



GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS | OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The City is committed to the prevention of abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. For purposes of this guideline, abuse refers to physical and emotional abuse inflicted on a minor or vulnerable adult, other than by accidental means, as well as all forms of sexual abuse. All employees, volunteers, and vendors working on behalf of the City are expected to support and comply with all policies and guidelines.

Any person under 18 years of age is considered a minor; however, the term “minor” also applies to any person 18 years of age or older who is significantly impaired in the ability to, or otherwise unable to, protect his/her own rights and vital interests or to report abuse or neglect without assistance because of physical, mental or emotional impairment. The primary goal of the City in this regard is to prevent the abuse of minors, and the primary method of prevention is education and care in the hiring and evaluation of employees and volunteers.

These guidelines are provided to all new employees and volunteers upon becoming involved in a program serving minors, and reviewed with returning employees and volunteers on an annual basis. These guidelines emphasize the responsibility that staff, parents, and minors each have in ensuring a safe and successful program.

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR WITH MINORS

We have a duty to prevent harm towards minors in our care. The following are behavior guidelines while working with minors in a short-term capacity. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a safe environment for both the employee and volunteer and minors, and to raise awareness of how to manage risk when minors are present in the program.

“Short-term interactions” amounts to less than one day, total, of activities.

“Minors” includes any youth under the age of 18 years old. The term “minor” also applies to any person 18 years of age or older who is significantly impaired in the ability to, or otherwise unable to, protect his/her own rights and vital interests or to report abuse or neglect without assistance because of physical, mental or emotional impairment.

“Staff” includes both employees and volunteers

“Designated staff member” refers to an employee or volunteer who has responsibility for the supervision of minors during a program or event.

“Parent” is considered both parents and legal guardians.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFELY WORKING WITH MINORS

1. Avoid being alone with a single minor where you cannot be observed by staff or other adults. Unless you are a designated staff member or volunteer in the course of your assigned duties, you should not be alone with a group of minors under any circumstance whether on city premises or not.
2. Do not discipline minors by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
3. Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of minors is unlawful and is prohibited by state law and City policy.
4. Avoid physical contact with minors, unless you must restrain or otherwise have contact for safety related reasons.
5. Do not have contact with minors outside of the program environment.
6. Understand and respect the boundaries set by minors regarding physical touch or sharing personal information.
7. In sensitive situations and in case of injury, involve another staff member, adult, or parent.
8. Allow minors to opt out of distribution of contact information (except to designated staff as needed).
9. Minors are not allowed on program premises without a designated staff member present.
10. No Internet social networking with minors for *personal* reasons or through personal profiles is allowed by staff. Networking through approved program sites/profiles may be used when the contact is related to programming and another designated staff member/volunteer. You want another adult shadowing your communications so communication should also be copied to the appropriate paid staff member.
11. Understand the program emergency plan for responding to a crisis situation.
12. Communicate to your program lead all situations that may be questionable or a possible breach of these guidelines.
13. If you believe someone has perpetrated abuse or neglect, immediately and confidentially report such violation to the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS) Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-25-ABUSE or the police, and follow City guidelines for internal reporting, as applicable.

PREVENTING HARMFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MINORS

The following are specific actions staff can follow in order to avoid harmful relationships with minors.

1. Establish clear boundaries with minors, i.e. stating what are or are not appropriate conversation topics.
2. Avoid all physical contact with minors.
3. Treat all minors equitably, i.e. fairly and consistently. Avoid showing favoritism.
4. Do not discuss your personal life with minors.
5. Follow appropriate professional attire guidelines and avoid provocative or revealing attire.
6. Do not swear or tell off-color jokes.
7. Do not allow minors in your living quarters.

8. Do not discuss your own or minor's sex life or activities.
9. Do not smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of minors.
10. Do not share sexually explicit literature, magazines, books, music, or videos except those in the context of a sanctioned, appropriate activity that relates to the educational objective of your program.
11. Seek support from lead staff for high risk situations, such as discussions of very personal stories.
12. When in doubt, seek assistance from a program lead.

NON-PROGRAM CONTACT WITH MINORS

In-Person Meetings

Employees and volunteers who are part of a city activity involving minors should not meet in person outside the activity with any individual minor unless another adult who is part of the activity (preferably the employee's or volunteer's supervisor) has been made aware and has approved of the meeting in advance.

Employees and volunteers supervising a city activity involving minors may meet groups of program participants outside the activity provided:

- The employees or volunteers have written permission from the parents/guardians of each minor participating in the outside activity.
- The outside activity is held in a public place such as a restaurant, museum, or stadium.

