



***Office of
Professional Standards***

***General Information
Manual***

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Office of Professional Standards

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The responsibility of the Office of Professional Standards is to implement all laws, rules, policies, and procedures relating to professional standards of:

- Employees
- Applicants
- Substitute Staff
- Jessica Lunsford Act
- Florida Educational Equity Act
- Safe Operations Committee
- Professional Standards Committee
- Fraud Hotline

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POLICY 415 - Conduct of Employees Regarding Illegal Drugs or Alcohol Abuse

It is the intention of the School Board of Volusia County to maintain a drug-free workplace and school environment for its employees and students, and to discourage drug abuse by its employees and students.

Entire Policy 415 may be found at [Policy 415](#)

POLICY 418 - Standards of Conduct

The School Board recognizes the professionalism and diligence of the employees of the Volusia County School district. Their continued dedication in carrying out their assigned tasks is essential to the education of the students of this school district. All employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner when carrying out their assigned responsibilities. Employees shall comply with the Principles of Professional conduct for the Education Profession in Florida applicable law, School Board policies, and reasonable rules established by the Superintendent/designee. Any allegation that an employee has not complied with these standards shall be reported to the Superintendent/designee for investigation and review. Discipline or other action, if found to be warranted, shall be administered in accordance with the law and any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Entire Policy 418 may be found at [Policy 418](#)

POLICY 426 - Vendor Relations Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide more restrictive and supplemental ethical standards of conduct for employees of the school district than established by state law and rules of the State Board of Education.

Entire Policy 426 may be found at [Policy 426](#)

POLICY 507 - Non-Discrimination and Educational Equity

It is the policy of the Volusia County School District to offer the opportunity to students to participate in appropriate programs and activities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or age except as otherwise provided by Florida State Law. Volusia County Schools will not discriminate against employees or

applicants for employment on the basis race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or age.

Entire Policy 507 may be found at [Policy 507](#)

POLICY 509 - Prohibition of Harassment

It is the policy of the Volusia County School District to maintain a work environment that is free from harassment because of an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or age.

Entire Policy 509 may be found at [Policy 509](#)

POLICY 518 - Use of Electronic Information Services

The Office of Professional Standards is responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct regarding transmission of inappropriate material over the Volusia County e-mail/internet system. Filters to assist in blocking transmission or reception of material containing profanity, inappropriate sexual content, pictures, inappropriate web sites, etc. are currently assisting in stopping this type of activity on the Volusia County School electronic system. The Office of Management Information Services is in charge of the security of the system and maintains user agreements for all employees having access to e-mail and internet usage. Allegations of misconduct regarding this system are forwarded to the Office of Professional Standards for review. Continued inappropriate use of the system may result in the loss of user's privileges.

Entire policy may be found at [Policy 518](#)

POLICY 524 – Employee Use of Social Media Networks

This policy addresses the use of public social media networks and applications by district employees, including but not limited to, social networks, web blogs, personal websites, online forums, and all other forms of social media.

Entire policy 524 may be found at [Policy 524](#)

POLICY 525 - Policy Against Bullying and Harassment

It is the policy of the Volusia County School District that all of its students and school employees have an educational setting that is safe, secure, and free from harassment and bullying of any kind. The district will not tolerate bullying and/or harassment of any type. Conduct that constitutes bullying and harassment, as defined herein, is prohibited. Issues regarding sexual harassment, and harassment based upon race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status, age, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability shall be dealt with under School Board Policy 509, Prohibition of Harassment.

Entire policy 525 may be found at [Policy 525](#)

<p style="text-align: center;">Florida Educational Equity Act Section 1000.05, Florida Statutes</p>

Discrimination against students and employees in the Florida K-20 public education system prohibited; equality of access required.

(1) This section may be cited as the “Florida Educational Equity Act.”

(2)(a) Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status against a student or an employee in the state system of public K-20 education is prohibited. No person in this state shall, on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any public K-20 education program or activity, or in any employment conditions or practices, conducted by a public educational institution that receives or benefits from federal or state financial assistance.

(b) The criteria for admission to a program or course shall not have the effect of restricting access by persons of a particular race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status.

