

# Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators

*Ohio is nationally known as a state that produces high-quality educators and recognizes that its practicing educators hold themselves to high standards. Our state's educators are aware of the importance of maintaining the confidence and trust of students, parents, colleagues and the public and, therefore, maintain the highest degree of professional conduct.*

The eight principles of professional conduct adopted by the State Board of Education are set forth in the *Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators*. This code provides the framework for professional conduct for all Ohio educators licensed by the State Board, including coaches, aides, teachers (including substitutes), principals, superintendents and other licensed persons serving schools (e.g., school nurses and school counselors). The code also serves as the basis for decisions on issues pertaining to licensure that are consistent with applicable law and provides a guide for conduct in situations that have professional implications for all individuals licensed by the State Board.

## Principles of Professional Conduct

Ohio's practicing educators hold the fundamental beliefs defined in the following eight principles:

1. Educators behave in a professional manner, realizing that one's actions reflect directly on the status and substance of the profession.
2. Educators maintain a professional relationship with all students at all times, both inside and outside the classroom. **(According to Ohio Revised Code 2151.421, educators are mandatory reporters of child abuse.)**
3. Educators accurately report information required by the local board of education or governing board, state education agency, federal agency, or state or federal law.
4. Educators adhere to federal, state and local laws and statutes regarding criminal activity.
5. Educators comply with state and federal laws related to maintaining confidential information.
6. Educators serve as positive role models and do not use, possess or unlawfully distribute illegal or unauthorized drugs.
7. Educators ensure that school property, public funds or fees paid by students or the community are used in the best interest of students and not for personal gain.
8. Educators fulfill all of the terms and obligations in their employment contract.

## Investigation and Due Process

When a principal, parent, teacher, student, superintendent or community member reports an educator to the Ohio Department of Education for an allegation of unprofessional conduct, the Department will determine whether the State Board has jurisdiction to investigate the matter pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 3319.311.

If it is determined that an investigation is warranted, a thorough investigation would be conducted pursuant to ORC 3319.311 at which time **all evidence will be fully examined to determine whether the allegation can be substantiated**. If the results of an investigation warrant initiating an action under ORC 3319.31, **an educator is entitled to all due process rights** afforded pursuant to ORC Chapters 33 and 119 and Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3301.

## Disciplinary Guidelines

Upon a determination that the results of an investigation warrant the State Board to impose a disciplinary action pursuant to ORC 3319.31, the State Board may impose an appropriate penalty within a range of disciplinary actions on a **case-by-case basis** as set forth in these disciplinary guidelines, unless the aggravating and mitigating factors in an individual case warrant a penalty outside this range.

The range of disciplinary actions may include a letter of admonishment, consent agreement, limitation of a license, suspension of a license, revocation of a license or denial of a license. The terms “suspension,” “revocation” and “denial” shall mean any length of suspension, revocation or denial, including permanent revocation or permanent denial. A license may be suspended or limited pursuant to a consent agreement or State Board resolution. To find a complete explanation of the types of disciplinary actions, visit the Ohio Department of Education’s website, [education.ohio.gov](http://education.ohio.gov), and search keywords *disciplinary actions*.

The State Board may determine that a penalty outside the range of the disciplinary guidelines is more appropriate in an individual case based upon aggravating and mitigating factors outlined in Ohio Administrative Code 3301-73-21 (A) (B) and 3301-20-01 (E) or any other factors the State Board, district or educational entity, or local superintendent consider relevant. Further, the State Board may determine not to impose a disciplinary action involving an educator’s licensure or licensure application based upon a local school district or educational entity appropriately addressing the violation of the *Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators* at the district or building levels.

## For more information

See answers to frequently asked questions here:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Conduct/Educator-Conduct-FAQs>