

## **Ocala Christian Academy Ethics in Education Act**

Ocala Christian Academy requires high standards of conduct and professional ethics of all employees involved in its ministry. These expectations are covered in the application, contract, and Faculty Manual which is done as a required training session during Orientation Week.

Included with these stated expectations is the requirement to abide by the Ethics in Education Act put into effect by the state of Florida on July 1, 2008.

This act establishes the following code of ethics for the education profession in Florida (6B-1.001):

1. The educator values the worth and dignity of every person, the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and the nurture of democratic citizenship. Essential to the achievement of these standards are the freedoms to learn and to teach and to guarantee equal opportunity.
2. The educator's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential. The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.
3. Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of other members of the community, the educator strives to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct.

This act further establishes the following principles of professional conduct for the education profession in Florida (6B-1.006):

4. The following disciplinary rule shall constitute the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida.
5. Violation of any of these principles shall subject the individual to revocation or suspension of the individual educator's certificate or the other penalties as provided by law.
6. Obligation to the student requires that the individual:
  - a. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning and/or to the student's mental and/or physical health and/or safety.
  - b. Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
  - c. Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
  - d. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
  - e. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.
  - f. Shall not harass or discriminate against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition, or family background and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment or discrimination.

- g. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage.
  - h. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
7. Obligation to the public requires that the individual:
- i. Shall take reasonable precautions to distinguish between personal views and those of any educational institution or organization with which the individual is affiliated.
  - j. Shall not intentionally distort or misrepresent facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.
  - k. Shall not use institutional privileges for personal gain or advantage.
  - l. Shall accept no gratuity, gift, or favor to obtain special advantages.
8. Obligation to the profession of education requires that the individual:
- a. Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings.
  - b. Shall not on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition if otherwise qualified, or family background deny to a colleague professional benefits or advantages or participation in any professional organization.
  - c. Shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political or civil rights and responsibilities.
  - d. Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct which unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance of professional or work responsibilities or with the orderly process of education or which creates a hostile, intimidating, abusive, offensive or oppressive environment; and, further, shall make reasonable effort to assure that each individual is protected from such harassment or discrimination.
  - e. Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.
  - f. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional judgments of colleagues.
  - g. Shall not misrepresent one's own professional qualifications.
  - h. Shall not submit fraudulent information on any document in connection with professional activities.
  - i. Shall not make any fraudulent statement or fail to disclose a material fact in one's own or another's application for a professional position.
  - j. Shall not withhold information regarding a position from an applicant or misrepresent an assignment or conditions of employment.
  - k. Shall provide upon the request of the certified individual a written statement of specific reason for recommendations that lead to the denial of increments, significant changes in employment, or termination of employment.
  - l. Shall not assist entry into or continuance in the profession of any person known to be unqualified in accordance with these Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida and other applicable Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules.
  - m. Shall self-report within forty-eight (48) hours to appropriate authorities (as determined by district) any arrests/charges involving the abuse of a child or the sale and/or possession of a controlled substance. Such notice shall not be

considered an admission of guilt nor such notice be admissible for any purpose in any proceeding, civil or criminal, administrative or judicial, investigatory or adjudicatory. In addition, shall self-report any conviction, finding of guilt, withholding of adjudication, commitment to a retrial diversion program, or entering of a plea of guilty any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation within forty-eight (48) hours after the final judgment. When handling sealed and expunged records disclosed under this rule, school districts shall comply with the confidentiality provisions of Sections 943.0585(4c) and 943.059(4c), Florida Statutes.

- n. Shall report to appropriate authorities any known allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 1012.795(1), Florida Statutes.
- o. Shall seek no reprisal against any individual who has reported any allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 1012.795(1), Florida Statutes.
- p. Shall comply with the condition of an order of the Education Practices Commission.
- q. Shall, as the supervising administrator, cooperate with the Education Practices Commission in monitoring the probation of a subordinate.

