Staff Conduct

And Responsibilities

Professional boundaries with students

In a professional staff/student relationship, staff members maintain boundaries with students that are consistent with their professional code of conduct and obligations. All BOCES employees having contact with students are expected to observe and maintain proper professional boundaries, in accordance with this regulation and accompanying policy.

The following list provides examples of staff conduct that, in the absence of evidence of a legitimate educational purpose or other reason deemed valid by the BOCES, may be regarded as evidence that a staff member has violated professional boundaries with a student:

- any type of inappropriate physical contact with a student or any other conduct that might be considered harassment under Board policy
- furnishing alcohol, drugs or tobacco to a student or being present when any student is consuming these substances
- repeating sexual or inappropriate romantic rumors
- accepting massages, or offering or giving massages other than in the course of injury care administered by the appropriate athletic trainer, coach or health care provider
- singling out a particular student or students for personal attention or friendship beyond the ordinary professional staff-student relationship
- being alone with a student behind closed doors
- initiating or extending contact with a student beyond the school day or outside of class times for the staff member's personal purposes
- sending or accompanying a student on personal errands
- inviting a student to a staff member's home without appropriate chaperones
- going to a student's home when the student's parent/guardian or an appropriate chaperone is not present
- giving a student a ride in a vehicle without prior notification to and approval from the student's parent/guardian and the principal or Executive/Special Education Director, except in an emergency under appropriate circumstances
- giving gifts or money to the student
- any other action or activity similar in nature to those listed above

Prohibited communications in any format (email, text messaging, written communications, in person, etc.) by a staff member with a student includes, but is not limited to the following:

- any communications without a legitimate educational reason
- flirting, propositions or sexual remarks
- sexual slurs, leering, sexual or derogatory comments
- inappropriate comments about a student's body
- sexual jokes, notes, stories, drawings, gestures or pictures
- displaying or transmitting sexual pictures, objects or depictions
- disclosing personal, sexual, romantic, marital or employment issues or other private matters
- other communications or activities similar in nature to those listed above

Reporting violations and disciplinary action

Staff members shall promptly notify the principal or Executive/Special Education Director if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this regulation. Depending on the specific circumstances of the allegations or suspicions, staff members may have a mandatory duty under state law to report the violation(s) as child abuse, in accordance with applicable Board policy.

Students and their parents/guardians should notify the principal or Executive/ Special Education Director if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this regulation.

In determining whether a violation of professional boundaries has occurred, the BOCES shall consider the totality of the circumstances, including the nature and extent of the conduct involved, the job description and duties of the employee, the employee's intent or purpose in engaging in the conduct, and whether the conduct caused harm to the student or adversely affected the education of students.

Persons reporting in good faith regarding alleged violations or suspected violations of this regulation shall not be subjected to retaliation in any form.

(Adoption date: June 16, 2021)