

## **Passages Charter School Mandated Reporter Policy**

All school personnel and Covered Individual Adults at Passages Charter School are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect. Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child maltreatment immediately when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused child or a neglected child, pursuant to the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/4).

This policy establishes clear expectations for reporting suspected abuse, neglect, grooming, sexual misconduct, inappropriately intimate conduct, and boundary violations. Passages Charter School maintains a zero-tolerance standard for abuse or inappropriate relationships and requires strict adherence to professional boundaries in compliance with the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/), the Illinois Criminal Code (720 ILCS 5/), and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681).

### **1. Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to all Covered Individual Adults, including employees (certificated and non-certificated), administrators, contractors, vendors, volunteers, board members, consultants, and any adult participating in school programs or activities.

Professional boundary expectations apply at all times, on or off campus, during or outside school hours and extend to recent graduates for one year following graduation, consistent with Illinois law (105 ILCS 5/21B-75; 720 ILCS 5/11-25).

### **2. Definitions**

#### **2.1 Mandated Reporters**

All school personnel designated under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/4) are mandated reporters. A mandated reporter must immediately report when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their professional capacity may be abused or neglected. Informing a supervisor alone does not satisfy this obligation.

## 2.2 Abuse

Abuse includes physical injury inflicted by non-accidental means; sexual abuse or sexual exploitation as defined under the Illinois Criminal Code (720 ILCS 5/); grooming under 720 ILCS

5/11-25; corporal punishment prohibited under 105 ILCS 5/24-24; human trafficking under 720 ILCS 5/10-9; or creating a substantial risk of harm.

## 2.3 Neglect

Neglect includes failure to provide proper supervision, medical care, food, clothing, shelter, or other necessary support for a child's well-being as defined under 325 ILCS 5/3.

## 2.4 Grooming

Grooming is behavior used by an adult in a position of trust to build emotional connection with a student in order to lower inhibitions or create opportunities for sexual misconduct under 720 ILCS 5/11-25. Examples include private texting, encouraging secrecy, isolating a student, gift-giving to a specific student, or crossing physical boundaries. Grooming must be reported even if abuse has not yet occurred.

## 2.5 Boundary Violation

A boundary violation is conduct by a Covered Individual Adult that lacks legitimate educational purpose and risks exploitation of the professional relationship. Boundary violations must be reported even if they do not rise to the level of abuse and may constitute unprofessional conduct under 105 ILCS 5/21B-75 and 23 Ill. Adm. Code 22.

# 3. Professional Boundaries

All Covered Individual Adults must maintain strictly professional relationships with students at all times. Staff must:

- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries
- Treat students consistently and without favoritism
- Avoid exclusive or overly personal relationships
- Ensure all interactions serve a legitimate educational purpose
- Avoid conduct that creates the appearance of impropriety

These expectations apply during instruction, extracurricular activities, transportation, field trips, and electronic communication.

## 4. Prohibited Conduct

Covered Individual Adults must not:

- Engage in romantic or sexual conduct with students
- Make sexual comments, jokes, or innuendo
- Comment on a student's body or physical appearance
- Ask students to keep secrets
- Provide alcohol, drugs, or tobacco
- Give gifts to individual students (except nominal classroom-wide items)
- Invite students to their homes
- Meet students off-campus for non-educational purposes
- Transport students in a private vehicle without written administrative and parent approval
- Take or possess student photographs or videos for personal use
- Use corporal punishment or humiliating discipline

Such conduct may violate 720 ILCS 5/, 105 ILCS 5/, and Title IX.

## 5. Electronic Communication

All communication with students must occur only through approved school platforms.

Personal email accounts may not be used to communicate with students.

Personal social media connections with students are prohibited.

Direct messaging students through personal accounts is prohibited.

All communication must serve a legitimate educational purpose and comply with the Illinois School Student Records Act (105 ILCS 10/). These restrictions apply to recent graduates for one year following graduation.

## 6. Reporting Requirements

### 6.1 Immediate Reporting to DCFS

If you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect, you must:

1. Immediately call the DCFS Hotline at 1-800-252-2873
2. Inform the Principal or a member of administration (unless they are the subject of the allegation)
3. Complete the required internal incident documentation the same day

You do not need permission before calling DCFS.

Failure to report may result in criminal penalties under 325 ILCS 5/4.

### 6.2 Reporting Grooming and Inappropriate Conduct

Sexual misconduct, grooming, inappropriately intimate relationships, suspected abuse by any Covered Individual Adult, and boundary violations that raise concern must be reported immediately.

### 6.3 Confidentiality

If the suspected abuser is a parent, guardian, or household member, do not notify the parent. DCFS or law enforcement will handle notification consistent with 325 ILCS 5/. Information should only be shared with DCFS, law enforcement, administration, or authorized investigators.

## 7. Support for Students

If a student requires immediate medical attention, call 9-1-1.

If it is unsafe for a student to return home, contact DCFS immediately and follow instructions regarding student safety consistent with the Juvenile Court Act (705 ILCS 405/). The school will provide appropriate counseling and support services to impacted students.

## **8. Student and Parent Reporting**

Students and parents or guardians who believe a Covered Individual Adult has engaged in abuse, grooming, or boundary violations may notify the Principal, another trusted staff member, or contact DCFS or law enforcement directly. The school will respond promptly and equitably to all complaints consistent with Title IX and applicable Illinois law.

## **9. Cooperation with Investigations**

All Covered Individual Adults must cooperate fully with DCFS, law enforcement, CPS, and internal school investigations. Failure to cooperate may result in disciplinary action and may constitute unprofessional conduct under 105 ILCS 5/21B-75.

## **10. Training**

All mandated reporters must complete required DCFS training upon hire and annually thereafter as required by 325 ILCS 5/4.

Training includes recognizing abuse and neglect, identifying grooming behaviors, reporting procedures, trauma-informed response, and professional boundary standards.

## **11. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**

Passages Charter School will track reported incidents, review data annually, update training as needed, and strengthen procedures to protect students in alignment with state and federal legal requirements.

## **12. Penalties**

Failure to report suspected abuse, neglect, grooming, sexual misconduct, or boundary violations may result in discipline up to and including termination, reporting to the Illinois State Board of Education under 105 ILCS 5/21B-75, and criminal penalties under 325 ILCS 5/4.