

P4-05-016 Employee Conduct

A. Standards of Professional Conduct

Consistent with its mission, it is the policy of the School Board to recruit and employ highly professional employees who demonstrate the utmost professional and ethical behavior while making the well-being of the students of Henrico County Public Schools their primary goal. Accordingly, all School Board employees shall maintain a standard of dress, personal appearance, general decorum, and behavior that reflects positively on their status as employees of the School Board and as role models for students.

As a condition of employment, all employees are expected to comply with School Board policies and regulations. Employees shall fulfill their individual responsibilities with courtesy, respect, responsibility, honesty, and accountability. Safety and respect for diversity are expected of all employees.

1. Employee – Student Relations

At no time should an employee's conduct jeopardize a student's ability to learn. Accordingly, no employee shall:

- a. associate or interact with HCPS students at any time in a manner that is intimate or sexually suggestive;
- b. direct excessive or intimate communications to a student, either in person or via electronic means;
- c. cause any student to miss instructional time or school-sponsored activities for non-educational purposes;
- d. allow a student to ride in or drive the employee's personal vehicle without the knowledge and consent of the student's parent/guardian and appropriate supervisor;
- e. assist or encourage a student's use of controlled substances such as tobacco, alcohol, or drugs; or
- f. help a student falsify or conceal information impacting the student's health, safety or welfare.

Any employee who possesses knowledge or evidence of possible violations of this policy must immediately make a report to their building administrator/department head, the appropriate Division Leadership Team member or the Chief Human Resources Officer. All employees who know or have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or harassment shall immediately report the suspected violation in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 63.2-1509. Employees may be disciplined for failing to make such reports up to and including termination.

2. Exceptions

The goal of this policy is to protect students from harm and employees from allegations of misconduct by requiring employees to maintain professional boundaries with students. HCPS does not intend to interfere with or impede appropriate interactions between employees and students. An employee who, in good faith, reports a violation of this policy will not be subjected to discrimination or retaliation. The employee shall report any such discrimination or retaliation to the Chief Human Resources Officer for further investigation.

This policy does not limit employees from communicating with their children, stepchildren, other persons living within the employee's home, or students related by birth or marriage who happen to be students of the Division.

B. Threats Against Co-Workers

No employee shall physically or verbally threaten or intimidate another employee or create an abusive work environment. Any employee who contributes to an abusive work environment is subject to appropriate discipline. Retaliation against any School Board employee who reports an abusive work environment or assists in the investigation of an allegation of an abusive work environment is prohibited.

"Abusive conduct" means conduct of a School Board employee in the workplace that a reasonable person would find hostile and that is severe enough to cause physical harm or psychological harm to another School Board employee based on a determination in which the following factors are considered: the severity, nature, and frequency of the conduct and, when applicable, the continuation of the conduct after a School Board employee requests that it cease or demonstrates outward signs of physical harm or psychological harm in the face of the conduct. "Abusive conduct" includes verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; the gratuitous sabotage or undermining of another School Board employee's work performance; attempts to exploit another School Board employee's known psychological or physical vulnerability; or repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, or epithets. "Abusive conduct" does not include (i) a single act, unless it is especially severe, or (ii) conduct that the School Board proves with clear and convincing evidence is necessary for the furtherance of its legitimate and lawful interests.

"Abusive work environment" means a workplace in the school division in which abusive conduct occurs.

C. Conduct Outside of the Workplace

The School Board recognizes that employees retain the right to keep their personal lives separate from their positions as School Board employees. The School Board also recognizes that due to the unique position School Board employees serve in the community as leaders, role models, and caretakers for the division's students, inappropriate conduct outside of the workplace can interfere with instruction and operations and be inconsistent with employment by the School Board.

Conduct that jeopardizes the School Board's or the community's trust in an employee's ability to perform his or her duties may be the basis for disciplinary action. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to: (1) drug or alcohol abuse that becomes open and notorious; (2) conviction of a felony, a crime of moral turpitude or another offense that would disqualify an employee from employment; (3) the misuse of School Board property; (4) intentional conflicts of interests; (5) interference of personal matters with the employee's performance of duties; and/or (6) inappropriate social networking activities on Internet sites or other public media. In such cases the School Board reserves the right to take disciplinary action that promotes the integrity and safety of the staff and students.

All employees shall inform the Chief Human Resources Officer in writing within 72 hours or the beginning of the next work day, whichever comes first, after an arrest for any felony or misdemeanor. In addition, all employees shall inform the Chief Human Resources Officer in writing within 10 days after having been found guilty of any felony or misdemeanor.

Last Revised August 2018

Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-291.4.