



## Keeping Students Safe

Protecting students and protecting you as a mentor of students is essential. Encountering an inappropriate or vulnerable incident with a student happens rarely, however, knowing how to prevent an uncomfortable or dangerous situation and how to handle a student in trouble is important information to know before you begin working with teenagers.

All mentors with CREATE Clubs will complete a criminal background check and reference checks. These precautions don't guarantee that a mentor wouldn't make a foolish decision, given the wrong circumstances. In this document, we share with you some boundaries with students that will protect them and you. These boundaries will protect you from an awkward situation, and from misinterpreted intentions that could lead to false allegations. Boundaries will protect the students as well.

Before we share with you the rules, let us explain a little about teenagers. Do you remember being a teenager? For the most part, they can keep their emotions together, but occasionally, their immaturity shows. CREATE Clubs mentors will talk with students about their character both in business and in life, opening up meaningful conversations. Students will discover their motivations, their passions, and their roadblocks to reaching their goals. You, as their mentor, will process with students and help them overcome. You can see how this will facilitate a close relationship with the students.

Not all high school students understand appropriate boundaries. It's the teacher and mentors' responsibility to set clear boundaries, not necessarily verbally, but by their example. Here are a list of our guidelines for you and students.

### Physical Touch

Handshakes are standard, and teaching a student how to have a firm business-like handshake can be a valuable tool for them. Limit physical touch to a handshake or a high five as other physical touch is inappropriate with teenagers. Don't give or receive shoulder rubs or any hand massages. It's just inappropriate.

What about a hug? We'd recommend that you don't initiate this with students. You may have a student that you help overcome a challenge or reach a goal, and the affectionate teenager wants to give you a full embrace. Consider using a side-hug as a safe alternative. Understand, boundaries with teenagers around physical touch can protect you and them.

### Meetings

You shouldn't ever meet with a student alone in a non-public place. Never invite a student to your home by themselves - even if you have a 3D printer or a program that helps you create a VR ad campaign for your student's program at your home, never invite a student alone to your home for any reason. Even if you never intended for a sexually predatory relationship, you don't want there to be a perception of sexual misconduct. It's worth repeating, don't ever meet with a student alone in a private place.

### Contact

Be mindful when you contact a teenager via phone or email. Email is often best as it's more professional than text or phone call. Imagine this scenario. Gina, a high school senior, shares in her group debrief about the courageous steps she took, reaching out to survey the adults in her community to research the viability of her product. When sharing with the group, she said, "I always feel so self-conscious about how I look when I'm talking to other people, like, people don't want to talk with me." Brad, her mentor, sends her a private text later saying, "Great job on reaching out to your community, and a beautiful girl like you shouldn't worry about presenting themselves to others."

How do you feel about Brad's comment? I'm concerned for Brad that he's either unaware of appropriate boundaries or aware - and making an inappropriate advance. I'm concerned for Gina, who would be confused by Brad's comments.

Brad should not send Gina a private text, and a mentor should never comment on how a student looks. In general, keep it professional; protect yourself and protect kids.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

In rare cases, a student would reach out to a mentor when they are in physical or emotional distress. Since CREATE Clubs work with thousands of students, there is a chance that a student would share their burden with their mentor.

We want you to have tools and a protocol for handling these situations. Most of you will never have to call these Protective Services numbers, but we want you to feel equipped if you need to.

Each state has requirements about who are required mandatory reporters. All teachers, social workers, and police are mandatory reporters, and often youth pastors and volunteers with students are mandated to report. Please know your state's laws, and decide now that you'll have the courage to investigate or inquire if you hear a student has suicidal thoughts or is being abused in the home. If a student says, "Life is just so difficult, I often wish I weren't here," this is language to investigate on. If they say to you or another student, "I wish I were dead" or "You'll be sorry when I'm dead," this is more serious. Whether they were joking or not, take it seriously.

### **Action Steps**

Pull them aside with another mentor/adult after class. Show your concern and ask them to clarify their feelings about the issue. If they ask you not to tell anyone, share with them that if they say that they're being hurt, you are mandated to get them help. Let them know that you can't promise that you'd keep their secret if it involves self-harm or harm from another. If there is a clear suicidal issue - take the following steps and then notify your CREATE Clubs Regional Director:

1. Call the national suicide hotline - 1-800-273-8255
2. Call the school and ask to speak to the student's counselor or the school principal.
3. Call the student's parents.

Even more rare, a student would disclose with you that they are being sexually, physically, or mentally abused. Follow a similar protocol as above:

1. Call the National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673. Physical Abuse 1 800-799-SAFE (7233)
2. Call the school and ask to speak to the student's counselor or the school principal.
3. Call the student's parents (unless they are reported as the abuser.)

This document is designed to give you awareness of safety with high school students. Here, we are not exhausting the possible ways to protect students and you, but we hope this information will compliment your good judgment. Thank you for learning how to create a safe environment for CREATE Clubs.