

Providence College

Guidelines for Working/Volunteering with Minors

Introduction

This information is intended to help you understand your responsibilities so that you can confidently perform your duties in accordance with established behavioral standards and policies. This handout includes information about common-sense precautionary measures and about how to avoid unfounded allegations of child abuse; child abuse definitions and descriptions of warning signs; and, guidance about how to respond to child abuse or a suspicion of abuse, including the mandate to report. A “minor” is a person under the age of 18 and not an enrolled PC student.

Code of Conduct for Working with Minors

This Code of Conduct establishes limits on personal behavior and describes appropriate interactions with children. You owe the children with whom you interact, and the affiliated organization/group, a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent abuse or improper behavior. You also have a duty to take precautionary steps to prevent unfounded accusations of abuse. You are expected to follow this Code of Conduct when working/interacting with minors.

1. Become a positive role model for children by maintaining an attitude reflecting patience, courtesy, and maturity. You should act in a caring, respectful, honest, and responsible manner that is consistent with the mission of the program.
2. Wear clothing that is appropriate for the activity or program.
3. Treat all children equally and do not treat them based on their status or characteristics (e.g., race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical appearance, or socio-economic status).
4. Do not use any form of physical or emotional punishment to discipline children.
5. Do not engage in physically rough or sexually provocative games with children; do not allow children to sit on your lap.
6. Do not engage in or allow inappropriate touching, including between or among children.
7. Be aware of the impact of your words and language on children of all ages. Do not use profanity; do not use or respond to sexual innuendo; never make a sexually suggestive comment, even in an attempt to be humorous.
8. If children use inappropriate language, including language of a sexual nature, respectfully and calmly correct them.
9. Be aware of situations in which actions can be misconstrued or manipulated by others (for example, being alone with the last child to leave an instructional setting); conduct all dealings with children in a public environment to the extent possible so that all behavior can be easily observed.
10. Follow the “rule of three” – no fewer than three persons (preferably 2 staff and one child, or 1 staff and 2 children, are present) when spending time with children as part of your official duties. Unless there is an emergency, do not spend time alone with a child away from others, particularly in a locker room, bathroom, dorm room, storage closet, or athletic training room. If there is an emergency that requires you to be alone with a child (for example, you must take a sick child to the bathroom immediately), the timeframe should be limited only to that amount of time necessary under the circumstances; once the emergency has been addressed, you should inform your supervisor and document the circumstances immediately after the incident. If your program or activity involves interaction with a child on a one-on-one basis – such as a

- private music lesson – then the activity should be observable via open doors and/or doors with windows, and you should be amenable to unannounced interruptions. If possible and as applicable, use separate facilities (bathrooms, locker rooms, showers) from minors; otherwise, schedule separate usage time.
11. Physical touching guidelines between staff and children should be governed by and appropriate for the particular activity, program, or circumstance and for a clear educational or developmental purpose. Further, any necessary touching should be open and not secretive. Out of respect for the child and in consideration of the fact that many children are uncomfortable with touching for a variety of reasons, obtain the child's permission before touching him/her.
 12. Request assistance from proper authorities when children behave in an out-of-control or unsafe manner; refrain from physically restraining children.
 13. As applicable to the circumstances and setting, children should use a "buddy system" or otherwise be encouraged to stay together when going to the bathroom or when leaving the instructional setting.
 14. Do not invite children to your home or to ride in your vehicle, and do not meet with children outside of the approved program or activity.
 15. If you need to reach children during off-hours, you should communicate with them via their parent/guardian. If you must have direct electronic contact with children, always include another employee in the email communication.
 16. Do not "friend" children on a social networking site or communicate with children via Internet chat rooms; do not send personal emails or text messages to children; do not share personal or intimate information with children.
 17. Do not take pictures of children unless their parent/guardian has signed a waiver allowing use of photography for program-related purposes.
 18. Do not appear to favor one child more than any other; do not give gifts to any one child in a program; do not accept gifts from any child in the program.(Of course, common sense governs here; for example, it may be entirely appropriate to accept a picture drawn by the child.)
 19. Do not tell children, "This is just between the two of us," or use similar language that encourages children to keep secrets of any nature from their parent/guardian.
 20. Do not use or possess alcohol, illegal drugs, or tobacco products while "on duty" and do not come to work or to participate in your group's activity under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
 21. All weapons are prohibited on the premises of Providence College; therefore, you should not have weapons in your possession or in your vehicle while on campus.
 22. Release children only to an authorized parent/guardian, or other adult specifically authorized by the custodial parent and after confirming that person's identity via proper identification.
 23. If you are supervising other employees/volunteers, be visible and available, and make periodic unannounced visits to program sites to observe whether behavioral standards are being followed. Correct and provide feedback to others as necessary, and immediately stop any activity with a child that appears suspicious.
 24. If you *suspect* that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, you **must** make a **report immediately** to the Chief of Public Safety, Koren Kanadian, at 401-865-2391 (or his designee). If in doubt about whether there are grounds for making a report, ask yourself: Would a reasonable person in the particular circumstances suspect that abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred? If you remain in doubt, take the precautionary step of reporting.

