

Employee Code of Professional Conduct

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all employees at the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Foundation (JJKF) understand and adhere to the professional standards outlined under Faith's Law. The policy establishes guidelines for maintaining a professional and ethical relationship with students, while outlining key expectations for employee conduct and necessary reporting requirements.

This policy applies to all employees, agents, and volunteers at JJKF and outlines the employee code of professional conduct required by Faith's Law and other relevant state and federal laws.

Code of Ethics:

The employee code of professional conduct will incorporate the Code of Ethics for Illinois Educators as found in 23 IL Adm Code 22.20. All employees must adhere to these ethical standards in their daily interactions with students. The code is founded on five core principles.

1. Responsibility to students
2. Responsibility to the school community
3. Responsibility to the profession
4. Responsibility for professional competence
5. Responsibility to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

Employees must be aware of and avoid behaviors that could be considered sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct is defined as any behavior or action of a sexual nature that is inappropriate, unwelcome, or violates the trust and professional boundaries between school personnel and students. This includes, but is not limited to, acts intended to exploit or groom students, create an unsafe environment, or cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm.

Expectations for Professional Relationships:

Employees and agents of JJKF are expected to maintain professional relationships with students at all times. All conduct should reflect professionalism, with physical contact limited to educational, safety, or supportive purposes and without favoritism or special treatment. Communication and behavior must align with the students' cognitive and emotional development, avoiding language or activities unsuitable for their maturity level. Transparency is key, requiring open communication with parents, guardians, and supervisors about all interactions. Relationships with students should remain strictly professional, avoiding any personal or social contexts. The following guidelines outline key areas of employee conduct:

- **Transporting Students:** Employees are expected to follow all guidelines when transporting students to and from school or other related activities. They should avoid transporting students in their personal vehicles unless it is an emergency and prior approval has been obtained from the JJKF Administration and the student's parent/guardian.
- **Photographs and Videos:** Photos and videos of students must only be taken for educational, JJKF related purposes or events, with prior consent from school administration and parents/guardians. Images must not be shared on personal social media or in any manner outside of authorized JJKF communications. Employees must follow proper protocols when taking or possessing photographs or videos of students, ensuring these actions are in the best interest of JJKF.

- 6. Meeting with Students Outside Professional Role:** Employees are prohibited from meeting with or contacting students outside of their professional role. Personal communication platforms (e.g., personal email, text messaging, or social media) should not be used to interact with students. All communication should occur through JJKF approved systems.

Required Training:

All employees will be required to undergo training related to child abuse and educator ethics, as mandated by state and federal law, including training in compliance with 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(d).

Reporting Areas of Concern

- 1. Reporting Violations:**

Any JJKF employee, agent, or volunteer who witnesses or suspects a violation of the employee code of professional conduct is required to report the concern promptly. This includes witnessing misconduct or violations of professional boundaries by any other employee or agent of the Foundation. Concerns can be reported directly to the Designated Compliance Officer for JJKF, Supervisor, COO or HR.

- 2. Immediate Action Required:**

Reports should be made as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the incident. Reports can be made verbally, via email, or through formal written documentation.

- 3. Confidentiality:**

All reports will be treated with confidentiality to the extent possible while ensuring the safety and well-being of students. The person making the report may choose to remain anonymous, but providing contact information will help with follow-up.

- 4. Non-Retaliation:**

JJKF strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee who reports a concern in good faith. Employees will be protected from any adverse action, including harassment, discrimination, or any form of retaliation, for reporting misconduct or participating in an investigation.

- 5. Investigation Process:**

Once a report is received, JJKF will initiate a formal investigation. Employees are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation process. Based on the findings, appropriate disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be taken.

Consequences of Violations

Violations of the employee code of professional conduct may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment. Violations include any misconduct by an employee as well as failure to report violations by another employee. Any employee who does not report another employee's misconduct may also face disciplinary action.

JJKF is committed to creating a safe and respectful environment for all students. Adherence to this employee code of professional conduct is essential for fostering an ethical, professional, and supportive atmosphere. All employees, agents, and volunteers must comply with these guidelines to ensure the well-being of students and maintain the high standards set by Faith's Law.