with parents, families, and communities; and
  - Cooperate with community agencies that provide resources and services to enhance the learning environment.
- ***Principle 5. Responsibility to the Illinois State Board of Education.*** Illinois educators are committed to compliance with the School Code [105 ILCS 5] and its implementing regulations, and to State and federal laws and regulations relevant to their profession. Illinois educators:
- Provide accurate communication to the Illinois State Board of Education concerning all educator licensure matters;
  - Maintain appropriate educator licensure for employment; and

- Comply with State and federal laws and regulations.

Employees are prohibited from engaging in *grooming* behaviors and sexual *misconduct*, which under this policy, and pursuant to Section 22-85.5 of the *Illinois School Code*, is defined as (a) any act, including, but not limited to, any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity, (b) by an employee or agent of the school with direct contact with a student, (c) that is directed toward or with a student to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with the student. Such an act includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- A sexual or romantic invitation;
- Dating or soliciting a date;
- Engaging in sexualized or romantic dialogue;
- Making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with a student;
- Self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature; or
- A sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact with the student.

Employees are not permitted to transport students in the employee's privately owned vehicles. All transportation of students to and from the school is pursuant to the student's transportation plan (or IEP) and any changes need to be approved by Executive Directors, or designee, and will be made in consultation with the Parent/Guardian.

Employees are not permitted to take or possess a photo or video of a student on their private devices. Student pictures for school sponsored activities or related media are permitted; however, staff members are not to utilize their personal devices for this purpose and any photography or videography for school-related matters is only permitted to occur upon approval of Executive Directors, or designee.

Employees are not permitted to meet with a student or contact a student outside the employee's professional role. Employees are expected to avoid crossing a line that results in an actual or perceived inappropriate relationship.

Employees are prohibited from engaging in communication in any form on any subject matter that would be deemed unprofessional and inappropriate between an employee and student. Employees are also strictly prohibited from engaging in communication with students through personal platforms, i.e., personal e-mail addresses, social media, text message, web applications.

All employees are mandated reporters and required to comply with all reporting requirements of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/).

Employees are also required to report any sexual harassment or sexual abuse under this policy to their supervisor, or his/her designee or the Human Resources Director.

All employees are required to complete training related to educator ethics, child abuse and mandated reporting, grooming behaviors, and boundary violations consistent with Section 22-85.5 of the Illinois School Code and this Professional Code of Conduct Policy.

A violation of this Professional Code of Conduct Policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment. Failure to report a violation of this Professional Code of Conduct Policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.