

# #ABCConduct

To download other tip sheets, visit [education.ohio.gov/ABCConduct](http://education.ohio.gov/ABCConduct)



Educators have a visible place in their communities. The choices they make, even when well-intended, can affect their jobs, families, schools and profession. The Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Education Association and Ohio Federation of Teachers, supported by BASA, OASSA and OAESA, offer this series of tip sheets on how to recognize situations that can get good educators in trouble. #ABCConduct Tip Sheets are designed to help educators identify and mitigate risks that occur in everyday situations. These tip sheets provide guidance for best practices and are not intended to be used in disciplinary actions.

## The Top 10 Professional Conduct Concerns

Most educators care about their professional conduct, but they still can make small, avoidable mistakes that lead to larger consequences. Here are 10 important concerns, in no certain order, that can get educators into sticky situations with Ohio's Office of Professional Conduct.

### 1. Falsification or Failure to Disclose

Educators must accurately report their criminal and disciplinary histories, employment status and academic credentials every time they fill out employment applications or complete state licensure applications.

### 2. Emotional, Romantic and Sexual Relationships

Responsible educators never engage in sexual relationships with students or fail to keep proper professional and emotional boundaries in their relationships with students. Educators should be empathetic but know when to refer students to parents, counselors or mental health professionals.

### 3. Social Media

Responsible educators stay professional on all personal social media 24/7/365. They keep their personal profiles private, knowing unwise entries can result in discipline.

### 4. Theft and Fraud

Theft and fraud crimes, even if unrelated to the school community, are cause for discipline. Responsible educators know these crimes reflect poorly on the profession.

### 5. Alcohol

Responsible educators don't come to school smelling of alcohol, have alcohol in their systems or consume alcohol once there. They are responsible for the care, custody and control of students.

### 6. Broken Contract

Contracts are a two-way street. Public and community school educators should talk to their district or school administrators before resigning from positions. Responsible educators know they may be disciplined for resigning during the school year or after July 10.

### 7. Personal Gain

Responsible educators know they can't use their professional positions or school property for personal gain, such as selling products or getting free perks from vendors. They know that educators who want to tutor or give private lessons to district students must first seek district approval.

### 8. Mandatory Reporting

Responsible educators know all school workers are mandatory reporters under the law. If they have reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect by parents, other educators, or other students or they believe a student is self-harming, they must report it.

### 9. Physical or Verbal Altercations with Students

Responsible educators avoid physical and verbal altercations with students by using proper classroom management and de-escalation techniques.

### 10. Failure to Supervise

Educators are responsible for student safety at all times. Responsible educators review course materials, educational supplements and media, and the school environment before using these materials.



# DO's & DON'Ts

—with—  
*Crystal Clear*

- DO** preview all media fully before using in the classroom.
- DO** turn off auto-play on YouTube in the classroom, so the platform does not select videos based on your personal viewing history.
- DO** understand student safety policies and stay up-to-date on required safety trainings.
- DO** disclose all criminal convictions, including sealed or expunged ones, on every licensure application to the Ohio Department of Education.

- DON'T** come to work hungover.
- DON'T** ignore the potential consequences of breaking your contract.
- DON'T** worry about over-reporting child abuse or neglect. Children Services professionals will do the screening.
- DON'T** escalate a situation with a student by reacting too quickly.

## Make a Professional Choice!

Ms. Smith sympathizes with a female student whose parents are getting a divorce. Soon, she and the student are texting continually about personal issues. Professional or Unprofessional?

**Unprofessional**  
Ms. Smith is not keeping appropriate student-teacher boundaries.

Jana, a seventh-grader, always pushes Ms. Liu's buttons. Ms. Liu warns her to follow classroom rules, but Jana tells her to "buzz off." Ms. Liu is infuriated but pauses for a breath before giving Jana a referral slip. Professional or Unprofessional?

**Professional**  
Ms. Liu remained professional in dealing with a defiant student.

Mr. Evans intercepts a student's note to a friend revealing the student has been cutting himself. Concerned, he decides to keep an eye on the student. Professional or Unprofessional?

**Unprofessional**  
Mr. Evans is obligated to immediately report the discovery to Child Protective Services and school services personnel.

Director Jones is applying to renew her license with the Ohio Department of Education. She doesn't disclose a disorderly conduct conviction from college because she had reported it on her previous application. Professional or Unprofessional?

**Unprofessional**  
Educators must report all convictions to the Department on every licensure application.

Coach Conner is the only adult on duty for the first 15 minutes of lunch, but he steps out for a while to take an important phone call. Professional or Unprofessional?

**Unprofessional**  
If anything had gone wrong while he was gone, his license could be at risk.