

# Winter Haven Christian School



## Standards of Ethical Conduct

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## Ethics in Education Notice - WHCS

*As a school that participates in the Florida Department of Education School Choice Scholarship program, and pursuant to the requirements outlined in the 2008 Ethics in Education Act, please be advised that Winter Haven Christian School operates under the following guidelines and laws.*

### Ethics in Education Act

Senate Bill 1712 (Chapter Law 2008-108), the Ethics in Education Act, became effective July 1, 2008, impacting specific operational procedures for private schools participating in the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Programs.

The Act amends Section 1002.421, Florida Statutes, related to participating in private school accountability by adding new requirements to the employee screening process. All instructional personnel, educational support employees, and school administrators in a position that requires direct contact with students are subject to the new screening standards.

The private school accountability statute has also been amended to require private schools to develop standards of ethical conduct for the school's instructional personnel, educational support employees, and administrators. Sections 1012.01(2) and (3), Florida Statutes define instructional personnel and school administrators.

Finally, the Act amends Section 1006.061, Florida Statutes, related to the state's child abuse, abandonment, and neglect policy. Private and charter schools are now required to comply with these policies.

An explanation of the requirements, instructions for implementation, and links to additional resources have been provided for your convenience.

### Employment Screening

1. Winter Haven Christian School disqualifies from employment any instructional personnel, educational support employee, or school administrator who is convicted of an act listed under Section 1012.315, Florida Statutes. [Level 2 VECHS fingerprinting (which includes FBI - national, and FDLE - state searches) is utilized to meet this standard.]
2. Conduct an employment history check before employing instructional personnel, educational support employees, or school administrators in any position that requires direct contact with students.
3. Winter Haven Christian School screens new instructional personnel, education support employees, and school administrators using the two employee screening tools developed by the Department of Education. New instructional personnel or school administrators are those individuals employed after the law became effective on July 1, 2008.

*All Winter Haven Christian School board members, administrators, teachers, and staff members have been fully screened and background checked under state law. In addition, as an added measure of safety and concern for our students, regular volunteers who are permitted to enter the campus during school hours are required to undergo the same FBI/FDLE (VECHS) background clearance as hired faculty and staff.*

## Confidentiality Agreements and duties of Winter Haven Christian School

1. Winter Haven Christian School **prohibits confidentiality agreements** with instructional personnel, educational support employees, or school administrators who are dismissed, terminated, or resign in lieu of termination due to misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.
2. Winter Haven Christian School posts a notice at the school stating that all employees and volunteers have a duty to report actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
3. Winter Haven Christian School posts at our school site and on our website the policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel, educational support employees, or school administrators, which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

## Standards of Ethical Conduct for Instructional Personnel and School Administrators

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 a 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, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, handicapping condition, or social and family background and shall make a 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, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, 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, education support employees, 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 instructional personnel, educational support 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 Joseph Klein at 863-294-4135 x113 or 863-206-8978.

Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to Dennis "Wayne" Stults. 863-295-9118 or 863-412-4460.

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 school office (teacher workroom) at Winter Haven Christian School and on our website at <http://www.whcsonline.org/parent-resources>.

Failure to report misconduct could result in any one or a combination of the following:

- Written reprimand
- Suspension with or without pay
- Termination of employment
- Discipline/Sanctions on an Educator's Certificate if applicable

## 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)

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