



Examples of Best Practices for In-Person Youth Activities

Establish and Maintain Appropriate Boundaries

1. **Make in-person interactions observable and interruptible.** Most child sexual abuse is perpetrated in isolated, one-on-one situations. By reducing such interactions between children and adults, youth activities can reduce the risk of abuse.
 - a. Observable and interruptible means the interaction takes place in such a way that another person can see, hear, or has knowledge of the interaction and can interrupt if a concern arises.
 - i. Consider implementing the rule of three. The “rule of three” specifies that there should always be at least three people present (i.e., one employee and two or more children, or two employees and one child).
 - ii. Some conversations may be most effective outside of the earshot of others (e.g., a child expressing concern for safety to a trusted adult). Other Authorized Adults should be aware that the conversation is taking place and be able to interrupt if there is concern about the interaction.
 - iii. In situations where an individual must take care of personal needs in a location where privacy is required (e.g., a restroom), adults must be aware of the length of time youth are out of sight.
 1. For younger children, it may be necessary for an adult to keep the entry/exit to the restroom or other location in sight or check the restroom for adults prior to use. This is particularly important when the restroom is accessible by adults who have not been vetted.
 2. If you have concerns about safety or the duration that youth have been out of the activity space, consider making verbal contact with the youth before physically entering a multi-stall restroom to check on them. Prior to entering the restroom, make an announcement that you will be doing so.
 - b. For programs/activities where one-on-one interaction/communication with an adult is a regular component of the youth activity (e.g., tutoring, music lessons), it is required that written communication to parents/guardians include information about safety in one-on-one programming. Written permission from parents/guardians for one-on-one interactions should include an acknowledgement that they understand such interactions are part of the youth activity.
2. **Include others when interacting with youth using electronic communications or social media.** To minimize the risk of misconduct resulting from electronic communications (e.g. email, text) between adults and youth involved in university activities, all electronic correspondence between authorized adults and youth participants should include a parent/guardian, Authorized Custodian, other staff, or group of youth.
 - a. Suggestions for email, text, and chat communications:

- i. Email from the youth activity's service email or other work email. Avoid using a personal email account.
 - ii. Save email, chat, and text message strings.
 - iii. Limit contact with participants to reasonable youth activity hours. Emails should be sent, or scheduled to be sent, during typical working or youth activity hours.
 - b. Suggestions for social media:
 - i. Do not interact with youth participants through personal accounts on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn and others.
 - 1. Deny requests from youth participants to become friends on social media.
 - ii. Inform youth participants about restrictions on connecting with adult staff through personal social media. Youth participants may follow the youth activity's social media accounts (if applicable).
3. **Respect the privacy of youth.**
- a. Adults must respect the privacy of youth in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers, whenever possible. Intrusions are permitted only to the extent that health and safety require.
 - b. Adults in similar situations (e.g., changing clothes and taking showers) must maintain their own privacy.
4. **Physical contact with youth**
- a. In non-emergency situations where touch is commonly used as a teaching tool (e.g., coaching sports, music lessons), seek permission before touching youth in any manner.
 - b. For activities where touch is an accepted teaching tool, it is highly recommended that the parameters around physical contact with youth be communicated in writing with parents prior to the activity.
 - i. This communication should include the practice of seeking permission from the youth prior to touching them in any manner.
 - ii. Communication should include examples of how and why a coach or instructor would touch a youth participant as part of a teaching tool.
 - c. Always refrain from touching youth in non-emergency situations if the individual appears uncomfortable.
 - i. Youth from different cultures may perceive touch in different ways.
 - ii. Youth from low contact cultures may stand further away when talking, maintain less eye contact, and be more wary about situations.
5. **Ensure appropriate supervision is in place for overnight programs.** Parents/guardians of youth program participants must give written permission prior to participation in any overnight activity. Examples are included below:
- a. Unrelated male and female youth program participants must be housed separately based on the gender identified in the registration materials.
 - i. Conversations with non-binary youth and their parents/guardians about housing preferences will help inform housing decisions.
 - b. Two (2) authorized assistant custodians should check rooms together whenever possible.

- c. The gender identification of the individuals conducting room checks should be the same as the gender identification of the youth activity participants. The door to the youth's room must remain open during room checks.
- d. No unrelated adult is to share a bed or sleeping bag with youth participants.
- e. Youth participants with significant age gaps should not room together unless they are siblings or otherwise related (with parental permission).
 - i. Youth who are 18 and over should be housed with other youth who are 18 and over whenever possible.
- f. Youth must never be allowed to leave the residence halls or other overnight accommodation during the hours designated for rest except in cases of emergency.
- g. In situations where there are limited toilet and bathing facilities, staff will ensure that all youth can use these facilities in a safe manner.

6. Supervising Older Youth

- a. When older youth (e.g. 16 years and older) are enrolled in precollege programming, the youth activity may choose to develop rules for allowing groups of three youth or more to have additional autonomy on campus during "free time."
 - i. Establish clear parameters that are shared with the youth and parents/guardians prior to the start of the youth activity.
 - ii. Parameters should include items such as sign-in and sign-out procedures, collecting contact numbers prior to sign out, expectations about acceptable behavior, and consequences for failure to abide by rules.

Refrain from Engaging in Prohibited Conduct

Conduct that violated the law or university policy is never permitted. Adults must also refrain from:

1. Using a device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in showers, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants is prohibited.
2. Meeting with youth participants outside of established times for youth activities.
 - a. Exceptions can be made in situations where youth are with a parent/guardian or have written permission to meet with the staff member from a parent/guardian.
 - b. Examples of acceptable out of youth activity contact include career advising or other youth activity-related information.
3. Touching youth in a manner that a reasonable person could interpret as inappropriate.
4. Engaging in any abusive conduct of any kind toward, or in the presence of, youth.
5. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
6. Driving alone in a vehicle with a youth. Another youth or adult must be present except in cases of medical urgency or other emergency situations.
7. Making sexual materials in any form available to youth or assisting them to gain access to such materials.
8. Expressing any romantic or sexual feelings to youth participants.
9. Commenting on the physique or body development of a youth, making sexual comments or jokes in their presence, or talking about sex with a youth.

Enhance Access and Inclusion

Plan youth activities using universal design principles, incorporating features to make your youth activity accessible for all participants, regardless of ability.

1. Ask for disability accommodation needs from all participants prior to the start of the youth activity to allow for time to meet the requests.
2. Have questions about accommodations for youth participants? Complete the Visitor/Guest/Program Participant Reasonable Accommodation Consultation Form, call the McBurney Center at voice/Relay711 at (608) 263-2741, text us at (608) 225-7956, or email us. Business hours are 8:00am- 4:30pm, Monday through Friday.

Engage with Parents/Guardians

Engage with parents/guardians before, during and after youth activity to foster a positive, supportive relationship with the youth activity.

1. Before the Youth Activity
 - a. Provide a full description of the youth activity including, but not limited to, details regarding the setting, physical requirements, skills required, and fees, as applicable. This will allow parents or guardians and the youth to assess their fit for the youth activity.
 - b. Share any resources that may assist parents in supporting their youth to achieve successful participation in the youth activity.
2. During the Youth Activity
 - a. Provide updates through digital platforms or social media to keep parents informed.
 - b. Create an environment where parents feel comfortable contacting the youth activity with questions or concerns.
3. After the Youth Activity
 - a. Send surveys or conduct interviews to get feedback on the youth activity's impact and how it can be improved.
 - b. Share outcomes or highlights from the youth activity.
 - c. Offer ongoing resources, tips, or opportunities in future youth activities.