With the content of the Ethics in Education Act in mind, ***it is the obligation and legal responsibility of all Ocala Christian Academy employees to report actual or suspected misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. The administrator is Randy Osborne and he can be reached at [rosborne@ocacrusaders.com](mailto:rosborne@ocacrusaders.com).*** Misconduct that should be reported includes, but is not limited to, obscene language, drug and alcohol use, disparaging comments, prejudice or bigotry, sexual innuendo, cheating, testing violations, physical aggression, and acceptance or offering of favors.

***Reports of such misconduct should be made directly to the Chairman of the Ocala Christian Academy School Board. Chairman, Terry Loyd can be reached at [sloyd@ocacrusaders.com](mailto:sloyd@ocacrusaders.com).***

***Failure to report misconduct may result in penalties up to termination of employment and revocation of an educator's certificate.***

***These policies and procedures are posted in the Middle, High School and Main offices and in the employee mail room in the Elementary Building and on the website at [ocacrusaders.com](http://ocacrusaders.com).***

Employees are protected from liability when reporting misconduct by the following Florida Statutes:

39.203 - Immunity from liability in cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

- 1a. Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by this chapter, or reporting in good faith any instance of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to the department or any law enforcement agency, shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability which might otherwise result by reason of such action.

- 1b. Except as provided in this chapter, nothing contained in this section shall be deemed to grant immunity, civil or criminal, to any person suspected of having abused, abandoned, or neglected a child, or committed any illegal act upon or against a child.
- 2a. No resident or employee of a facility serving children may be subjected to reprisal or discharge because of his or her action in reporting abuse, abandonment, or neglect pursuant to the requirements of this section.
- 2b. Any person making a report under this section shall have a civil cause of action for appropriate compensatory and punitive damages against any person who causes detrimental changes in the employment status of such person including, but not limited to, discharge, termination, demotion, transfer, or reduction in pay or benefits or work privileges, or negative evaluations within a prescribed period of time shall establish a rebuttable presumption that such action was retaliatory.

768.095 - Employer immunity from liability; disclosure of information regarding former or current employees.

An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under chapter 760 of the Florida Statutes.

***Ocala Christian Academy prohibits confidentiality agreements with instructional personnel or school administrators who are dismissed, terminated, or resign in lieu of termination due to misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.***

Included additional information:

1. Child Abuse Information
2. Reporting Professional Misconduct Notice
3. Reporting Professional Misconduct Brochure
4. Educator Misconduct Reporting Form
- 5.

## **Child Abuse: Look for the Signs**

Dial 1-800-96-ABUSE

### **Signs of Physical Abuse**

The child may have unexplained:

- Bruises, welts, cuts, or other injuries
- Broken bones
- Burns

A child experiencing physical abuse may:

- Seem withdrawn or depressed
- Seem afraid to go home or may run away
- Shy away from physical contact
- Be aggressive
- Wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries

## Signs of Sexual Abuse

The child may have:

- Torn, stained or bloody underwear
- Trouble walking or sitting
- Pain or itching in genital area
- A sexually transmitted disease

A child experiencing sexual abuse may:

- Have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively
- Fear of particular person
- Seem withdrawn or depressed
- Gain or lose weight suddenly
- Shy away from physical contact
- Run away from home

## Signs of Neglect

The child may have:

- Unattended medical needs
- Little or no supervision at home
- Poor hygiene
- Appear underweight

A child experiencing neglect may:

- Be frequently tired or hungry
- Steal food
- Appear overly needy for adult attention

## Look for Patterns

Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported.

If a child tells YOU about abuse:

Be a good listener. Show that you understand and believe what the child tells you. Encourage, but don't pressure him/her to talk. Ask open-ended questions.

Be supportive. Tell the child he/she did the right thing by coming to you. Stress that he/she is not to blame. Let the child know that you want to help.

Don't overreact. This can frighten the child or prevent him/her from telling you more. Do not talk negatively about the suspected abuser in front of the child.

Document and report it. Document your conversation as soon as you can. If possible, write down the child's exact words.

Don't delay. Never assume someone else will report the abuse. The sooner it's reported, the sooner the child and their family can be helped.

## WHO MUST REPORT ABUSE?

Doctors

Nurses

Social Workers

Child Care Workers

Any Witnesses

Any/All School Personnel

**Call or Report it online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>**