



Substance Use and Abuse Policy

It is the policy of Community Charter School of Cambridge that every effort shall be made to help students solve problems without resorting to extreme disciplinary measures. Suspension should always be considered a last resort and alternatives to suspension should always be considered first.

The use and/or abuse of all substances including alcohol and illegal substances, as well as the inappropriate use and/or abuse of legal substances (prescription medications, inhalants, herbal supplements, dietary aids and over-the-counter medications) in school is both a violation of the law and harmful to the educational purposes of our school.

Policy

The use and/or abuse of any substance including alcohol and illegal drugs, as well as the inappropriate use and /or abuse of legal substances *is strictly prohibited on school grounds*. Any possession, use or sale of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia, legal substances intended for misuse or alcoholic beverages on school grounds, at school functions or on school buses is prohibited at all times.

Students suspected of abusing substances (e.g. smelling of alcohol or marijuana, or behaving in a manner that would indicate possession or ingestion of drugs or alcohol) on school property and at school events are subject to this policy. In appropriate cases where a student is suspected to be under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs while in school or off-campus at a event connected to the school, the principal/head of school or designee may alert the school nurse and accompany the student to see the school nurse. The principal/head of school or designee may notify the student's parent/guardian and refer the matter to the appropriate medical and/or legal authorities, and a meeting with the student and the student's parent/guardian may be scheduled.

At the discretion of the principal/head of school or designee, such a student may be given the opportunity and encouraged to attend a facility specializing in the treatment of persons with such problems. Students with drug, alcohol or other substance abuse problems and their parent/guardian are encouraged to seek the assistance of school personnel for planning, intervention and referral to appropriate city/health agencies for substance abuse treatment and support. All communication regarding such issues is to be kept in strictest confidence.

Additionally, the principal/head of school will assess each incident and its impact not only on the students involved but also those that may have witnessed the incident to ensure that appropriate emotional/social wellness measures are implemented as necessary.

Procedure

The following steps will be taken in response to student use, or suspected use, of substances:

1. If a student voluntarily confides a drug or alcohol problem to any staff member, staff will consult immediately with a school counselor, school nurse, or principal, who will consult to develop recommendations. In such instances, the school will work with the student and family to address the drug or alcohol problem.
2. If a school administrator has reasonable grounds to suspect that a student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, but no contraband is found, an assessment will be made by trained designated staff. The principal will be notified, the student will be removed from class, and parental contact will occur immediately.
3. When a student is determined to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, but no contraband is found, the administrator will immediately notify parents and a conference will be held with the student and parents before the student returns to school. The student may be required to attend meetings of an approved alcohol or drug recovery program or other appropriate treatment. At the discretion of the principal and in accordance with school and state discipline policies, the student may be subject to a maximum of ten days suspension from school.
4. If a student is found to be in possession of any drugs or alcohol, the contraband will be confiscated, the principal will be notified, and the parents notified immediately. A conference will be held with the student and the parents immediately. The substance will be sealed and labeled with the date and time of confiscation and noted in an incident report. If it is a legal substance, it may be given to the parent or disposed of at the parent's request. If the substance is illegal, it will be turned over to the Head of School who will then relinquish it to the Cambridge Police Department. The student may be required to attend an approved alcohol or drug recovery program or other appropriate treatment. At the discretion of the principal and in accordance with school and state discipline policies, the student may be subject to suspension or expulsion from school.

At CCSC it is our policy to respond to the use and/or abuse of substances including alcohol, and illegal drugs, as well as the inappropriate use and/or abuse of legal substances through education, medical/health assistance, and discipline.

Interventions utilized will be directly related to the severity of infraction. An education/medical/health approach will be the first step in an attempt to help students decide not to use and/or abuse substances and to assist students who are involved. Every effort will be made by teachers and counselors to educate students about substance use and/or abuse and to create an atmosphere of knowledge, confidence, and trust that will encourage young people to seek help in overcoming problems in substance abuse.

However, in cases where a student is disruptive to school, hurtful to himself/herself or others, or engages in activity forbidden by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts then discipline may be warranted. Based upon the specific circumstances of a violation of these requirements, a student may be disciplined and may also be referred to an appropriate city/health education program. Additionally, in certain instances, it may be necessary for an administrator or a designee to consider whether it is appropriate to file a report with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families with respect to a violation that falls under the provisions of this policy.

The intent of the Community Charter School of Cambridge substance use and abuse policy is to identify students with substance use and/or abuse problems so that we may provide resources and support for our students and families. We also will work proactively with our staff to be prepared and trained to handle sensitive issues such as these.