**Ethical Conduct Standards
Step by Step Special Needs Academy**
*(Adapted from the Florida Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Education)*

1. Our school upholds the inherent value and dignity of every individual, promotes the search for truth, strives for excellence, fosters the acquisition of knowledge, and encourages the development of democratic citizenship. Central to these values is the freedom to learn and teach, along with ensuring equal opportunities for all.
2. The primary focus of our school is the student and their development. Employees are committed to their own professional growth and will make decisions with the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.
3. To prioritize student welfare, instructional staff are expected to:
	* a. Take reasonable actions to protect students from conditions that could harm their learning, mental or physical health, or safety.
	* b. Avoid unnecessarily restricting a student’s independence in learning.
	* c. Ensure that students have access to a variety of viewpoints.
	* d. Refrain from deliberately withholding or distorting relevant subject matter.
	* e. Avoid intentionally causing embarrassment or belittling a student.
	* f. Never violate or deny a student's legal rights.
	* g. Refrain from discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, sex, age, national origin, or other personal factors and ensure students are protected from such behaviors.
	* h. Avoid exploiting any relationship with a student for personal gain.
	* i. Keep students' personal information confidential, unless disclosure is required for professional purposes or by law.
4. In order to maintain the trust and respect of colleagues, students, parents, and the community, all employees must uphold the highest ethical standards. This commitment includes:
	* a. Being honest in all professional interactions.
	* b. Not denying colleagues professional opportunities based on race, religion, sex, or other personal characteristics.
	* c. Refraining from interfering with a colleague’s civil or political rights.
	* d. Avoiding harassment or discrimination that affects the professional environment or the educational process and ensuring a harassment-free space for all individuals.
	* e. Not making false or malicious statements about colleagues.

**Training Requirement:**
All instructional staff, educational support personnel, and administrators are required to complete training on these ethical standards as a condition of employment.

**Reporting Misconduct:**
All instructional staff, educational support personnel, and administrators are obligated to report any misconduct that affects the health, safety, or well-being of students. Misconduct examples include inappropriate language, substance abuse, discriminatory behavior, sexual innuendo, cheating, physical aggression, and the exchange of favors. Misconduct involving employees should be reported to the appropriate contact. Misconduct by administrators should be reported to the specified administrator or authority. Allegations of misconduct by Florida-certified educators will be forwarded to the Office of Professional Practices Services. Detailed procedures for reporting misconduct are available on the school's website.

**Reporting Child Abuse, Abandonment, or Neglect:**
All employees are required to report suspected or confirmed cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Reports can be made by calling 1-800-96-ABUSE or submitting an online report.

**Signs of Physical Abuse:**
Indicators may include unexplained injuries such as bruises or cuts, broken bones, burns, or withdrawn behaviors. Children may appear afraid to go home or avoid physical contact.

**Signs of Sexual Abuse:**
Signs may include unusual knowledge of sex, difficulty walking or sitting, torn or stained underwear, or a sexually transmitted disease. Abused children may become withdrawn or fearful of certain people.

**Signs of Neglect:**
Children may have unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, inadequate supervision, or may appear underfed or exhausted. They may also show extreme dependence on adults.

**Patterns of Abuse:**
Abuse is often characterized by multiple signs. A consistent pattern of physical or behavioral symptoms is a significant indicator that must be reported.

**Liability Protections:**
Anyone reporting abuse or neglect in good faith is protected from civil or criminal liability. Employers who disclose information about current or former employees to prospective employers are also protected from liability, unless the information is proven to be false or discriminatory.