



## **PERSONAL INTERACTION POLICY**

### **Authority**

This policy applies to I-LEAD Charter School employees, volunteers, and independent contractors and their employees who interact with learners or are present on school grounds. For purposes of this policy, such individuals are referred to collectively as adults. The term adults as used in this policy, does not include I-LEAD Charter School learners who perform services on a volunteer or compensated basis.

All adults shall be expected to maintain professional, moral and ethical relationships with I-LEAD Charter School learners that are conducive to an effective, safe learning environment. This policy addresses a range of behaviors that include not only obviously unlawful or improper interactions with learners, but also precursor grooming and other boundary-blurring behaviors that can lead to more egregious misconduct.

The Board directs that all adults shall be informed of conduct that is prohibited and the disciplinary actions that may be applied for violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, rules and procedures.

This policy is not intended to interfere with appropriate pre-existing personal relationships between adults and learners and their families that exist independently of the I-LEAD Charter School or to interfere with participation in civic, religious or other outside organizations that include I-LEAD Charter School learners.

### **Definition**

For purposes of this policy, legitimate educational reasons include matters or communications related to teaching, counseling, athletics, extracurricular activities, treatment of a learner's physical injury or other medical needs, school administration or other purposes within the scope of the adult's job duties.

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The Chief Executive Officer or designee shall annually inform learners, parents/guardians, and all adults regarding the contents of this Board policy through employee and learner handbooks, posting on the I-LEAD Charter School website, and by other appropriate methods.

I-LEAD Charter School's Chief Academic Officer or designee shall be available to answer questions about behaviors or activities that may violate professional boundaries as defined in this policy.

Independent contractors doing business with I-LEAD Charter School shall ensure that their employees who have interaction with learners or are present on school grounds are informed of the provisions of this policy.

### **Guidelines**

Adults shall establish and maintain appropriate personal boundaries with learners and not engage in any behavior that is prohibited by this policy or that creates the appearance of prohibited behavior.

### **Prohibited Conduct**

#### **Romantic or Sexual Relationships -**

Adults shall be prohibited from dating, courting, or entering into or attempting to form a romantic or sexual relationship with any learner enrolled in I-LEAD Charter School, regardless of the learner's age. Learners of any age are not legally capable of consenting to romantic or sexual interactions with adults.

Prohibited romantic or sexual interaction involving learners includes, but is not limited to:

1. Sexual physical contact.
2. Romantic flirtation, propositions, or sexual remarks.
3. Sexual slurs, leering, epithets, sexual or derogatory comments.
4. Personal comments about a learner's body.
5. Sexual jokes, notes, stories, drawings, gestures or pictures.
6. Spreading sexual or romantic rumors.
7. Touching a learner's body or clothes in a sexual or intimate way.

8. Accepting massages or offering or giving massages other than in the course of injury care administered by an athletic trainer, coach, or health care provider.
9. Restricting a learner's freedom of movement in a sexually intimidating or provocative manner.
10. Displaying or transmitting sexual objects, pictures, or depictions.

### **Social Interactions -**

In order to maintain professional boundaries, adults shall ensure that their interactions with learners are appropriate.

Examples of prohibited conduct that violates professional boundaries include, but are not limited to:

1. Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns or other private matters to one or more learners.
2. Exchanging notes, emails or other communications of a personal nature with a learner.
3. Giving personal gifts, cards or letters to a learner without written approval from the building principal.
4. Touching learners without a legitimate educational reason. (Reasons could include the need for assistance when injured, a kindergartner having a toileting accident and requiring assistance, appropriate coaching instruction, or appropriate music instruction).
5. Singling out a particular learner or learners for personal attention or friendship beyond the ordinary professional adult-learner relationship.
6. Taking a learner out of class without a legitimate educational reason.
7. Being alone with a learner behind closed doors without a legitimate educational reason.
8. Initiating or extending contact with a learner beyond the school day or outside of class times without a legitimate educational reason.
9. Sending or accompanying a learner on personal errands.
10. Inviting a learner to the adult's home.
11. Going to a learner's home without a legitimate educational reason.
12. Taking a learner on outings without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.
13. Giving a learner a ride alone in a vehicle in a nonemergency situation without prior notification to and approval from both the parent/guardian and the building principal.
14. Addressing learners or permitting learners to address adults with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner.
15. Telling a learner personal secrets or sharing personal secrets with a learner.
16. For adults who are not guidance/counseling staff, psychologists, social workers or other adults with designated responsibilities to counsel learners, encouraging learners to confide their personal or family problems and/or relationships. If a learner initiates such discussions, the learner should be referred to the appropriate school resource.
17. Furnishing alcohol, drugs or tobacco to a learner or being present where any learner is consuming these substances.
18. Engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct prohibited by other I-LEAD Charter School policies or by state or federal law and regulations.

