Best Practices Reference Guide for External Groups Working with Minors on the UT Dallas Campus
BEST PRACTICE REFERENCE GUIDE FOR EXTERNAL GROUPS WORKING WITH
MINORS ON THE UT DALLAS CAMPUS

External programs, activities, camps and events for minors are sometimes held on the UT Dallas campus. External programs are not owned or operated by UT Dallas. The following best practices are offered to the staff and volunteers of external programs for minors only as a courtesy.

DEFINITIONS

Camper: A minor under age 18 who is attending a program for minors.

Program Staff: Any person involved in a program for minors and who has contact with a minor. Examples of program staff include but are not limited to directors, coordinators, paid staff, volunteers and contracted employees.

Minor: An individual under the age of 18.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Responsibilities of program staff include:

- Maintain the highest standards of personal behavior when interacting with youth.
- Ensure the safety of each camper.
- Follow the instructions of the camp director and execute or implement the program’s supervision and instruction plan.
- Create a memorable experience by providing:
  - Instruction that is appropriate for each camper’s age and ability.
  - Encouragement that enables each camper to increase the confidence needed to acquire new skills.
- Serve as a role model, teacher and guide for campers in their care.
- Monitor the behavior of campers to ensure they adhere to the program’s participant code of conduct/rules.
- Enforce the rules consistently and fairly. Immediately communicate any issues to the program director.
- Treat minors with respect and dignity.
- Comply with all applicable laws and UT Dallas policies.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT:

Program staff should not engage in behaviors that could cause harm or be misconstrued as possibly causing harm.

- No one-on-one contact with campers outside the presence of others. If one-on-one interaction is required, meet in open, well illuminated spaces or rooms with window observable by other program staff members.
- No social contact with campers outside of established times for program activities without another program staff member being included. This includes meeting, dating, texting, emailing, social networking, websites, etc.
- No inappropriate language, risqué jokes or sexually suggestive comments around minors, even if the campers are doing so themselves.
- Do not touch campers in a manner that a reasonable person could interpret as inappropriate. Touching should generally only be in the open and in response to the minor’s needs, for a purpose that is consistent with the program’s mission and culture, or for a clear educational, developmental, or health related purpose (i.e. treatment of an injury). Any resistance from the minor should be respected.
- Do not engage in rough or suggestive games, including horseplay.
- Do not give personal gifts to, or do special favors for, a camper, or do anything that may be seen as favoring one camper over others.
- Do not engage in abusive conduct of any kind toward, or in the presence of a camper, including but not limited to verbal abuse, striking, hitting, punching, poking, spanking, or restraining. If restraint is necessary to protect a camper or other camper from harm, the incident should be documented and disclosed to the program director and the camper’s parent/guardian.
- Do not engage in abusive conduct of any kind toward, or in the presence of a camper, including but not limited to verbal abuse, striking, hitting, punching, poking, spanking, or restraining. If restraint is necessary to protect a camper or other camper from harm, the incident should be documented and disclosed to the program director and the camper’s parent/guardian.
- Do not shower, bathe or undress with or in the presence of campers.
- Do not use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on duty or in the presence of minors involved in the program, or when responsible for a camper’s welfare.
- Do not be alone in a vehicle with a camper at any time. When transporting minors, more than one program staff member should be present in the vehicle, except when multiple minors will be in the vehicle at all times through the transportation. Avoid using personal vehicles if possible and comply with the program’s transportation guidelines.
- Do not make sexual materials, alcohol or illegal drugs available to campers participating in programs or activities, or assist them in any way in gaining access to such items.
- Use good judgment about bathroom trips. Do not go into the stall with a child. It is best to bring more than one child at a time to the bathroom, but if that is not possible, maintain an appropriate distance from the stall.
- Do not take pictures of campers for personal use. If you have, or are provided with, pictures of campers in your charge do not distribute them on social networking sites.
- Do not provide medication to a camper unless authorization has been granted (signed form on file) by the parent/legal guardian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate Physical Interactions*</th>
<th>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Side hugs.</td>
<td>- Full-frontal hugs.</td>
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<td>- Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs.</td>
<td>- Kisses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pats on the shoulder or back.</td>
<td>- Lap sitting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Handshakes.</td>
<td>- Wrestling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- High-fives and hand slapping.</td>
<td>- Piggyback rides.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Verbal praise.</td>
<td>- Tickling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pats on the head (when culturally appropriate).</td>
<td>- Allowing a youth to cling to a program staff member’s leg.</td>
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<td>- Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations).</td>
<td>- Massaging of any kind given by or to a youth.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Compliments relating to physique or body development.</td>
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</table>
### Appropriate Verbal Interactions*
- Positive reinforcement.
- Appropriate jokes.
- Encouragement.
- Praise.

### Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
- Name calling.
- Discussing sexual encounters.
- Secrets.
- Cursing.
- Off-color or sexual jokes.
- Shaming.
- Belittling.
- Derogatory remarks.
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate.
- Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family.

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**Behavior Management:**

There are occasions when it may be necessary for the program staff to address behavior issues with campers while they are participating in a program.

When a camper’s behavior creates a risk for the physical health and safety of another child, himself/herself, or the program staff, the following best practices should be considered:

- Discipline is an important part of the program staff’s duties.
  - Be fair. All rules are the same for everyone.
- Give a verbal warning.
  - Explain to the camper(s) why behavior is inappropriate.
  - Give the camper(s) time to refocus and/or redirect their behavior.
- Do not admonish the entire group.
  - Direct instructions to individuals by name.
- Be a mediator in disagreements between campers.
  - Use quiet authority. Do not yell or use abusive language. No physical contact.
- Let campers know their boundaries.
  - Do not assume the campers know what is expected.
  - Read over and reiterate the code of conduct with campers upon arrival to ensure the expectations and rules are understood from the beginning.
  - Explain to campers that if the code of conduct is not adhered to it will result in dismissal from the camp.
- Always be present.
  - Lack of supervision is a major cause of accidents and problems between campers.
It is appropriate for program staff to discipline a camper as listed above. The following types of discipline should never be used:

- Corporal punishment.
- Hitting.
- Touching or grabbing.
- Shaking.
- Intimidating a camper.
- Verbal abuse.