Telephonic and Electronic Communication

Employees and volunteers may communicate through electronic media to groups of program participants. However, unless they copy or otherwise include another adult connected to the activity (preferably their supervisor), employees and volunteers participating in a city activity involving minors should not:

- Send text messages to or respond to text messages from an individual minor involved in a program
- Send emails to or respond to emails from an individual minor involved in a program
- Communicate via the personal page of an individual minor on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter
- Call an individual minor involved in a program on the telephone

Exceptions should be allowed for employees communicating to individual middle school or high school age minors for business purposes only, provided those employees:

- For emails, use only their city email address
- For texts and phone calls, use city-owned devices to the greatest extent possible
- Are willing to share records of their communications with minors sent or received via personal devices

GIFTS

Adults participating in a city activity involving minors may give a token gift (under \$25 value) to all minors involved in the activity. However, no adult participating in a city activity involving minors should be allowed to give an individual minor in the program a gift (regardless of value) without prior approval from both:

- The parent or legal guardian of the minor
- The program supervisor

TRANSPORTING MINORS

Walking

Parents/guardians should be informed in advance of any walk for minors less than eight years of age that includes crossing a street used by automotive vehicles. The parents/guardians should be informed of known traffic hazards and what steps the activity involving minors will take to mitigate those hazards. Parents/guardians should provide written permission before their minors under age eight participate in such a walk.

When walking off-site as part of their activity, minors under age twelve should wear identifying lanyards, badges, vests, or shirts. At least one adult should lead the procession and permit no minor to walk ahead. At least one adult should follow the procession and permit no minor to lag behind. The procession should stop on a regular basis for a head count. Unless safety considerations dictate otherwise, the procession should not advance until all minors are accounted for.

Automobiles

Do not transport minors in a private or city-operated vehicle without explicit program permission and following proper procedures. In case of emergency, always have another adult in the vehicle with you at all times.

Parents/guardians should be informed in advance if their minor will be driven someplace. Parents/guardians should provide written permission to transport their minor via private vehicle.

Drivers should present the supervisor of the activity involving minors an up-to-date copy of their driver record from the Department of Motor Vehicles. If the driver record shows moving violations within the last three years, or a driving-under-the-influence conviction at any time, the driver should not be approved. Drivers who cannot or will not present copies of their driver record should not be allowed to transport minors.

If possible, drivers should use a City vehicle. Second preference is a rental vehicle obtained through a preferred provider. If using a privately-owned vehicle, the employee supervising the activity should determine in advance whether the private vehicle is appropriately equipped to

transport minors, including, but not limited to confirming that the private vehicle has a seat belt or car seat for each minor.

Drivers of private vehicles should provide a valid registration for the vehicle they are driving. They should also show the department a valid driver license for the type of vehicle they are driving and proof of insurance for at least \$50,000 per bodily injury, \$100,000 for all bodily injuries, and \$50,000 for property damage. Drivers who fail to provide the required registration, license, or insurance should not be approved for driving minors in a private vehicle.

Minors should not be transported by motorcycle.

No adult should drive one minor unless the driver is the minor's parent, grandparent, legal guardian, or sibling. In all other circumstances except emergencies, drivers should inform their supervisor and the parent of the minor in advance before driving one minor.

Vans, Buses, and Other Commercial Transportation

Departments should notify parents/guardians in advance if minors will be driven someplace. Parents/guardians should provide advance written permission to transport their minor via van or bus.

For minors age twelve or under, adults should be seated throughout the bus for easier supervision, with at least one adult in the middle of the bus and one in the far rear. Adults should sit in an aisle seat so they can get up to supervise minors as necessary.

Minors should be seated by grade or age group. Disruptive minors should be seated next to an adult.

Adults supervising the activity involving minors should take a head count or roll call before loading and after unloading a van, bus, or other form of commercial transportation, and unless safety considerations dictate otherwise, should not proceed until all minors are accounted for.

Public Transportation

Departments should notify parents/guardians in advance if minors will be taken someplace via public transportation. Parents/guardians should provide advance written permission to transport their minor via public transportation.

Minors under age twelve should be restricted to one area of the bus or train for easier supervision. Adults should stand or sit on the periphery of the area to which minors on public transportation are restricted. They should take a head count or call roll before boarding public transportation and upon leaving public transportation, and unless safety considerations dictate otherwise, should not proceed until all minors are accounted for.

SUPERVISION OF BATHROOM USE

Adults should use staff-only bathrooms. If no staff-only bathrooms are available, adults should use bathrooms when no minors are present. If adults must use a bathroom when a minor is present, the adult needs to follow the rule of three, i.e. at least one other adult or minor should also be present.

For minors age twelve and under, adults should escort two or more minors to the bathroom for group bathroom breaks. The adult should not send in more than the number of stalls and/or urinals in the bathroom. As one student exits the bathroom, another may enter. The supervising adult should stand by the doorway and ensure students are leaving the bathroom in a timely manner. If a minor under age twelve must use a bathroom alone, the minor should use a single-stall bathroom. If the only bathroom available has multiple stalls, the adult should assign a classmate to stand outside the bathroom and wait for the minor to finish. If the minor needing the bathroom, the classmate, or both do not return in a timely manner, the adult in charge of the activity should promptly check on them.

For minors thirteen or older, an adult supervising the activity should give permission for the minor to leave the activity to use the bathroom. The adult should note when the minor left for the bathroom and when the minor returned. If the minor does not return in a timely manner, the adult in charge of the activity should promptly check on the minor. During periods of transition from one activity to another, minors do not need permission to use bathrooms, but adults should randomly monitor bathrooms to ensure minors are not lingering or acting inappropriately in them.

