

YOUTH PROGRAM STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

Adult Name: _____

Youth Program: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

As Faculty, Staff, Students and Volunteers of West Virginia University, it is our responsibility to safeguard the youth in our care. The following code of conduct describes the minimum expectations that we hold for personnel who interact with youth in a University program.

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS FOR INTERACTING WITH YOUTH

General Contact

Expectations

- Limit physical contact to purposes that are consistent with the program's mission and/or for a clear educational, developmental, or health related purpose, in the presence of another staff member, and with the consent of the youth.
- Use program-sponsored e-mail, phone and social media accounts for communication when there is an essential educational or programmatic reason to do so.
- Disclose any pre-existing relationships with youth in the youth program immediately to the program lead. Abide by these standards while affiliated with the youth program, despite any pre-existing personal relationships.

Prohibited

- (Note: Discouraged behaviors are indicated by use of the word "avoid." All other behaviors are prohibited.)
- Avoid being alone with a single youth where you cannot be observed by program staff or other adults.
- Do not act in a manner that can be perceived as physical or verbal abuse.
- Do not discipline youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
- 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.

Equal and Fair Treatment

Expectation

- Treat all youth fairly and consistently, regardless of their actions or behavior, sex, race, color, religion, culture, place of birth, age, class, ability, health, citizenship, language, or other protected identities.

Prohibited

- Do not discriminate against a youth based on their sex, 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.

Sexual Misconduct

Expectation

- Understand and respect the physical and personal boundaries set by youth.

Prohibited

- Do not engage in sexual contact of any kind (including any verbal or physical contact that can be perceived as sexual in nature.)
- 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 share sexually explicit material with youth.

Safety

Expectations

- The safety of youth must be your primary concern above all others.
- Report any concerns for suspected abuse or neglect of a youth to authorities per University policy requirements.
- Notify University representatives per policy requirements of any violations of these standards for interacting with youth.
- Follow all University transportation procedures for transporting youth.

Prohibited

- Do not possess, sell, use, or be under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco or illegal drugs while engaged in program activities or on site.
- Do not bring or carry a weapon into the program.
- Do not transport youth in a personal vehicle.

Educating Youth

Youth should be informed in an age-appropriate manner of their right to set their own physical limits for personal safety. They should be encouraged to tell an adult if someone is abusing them, or if they are in a situation or observe something that makes them uncomfortable.

Consequences Of Violating University Standards

West Virginia University and [program name] takes these matters seriously. In the case of suspected abuse or neglect of a youth or violations of the Standards for Interacting with Youth, the University and [program name] will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action. Actions taken will first and foremost consider the need to ensure the safety of youth participating in the program.

[program name] SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

[If you have specific expectations with respect to convey to your staff you may include them here. If not, or if you include them in a separate document, delete this section.]

HOW TO REPORT VIOLATIONS OF THE STANDARDS FOR INTERACTING WITH YOUTH

If you believe a staff member involved in a WVU youth program has violated the Standards for Interacting with Youth you must notify the Division of Campus Engagement and Compliance at 304-293-5600 within 48 hours.

If you believe the faculty, staff, student or volunteer has violated the Standards in a way that raises concerns for abuse or neglect, you must first contact either DHS Child Protective Services or law enforcement (see below for contact information).

If you are unsure about whether someone's behavior is a violation of the standards, you can consult with your supervisor, or the WVU youth program specialist with your concerns and they can provide guidance.

HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

All faculty, staff, students and volunteers are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect including child sexual abuse to authorities, as outlined below.

If you have reasonable cause to believe that a youth has experienced abuse or neglect, or if a youth has disclosed abuse or neglect to you, you are required report that abuse to the proper authorities within 24 hours.

Failure to do so is a violation of [program name] and West Virginia University BOG Rule 1.7: Rule on Child Protection. Those who are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect and who fail to do so may be charged with a misdemeanor and/ or subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Personnel who become aware of suspected child abuse or neglect must:

1. If the safety of a child is of immediate concern, call the police:
 - **911**
2. Call the West Virginia Department of Human Services: Centralized Intake for Abuse and Neglect 24-hour Hotline:
 - **1-800-352-6513.**
3. If the incident occurred on WVU Property, Call the University Police Department:
 - **304-293-3136**
 - If the incident did not occur on WVU property, call the nearest local police department.
4. If this occurs during a WVU program or on WVU property, contact your supervisor immediately after making your report to CPS and law enforcement, and contact the Division of Campus Engagement and Compliance by utilizing one of the options below:
 - Fill out the complaint form online
 - <https://campusengagement.wvu.edu/home/submit-a-complaint>
 - **304-293-5600**

Information to provide when you call:

1. Information about the youth, e.g., name, age, contact information and name of parent/guardian(s).
2. Information about the person suspected of committing the abuse or neglect.
3. The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect, including location and description of the incident.
4. Any knowledge of previous incidences.

You do not need to have all the above information when you call to make a report, but the more accurate information you can provide, the better equipped the office will be to assess the child's risk.

[program name] will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action regarding the employee or volunteer, including suspension or termination from [program name] employment or volunteer status.

Confidentiality of information related to abuse is crucial and should be limited to the immediate supervisor, any authorities called, and designated WVU internal reporting recipient(s).

CONFIRMATION OF UNDERSTANDING

I have read [program name] Standards for Interacting with Youth and I agree to abide by the standards as stated.

I UNDERSTAND VIOLATIONS OF [program name] STANDARDS FOR INTERACTING WITH YOUTH MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION UP TO AND INCLUDING DISMISSAL (SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT). I ACKNOWLEDGE I AM AWARE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES AND I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THE STANDARDS FOR INTERACTING WITH YOUTH.

Print Name: _____

Signature

Date