

## **Conduct Requirements for Working with Minors – Policy on the Safety of Children in University Programs**

The guidelines stated below are consistent with the standards and expectations set forth in the Policy of Safety of Children in University Programs, the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, and the North Park University Employee Handbook. Members of the University community (faculty, academic appointees, staff/student employees, student volunteers, and volunteers) associated with programs or activities involving minors must observe the following guidelines in order to maintain a safe and positive experience for program participants, encourage parental confidence, and avoid mistaken allegations.

The boundary between appropriate and inappropriate interactions between adults and minor program participants can be readily recognized but difficult to articulate. Boundaries can be physical, behavioral, emotional, and even locational (or situational), and a healthy sense of boundaries is what allows youth to trust others and remain safe. Boundaries are shaped around the fundamental differences between adults and children – differences with regard to authority, judgment, emotional maturity, and physical, cognitive and psychosocial development. In view of these differences, and taking into account the inherent vulnerability of children and the duty of care borne by adults, the written and unwritten rules that govern interactions between adults and children in youth serving programs must take into account these differences and must be established and maintained in a way that ensures the safety and welfare of every child participant.

### **DO:**

1. Show an unwavering commitment to ensuring that the welfare of participating minors is a paramount and shared responsibility.
2. Create an open, welcoming educational environment.
3. Work and engage with minors in an open and transparent manner.
4. Support participants' personal and educational development, make them feel valued, and provide them with safe and caring connections to the program.
5. Maintain the highest standard of personal behavior at all times when interacting with minors.
6. Refrain from being alone with a child at any time in connection with the program. Try to have another adult present when you are working with minors in an unsupervised setting.
7. Whenever possible meet in open, well illuminated spaces or rooms with a window observable by other adults.
8. Be aware of how your actions and intentions might be perceived and could be misinterpreted.
9. Consult with other adult supervisors or colleagues when you feel uncertain about a situation.
10. Abide by all guidelines stated within the student handbook or employee handbook.
11. Use a northpark.edu email address when acting on behalf of the University during email exchanges with a minor.

### **DO NOT:**

1. Relate to minors as if they are peers, conduct private correspondence, or take on the role of a "confidant". Do not ask a minor to keep a secret.
2. Engage in abusive conduct of any kind toward, or in the presence of any child.
3. Administer force upon a child with or without an implement or tool for the purpose of

discipline (e.g., corporal punishment).

4. Touch a child or have physical contact in an inappropriate or illegal manner.
5. Engage in the use or possession of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs in the presence or vicinity of children.
6. Possess, produce, access or make available to children, any sexually explicit images, material, or media.
7. Use inappropriate language, tell risqué jokes, or make sexually suggestive comments around children, even if the children themselves do so.
8. Engage in or communicate with minors through text messages, social networking websites, internet chat rooms, or other forms of social media unless such communication is for the business purpose of University (e.g. Admissions, scheduling, recruitment).
9. Take or utilize photographs of any child without the written express consent of the child's parent/guardian. A waiver of this guideline can be obtained by contacting the Youth Program Coordinator.
10. Date or become romantically or sexually involved with a child. Do not show pornography to a child or involve children in pornographic activities.
11. Transport a child alone in any vehicle. Do not use personal vehicles if possible.
12. Invite children to your home.

Applicants for first-year admission to North Park University are often under the age of 18. For the safety of our applicants and of our NPU Admission interviewers, and in order to comply with the Policy on the Safety of Children in University Programs, NPU interviewers cannot have unmonitored contact with applicants. Interviews must:

- Be conducted in public settings in open sight of other people, such as in coffee shops or libraries;
  - Never be conducted in private settings (especially not at the interviewer's personal residence).
- Similarly, NPU personnel/volunteers are strongly advised against transporting an applicant to or from the interview.

### **Reports of Abuse or Neglect of Minors:**

All University faculty, academic appointees, postdoctoral researchers, staff employees, student employees, student volunteers, and other volunteers are mandated reporters under Illinois law and thus must comply with the University's mandated reporter policy, a summary of which is included in this packet. ***University students are not, in their capacity only as students, mandated reporters under Illinois law. However, University students bear the following responsibility if they are associated or volunteering with (i) a University-sponsored program or activity involving minors, or (ii) a non-University sponsored program or activity on campus involving minors:***

If you have a reasonable basis to believe that a minor you know in your professional capacity has been abused or neglected, you ***MUST: (a) immediately inform the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) of the circumstances by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.25.ABUSE; and (b) immediately inform your supervisor or director of the program or activity of the report to DCFS and the underlying circumstances.***

**Emergencies:**

In case of an emergency, immediately call North Park Campus Safety Office at (773) 244-5600 or the Chicago Police Department at 911.

**Questions:**

If you have questions about your obligations or what you should do in a situation that makes you uncomfortable or uncertain about what you need to do contact Elizabeth Fedec, [efedec@northpark.edu](mailto:efedec@northpark.edu) or (773) 244-5664.