

## Zero Tolerance for Sexual Misconduct

Knowing that trauma is a universal experience, and knowing that many of the youth that come into our care have already experienced stress, adversity and trauma, VisionQuest has special precautions in place to protect all members of our community.

VisionQuest has Zero Tolerance for Sexual Misconduct, Abuse or Harassment of any youth in our care, regardless of age. All allegations will be investigated and reported to external authorities as required by law. Violations of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may be prosecuted. Staff are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct, abuse or harassment. Retaliation against individuals who in good faith report allegations of sexual misconduct, abuse or harassment is prohibited and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Sexual Misconduct, Abuse or Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- The physical act of sex or penetration with any object or body part
- Any verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct which is sexual in nature or sexually suggestive
- Kissing, hugging, fondling or other touching of a breast, genital, anal or other intimate area, either directly or through clothing
- Threats, intimidation, and actions or communications meant to coerce or pressure another to engage in an inappropriate act
- “Consensual” sexual activities between youth and staff, contractors, volunteers and interns. This includes youth-on-youth abuse.
- Sexual comments and conversations with sexually suggestive innuendos or double meanings
- Requests for sexual favors, sexual acts or sexual contact
- Taking, viewing or sharing of photographs/video of youth or staff in provocative clothing/situations.

Working in programs for adolescents and young adults requires a great deal of emotional maturity and clear thinking. Staff are often working in close proximity with youth for long hours which presents unique opportunities for therapeutic interactions, but also provides unique challenges for staff to maintain clear professional boundaries with all youth. VisionQuest encourages all staff to think about and acknowledge the following standards that must be followed while working with our youth.

### **Standards for Professional Conduct**

Please initial each item in the space provided, indicating that you have read and understand the expectation.

_____ 1.	I understand that due to the imbalance of power between youth and staff, sexual interactions between staff and youth are unprofessional, unethical and illegal. Because there is an imbalance of power, there can never be a consensual relationship, regardless of the age of the youth.
_____ 2.	I understand that youth often misinterpret caring gestures as sexual or romantic, therefore, I need to be very cautious about any physical contact with youth, including making sure I have adequate personal space and that I minimize physical contact with youth. Hugging or kissing of participants is not allowed. Allowed physical contact includes handshakes and brief pats on the shoulder. Hugging is permitted when participating in circles.
_____ 3.	I understand that I am not permitted to be alone with a youth (one on one) in a room, building, or vehicle unless my supervisor has granted special permission for a specific purpose. I must request permission for each time it is necessary for me to be alone with a youth.
_____ 4.	I understand that I am not allowed to have any personal contact with youth outside of my usual work hours unless such contact has been approved by the Chief Administrator.
_____ 5.	I understand that I am only allowed to be present at the facility during my scheduled work shift (or as directed by the Chief Administrator) and I am expected to arrive and leave immediately prior to and after my scheduled shift. I understand that I may stay after a scheduled shift to provide coverage for the following shift, if needed and authorized by the Chief Administrator or designee. This policy helps protect against some staff being viewed as more caring and helps staff avoid developing personal relationships outside their professional role. If I reside on the property, I understand that I am to have no contact with youth after my shift is over.
_____ 6.	I understand that I am prohibited from doing personal or special favors for youth, which establishes a sense of favoritism, and can lead to misinterpreting the intent of a staff's action. This includes running errands for youth on my personal time. I understand that I am not allowed to spend, give or lend any of my personal money to youth at any time. Also I am not permitted to buy or give gifts to youth.
_____ 7.	I understand that personal cell or home phone numbers, email addresses, social networking account addresses and similar information is not to be provided to youth. If I have a social networking page, blog or website,

	such as but not limited to, FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter, I agree to take appropriate action to keep that information private so that participants will not have access to that information.
_____ 8.	I understand that texting, instant messaging, letters and notes between youth and staff are never allowed. I understand that I am not allowed to engage in any phone or electronic media contact with any youth unless I am at work during a regularly scheduled shift, using agency computers, phones and equipment.
_____ 9.	I understand that I may not take or share photographs or videos of myself in provocative clothing/situations with any youth. I also will not take, view or share photographs or videos of any youth in provocative clothing/situations.
_____ 10.	I understand that in this line of work that I may become vulnerable to the impact of vicarious trauma. Because our youth may be reenacting their trauma histories in their current relationships and behaviors, I understand that I must use the tools available to me, including supervision, team treatment, self-care planning, and circles to mitigate against the potential for unhealthy responses or relationships with youth. I understand that I am working here as a professional staff and I am expected to always function as a professional, not as a personal friend for any youth.
_____ 11.	I understand that when I terminate employment with VisionQuest that I am not allowed to pursue any form of contact with youth, including but not limited to mail, phone calls, social media, etc.
_____ 12.	I understand that some youth in my program may have difficulty with judgment or impulse control and therefore it is very important that I maintain professional, conservative dress at all times I am working or on program property. I will make a concerted effort to adhere to the dress code policy and avoid wearing revealing or provocative clothing.
_____ 13.	I understand that I am not allowed to share my clothing with youth and I am not allowed to wear their clothing. This includes hats, coats and other personal items.
_____ 14.	I understand that I must maintain clear separation of my personal life and my professional life. I will not discuss information of high emotional content about my personal life with youth. This includes information about my personal relationships, financial situations or living situation.
_____ 15.	I understand that I am not allowed to discuss any issues related to my job performance, pay, or relationships with co-workers or supervisors with youth or within earshot of youth.
_____ 16.	I understand that I am not allowed to have any youth in my personal vehicle unless it is during my scheduled work time for a specific purpose as directed by the Chief Administrator or designee.
_____ 17.	I understand that I am not to take any youth to my personal residence, or the residence of any of my family members, at any time for any reason. I am expected to keep my personal life separate from my professional life.
_____ 18.	I understand that I may not go to a youth's home. I understand that I am not to bring any visitors to a youth's home, including but not limited to, family, friends and children.
_____ 19.	I understand that I am not able to use the youth's home phone or cell phone to make personal calls. Any use of youth home or cell phones must be used for company business only.
_____ 20.	I understand that I am not allowed to retaliate against any youth or staff who reported an allegation of sexual misconduct, abuse or harassment in good faith.

**Reporting Allegations of Sexual Misconduct, Abuse or Harassment**

If you witness or have knowledge of any allegation of sexual misconduct, abuse or harassment in your program, you are required to report that information as a Mandated Reporter.

**Acknowledgement**

I have read and understand VisionQuest's Zero Tolerance for Sexual Misconduct policy and have no questions.

I agree to these terms of employment and understand that violations of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may be prosecuted.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Name (printed legibly)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date