

ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY'S

ETHICS IN EDUCATION POLICY



(Revised: February 16, 2018)

Abundant Life Christian Academy's Ethics in Education Policy

PURPOSE:

To comply with the requirements established by the Florida Ethics in Education Act, Florida Statute §1002.421, through the adoption, implementation, and enforcement of a policy that regulates and creates ethical standards in employment and notifies all staff of their obligations to report child abuse.

APPLICABLE LAW:

Florida Statute §1001.10(5)
Florida Statute §1002.01(2)
Florida Statute §1002.39
Florida Statute §1002.395
Florida Statute §1002.42
Florida Statute §1012.315

Florida Statute §39.203
Florida Statute §768.095
Florida Statute §1012.01
Florida Statute §1012.32
Florida Statute §943.05 & .051
Florida Statute §943.0542

DEFINITIONS:

- 1) "Staff with direct student contact" means any employee or contracted personnel, who has unsupervised access to a student for whom the private school is responsible.
- 2) "Teachers" means staff members assigned the professional activity of instructing students in courses in classroom situations, including basic instruction, exceptional student education, career education, and adult education, including substitute teachers.
- 3) "School administrator" includes:
 - a. School principals or school directors who are staff members performing the assigned activities as the administrative head of a school and to whom have been delegated responsibility for the coordination and administrative direction of the instructional and non-instructional activities of the school.
 - b. Assistant principals who are staff members assisting the administrative head of the school. This classification also includes assistant principals for curriculum and administration.

NON-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE:

As a religious entity, Abundant Life Christian Academy is legally permitted to make enrollment and employment decisions based upon religious criteria, including doctrinal and lifestyle issues. It is the policy of Abundant Life Christian Academy to employ persons who subscribe without reservation to Abundant Life Christian Academy Statement of Faith and Standards of Conduct and who are living out these doctrines and standards in all areas of their lives, both at and away from ministry/school functions. Abundant Life Christian Academy does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, sex (as determined at birth and not subject to change), national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law.

EMPLOYMENT SCREENING:

All teachers will hold baccalaureate or higher degrees, have at least three (3) years of teaching experience in public or private schools, or have special skills, knowledge, or expertise that qualifies them to provide instruction in subjects taught.

All staff members who have direct student contact will undergo a state and national background screening, pursuant to Florida Statute §943.0542, by electronically filing with the Department of Law Enforcement a complete set of fingerprints taken by an authorized law enforcement agency or an employee of the private school, a school district, or a private company who is trained to take fingerprints and deny employment to or terminate an employee if he or she fails to meet the screening standards under Florida Statutes §435.04. Results of the screening shall become property of Abundant Life Christian Academy.

No person having direct student contact will begin working with the school without the school having first obtained a state and national background screen. Upon notification that a staff member or potential staff member has failed the background screening, the staff member or potential staff member will be dismissed or denied employment.

All staff members with direct student contact will undergo resubmission of retained fingerprints or full background screening every five (5) years. Upon notification that a staff member has failed the background screening, the staff member will be immediately dismissed.

All potential staff members who will have direct student contact will provide past employer references as a part of their pre-employment screening process. No staff member will begin service to the ministry until the ministry has contacted or has reasonably attempted to contact past employer references. All contact will be documented and become the property of Abundant Life Christian Academy.

All staff members with direct student contact will be screened using the following Department of Education's educator screening tools:

- The Professional Practices' Database of Disciplinary Actions Against Educators; and
- The Department of Education's Teacher Certification Database

All findings will be documented and will become the property of Abundant Life Christian Academy.

DISQUALIFYING CRIMES:

The security background investigations under this section must ensure that no persons subject to the provisions of this section have been arrested for and are awaiting final disposition of, have been found guilty of, regardless of adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to, or have been adjudicated delinquent and the record has not been sealed or expunged for, any offense prohibited under any of the following provisions of state law or similar law of another jurisdiction:

- A. Any felony offense prohibited under any of the following Florida Statutes:
 - (a) Section [393.135](#), relating to sexual misconduct with certain developmentally disabled clients and reporting of such sexual misconduct.
 - (b) Section [394.4593](#), relating to sexual misconduct with certain mental health patients and reporting of such sexual misconduct.
 - (c) Section [415.111](#), relating to adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation of aged persons or disabled adults.
 - (d) Section [777.04](#), relating to attempts, solicitation, and conspiracy to commit an offense listed in this subsection.