(c) All public K-20 education classes shall be available to all students without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status; however, this is not intended to eliminate the provision of programs designed to meet the needs of students with limited proficiency in English, gifted students, or students with disabilities or programs tailored to students with specialized talents or skills.

(d) Students may be separated by gender for a single-gender program as provided under s. 1002.311, for any portion of a class that deals with human reproduction, or during participation in bodily contact sports. For the purpose of this section, bodily contact sports include wrestling, boxing, rugby, ice hockey, football, basketball, and other sports in which the purpose or major activity involves bodily contact.

(e) Guidance services, counseling services, and financial assistance services in the state public K-20 education system shall be available to students equally. Guidance and counseling services, materials, and promotional events shall stress access to academic and career opportunities for students without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status.

(3)(a) No person shall, on the basis of gender, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be treated differently from another person or otherwise be discriminated against in any

interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics offered by a public K-20 educational institution; and no public K-20 educational institution shall provide athletics separately on such basis.

(b) Notwithstanding the requirements of paragraph (a), a public K-20 educational institution may operate or sponsor separate teams for members of each gender if the selection for such teams is based upon competitive skill or the activity involved is a bodily contact sport. However, when a public K-20 educational institution operates or sponsors a team in a particular sport for members of one gender but does not operate or sponsor such a team for members of the other gender, and athletic opportunities for that gender have previously been limited, members of the excluded gender must be allowed to try out for the team offered.

(c) This subsection does not prohibit the grouping of students in physical education classes and activities by ability as assessed by objective standards of individual performance developed and applied without regard to gender. However, when use of a single standard of measuring skill or progress in a physical education class has an adverse effect on members of one gender, the educational institution shall use appropriate standards which do not have such effect.

(d) A public K-20 educational institution which operates or sponsors interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics shall provide equal athletic opportunity for members of both genders.

1. The Board of Governors shall determine whether equal opportunities are available at state universities.

2. The Commissioner of Education shall determine whether equal opportunities are available in school districts and Florida College System institutions. In determining whether equal opportunities are available in school districts and Florida College System institutions, the Commissioner of Education shall consider, among other factors:

a. Whether the selection of sports and levels of competition effectively accommodate the interests and abilities of members of both genders.

b. The provision of equipment and supplies.

c. Scheduling of games and practice times.

d. Travel and per diem allowances.

e. Opportunities to receive coaching and academic tutoring.

f. Assignment and compensation of coaches and tutors.

g. Provision of locker room, practice, and competitive facilities.

h. Provision of medical and training facilities and services.

i. Provision of housing and dining facilities and services.

j. Publicity.

Unequal aggregate expenditures for members of each gender or unequal expenditures for male and female teams if a public school or Florida College System institution operates or sponsors separate teams do not constitute non-implementation of this subsection, but the Commissioner of Education shall consider the failure to provide necessary funds for teams for one gender in assessing equality of opportunity for members of each gender.

(e) A public school or Florida College System institution may provide separate toilet, locker room, and shower facilities on the basis of gender, but such facilities shall be comparable to such facilities provided for students of the other gender.

(4) Public schools and Florida College System institutions shall develop and implement methods and strategies to increase the participation of students of a particular race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status in programs and courses in which students of that particular race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status have been traditionally underrepresented, including, but not limited to, mathematics, science, computer technology, electronics, communications technology, engineering, and career education.

(5)(a) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to implement this section as it relates to school districts and Florida College System institutions.

(b) The Board of Governors shall adopt regulations to implement this section as it relates to state universities.

(6) The functions of the Office of Equal Educational Opportunity of the Department of Education shall include, but are not limited to:

(a) Requiring all district school boards and Florida College System institution boards of trustees to develop and submit plans for the implementation of this section to the Department of Education.

(b) Conducting periodic reviews of school districts and Florida College System institutions to determine compliance with this section and, after a finding that a school district or a Florida College System institution is not in compliance with this section, notifying the entity of the steps that it must take to attain compliance and performing follow-up monitoring.

(c) Providing technical assistance, including assisting school districts or Florida College System institutions in identifying unlawful discrimination and instructing them in remedies for correction and prevention of such discrimination and performing follow-up monitoring.

(d) Conducting studies of the effectiveness of methods and strategies designed to increase the participation of students in programs and courses in which students of a particular race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status have been traditionally underrepresented and monitoring the success of students in such programs or courses, including performing follow-up monitoring.