**BULLYING:**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Minors attending camp are susceptible to potential bullying situations. It is important that program staff and camp directors create a positive and caring environment to prevent and target bullying tactics.

Creating positive relationships is one of the keys to preventing bullying. Bullying is less likely to occur during a program if campers and program staff feel closely connected and responsible for one another. When campers develop positive relationships, they feel comfortable voicing their concerns and seeking help when bullying incidents occur. When program staff observe behaviors that may eventually lead to bullying, they should intervene immediately. If an incident is ignored, it has the propensity to escalate quickly.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signs a Camper is Being Bullied</th>
<th>Signs a Camper is a Bully</th>
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<tr>
<td>Unexplainable injuries.</td>
<td>Positive attitude toward violence and the use of violent means.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics or jewelry.</td>
<td>Dominate and subdue other campers to get their way.</td>
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<td>Frequent head or stomach aches.</td>
<td>Impulsive, aggressive, easily angered.</td>
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<td>Eating habit changes.</td>
<td>Lack of empathy.</td>
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<td>Difficulty sleeping or nightmares.</td>
<td>Defiance and aggression toward adults.</td>
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<td>Avoidance of social situations.</td>
<td>Involved in physical or verbal fights.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem.</td>
<td>Unexplained extra money or new belongings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-destructive behaviors (e.g. harming themselves, or suicidal thoughts).</td>
<td>Doesn’t accept responsibility for their actions.</td>
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*Provided by Praesidium Guardian Inc.*

Program staff should reiterate the following to campers:

- Bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- If a bully bothers you, ask program staff or the program director for help.
- Report bullying. Telling is not tattling.
POST CAMP COMMUNICATION:

After the program has ended, campers may want to connect with program staff via their personal social media accounts. It is considered best practice that program staff request campers direct their communication to the program or the program’s social media accounts and not communicate directly with the campers via email, text, or personal social media accounts after the program has ended.

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<th>Appropriate Electronic Communication*</th>
<th>Inappropriate Electronic Communication</th>
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<td>▪ Send and reply to emails and text messages from campers only when copying other program staff members or the camp director.</td>
<td>▪ Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments.</td>
</tr>
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<td>▪ Communicate through organization group pages on Facebook or other approved public forums.</td>
<td>▪ Sexually oriented conversations.</td>
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<td>▪ Private social media profiles for staff and volunteers that campers cannot access.</td>
<td>▪ Private messages between program staff and campers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Call UTDPD or 911 if an unknown person or vehicle is loitering or regularly passing by.</td>
<td>▪ Posting inappropriate comments on pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Notify the program director of any safety concerns.</td>
<td>▪ Friending or following campers on social networking sites.</td>
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</tbody>
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CAMPER SAFETY

In order to promote a safe environment for campers, program staff should:

- Think safety first and foremost. If an activity appears dangerous, discontinue immediately.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Periodically scan the area for questionable situations/people.
- Notify the program director of any safety concerns.
- Maintain a visual view of campers at all times.
- Campers should use the buddy system when going to the restroom or in route to camp activities.
- Notify the program director immediately if campers are in possession of alcohol/drugs/tobacco/weapons.
- When staying in a dormitory or off campus housing, review fire alarm and evacuation procedures with campers on your floor.
- Report all injuries to the program director immediately.

MEDICAL INFORMATION PROCEDURES

The program director and/or program staff should ensure medical forms for campers are accessible in the event of an emergency. Medical information is confidential and should only be used by program staff. Parents should be notified of all medically-related situations.
**Medical Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an emergency involving an injury or acute illness, the program director or program staff should follow the best practice risk reduction measures listed below:

- Call 911 to summon emergency personnel.
- Notify the parent/legal guardian or the emergency contact.
- A program staff member should accompany the minor to the hospital and remain until the parent/legal guardian arrives.

**Emergency Plan**

All program staff should be familiar with the emergency plans established for the program for minors. Program staff should:

- Escort campers out of the building and proceed to a safe area designated in the emergency plan
- Remain with their assigned camp group and take attendance immediately.

If all campers and staff are accounted for, the program staff should maintain order and follow the instructions of emergency personnel.

If a camper or program staff member are missing when attendance is taken, program staff should immediately notify the emergency personnel and follow their instructions.

**Field Trip Procedure**

When on a field trip with minors, program staff should consider the following best practices:

- Complete an initial count of all campers.
- Divide campers into small groups and use the buddy system.
- Take attendance prior to departing, immediately when everyone is in the vehicle, several times once you have arrived, prior to returning to the vehicle, and again when minors are in the vehicle for the return trip.

**Missing/Lost Minor Procedure**

Program staff should know the location of minors at all times, both onsite and off, for the duration of the program.

- Program staff must account for the minors they are responsible for at all times: Regularly check attendance, specifically when minors are in transition between locations.
- Immediately notify the program director if a minor is unaccounted for.
- Program director and program staff should search the area where the minor was last seen.

If the minor is not located after the aforementioned steps have been completed:
- Call 911. The program director should contact the police and wait for them to arrive.
- Contact parents. The program director should contact parents to apprise them of the situation.
- Program director and program staff should continue the search until police arrive.

When police arrive let them assume command to locate the missing camper.