

## RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

**STUDENT SUBSTANCE USE  
POLICY****Statement of Prohibition**

River Valley Charter School is committed to providing an alcohol-free, tobacco-free, and drug-free learning environment to its students. In order to protect the health and safety of our school community, River Valley Charter School prohibits the possession, use, or consumption of alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs on school property or at any school function. A student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use, or consume, possess, buy or sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product, including vapor or e-cigarettes; marijuana; steroids; or other controlled substances.

Additionally, any student who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol prior to, or during attendance or participation in a school-sponsored event or activity, is subject to disciplinary action.

**Education & Professional Training Relating to Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs**

River Valley Charter School (RVCS) believes in fostering a healthy learning environment for all students and staff. RVCS understands that substance use prevention requires education and collaboration. In accordance with state and federal law, RVCS shall provide developmentally-appropriate health and wellness education programs to its students with the addition of specific, evidence-based alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention education programs for students in grades 5-8. Such programs shall address the legal, social, and health consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, with emphasis on non-use by school-age children. The curriculum, instructional materials, and outcomes used in this program shall be recommended by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, and the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

Faculty and staff interact with students on a daily basis and are well-situated to recognize changes in student behavior, performance, demeanor, and appearance. These changes could suggest whether a student is in possession of, using, or at risk of possessing, consuming, and/or using alcohol, tobacco products, marijuana, steroids, or other controlled substances. RVCS faculty and staff will therefore receive information from the Health Office that supports them in identifying students who are at risk as well as in supporting the implementation of this policy. Faculty and staff will be made aware of the school's policies, procedures, and protocols for the prevention, intervention, and follow-up related to substance use and abuse. In addition to the elements of this policy, training will include early warning signs, building-based referral programs, and general protocols to follow when they are suspicious of, or made aware of student use, possession, or consumption of prohibited substances.

Families are also an essential partner in the effort to prevent substance use. River Valley will collaborate with families to ensure a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to substance use prevention and education. In addition to sharing resource information regarding outside support agencies with families in need, the Health and/or Counseling Offices will share relevant information with parents and guardians about substance use and prevention on an annual basis.

**Substance Use and Abuse Verbal Screening**

As recommended by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, and subject to Department of Elementary and Secondary School appropriation, River Valley will verbally screen students in grade seven annually using SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral for Treatment in Schools). Parents and guardians will be notified at the beginning of the year of the school's plan to screen and will be provided with an opportunity to opt out of the screening. The opt-out option will require written notification to the school.

Information collected during the verbal screening shall be considered confidential and shall not be disclosed without the written consent of the student, or parent or guardian, except in cases of immediate medical emergency or when disclosure is otherwise required by state law.

**Emergency Treatment and Access to Resources and Services.**

Should education not prevent substance use among our students, the River Valley Charter School Counseling and Health offices will be available to support students. RVCS maintains full time health and counseling staff to treat students with medical emergencies, whether they are physical or emotional in nature. Students who appear to be under the influence of a substance will first be triaged for medical intervention. Should narcotic or heroin use be suspected or observed and it deemed medically necessary, River Valley Charter School will have Naloxone available. (Naloxone is the reversal agent for opioid overdose.)

If immediate medical intervention is not necessary, students believed to be under the influence will be referred to the School Counselor. RVCS counseling and health personnel will maintain information for accessing referrals to community service agencies and will work in collaboration with outside substance use counseling professionals and mental health specialists when appropriate.

River Valley Charter School recognizes that substance use and health are closely related and we endeavor to support all students in their journey toward well-being.

**Disciplinary Response**

Any student who is found to have violated the above prohibitions shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion. In accordance with our philosophy of tailoring our disciplinary response to the needs of the individual student, each case of substance use infraction shall be given serious consideration within the context of the specific situation. Substance related infractions will, in some circumstances, necessitate disciplinary removal. Disciplinary removals will follow the rights granted to students and parents under G.L. c. 71 §37H and §37H½.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, section 96, this policy shall be posted on the RVCS website and notice shall be provided to all students and parents. Additionally, RVCS shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law and in a manner requested by DESE.