(e) Requiring all district school boards and Florida College System institution boards of trustees to submit data and information necessary to determine compliance with this section. The Commissioner of Education shall prescribe the format and the date for submission of such data and any other educational equity data. If any board does not submit the required compliance data or other required educational equity data by the prescribed date, the commissioner shall notify the board of this fact and, if the board

does not take appropriate action to immediately submit the required report, the State Board of Education shall impose monetary sanctions.

(f) Based upon rules of the State Board of Education, developing and implementing enforcement mechanisms with appropriate penalties to ensure that public K-12 schools and Florida College System institutions comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and subsection (3) of this section. However, the State Board of Education may not force a public school or Florida College System institution to conduct, nor penalize such entity for not conducting, a program of athletic activity or athletic scholarship for female athletes unless it is an athletic activity approved for women by a recognized association whose purpose is to promote athletics and a conference or league exists to promote interscholastic or intercollegiate competition for women in that athletic activity.

(g) Reporting to the Commissioner of Education any district school board or Florida College System institution board of trustees found to be out of compliance with rules of the State Board of Education adopted as required by paragraph (f) or paragraph (3)(d). To penalize the board, the State Board of Education shall:

1. Declare the school district or Florida College System institution ineligible for competitive state grants.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of s. 216.192, direct the Chief Financial Officer to withhold general revenue funds sufficient to obtain compliance from the school district or Florida College System institution.

The school district or Florida College System institution shall remain ineligible and the funds shall not be paid until the institution comes into compliance or the State Board of Education approves a plan for compliance.

(7) A person aggrieved by a violation of this section or a violation of a rule adopted under this section has a right of action for such equitable relief as the court may determine. The court may also award reasonable attorney's fees and court costs to a prevailing party.

State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.081, FAC, Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida

(1) Florida educators shall be guided by the following ethical principles:

(a) The educator 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.

(b) The educator's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential. The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.

(c) Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of other members of the community, the educator strives to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct.

(2) Florida educators shall comply with the following disciplinary principles. Violation of any of these principles shall subject the individual to revocation or suspension of the individual educator's certificate, or the other penalties as provided by law.

(a) Obligation to the student requires that the individual:

1. 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.
2. Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
3. Shall not unreasonably deny a student access to diverse points of view.
4. Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
5. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
6. Shall not intentionally provide classroom instruction to students in kindergarten through grade 3 on sexual orientation or gender identity.
7. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.
8. 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. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex includes subjecting any student to training or instruction that espouses, promotes, advances, inculcates, or compels such student to believe any of the concepts listed in Section 1000.05(4)(a), F.S.
9. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage.
10. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.

(b) Obligation to the public requires that the individual:

1. Shall take reasonable precautions to distinguish between personal views and those of any educational institution or organization with which the individual is affiliated.
2. Shall not intentionally distort or misrepresent facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.
3. Shall not use institutional privileges for personal gain or advantage.
4. Shall accept no gratuity, gift, or favor that might influence professional judgment.
5. Shall offer no gratuity, gift, or favor to obtain special advantages.

(c) Obligation to the profession of education requires that the individual:

1. Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings.
2. 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.

3. Shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political or civil rights and responsibilities.
4. 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.
5. Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.
6. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional judgments of colleagues.
7. Shall not misrepresent one's own professional qualifications.
8. Shall not submit fraudulent information on any document in connection with professional activities.
9. Shall not make any fraudulent statement or fail to disclose a material fact in one's own or another's application for a professional position.
10. Shall not withhold information regarding a position from an applicant or misrepresent an assignment or conditions of employment.
11. Shall provide upon the request of the certificated individual a written statement of specific reason for recommendations that lead to the denial of increments, significant changes in employment, or termination of employment.
12. Shall not assist entry into or continuance in the profession of any person known to be unqualified in accordance with these Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida and other applicable Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules.
13. Shall self-report within forty-eight (48) hours to appropriate authorities (as determined by district) any arrests/charges involving the abuse of a child or the sale and/or possession of a controlled substance. Such notice shall not be considered an admission of guilt nor shall such notice be admissible for any purpose in any proceeding, civil or criminal, administrative or judicial, investigatory or adjudicatory. In addition, shall self-report any conviction, finding of guilt, withholding of adjudication, commitment to a pretrial diversion program, or entering of a plea of guilty or Nolo Contendere for any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation within forty-eight (48) hours after the final judgment. When handling sealed and expunged records disclosed under this rule, school districts shall comply with the confidentiality provisions of Sections 943.0585(4)(c) and 943.059(4)(c), F.S.
14. Shall report to appropriate authorities any known allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 1012.795(1), F.S.
15. Shall seek no reprisal against any individual who has reported any allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 1012.795(1), F.S.
16. Shall comply with the conditions of an order of the Education Practices Commission imposing probation, imposing a fine, or restricting the authorized scope of practice.
17. Shall, as the supervising administrator, cooperate with the Education Practices Commission in monitoring the probation of a subordinate.

