

## **PREVENTION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND ABUSE**

Alexandria City Public Schools is committed to providing its students with a safe and supportive learning environment and to protecting its students from sexual misconduct and abuse. The responsibility to protect students from sexual misconduct and abuse is shared by the School Board, Superintendent, administrators, teachers, other ACPS employees, volunteers, parents, state agencies, and law enforcement.

Alexandria City Public Schools recognizes the importance of communication and interaction between students and adults in student achievement, successful learning, and instruction. At the same time, clear and reasonable boundaries for educator-student relationships are necessary to protect students from sexual misconduct and abuse and to protect adults from misunderstandings and false accusations.

This policy applies to ACPS employees, school volunteers, employees of virtual school programs (including but not limited to distance learning and on-line programs) and vendors providing instructional services to students. In this policy, these individuals will be referred to as “adults.”

### **Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Prohibited**

Adults are prohibited from engaging in sexual misconduct and abuse of students, which includes dating; making sexual advances; seeking romantic or sexual relationships; having conversations of a sexual nature not related to the adult’s professional responsibilities; and sexual contact.

### **In-Person Communication and Interaction**

Personal contact between adults and students must be nonsexual, appropriate to the circumstances, and unambiguous in meaning. Adults should avoid the appearance of impropriety in their interactions with students. Behaviors that can create an appearance of impropriety include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting ongoing, private conversations with individual students that are unrelated to academics, school activities, or the well-being of students and that take place in locations inaccessible to others;
- Inviting a student or students for home visits without informing parents/guardians;
- Visiting the homes of students without the knowledge of parents/guardians;
- Inviting students for social contact off school grounds without the permission or knowledge of parents/guardians; and
- Transporting students in personal vehicles without the knowledge of parents or supervisors.

Employees and volunteers should respect boundaries consistent with their roles as educators, mentors, and caregivers. Violations of these boundaries include:

- Physical contact with a student that could be reasonable interpreted as constituting sexual harassment;
- Showing pornography to a student;
- Unnecessarily invading a student’s personal privacy;
- Singling out a particular student or group of students for personal attention and friendship beyond the bounds of an appropriate educator/mentor-student relationship;
- Conversation of a sexual nature with students not related to the employee’s professional responsibilities; and
- A flirtatious, romantic, or sexual relationship with a student.

### **Electronic Communication**

Digital technology and social networking provide multiple means for educators and other ACPS employees to communicate appropriately with students and personalize learning. Such communication between adults and students must be transparent, accessible to supervisors and parents/guardians, nonsexual, appropriate to the circumstances, unambiguous in meaning, and professional in content and tone. Additional guidance is provided in School Board Policy GAC: Employee Use of Social Media and the accompanying regulation GAC-R.

As with in-person communications, educators and volunteers should avoid appearances of impropriety and refrain from inappropriate electronic communications with students. Factors to consider in determining whether an electronic communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

- The subject, content, purpose, authorization, timing, and frequency of the communication;
- Whether there was an attempt to conceal the communication from supervisors and/or parents/guardians;
- Whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship; and
- Whether the communication was sexually explicit.

Adults must restrict one-on-one, electronic communications with individual students to accounts, systems, and platforms that are provided by and accessible to Alexandria City Public Schools.

If an adult does not have access to a school division-approved communication account, system, or platform and there is a time-sensitive or emergency, school-related matter that must be communicated to students, the adult may use a personal communication account, system, or personal social media to communicate this information. The adult must note the date, time, and nature of the contact and make this information available to a supervisor upon request.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to have access to their children’s social networking and digital communications and to supervise their children’s use of these methods of communication.

## Reporting of Violations

School division employees are required to report any case of suspected sexual misconduct or abuse to the building principal, who shall report such information to the Chief Human Resources Officer. Employees who are not based in schools shall make such reports to the department head, who shall in turn report to the Chief Human Resources Officer. This requirement is in addition to the requirements for reporting cases of suspected child abuse or neglect under School Board Policy GAE/JHG: Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting.

In addition, employees are required to report suspected violations of this policy regarding in-person and electronic communications with students to the building principal, who shall report such information to the Chief Human Resources Officer. Employees who are not based in a school are to immediately report suspected violations of this policy to their department head or designee.

## Training

ACPS will provide training for employees and volunteers on the prevention of misconduct and abuse. Contracts with virtual school programs and other vendors providing instructional services to students will include a requirement that those adults will comply with this policy. Information about this policy will also be disseminated to employees, volunteers, students and parents.

## Investigation and Consequences for Violations

The Director of Employee Relations or designee and authorities as appropriate, shall investigate reports of suspected violations of this policy. Inadvertent and innocuous violations of this policy provide opportunities for additional counseling and training. Appropriate formal disciplinary procedures will follow violations of this policy when the substance of the conduct or communication in question is found to be inappropriate, flirtatious, romantic, or sexual. In the case of termination of employment for sexual misconduct or abuse, the school division will notify the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Consistent with the Virginia Department of Education Guidelines, Alexandria City Public Schools will disclose to other school divisions seeking references any formal reprimands or dismissals for violating this policy.

**Adopted:** November 5, 2015

**Legal Refs.:** Code of Virginia [§ 22.1-253.13:7](#), [§ 22.1-296.1](#), [§ 22.1-291.3](#), [§ 22.1-296.2](#), [§ 22.1-296.4](#), [§ 63.2-1509](#)

[Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse in Virginia Public Schools Approved by the Board of Education March 24, 2011](#)

**Cross Ref:**

[GAC Employee Use of Social Media](#)  
[GAC-R ACPS Social Media Regulations](#)  
[GAE Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting](#) (also [JHG](#));  
[GAE-R Regulations on Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting](#)  
(also [JHG-R](#));  
[GBA Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation](#);  
[GB-R/GBA-R-Procedures for Investigating Complaints of Discrimination](#)  
[and Harassment](#) (also [JFHA-R](#))