

Child Protection Policy for a Virtual Learning Environment

Recognizing and Reporting Abuse in Virtual Learning Environments and Online Code of Conduct

The advent of classrooms and youth programming converting to a virtual environment means teachers will have a new view of the students they serve. For the first time educators will catch a glimpse inside students' homes when we engage with them online and must adapt child protection strategies accordingly.

The Online Code of Conduct sets forth the expectations and responsibilities for online teaching and learning, and the standards to which all educators must comply for the protection of students. Utilizing digital platforms for interactions may not be new for many children and will likely require some instruction and boundary setting now that interactions will more commonly involve adults. And adults have an opportunity and a responsibility to model appropriate online behaviors for children. Healthy teacher to student boundaries in an online learning environment are as important as a physical classroom environment.

Teachers cannot assume that all students will know how to transfer the expectations of the physical classroom to the online classroom. Take the time to set up the rules and boundaries within this learning environment so all students feel safe and ready to learn.

Recognizing and Reporting Abuse in Virtual Learning Environments

Teachers and school officials are key in the prevention of child abuse through early recognition and reporting. With schools shifting to online learning environments, teachers must take note of students during all online interactions with a different lens. Be observant of the following:

- Child's appearance and any visual clues which may serve as indicators, such as:
overturned furniture, holes in drywall, drug paraphernalia, or weapons
- Interactions others in the household are having with the child
- Child's sudden change in behavior
- Significant decrease in child's performance or level of interaction

Mandatory Reporting Responsibility and Hotline

In all states, teachers are mandatory reporters of abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment) and neglect. If you have a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect, you must immediately report to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Hotline. Any individual who makes a report in good faith is immune from criminal and civil liability. You don't need proof, just a reasonable suspicion, which is based on your training and experience that reasonably leads you to believe abuse or neglect is occurring. You may be the only one who ever calls on behalf of that child. Load your local child abuse hotline as a contact in your cell phone today. You can save a life. Here is a link find the hotline in your state to: [Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Telephone Numbers by State](#)

Indicators of Abuse

- unexplained or repeated injury
- verbal threats of harm
- degrading commentary (humiliation, rejection, questionable forms of punishment) from an adult caregiver directed toward the student
- student has discomfort sitting
- student shows wariness when parent/caregiver is present/approaches
- student attempts to hide injury
- any disclosure of physical, sexual or emotional abuse

Indicators of Neglect

- Student appears malnourished
- Inappropriate clothing for the season
- Denied medical care/necessary medicine
- Extremely dirty/unbathed
- Lack of appropriate supervision for extended period
- Parent/caregiver: seems indifferent, under the influence, lacks the means to provide for the student (i.e. mental capacity)

Other Wellness/Safety Concerns and Resources:

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-TALK (8255)
- CyberTipline: 800-THE-LOST or <https://report.cybertip.org/>
- National Abuse Hotline: 800-4-A-student (800-422-4453)
- Dating Violence Hotline: 800-787-7233. For those who are unable to speak safely can log onto thehotline.org or text LOVEIS to 22522.
- National Parent Helpline: 855-4-A-PARENT (1-855-427-2736)
- ****Add your school/organizational resources here.**

Online Learning Code of Conduct

Supervision

It is our policy that all online interactions between teachers and students must be *continuously observable* and can be **interrupted at any time**. Specifically, teachers are required to conduct lessons that include two or more students at all times. No one-on-one video chat, facetime, or online chat groups with a student are permitted. For classroom security, keep the classroom (Zoom room) locked until the teacher is present and prepared to begin.

Relationships with Students Outside the Digital Classroom

Relationships with students formed as a result of the school are prohibited outside of the school (i.e. babysitting, tutoring). Online games and applications, used outside of the classroom, are also prohibited.

Staff, employees, and volunteers must not share their personal contact information with students or follow or friend them on social media platforms. Online learning requires teachers to maintain the same professional boundaries with students that they have in the classroom. Demonstrating healthy relationships between students and adults allows students to mirror with other adults and keeps students safer.

All persons associated with our school (young people and their families, staff, volunteers, administration and committee members) have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy. Relationships with students should be reinforced with respect for their personal space and their bodies, including online spaces.

Online Contact

All online contact with a student should be appropriate and observable by others; therefore, teachers (including paras, mentors and tutors) must not send 1-to-1 emails or text messages to students. Feedback on assignments, messaging related to class, etc. should be communicated through a platform that supports a second set of eyes, i.e. administrator, parent/caregiver, open class discussion.

Professional Integrity

Staff, employees, and volunteers accept that professional responsibility takes precedence over personal needs and opinions. Professionalism is paramount in an organization serving families. Students are impressionable and oftentimes model the behaviors of others, and professional behaviors must continue in the online environment.

Professional Integrity begins before the online class starts. The following professional online considerations for teachers must include:

- Dress appropriately (as a teacher) for the camera.
- Conduct video online classes in an appropriate room. Avoid the bedroom and other personal spaces not conducive to teaching.
- Select an area that is free from noise makers (TV, other people, pets, etc.).

- Silence all other devices.
- Avoid eating during this time.
- Keep your device on MUTE unless you are speaking.
- Make sure your backdrop is appropriate for students.
- Be sure the camera and microphone are working properly before the video classroom begins.
- Online classrooms require the same level of professional interaction with students as a physical classroom. Avoid being too casual in your interactions with students - this will deteriorate the integrity of the teacher-student relationship.
- Communication to parents and caregivers remains an important component in an online classroom. Find innovative ways of including parents/caregivers (i.e. 5 minute weekly recap involving student and parent) in a daily or weekly communication.
- The following behaviors are strictly forbidden in an online classroom:
 - Obscenities, profanity, or vulgar language
 - Harassing or intimidating behaviors
 - Sexually explicit, suggestive, humiliating or degrading comments
 - Viewing of any material inappropriate for a student viewing audience
 - To be under the influence of alcohol or drugs (prescription or illicit)
 - Use of any derogatory language regarding: race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship, socio-economic status or ability
 - Any form of verbal, sexual, or mental abuse or neglect

Online Safety

- If utilizing Zoom, keep your rooms safer by doing the following:
 - Require a password
 - Enable the waiting room
 - Use an generated User ID
- If utilizing Google Meets, the following safety measures are in place:
 - Anonymous users (users without Google accounts) are not allowed to join meetings.
 - Participants limited to join the meeting more than 15 minutes in advance of the scheduled time
 - Only users on the calendar invite can enter without an explicit request to join meetings. Participants not on the calendar invite must request to join a meeting by “knocking”, which must be accepted by the meeting organizer.
 - Meeting organizers have easy access to [security controls](#) such as muting and removing recipients, and only the meeting host can remove or mute participants directly within a meeting.