



YSO Policy: Youth Protection

This is a policy from a University that hosts youth ages 6-17 for summer over-night camping programs. For this policy, BE SAFE recommends the following:

- Include more specific stipulations about the touching policy, explicitly stating what is “appropriate” and “inappropriate” touching.

Policy:

Research reports that social norms established to protect youth in a community present a barrier to abuse. Support materials, trainings and supervision should reflect these social norms. Best-practice barriers to abuse include:

- a. Parents/guardians and other responsible adults are invited to visit programs at any time. Safety is everyone’s shared responsibility.
- b. Learning occurs in open places where others may observe (through windows in doors) and feel welcome to enter easily (not behind closed or locked doors). Create an open, welcoming environment.
- c. Two or more adults are engaged with youth. There is safety in numbers.
- d. The physical and emotional state of all youth is observed each time they participate. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse must be reported. (*See abuse reporting requirements*).
- e. Lodging assignments are made so that no single adult is housed with a single, unrelated minor. There is safety in numbers. Safety is always the guiding principle.
- f. The need for privacy is respected at all times, and specifically when youth are changing clothes or bathing. The appropriate adult action is to turn your back, provide a visual barrier (e.g., hold up a towel) or step out of the room (but remain within hearing supervision).
- g. Personal space is respected for all participants. Appropriate touching is always visible, open, and not secretive. Appropriate touching avoids contact with private body parts. Touching should be in response to the need of the child - not the needs of the adult.
- h. A buddy system is implemented to protect everyone. Youth should have a buddy when they are not with a larger group. However, avoid prolonged periods where youth are alone without adult supervision.
- i. Disciplinary measures never include use of physical punishment or failure to provide necessities of care, such as food, water or shelter. Nor should punishments single out an individual for group ridicule.
- j. Bullying, hazing or secret initiations are never allowed.
- k. Youth are protected from inappropriate adult conversations and topics, including but not limited to adult-oriented jokes or discussion of sexual interactions.