### **Electronic Communications -**

For purposes of this policy, electronic communication shall mean a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant or pager. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, emails, instant messages and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and other networking websites.

As with other forms of communication, when communicating electronically, adults shall maintain professional boundaries with learners.

Electronic communication with learners shall be for legitimate educational reasons only.

When available, I-LEAD Charter School-provided email or other I-LEAD Charter School-provided communication devices shall be used when communicating electronically with learners. The use of I-LEAD Charter School-provided email or other I-LEAD Charter School-provided communication devices shall be in accordance with I-LEAD Charter School policies and procedures.

All electronic communications from coaches and advisors to team or club members shall be sent in a single communication to all participating team or club members, except for communications concerning an individual learner's medical or academic privacy matters, in which case the communications will be copied to the building principal. In the case of sports teams under the direction of the Coach, such medical or academic communications shall also be copied to the Coach.

Adults shall not follow or accept requests for current learners to be friends or connections on personal social networking sites and shall not create any networking site for communication with learners other than those provided by I-LEAD Charter School for this purpose, without the prior written approval of the Chief Academic Officer.

### **Exceptions**

An emergency situation or a legitimate educational reason may justify deviation from professional boundaries set out in this policy. The adult shall be prepared to articulate the reason for any deviation from the requirements of this policy and must demonstrate that s/he has maintained an appropriate relationship with the learner.

Under no circumstance will an educational or other reason justify deviation from the "Romantic and Sexual Relationships" section of this policy.

There will be circumstances where personal relationships develop between an adult and a learner's family, e.g. when their children become friends. This policy is not intended to interfere with such relationships or to limit activities that are normally consistent with such relationships. Adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity.

It is understood that many adults are involved in various other roles in the community through non-I-LEAD Charter School-related civic, religious, athletic, scouting or other organizations and programs whose participants may include I-LEAD Charter School learners. Such community involvement is commendable, and this policy is not intended to interfere with or restrict an adult's ability to serve in those roles; however, adults are strongly encouraged to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to the nature of the activity with regard to all youth with whom they interact in the course of their community involvement.

### **Reporting Inappropriate or Suspicious Conduct**

Any person, including a learner, who has concerns about or is uncomfortable with a relationship or interaction between an adult and a learner, shall immediately notify the Chief Executive Officer, principal or other administrator.

All I-LEAD Charter School employees, independent contractors and volunteers who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse, shall immediately report the suspected abuse, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

An educator who knows of any action, inaction or conduct which constitutes sexual abuse or exploitation or sexual misconduct under the Educator Discipline Act shall report such misconduct to the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the required form, and shall report such misconduct to the Chief Executive Officer and his/her immediate supervisor, within fifteen (15) days of discovery of such misconduct.

If the Chief Executive Officer or designee reasonably suspects that conduct being reported involves an incident required to be reported under the Child Protective Services Law, the Educator Discipline Act or the Safe Schools Act, the Chief Executive Officer or designee shall make a report, in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

It is a violation of this policy to retaliate against any person for reporting any action pursuant to this policy or for participating as a witness in any related investigation or hearing.

### **Investigation**

Allegations of inappropriate conduct shall be promptly investigated in accordance with the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment.

It is understood that some reports made pursuant to this policy will be based on rumors or misunderstandings; the mere fact that the reported adult is cleared of any wrongdoing shall not result in disciplinary action against the reporter or any witnesses. If as the result of an investigation any individual, including the reported adult, the reporter, or a witness is found to have intentionally provided false information in making the report or during the investigation or hearings related to the report, or if any individual intentionally obstructs the investigation or hearings, this may be addressed as a violation of this policy and other applicable laws, regulations and I-LEAD Charter School policies. Obstruction includes, but is not limited to, violation of "no contact" orders given to the reported adult, attempting to alter or influence witness testimony, and destruction of or hiding evidence.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Any I-LEAD Charter School employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with all applicable I-LEAD Charter School disciplinary policies and procedures.

A volunteer or independent contractor or an employee of an independent contractor who violates this policy may be prohibited from working or serving in I-LEAD Charter School school for an appropriate period of time or permanently, as determined by the Chief Executive Officer or designee.

### **Training**

I-LEAD Charter School shall provide training with respect to the provisions of this policy to current and new I-LEAD Charter School employees and volunteers subject to this policy.

I-LEAD Charter School, at its sole discretion, may require independent contractors and their employees who interact with learners or are present on school grounds to receive training on this policy and related procedures.