**FLORIDA STATE STATUTE 39.201 (MANDATORY REPORTING
OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE, ABANDONMENT, NEGLECT TO
THE DCF HOTLINE
1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873))**

Scope of Responsibility:

Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes mandates that any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare shall report immediately such knowledge or suspicion to the central abuse hotline of the Department of Children and Families.

If you are one of the following persons:

- Physician
- Osteopathic physician
- Medical examiner
- Chiropractor
- Nurse
- Hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care, or treatment of children
- Health Professional
- Mental Health Professional
- Practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing
- School teacher
- **School Official or Personnel**
- Social worker
- Day Care Center Worker
- Professional Child Care Worker
- Foster Care Worker
- Residential Care Worker
- Institutional Worker
- Law Enforcement
- Judge

You are required to provide your name to the Hotline Staff. The name of the reporter shall be entered into the record of the report but shall be held confidential as provided in s. 39.302, F.S.

An Information Packet is available on the following internet site: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us>

REVIEW OF FLORIDA STATE STATUTE 415.1034, 415.111, MANDATORY REPORTING OF SUSPECTED ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION OF A VULNERABLE ADULT

Mandatory Reporting: Any person, who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a vulnerable adult has been abused, neglected, or exploited shall immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the central abuse hotline. A “vulnerable adult” is a person 18 years of age or older whose ability to perform normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, long-term physical, or development disability or dysfunction or brain damage, or the infirmities of aging.

A person who knowingly and willfully fails to report a case of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult, or who knowingly and willfully prevents another person from doing so, commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083 FS.

VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS FRAUD PROCEDURES

Purpose

The School District of Volusia County is committed to protecting its financial resources, property, information and other assets from any attempt to gain by deceit, financial or other benefits. This procedure establishes specific guidelines and responsibilities regarding appropriate actions that must be followed for detecting and reporting fraud or other irregularities.

Definitions

Fraud and other similar irregularities include, but are not limited to:

1. Forgery or alteration of documents (checks, time sheets, agreements, purchase order, purchasing card transactions, budgets, student records, etc.)
2. Misrepresentation of information on documents.
3. Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies or other assets.
4. Any intentional irregularity in the handling or reporting of financial transactions.
5. Theft, disappearance, or destruction of any asset.
6. Accepting a gratuity, gift, or favor that might influence professional judgment.
7. Unauthorized use or misuse of the District’s assets.
8. Knowingly authorizing or receiving payments for goods not received or services not performed.
9. Knowingly authorizing or receiving payment for hours not worked.
10. Any violation of Federal, State, or local laws related to dishonest activities or fraud.
11. Any similar or related activity.

Fraud Hotline

The School District of Volusia County will provide a fraud hotline (386-738-8650) or toll free (866-283-5699) operated by Professional Standards to enhance awareness regarding the prevention and detection of any fraudulent activity. Employees, the general public and anyone doing business with the District can call the hotline number to report suspected fraud. All calls will be handled in confidence.

Volusia County School's Fraud Hotline
Toll Free – (866) 283-5699
Local – (386) 738-8650

Roles and Responsibilities

The conditions of this procedure apply to any irregularity, suspected or observed, involving a Volusia County School District employee. Any investigation required shall be conducted without regard to the employee's length of service, position, title, or relationship with the District. Identification of allegations of personal improprieties, whether moral, ethical, or behavioral, shall be responded to by management and reported to the Professional Standards Department.

