



RICE UNIVERSITY

# Office of Ethics, Compliance and Enterprise Risk

## Youth Protection Code of Conduct for Adults

Shared values define the strength and character of the Rice community. Our values shape our culture and guide the behavior of all Rice University faculty, staff, students, volunteers, interns and independent contractors who interact with youth through University Programs or Activities Involving Minors. As outlined in Rice's [Policy 100, Standards of Ethical Conduct](#), our standards are centered around the letters of our university's name, RICE: Responsibility, Integrity, Community, Excellence

**Responsibility** – We understand our obligations and are accountable for our actions.

- Observe the “Rule of Three” – have at least one other adult, or another youth, present during all interactions with youth. This includes on-campus, off-campus and virtual programming.
- If one-on-one interaction is required, meet in open, well-lit rooms or spaces with windows observable by other adults from the University Program.
  - When it is not possible to comply with the above, parents/guardians of youth must sign a specific waiver acknowledging they understand their youth is engaged in a University Program requiring a one-on-one interaction (Youth to Adult) such as a private lesson or internship.
- When transporting Minors in a University Program, more than one adult from the University Program must be present in the vehicle, except when multiple Minors will be in the vehicle at all times through the transportation. Avoid using personal vehicles whenever possible.
- Use program-sponsored email, phone and social media accounts for communication with youth when there is an essential educational or programmatic reason to do so.
- Do not engage in purposeful communication or contact including in-person meetings, phone or other electronic communication including social networking, with youth outside of sanctioned program activities. Avoid texting and other forms of electronic one-on-one communication between a single staff person and a youth. Another authorized adult should be included on any direct electronic contact with a youth.

**Integrity** – We are committed to honesty and doing what is right.

- Do not meet with youth outside of established times for a university program. Any exceptions require parental authorization and must include more than one adult from the Program.
- Do not tell youth “this is just between the two of us” or use similar language that encourages youth to keep secrets from their parent/guardians.
- Do not discipline youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.

**Community** – We treat each other with respect and respect the rights of all participants in our community.

- All Rice University employees, faculty, staff, students, volunteers and independent contractors have a legal obligation to report abuse or neglect whether it is witnessed, suspected or reported. [See the Youth Protection Incident Reporting Procedures.](#)
- Do not discriminate against a youth based on their sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, culture, place of birth, age, class, ability, health, citizenship, language, or other identities.
- Do not give personal gifts to youth or their parents, e.g., any item intended to give a youth and/or parent special attention that is not given to others.
- Do not bring or carry a weapon into the program.
- Do not use, possess, share, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, including marijuana and its derivatives (synthetics, vapes, waxes, edibles, oils, etc.) while on duty or when responsible for the welfare of youth.
- Do not engage in any sexualized behavior with, or within the vicinity of youth, including but not limited to: engaging in sexual actions, making sexual comments, telling sexual jokes, or sharing or viewing sexually explicit material with or within the vicinity of youth, except as necessary for relevant academic content.
- Do not date or become romantically involved with youth.
- Do not discuss your own or a youth's sex life or sexual activities.
- Do not shower, bathe, or undress with or in the presence of youth.
- Do not engage in any abusive conduct of any kind toward, or in the presence of a youth, including, but not limited to: verbal abuse, hitting, punching, poking, or inappropriate restraining, except as required to protect a youth or others from harm. All incidents involving such conduct, whether or not required to protect a youth or others from harm, must be documented and disclosed promptly to the program sponsor, Youth Protection Manager and the youth's parent/guardian.

**Excellence** – We seek to achieve at the highest levels.

- Provide innovative educational and cultural resources to the broader Houston area.
- Engage communities across Houston and Texas to empower youth and think outside the box.
- Utilize digital education and innovative strategies to enhance programs for youth.