ETHICS IN EDUCATION

The Florida legislature passed Senate Bill 1712, the Ethics in Education Act, and it was signed into law effective July 1, 2008. This bill includes a code of conduct for instructional personnel as well as requirements for reporting child abuse and teacher/administrator misconduct.

The employees of The Montessori School of Pensacola are expected to adhere to these standards as well as the Core Values and Employer's Expectations listed at the beginning of this Handbook.

All employees have an obligation and legal responsibility to report anything that could affect the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

Reporting Misconduct by Instructional Personnel and Administrators

All employees, educational support 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 **Alisen Spear at alisen@montessoripensacola.com or 850-380-8725**.

Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to **Tracy McKay** at **HR@montessoripensacola.com or 850-433-4155 ext 302**. 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 on our bulletin boards and on our website at www.montessoripensacola.com.

Reporting Child Abuse, Abandonment or Neglect

All employees and agents have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Call 1-800-96-ABUSE or report online at: http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/.

Signs of Physical Abuse: The child may have unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, or other injuries; broken bones; or burns. A child experiencing physical abuse may seem withdrawn or depressed, seem afraid to go home or may run away, shy away from physical contact, be aggressive, or wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries.

Signs of Sexual Abuse: The child may have torn, stained or bloody underwear, trouble walking or sitting, pain or itching in genital area, or a sexually transmitted disease. A child experiencing sexual abuse may have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively, fear a particular person, seem withdrawn or depressed, gain or lose weight suddenly, shy away from physical contact, or run away from home.

Signs of Neglect: The child may have unattended medical needs, little or no supervision at home, poor hygiene, or appear underweight. A child experiencing neglect may be frequently tired or hungry, steal food, or appear overly needy for adult attention.

Patterns of Abuse: Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported.

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).

Penalties for Failure to Report

Failure to report suspected or actual child abuse, abandonment, or neglect: Under Section 39.205, Florida Statutes, a person who knowingly and willfully fails to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to the Central Abuse Hotline, or prevents another person from doing so, commits a third-degree felony.

Failure to report employee misconduct: Failure to report misconduct affecting the health, safety, or welfare of a student may result in penalties up to termination of employment and revocation of an educator's certificate, as applicable.

Training Requirement

All instructional personnel, educational support employees and administrators are required as a condition of employment to complete training on these standards of ethical conduct.

This information can be found on our website www.montessoripensacola.com and on our bulletin board.