1. Management

School District of Volusia County management shall be familiar with the content of this procedure and the types of improprieties that could occur within their areas of responsibility and shall be alert for any indication of irregularity. Management is responsible for establishing and implementing internal controls that will detect improper activity, misappropriation, or dishonest activity. Management shall also be responsible for implementing required procedures to assure the safety and security of the district's property, financial resources, data, and other assets. Any irregularity that is detected or suspected by any staff member shall be reported immediately to the Professional Standards Department.

2. All Employees

All employees who have knowledge of an occurrence of employee dishonesty, theft, or fraud, or has reason to suspect that an event has occurred, shall immediately notify his or her supervisor. If the employee has reason to believe that the employee's supervisor may be involved, the employee shall immediately notify the Professional Standards Department directly or by the fraud hotline. The employee shall not attempt to investigate the suspected fraud or to discuss the matter with anyone other than his or her supervisor, principal, department director, or the officials conducting the investigation. Allegations will be treated with the highest degree of sensitivity and confidentiality. Employees who knowingly make false allegations will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.

3. Supervisors

Upon receipt of information, or reason to suspect, that an employee may be involved in theft or fraud, the supervisor shall notify his or her immediate supervisor, and Professional Standards. If there is reason to suspect that the immediate supervisor or a person higher in the chain of command is involved, the matter shall be reported directly to the Professional Standards Department. The supervisor shall not attempt to investigate the suspected fraud or discuss the matter with anyone other than those to whom a report shall be made, Professional Standards and the officials conducting the investigation.

4. Principals, Managers, Directors, Assistant Superintendents

Upon receipt of information, or reason to suspect, that an employee may be involved in fraud, the principal, manager, or director shall notify the appropriate executive director or assistant superintendent. The executive director or assistant superintendent shall notify the Professional Standards Department.

5. Professional Standards Department

Upon notification or discovery of a suspected fraud, the Professional Standards Department will investigate the fraud. The Director of Professional Standards, with the approval of the Superintendent or his designee, will determine the status of an employee who becomes the subject of a fraud investigation. The investigation may involve a coordinated effort by District personnel and law enforcement. It may also involve attorneys, security personnel, and other specialists from inside or outside the School District of Volusia County. The Professional Standards Department shall inform Insurance and Employee Benefits that an investigation is under way and state the amount of suspected loss (if known) for insurance purposes.

6. Risk and Benefits Management Department

When there is sufficient evidence to warrant a criminal investigation, the Insurance and Employee Benefits Department shall immediately notify the current commercial crime insurer, in writing, of a possible loss situation. The Insurance and Employee Benefits Department shall interpret all reporting requirements under the current commercial crime policy, convey requirements to other appropriate School District of Volusia County personnel, and ensure that the requirements are satisfied.

7. Community Information Services Department

All contact with the media shall be coordinated through the Director of Community Information Services.

Security of Records

To ensure a successful investigation, all documents relating to the incident must be available for review in its original form. Once a suspected fraud is reported, principals, managers, directors, or other authorized personnel shall take necessary action to prevent the theft, alteration, or destruction of relevant records. Such actions may include, but are not limited to, removing the records and placing them in a secure location, limiting access to the location(s) where the records currently exist, and preventing the individual(s) suspected of committing the fraud or embezzlement from having access to the records. The records must be adequately secured until they are obtained by the investigating team.

Accounting for Loss, Restitution, and Recovery

The department/school incurring the loss from a dishonest or fraudulent act will normally suffer the loss until the monies can be recovered through insurance or restitution.

Confidentiality

Great care shall be taken in the investigation or allegations of fraudulent activity to avoid mistakenly accusing individuals or alerting suspected individuals that an investigation is underway.

Personnel Actions

If a suspicion of fraud is substantiated by the investigation, disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, shall be taken in conformance with the School District of Volusia County's personnel policies and procedures. A false and malicious allegation of fraud is a violation of this procedure. All violations of this procedure, including violations of the confidentiality provision, shall result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Whistle Blower Protection

No person acting on behalf of the Superintendent shall:

- dismiss or threaten to dismiss an employee;
- discipline or suspend or threaten to discipline or suspend an employee;
- impose any penalty upon an employee; or
- intimidate or coerce an employee,

because the employee has acted in accordance with the requirements of this procedure. Violation of this section will result in discipline up to and including dismissal.