- (e) Section [782.04](#), relating to murder.
- (f) Section [782.07](#), relating to manslaughter, aggravated manslaughter of an elderly person or disabled adult, or aggravated manslaughter of a child.
- (g) Section [782.071](#), relating to vehicular homicide.
- (h) Section [782.09](#), relating to killing of an unborn child by injury to the mother.
- (i) Chapter [784](#), relating to assault, battery, and culpable negligence, if the offense was a felony.
- (j) Section [784.011](#), relating to assault, if the victim of the offense was a minor.
- (k) Section [784.03](#), relating to battery, if the victim of the offense was a minor.
- (l) Section [787.01](#), relating to kidnapping.
- (m) Section [787.02](#), relating to false imprisonment.
- (n) Section [787.025](#), relating to luring or enticing a child.
- (o) Section [787.04\(2\)](#), relating to taking, enticing, or removing a child beyond the state limits with criminal intent pending custody proceedings.
- (p) Section [787.04\(3\)](#), relating to carrying a child beyond the state lines with criminal intent to avoid producing a child at a custody hearing or delivering the child to the designated person.
- (q) Section [790.115\(1\)](#), relating to exhibiting firearms or weapons within 1,000 feet of a school.
- (r) Section [790.115\(2\)\(b\)](#), relating to possessing an electric weapon or device, destructive device, or other weapon on school property.
- (s) Section [794.011](#), relating to sexual battery.
- (t) Former s. [794.041](#), relating to prohibited acts of persons in familial or custodial authority.
- (u) Section [794.05](#), relating to unlawful sexual activity with certain minors.
- (v) Chapter [796](#), relating to prostitution.
- (w) Section [798.02](#), relating to lewd and lascivious behavior.
- (x) Chapter [800](#), relating to lewdness and indecent exposure.
- (y) Section [806.01](#), relating to arson.
- (z) Section [810.02](#), relating to burglary.
- (aa) Section [810.14](#), relating to voyeurism, if the offense is a felony.
- (bb) Section [810.145](#), relating to video voyeurism, if the offense is a felony.
- (cc) Chapter [812](#), relating to theft, robbery, and related crimes, if the offense is a felony.
- (dd) Section [817.563](#), relating to fraudulent sale of controlled substances, only if the offense was a felony.
- (ee) Section [825.102](#), relating to abuse, aggravated abuse, or neglect of an elderly person or disabled adult.
- (ff) Section [825.1025](#), relating to lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of an elderly person or disabled adult.
- (gg) Section [825.103](#), relating to exploitation of an elderly person or disabled adult, if the offense was a felony.
- (hh) Section [826.04](#), relating to incest.
- (ii) Section [827.03](#), relating to child abuse, aggravated child abuse, or neglect of a child.
- (jj) Section [827.04](#), relating to contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child.
- (kk) Former s. [827.05](#), relating to negligent treatment of children.
- (ll) Section [827.071](#), relating to sexual performance by a child.
- (mm) Section [843.01](#), relating to resisting arrest with violence.
- (nn) Section [843.025](#), relating to depriving a law enforcement, correctional, or correctional probation officer means of protection or communication.
- (oo) Section [843.12](#), relating to aiding in an escape.
- (pp) Section [843.13](#), relating to aiding in the escape of juvenile inmates in correctional institutions.
- (qq) Chapter [847](#), relating to obscene literature.
- (rr) Section [874.05](#), relating to encouraging or recruiting another to join a criminal gang.

- (ss) Chapter 893, relating to drug abuse prevention and control, only if the offense was a felony or if any other person involved in the offense was a minor.
- (tt) Section [916.1075](#), relating to sexual misconduct with certain forensic clients and reporting of such sexual misconduct.
- (uu) Section [944.35\(3\)](#), relating to inflicting cruel or inhuman treatment on an inmate resulting in great bodily harm.
- (vv) Section [944.40](#), relating to escape.
- (ww) Section [944.46](#), relating to harboring, concealing, or aiding an escaped prisoner.
- (xx) Section [944.47](#), relating to introduction of contraband into a correctional facility.
- (yy) Section [985.701](#), relating to sexual misconduct in juvenile justice programs.
- (zz) Section [985.711](#), relating to contraband introduced into detention facilities.

- B. Any misdemeanor offense prohibited under any of the following statutes:
- 1. Section [784.011](#), relating to assault, if the victim of the offense was a minor.
 - 2. Section 787.025, relating to luring or enticing a child;
 - 3. Any criminal act committed in another state or under federal law which, if committed in this state, constitutes an offense prohibited under any statute listed in subsection (1) or subsection (2); and/or
 - 4. Any delinquent act committed in this state or any delinquent or criminal act committed in another state or under federal law which, if committed in this state, qualifies an individual for inclusion on the Registered Juvenile Sex Offender List under s. 943.0435.

The security background investigations under this section must ensure that no person subject to this section has been found guilty of, regardless of adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to, any offense that constitutes domestic violence as defined in s. [741.28](#), whether such act was committed in this state or in another jurisdiction.

