

This resource is one of many available to you through the *Second Step* Child Protection Unit, a comprehensive school-based child protection program, which includes staff training, student lessons, and family resources. Access additional free resources on child sexual abuse prevention for parents at [earlyopenoften.org](http://earlyopenoften.org).

## Staff Code of Conduct

A staff code of conduct outlines clear expectations for interactions between adults and children in your school or program. It explicitly identifies acceptable and appropriate behavior for all adults working with children. The sample policy below reflects best practices for ensuring safe, supportive, and respectful interactions between adults and children in your school or program.

### Sample Code of Conduct

\_\_\_\_\_ <insert school or program name> requires that all adults engage in safe, supportive, and respectful interactions with children at all times. The following outlines appropriate and expected conduct for physical behavior, verbal and digital communication, and general conduct.

### Physical Behavior

All adults interacting with children must do so in open, public spaces. If one-on-one meetings are necessary for educational or emergency purposes, they should also be conducted in a public area, in a room where the interaction can be (or is being) observed, or in a room with the door left open and another adult is notified about the meeting. The child should always be given the option of having another adult present. Adults must not give a child a ride home alone unless they have the written permission of the child's parents or in the case of an emergency.

**The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate physical behavior:**

**Appropriate physical behavior** includes contact that maintains physical boundaries at all times and only consists of public and nonsexual touches, such as:

- Pats on the back or shoulder
- Child-initiated hugs

- Holding hands to cross the street safely
- Support with toileting or changing clothes

**Inappropriate physical behavior** is any contact that abuses, exploits, or harasses the child, such as:

- Slapping, shaking, pinching, hitting, punching, pushing, grabbing, kicking
- Patting the buttocks
- Touching private body parts
- Intimate/romantic/sexual contact
- Showing pornography or involving children in pornographic activities

### Communication

All communication between adults and children should be transparent and about school or program activities. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate verbal and digital communication.

#### VERBAL

##### Appropriate

- Praise and/or positive reinforcement with a pedagogical purpose when used consistently and equally for all children

##### Inappropriate

- Profanity, sexual innuendo, or risqué jokes
- Yelling, threatening, ridiculing, or degrading comments

#### DIGITAL

##### Appropriate

- Emails and/or text messages with pedagogical purpose and subject to periodic monitoring

##### Inappropriate

- Private messaging via social media and/or online gaming communities
- Allowing access to electronic devices that may expose children to inappropriate content

## General Conduct

### Adults will:

- Treat all children with respect and provide safe and supportive interactions that foster children’s social, emotional, and academic development
- Comply with all state- and program-level mandatory reporting procedures
- Cooperate fully with any investigation of misconduct or abuse of children

### Adults will not:

- Engage in bullying as defined in the anti-bullying policy
- Use or be under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs in the presence of children
- Give individual children gifts without the knowledge of the children’s caregivers

## Safe Environment Policy and Code of Conduct Statement of Receipt and Agreement

I understand that as a person working with and/or providing services to children at \_\_\_\_\_ <insert school or program name>, I am subject to a criminal background check. My signature confirms that I have read and understood the Safe Environment Policy and Code of Conduct, and that I agree to comply with the standards contained therein. I understand that any action that violates these policies may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from \_\_\_\_\_ <insert school or program name>.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The *Second Step* Child Protection Unit online training also includes: Safe Environment Policy, Child Protection Policies and Procedures Assessment, Child Protection Strategy Baseline Audit, and Staff Code of Conduct Observation Tool.