



# ETHICS POLICY

## Academy Prep Center of St. Petersburg

### Summation of Policies & Procedures Regarding Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment Violence Prevention, Child Abuse, Abandonment, or Neglect 2024-2025

The purpose of this notice is to provide employees with a general summary of Academy Prep's philosophy, policies, procedures and guidelines regarding the policies and reporting procedures with respect to non-discrimination, anti-harassment, violence prevention and child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

#### REFERENCE:

**Florida Statute 39.203 Immunity from liability in cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.**

(1)(a) 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.

(b) 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.

(2)(a) No resident or employee of a facility serving children may be subjected to reprisal or discharge because of his or her actions in reporting abuse, abandonment, or neglect pursuant to the requirements of this section.

(b) 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 reporting party by reason of his or her making such report. Any detrimental change made in the residency or 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.

**Florida Statute 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.

Conduct that is in some way connected with employment at Academy Prep and that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, student, family, guest, vendor, volunteer, or a member of the public at any time, including off-duty periods, will not be tolerated. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to, verbal insults, hostile acts, threats or jokes that relate to race, age, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, disability/handicap, veteran status, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, or other applicable legally protected category.

All individuals connected with Academy Prep, including employees and contractors, are expected to refrain from verbal or physical fighting, including "horseplay," or other conduct that may be dangerous to others. Firearms, weapons, and other dangerous or hazardous devices or substances are strictly prohibited from the premises of Academy Prep or at any Academy Prep sponsored or work-related events.

Violations of any of the policies or guidelines may result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination. All employees have a duty to report, verbally or in writing, promptly and confidentially, all evidence of any improper practice of which they are aware. As used here, the term "improper practice" means any illegal, fraudulent, dishonest, negligent, or otherwise unethical action arising in connection with the operations or activities of Academy Prep.

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.

A complaint or concern should immediately be discussed with the Head of School. If the Head of School does not satisfactorily resolve the matter, meet with the appropriate administrator, at the next level, who will attempt to work out a satisfactory solution. If, after following the above steps, the problem still has not been resolved to the employee's satisfaction, the employee may contact a representative of MBA's Human Resources Department at 727-563-1500 or toll free at 888-622-6460. If the employee wishes to bypass any or all of the above steps, the employee may contact MBA's Human Resources Department at 727-563-1500 or toll free at 888-622-6460. If your complaint relates to MBA's Human Resources Department, notify the President or an Officer of MBA at 727-563-1500 or 888-622-6460.

Additionally, employees have a duty to report actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment or neglect. Failure to report is a misdemeanor of the first degree as described in Section 39.205, Florida Statutes. In cases of actual or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, your concern should immediately be relayed to the Head of School where appropriate actions will be taken, including notifying and involving local Department of Children and Families (DCF) authorities, as required or contacting DCF directly. The statewide, toll-free abuse hot-line number is 1-800-96ABUSE. Possible penalties for employees who fail to report abuse or misconduct by instructional personnel or administrators, which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student, may include written reprimand, suspension with or without pay, or termination of employment.

In all cases, your complaint or concern will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate remedial action will be taken. Importantly, no employee will be retaliated against for good-faith reporting of discrimination, harassment, violence, actual or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, or participating in such an investigation. Employees have immunity from civil or criminal liability if they report, and will have a duty to comply with child protective investigations and all other provisions of law relating to child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. Retaliation is a serious violation of these policies and **must** be reported to MBA's Human Resources Department at 727-563-1500 or 888-622-6460. Additionally, Academy Prep is immune from civil liability or its consequences with respect to disclosure of information regarding former or current employees to a prospective employer upon request of the prospective employer unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by Academy Prep was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under chapter 760.

The contents of this notice should not be viewed as a comprehensive statement of school policies. If you have any questions about the contents of this notice or Academy Prep/MBA's policies and procedures, please contact your supervisor and/or MBA's Human Resources Department.

## **Standards of Ethical Conduct (Academy Prep Center of St. Petersburg)**

(Adapted from the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida and Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida)

1. Our school 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 freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal opportunity for all.
2. Our primary concern is the student and the development of the student's potential. Employees will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.
3. Concern for the student requires that our instructional personnel:
  - 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 unreasonably deny a student access to diverse points of view.
  - d. Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
  - e. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
  - f. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.
  - g. 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, sexual orientation, or social and family background and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment or discrimination.
  - h. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage.
  - i. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
4. Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the community, employees of our school must display the highest degree of ethical conduct. This commitment requires that our employees:
  - 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 social and 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 processes 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.

**Training Requirement** All instructional personnel and administrators are required as a condition of employment to complete training on these standards of ethical conduct.

**Reporting Misconduct by Instructional Personnel and Administrators** All employees and administrators have an obligation to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school

administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. Examples of misconduct include obscene language, drug and alcohol use, disparaging comments, prejudice or bigotry, sexual innuendo, cheating or testing violations, physical aggression, and accepting or offering favors. Reports of misconduct of employees should be made to Head of School, Gina Burkett. Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to MBA's Human Resources Department at 727-563-1500 or toll free at 888-622-6460.

Legally sufficient allegations of misconduct by Florida certified educators will be reported to the Office of Professional Practices Services. Policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student are posted in the teacher's lounge and on our Web site at <http://academyprep.org/stpete/about/ethics-and-wellness-policy/>.

**Reporting Child Abuse, Abandonment or Neglect** All employees and agents have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Call 1-800-96-ABUSE or report online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>.

**Signs of Physical Abuse** The child may have unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, or other injuries; broken bones; or 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, or 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, or a sexually transmitted disease. A child experiencing sexual abuse may have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively, fear a particular person, seem withdrawn or depressed, gain or lose weight suddenly, shy away from physical contact, or run away from home.

**Signs of Neglect** The child may have unattended medical needs, little or no supervision at home, poor hygiene, or appear underweight. A child experiencing neglect may be frequently tired or hungry, steal food, or appear overly needy for adult attention.

**Patterns of Abuse:** 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.

**Liability Protections** Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by law, 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. (F.S. 39.203)

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 F.S. Chapter 760. (F.S. 768.095)