For additional, important information about reporting suspected abuse and neglect, please see **Providence College's Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting Policy:** (<https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.providence.edu/dist/a/54/files/2018/02/child-abuse-neglect-reporting-1oek1ej.pdf>). Anyone making a good-faith report of suspected abuse or neglect pursuant to this Reporting Policy should feel safe and empowered to do so and is protected against retaliation.

What is Child Abuse?: Basic Information

Generally, "child abuse" is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, often by adults they know and trust. The effects of child abuse can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not receive help to cope with the abuse. Children suffering from abuse may develop behavioral difficulties, problems at school, delays in development, and emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, and withdrawal.

Physical Abuse: Intentionally hurting or inflicting physical injury on a child. This includes behaviors such as severely striking or hitting a child; giving a child alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison; attempting to suffocate or drown a child; and in sports, allowing the nature and intensity of training to exceed the capacity of the child's immature and growing body. In its more common forms, physical abuse *may* be detected by bruising, burns, or markings that are recurrent and on parts of the body where accidental injury would be unlikely to occur. It may be difficult for the child to explain the injuries. They may be covered by clothing and noticed only when the child removes clothing during exercise; thus, a child may be reluctant to remove layered clothing in warm weather.

Neglect: Failing to meet a child's basic physical needs (e.g., food, shelter, clothing); leaving children alone and unsupervised; failing to give a child love, affection, or attention. Because neglect may be a long-term problem, symptoms may include physical and behavioral signs, such as failure to attain age-appropriate development.

Sexual Abuse: Using a child to meet adult sexual desires (sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling); showing a child pornographic material; photographing/videotaping a child for pornographic purposes. A child often feels ashamed and responsible, and may find it difficult to disclose. Indicators may be physical (pain, discomfort) or behavioral (the child seems inappropriately sexually aware for his/her age, or exhibit fear of a particular adult). In sporting/athletic situations that involve physical contact – for example, supporting or guiding the child's body – there is the potential for situations where sexual abuse goes unnoticed.

Emotional Abuse: Shouting, taunting, ridiculing, or making cruel remarks; persistent lack of love or affection; constant and intense overprotection that prevents a child from functioning normally.

What if a Child Tells Me that He/She is a Victim of Abuse or Neglect?

- Stay calm; ensure that the child is safe and feels as safe as possible.
- Do not probe for more information or details; do not "interview" the child or otherwise attempt to investigate the matter on your own. Do not confront the alleged abuser.
- Be honest; explain that you will have to tell someone else to help stop the behavior. Avoid making promises you cannot keep.
- Make a note of what the child said as soon as possible.
- REPORT! You must immediately report what the child told you.