SUPERVISION OF LOCKER ROOM USE

Adults should not change clothing or shower in locker rooms at the same time as minors, nor should they watch minors undress or shower.

While minors shower, at least one adult in charge of the activity should stand within earshot of the minors to ensure that no adults are showering with them and that the minors are respectful of one another.

EDUCATING MINORS

Minors may be informed in a manner that is age appropriate of their right to set their own physical limits for personal safety. They will be encouraged to tell an adult if someone is abusing them. They will also be encouraged to tell an adult if they are in a situation or observe something that makes them uncomfortable.

CONSEQUENCES OF BEHAVIORS THAT HARM MINORS

The City of Collinsville and its Park and Recreation Department take these matters seriously. In the case of suspected abuse or neglect of a minor, the City and the Parks and Recreation Department will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action. Actions taken will first and foremost consider the need to ensure the safety of minors participating in the program.

HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

All City of Collinsville employees and volunteers are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the authorities, as outlined below.

Abuse can occur:

1. At home or away from the program; signs of abuse may be observed at the program, or a minor makes a written or oral disclosure.
2. During the program by an employee, volunteer or other adult or minor:
 - a. Staff can break rules or cross boundaries of appropriate interaction with minors.
 - b. Minors can act out by themselves or with other minors, including bullying, intimidation or other prohibited acts.

*If you have **reasonable cause** to believe a minor has been abused, or if a minor has disclosed abuse to you, you have a duty to report that abuse to the proper authorities.*

Illinois law requires certain individuals, called mandated reporters, to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS) Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-25-ABUSE.

Under the law, the position of “emergency medical technician” and “recreational or athletic program or facility personnel” are mandated reporters and must immediately report any instance where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their official capacity may be abused or neglected. Mandated reporters are professionals who may work with children in the course of their professional duties. Under the law, “mandated reporters” includes any “emergency medical technician” and “recreational or athletic program or facility personnel.”

Because the protection of children is the responsibility of the entire community and that the law provides that anyone may make a report to the Hotline, in addition, the City encourages any person who is not a mandated reporter to report abuse to IDCFS if they have reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused or neglected. The City thus requires all City staff employees and volunteers to immediately report to IDCFS if they have reasonable cause to believe a child known to them in their official capacity may be abused or neglected.

Failure by a mandated reporter to immediately report suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to IDCFS constitutes a Class A misdemeanor. Moreover, reporting suspicions to a co-worker, supervisor, other management employee, Human Resources/Risk Management, a member of City Council and/or the Mayor – but not IDCFS – does not satisfy the legal duty to report. The only means of fulfilling one's legal obligation and avoiding legal penalty is to report the suspected child abuse or neglect to IDCFS.

At the first reasonable cause to believe that *abuse or neglect* occurred (off-site or on-site), or if you witness abusive behaviors, you must:

- 1) If the safety of a minor is of immediate concern, call 9-1-1 for immediate intervention.**
- 2) For all other cases, call the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS) Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-25-ABUSE.**

Questions that will be asked when you call:

- The name, address and age of the minor.

- The name and address of the minor's parent, guardian or other persons having custody of the minor.
- The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect, including location and description of the incident.
- Any knowledge of previous incidences.
- Any other information which may be helpful in establishing the cause of the minor's abuse or neglect and the identity of the perpetrator.

You do not need to have all of the above information when you call to make a report, but the more accurate information you can provide, the better equipped the office will be to assess the child's risk. Provide the information you are able to obtain, as clearly and objectively as possible. Describing actions, symptoms, physical observations or telling what is said, is more helpful than giving your opinion.

If you are unsure about whether a report is justified, you may use the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services as a sounding board to help determine whether a report should be made and to whom.

3. **For cases involving abuse occurring in a City program or on City property,** contact your program lead immediately after making your report to IDCFS or law enforcement, and follow City instructions on internal reporting. Describe what occurred and who was involved, and any details regarding your conversation with IDCFS or law enforcement.

The Parks and Recreation Department will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action regarding the employee or volunteer, including suspension or termination from employment or volunteer status.

Confidentiality of information related to abuse is crucial and should be limited to the immediate supervisor; any authorities called, and designated City of Collinsville internal reporting recipient(s).



CONFIRMATION OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS

I have read the City of Collinsville’s Guidelines for Working with Minors and I agree to abide by the program rules and boundaries for staff relationships with minors as stated.

I UNDERSTAND VIOLATIONS OF THE CITY OF COLLINSVILLE’S GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH MINORS MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION UP TO AND INCLUDING DISMISSAL (SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT).

I ACKNOWLEDGE I AM AWARE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES AND I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THE GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH MINORS.

Employee/Volunteer Name (printed)
Employee/Volunteer Name (signed)
Date

*Return this signed form to the
Office of Human Resources
125 South Center Street
Collinsville IL 62234*