Abundant Life Christian Academy understands that scholarship funding shall be suspended if Abundant Life Christian Academy knowingly fails to comply with this subsection, and the Department of Education shall prohibit Abundant Life Christian Academy from enrolling new scholarship students, for one (1) fiscal year and/or until the school complies.

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR STAFF MEMBERS:

Abundant Life Christian Academy values the worth and dignity of every person, the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and the nurture of spiritual growth. Essential to the achievement of these standards are the freedom to learn and to teach in a truly Christian environment. Abundant Life Christian Academy's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential, both from an educational perspective and a spiritual perspective. Abundant Life Christian Academy will therefore strive for professional and spiritual growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity while maintaining a proper Christian testimony. Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of other members of the community, Abundant Life Christian Academy therefore strives to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct.

PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL AND SPIRITUAL CONDUCT FOR STAFF MEMBERS:

The following disciplinary rules shall constitute Abundant Life Christian Academy's ethical standards for all staff members. Violation of any of these standards shall subject the individual to discipline and/or dismissal.

- 1. Obligation to the student requires that the individual:
 - a. Shall manifest by precept and example the highest Christian virtue and personal decorum, serving as a Christian Role Model both at and away from Abundant Life Christian Academy, and as an example to all in judgment, dignity, respect, and Christian living;
 - b. Shall make 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;
 - c. Shall not engage in personal relationships with students outside of the classroom that are inappropriate, familiar or of any immature manner;
 - d. Shall not invite student to overnight outings, whether in teacher's home or otherwise;
 - e. Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning;
 - f. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement;
 - g. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights;

- h. Shall not harass any student;
 - i. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage; and
 - j. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
2. Obligation to the public requires that the individual:
- a. Shall subscribe without reservation to the Articles of Faith and the Standards of Conduct of Abundant Life Christian Academy and agree to abide by these doctrines and standards in all aspects of my life, both at and away from ministry functions;
 - b. Shall understand that the bona fide occupational qualification of being a Christian Role Model includes but is not limited to abstaining from all acts of fornication, adultery, and other acts outside of biblical context;
 - c. Shall become of member of a church of like faith and practice to Abundant Life Christian Academy, faithfully attending public services and taking an active part in the total ministry program;
 - d. Shall not use institutional privileges for personal gain or advantage;
 - e. Shall accept no gratuity, gift, or favor that might influence professional judgment; and
 - f. Shall offer no gratuity, gift, or favor to obtain special advantages.
3. Obligation to the profession of education requires that the individual:
- a. Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings;
 - b. Shall remain loyal to Abundant Life Christian Academy's leadership and Abundant Life Christian Academy's programs in word and in action;
 - c. Shall agree to fulfill all duties and responsibilities of membership in the church of like faith and practice;
 - d. Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct contrary to Abundant Life Christian Academy's statement of faith, 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 abstain from illegal drug use, public intoxication, and the abuse of alcohol;
 - f. Shall not engage in promiscuity, intimate sexual activity outside of a marriage, shall not engage in viewing pornography, and/or other sexual deviant activity;
 - g. Shall understand that the afore listed activities conflict with a biblical principles and are incompatible with employment at Abundant Life Christian Academy and are basis for dismissal;
 - h. Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague;
 - i. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional judgments of colleagues;
 - j. Shall not misrepresent one's own professional qualifications;
 - k. Shall not submit fraudulent information on any document in connection with professional activities;
 - l. Shall not make any fraudulent statement or fail to disclose a material fact in one's own or another's application for a professional position;
 - m. Shall not withhold information regarding a position from an applicant or misrepresent an assignment or conditions of employment;
 - n. Shall not assist entry into or continuance in the profession of any person known to be unqualified in accordance with this Code of Ethics;
 - o. Shall self-report within forty-eight (48) hours to appropriate authorities (principal, vice principal, or headmaster) any arrests/charges involving the abuse of a child or the sale and/or possession of a controlled substance. Such notice shall not be considered an admission of guilt nor shall such notice be admissible for any purpose in any proceeding, civil or criminal, administrative or judicial, investigatory or adjudicatory. In addition, shall self-report any conviction, finding of guilt, withholding of adjudication, commitment to a pretrial diversion program, or entering of a plea of guilty or *Nolo Contender* for any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation within forty-eight (48) hours after the final judgment. When handling sealed and expunged records disclosed under this rule, Abundant Life Christian Academy shall comply with the confidentiality provisions of Sections 943.0585(4)(c) and 943.059(4)(c), Florida Statutes;
 - p. Shall report to appropriate authorities any known allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 1012.795(1), Florida Statutes;
 - q. Shall seek no reprisal against any individual who has reported any allegation of a violation against me;
 - r. Shall understand and agree that my responsibilities as a staff member are inseparable to the ministry and that I will be immediately removed from the Abundant Life Christian Academy staff if I am out of fellowship with the church, as determined in the sole discretion of the pastor; and

- s. Shall understand and agree that God's command for my role as a member of the staff is for me to perform at the will of Abundant Life Christian Academy leadership. Following this command of God, I agree to perform all duties and responsibilities entrusted to me by Abundant Life Christian Academy leadership to their complete and full satisfaction.