Media Inquiries

Any employee contacted by the media with respect to an investigation shall refer the media to the Director of Community Information Services.

REVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS PROCESS

What happens when a complaint is received by the Office of Professional Standards?

If legal sufficiency is established regarding an allegation(s) concerning an employee's conduct, a case will be opened for investigation. This is based upon a complaint of a violation of federal law, state law, and The Principals of Professional Conduct of the Education Profession in Florida, Volusia County Tenure Law, and/or Volusia County School Board Policy/Procedures.

The Office of Professional Standards is responsible for completing a fair, thorough and objective investigation by establishing the facts that are material matter to the allegation(s).

The investigator's responsibilities in the investigation include but are not limited to:

- Obtaining testimony from the complainant, both adults and students;
- Obtaining testimony from witnesses to the alleged event, both adults and students;
- Obtaining related physical evidence, including documents;
- Obtaining testimony from the respondent;
- Seeking material information from sources to include those suggested by the respondent;
- Completing a written investigative report.

The ultimate goal of the investigation is to find the truth relating to the complaint.

The investigative report is submitted and reviewed by the Professional Standards Committee comprised of designated members of the superintendent's staff of Volusia County Schools. The Professional Standards Committee is responsible for considering and evaluating the information presented and establishing whether a preponderance of evidence exists to substantiate the allegation(s). The committee's recommendation could include but is not limited to no probable cause, staff development, caution, reprimand, unpaid suspension, and/or termination. The Superintendent of Schools is then provided with the Committee's recommendations.

Upon receipt of the Committee's recommendations, the Superintendent of Schools reviews all materials and renders a decision regarding the allegation. If the level of discipline rises to unpaid suspension and/or termination, the Superintendent of Schools makes this recommendation to the Volusia County School Board.

Upon receipt of the Superintendent's recommendation of unpaid suspension and/or termination, the School Board decides upon the issue through official board action.

At the conclusion of the case, the employee receives written notice of the decision, including appropriate appeal options and a copy of the investigative report.

SUGGESTIONS FOR AVOIDING NEGLIGENCE AND ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

- Do not make disparaging and/or embarrassing remarks to students.
- Maintain a neat, orderly and safe environment for students.
- Caution students and fellow employees against hazards.
- Never leave student(s) unattended.
- Know how to contact school personnel who can assist with an emergency.
- Report accidents or injuries to the office immediately. As soon as possible, write down what happened for school authorities and keep a copy of the report.
- Never give medication of any kind to students. Refer students who are taking medication to the Office or School Nurse.
- If a student appears to be ill, refer him/her to the office and or School Nurse.
- Do not order a disruptive student to leave class unsupervised, instead:

1. Use the intercom to ask for assistance from the office;

2. Ask another teacher/campus advisor to escort the student to the office, or
 3. Ask another teacher to supervise your class while you escort the student to the office.
- Never use corporal punishment with students. Corporal punishment includes but is not limited to hitting, pushing, pinching, forcing a child to stand for longer periods of time, or using any type of physical force.
 - Allow students from your class to leave campus only if they have permission from the office.
 - Do not keep students after class or after school.
 - Do not release students to anyone from school. They must be released from the Administrative office.
 - Avoid introducing controversial subjects or materials (i.e.: racist material, sexually explicit material, etc.).
 - Know the proper use of school computers and transmission of electronic communication.
 - Maintain professional and proper relationships with students and fellow employees.
 - Avoid being alone with student(s) for extended periods of time.
 - Safeguard equipment and materials from abuse and theft.
 - Exceptional Students come under specific guidelines respective to handling misconduct.
 - All suspected incidents of substance abuse by a student should be reported immediately to administration.
 - All suspected incidents of child abuse **must** be reported to proper authorities.
 - Abide by and follow policy and procedures.
 - Avoid sending or receiving inappropriate material (that which may include inappropriate language, pictures, etc.) on your Volusia County Schools e-mail/internet account.
 - Do not allow others to take inappropriate photographs of you.

The primary professional concern of employees for Volusia County Schools should always be for the student and the development of the student's potential. As employees of Volusia County Schools, we are entrusted with the custody of our students and to fulfill this trust, we must be of good moral character.