

Subject: **Interaction with Juvenile Participants Code of Conduct for Volunteers**

Purpose: To ensure the safety of juvenile participants (age 17 or younger) in their interactions with volunteers and with each other.

Requirements:

The Department of Parks and Recreation takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that youth participating in our programs have a safe, healthy and positive environment in which to have fun.

Appropriate, positive interactions among youth and between volunteers and youth are essential in supporting positive youth development, making youth feel valued, and providing the caring connections that serve as protective factors for youth. Conversely, inappropriate or harmful interactions put youth at risk for adverse physical and emotional outcomes.

Parks and Recreation volunteers are expected to conduct themselves professionally at all times during their interactions with all participants. Social relationships with juvenile participants outside the context and scope of our services is inappropriate.

*It is our expectation that everyone involved in our programs will contribute in a positive manner, creating a healthy environment where participants will feel safe and welcome and where they will find their participation rewarding. Adults interacting with young people should do so with integrity and respect for the child. **It is the adult's responsibility to set and respect boundaries. When a child attempts to involve an adult in inappropriate behavior, the adult is responsible for redirecting the behavior.***

Examples of appropriate, positive interactions include:

- *Praise*
- *Positive reinforcement*
- *Pats on the back or shoulder*
- *High fives*
- *Brief, youth-initiated hugs*

Examples of inappropriate and/or harmful interactions include:

- *Sexually provocative or degrading comments*
- *Risqué jokes*
- *Patting the buttocks*
- *Corporal punishment*
- *Behavior or language that is threatening or demeaning*
- *Intrusive questions, comments or observations, verbally or through notes*
- *Unwanted staring or watching*

Sometimes it is unclear if a behavior is appropriate, inappropriate, or harmful. For example, contact, such as kissing, may be developmentally appropriate between older youth or similar ages/development, but is inappropriate within our programs. It may even be harmful if the kissing is coercive. Another example involves hugging. Hugging may be appropriate and positive in some circumstances, but it can also be inappropriate if the child is not receptive, if the volunteer is hugging too often or for too long, or if the contact is romanticized or sexually intimate.

Each volunteer is expected to do their part in promoting safe interactions and monitoring and preventing inappropriate or harmful interactions with and between youth. If you are concerned about any interaction between a volunteer and program participant, please take action immediately. Possible responses include bringing the behavior to the attention of the person you're concerned about and asking them to stop (e.g. "I felt uncomfortable having you tell that joke when children could have overheard you."). If you see or learn of anyone exhibiting behavior that is inappropriate or potentially harmful it should be reported immediately to your supervisor and/or emergency services.

Under NO circumstances should volunteers engage in the following activities with juvenile participants:

- *Inappropriate affectionate contact including, but not limited to: any type of sexual contact, kissing, dating, holding hands, or allowing children to sit on a volunteer's lap;*
- *Providing any mood altering substances to any participant, including but not limited to: alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, and/or prescription drugs;*
- *Allowing a juvenile participant to visit the volunteer's residence at any time;*
- *Initiating or responding to social or personal contact with a juvenile participant by phone, e-mail, text messaging, etc. for any purpose unrelated to City business;*
- *Providing a juvenile participant with the volunteer's personal contact information, including but not limited to: the volunteer's home phone number; cell phone number; personal e-mail address; and/or home address for any reason other than City business.*
- *Giving, offering, providing, or promising juvenile participant money, food, gifts or anything of value, unless related to City programs or services or in an emergency.*

Volunteers who engage in any of the behaviors outlined in this policy will be subject to immediate discipline, up to and including discharge, and may also be subject to criminal penalties.

Possible consequences for breaches of this Code of Conduct include:

- *An apology*
- *Direction to stop the inappropriate behavior*
- *Transfer to a different assignment*
- *Training*
- *Verbal or written warning*
- *Suspension*
- *Termination*
- *Prosecution by authorities (if criminal act)*

It is understood that occasionally a volunteer's relationship with a program participant pre-dates the volunteer's hire. Circumstances such as these should be reported to your Supervisor immediately and will be managed on a case by case basis.

Volunteers who are aware that another volunteer is engaging in any of the behaviors outlined in this policy are required to report the behavior to their supervisor without delay. Failure to do so will result in discipline for all volunteers aware of the situation, up to and including discharge.

Two-Adult Rule:

To reduce the risk of accusations of inappropriate conduct with youth, all volunteers should ensure that there is more than one person present during all activities with children and young people. If this is not possible, any one-on-one interaction with a child or young person (e.g. providing first aid, correcting conduct, etc.) must take place within sight or hearing of others. Volunteers should never allow touching to occur out of visibility of others, even in the event of tending to an injured child or youth. If privacy is needed, have another volunteer, staff member or child/youth present. Any touching that is resisted or refused by a child or youth must be respected.

All doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

If transporting participants, volunteers should never be alone in a vehicle with a single youth participant.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Department of Parks and Recreation's 'Interaction with Juvenile Participants Code of Conduct for Volunteers'. I understand that I am free to discuss my opinions about this code with my supervisor but that I must abide with the code as written. I understand that my failure to abide by this code or the provisions of this policy may result in dismissal from volunteer positions involving children and youth.

Further, I agree that if I am charged or convicted of a crime that would exclude me from working with youth (e.g. violent crimes including but not limited to assault, malicious punishment of a child, aggravated robbery, or any offense committed with a weapon; drug offenses, except those which would be treated as a petty misdemeanor; and criminal sexual conduct, solicitation of children for sex or other related offenses), I will notify my supervisor of this fact.

Signature _____ Date: _____