REPORTING MISCONDUCT BY INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATORS

All Abundant Life Christian Academy 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 Principal Stacy Angier (954-979-2665 or sangier@abundantlife.tv).

Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to Bishop Rick Thomas (954-972-0660 or rthomas@abundantlife.tv).

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 Academy and on our website at alca eagles.com.

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)

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS:

Abundant Life Christian Academy, or any of its employees, may not enter into a confidentiality agreement regarding terminated or dismissed staff members, or staff members who resign in lieu of termination, based in whole or in part on misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student, and may not provide the staff member with employment references or discuss the personnel's or administrators' performance with prospective employers in another educational setting, without disclosing the staff member's misconduct.

In accordance with Florida Statue 768.095 Abundant Life Christian Academy will disclose 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 and 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 chapter 760.

MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Abundant Life Christian Academy seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse of any form to our children and youth and to minister to victims of abuse and their families. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand (Matthew 18:5-7 and Mark 10: 13-16).

Our goal in response to these Biblical mandates is to maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where children may grow: a place where care-givers, teachers, and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

Abundant Life Christian Academy desires to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity. Individuals they know and trust sometimes victimize children. The ministry is not immune to such abuse, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across racial, social, economic and religious boundaries. Although no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this section along with Abundant Life Christian Academy Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures reflect its commitment to help protect children from harm.

Abundant Life Christian Academy will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Staff cooperation in this commitment not only reflects a concern about children's safety in this society, but also a willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in Abundant Life Christian Academy-sponsored activities with children are required to comply with the guidelines provided in this policy in conjunction with our Child Abuse Prevention Policy.

If Abundant Life Christian Academy receives an allegation of child abuse, it will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, Abundant Life Christian Academy's personnel will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that Abundant Life Christian Academy takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern. It is the legal responsibility of any person with responsibility for the care of children to report all cases of child abuse they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse. Failure to report could lead to liability, both civilly and criminally, on the part of Abundant Life Christian Academy, the observer, or both.

Abundant Life Christian Academy has determined that it is the responsibility of the program staff to report all cases of suspected child abuse to the proper legal authorities. While the confidentiality of the pastor/parishioner relationship is very important, reporting reasonable suspicion of child abuse has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to a child, that person, or others.

What is reasonable suspicion? Reasonable suspicion means that there is credible evidence or a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining a child's suspected abuse.

A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question. Reporting is not a determination that child abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, Abundant Life Christian Academy has adopted the following guidelines for reporting:

- a) Treat each allegation of child abuse seriously.
- b) Attempt to assure the safety and protection of persons who have been harmed.
- c) Pray for Abundant Life Christian Academy and all persons affected by the allegation.
- d) Immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in handling the allegation.
- e) Immediately notify the school administrator. The school administrator will, along with the reporting staff member, immediately report allegations to the Department of Children and Family Services.
- f) Immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge of the allegations, and allegations are not currently against them.

- g) Immediately notify Abundant Life Christian Academy's insurance company. As appropriate, the school administrator shall immediately notify Abundant Life Christian Academy's insurance carrier of the possibility of a claim. If the abuse allegation does not implicate an Abundant Life Christian Academy staff member or Abundant Life Christian Academy volunteer, this step may be omitted.
- h) If the accused has assigned duties within the life of Abundant Life Christian Academy, that person must be immediately relieved of his duties until the investigation is concluded.
- i) The pastor/school authorities should extend whatever care and resources necessary. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor, ministry leader, and/or school authorities, should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate an official investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or negating the allegation.
- j) It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.
- k) Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the pastor.
- l) Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or student is secured.
- m) Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the alleged victim and his or her family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority. In some situations, ministries and schools have responded in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim. This conduct can increase the anger and pain of the alleged victim and his or her family. Further reconciliation can then be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- n) Treat the accused with dignity and support.
- o) If the media or other parties contact a ministry official or school authorities about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the pastor or principal. Only the ministry leader, school authorities, or their designees should make comments about the allegations, using a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation, staff members, and school personnel. The prepared statement shall be made only after consultation with Abundant Life Christian Academy's attorney and will include the steps Abundant Life Christian Academy has taken to protect children, such as the development and implementation of this manual, and the care and concern Abundant Life Christian Academy has for all parties involved. The privacy and confidentiality of all involved shall continue to be of primary concern.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND THEIR PHONE NUMBERS:

National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (800-422-4453)

Florida Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-96-ABUSE (800-962-2873)

Florida Department of Children & Families website: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/>