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REPORT CHILD ABUSE
OR NEGLECT

Do you suspect abuse or neglect of a minor? Call the local police (911 or a non-emergency line) or Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline (1-855-323-3237)

For questions about the USU Policy 534
e-mail: risk@usu.edu

Protection of Minors

 RISK 
CONTINUUM



UtahStateUniversity[®]
RISK MANAGEMENT



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

This continuum looks at the surroundings that youth are in, whether they are developmentally appropriate and safe, or pose inherent risks that need to be addressed.



Age-appropriate indoor space containing minimal hazards and contagions
Examples: Appropriately sized chairs & equipment; areas free of fall zones



Outdoor spaces containing minimal inherent hazards
Examples: Quad, Legacy Fields, Housing Green Space



Younger children in otherwise secure spaces designed for adults
Example: most USU classrooms, if left unmodified.



Proximity to rugged terrain, bodies of water, or moving vehicles; spaces with equipment that requires supervision
Examples: mountain trails, lakes, rivers, waterfront, busy roads, loading docks; art studios, kitchens.



Spaces with hazardous materials or equipment; environments where serious injury, abuse or illness can occur
Examples: Labs, shops; animal handling; water features, sheer drop off (>4-6 ft.) with no guard rails; extreme weather; locker rooms, bedrooms, unsupervised bathrooms.



REDUCING RISK



Tips for reducing risk for Physical Environment

- Seek out environments that suit your age group. For elementary aged youth avoid use of rooms that have tablet arm chairs, which can cause injuries if not used properly. If in a space designed for adults, assess any potential hazards, such as equipment that may cause injuries to minors if not properly supervised.
- Plan routes around campus that steer clear of loading docks or other potential fall zones and streets with car or bus traffic.
- Have a plan for indoor activities in the case of inclement weather or poor air quality.
- If at an outdoor venue with cliffs, bodies of water, or other rugged terrain:
 - Ensure that parents have been made fully aware of the environment and associated risks, and sign an acknowledgement of risk indicating their permission.
 - Ensure that staff are trained to prevent and address injury, and in proper supervision to monitor and protect youth.
 - Orient and train youth prior to setting out into the environment- give clear guidelines for conduct and instruct on how to safely navigate the setting. Clearly articulate any prohibited behaviors that may cause harm to themselves or others.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

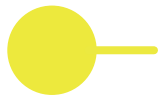
This continuum portrays safe and potentially unsafe levels of physical contact and activity in youth programs. Level of contact and potential for injury are key factors in a safe vs. a riskier activity.



Minimal physical contact or activity with little risk of injury
Examples: sitting; standing; walking on well-groomed pathways



Moderate age and skill appropriate physical activity with limited touching and low risk of injury
Examples: games involving a limited amount of running, physical touch or using soft sports equipment (balls, etc.)



Moderate physical activity, moderate touch involved between youth; use of equipment that can cause injury
Examples: base/soft-ball; soccer; gymnastics; lacrosse; racket sports; ropes course



Strenuous physical activity with moderate risk of injury; Activities that require physical touch between adults and minors
Examples: cardio intensive sports such as track and field; variable skill levels among participants



Strenuous physical activity with high risk of injury or extensive physical contact; other risk of illness or injury due to inclement weather
Examples: 'extreme' sports; high contact sports; water sports; rock climbing; football, wrestling.



REDUCING RISK



Tips for reducing risk for Physical Activities

- Unless the program is primarily athletic in nature (e.g. a sports camp) keep physical activity to moderate levels. Avoid games that use equipment that can cause injury, or substitute softer equipment (nerf balls vs. baseballs). Choose locations that have dedicated space for your group and safe perimeters (i.e., not adjacent to a street).
- Ensure that parents have been made fully aware of the physical activity level and associated risks, and sign an acknowledgement of risk indicating their permission to participate.
- With prolonged or strenuous activity:
 - Give youth scheduled breaks and water. Allow for additional unscheduled breaks as needed by a youth participant.
 - Ensure that youth demonstrate physical fitness that matches the level of activity you will be requiring of them. Assess team compositions of youth to prevent less experienced youth from inadvertently being harmed by more experienced youth or vice versa.
 - Only employ staff and volunteers who are trained in youth sports management, and also who understand varying sports developmental levels so as to prevent injury.



SUPERVISION

Some level of supervision when engaging with youth is always recommended. Factors such as youth age and type of activity will impact the levels of supervision needed.



Supervision by Parent/Guardian or custodial caregiver who is providing active supervision throughout
Examples: School visits where parents or guardians and/or teachers accompany and actively supervise



Supervision by USU Staff with adequate adult-youth ratios, based on youth age
Examples: increased number of adults with younger ages; see ACA group supervision ration recommendations



Supervision by volunteers or short-term staff
Examples: Leaving a group with a guest presenter; campus visits where parents or guardians and/or teachers accompany but do not actively supervise



Older youth allowed to independently come and go to and from program
Examples: youth sign themselves in/out, or allowed to go off campus at lunchtime;



No supervision provided during part or all of a program
Examples: Youth left unsupervised during lunch or "free time"; adults leave a classroom unattended; community event with no supervision



REDUCING RISK



Tips for reducing risk for Supervision

- Communicate clearly who is responsible for supervision for any events- USU Staff? Parents/caregivers? Third party? Also ensure mutual understanding between all adults involved.
 - If there is an option to require attendance by parents, guardians or other custodial caregivers such as teachers, this will reduce your supervisory responsibility. It is important that caregivers understand, though, that they are always responsible for supervision of their children and that they should not wander away from the event.
- Plan for adequate supervision, by adding a 'floating' or 'roving' covered program employees to fill in any gaps due to breaks absences, and help with transitions.
- Limit independent free time for older youth (aged 16-18). Have older youth sign in and out when they leave the program premises. Be sure you have contact information for them (e.g., cell phone number). Include guidelines for acceptable use of free time, such as limits to how far they can go or what they should not do.
- Youth under age 16 should not be left unsupervised for any period of time while participating in your program. If they are given free choice time, ensure there are staff members on duty to supervise any areas where youth are allowed to hang out.



SCREENING & TRAINING

Some level of screening to assess the suitability of a person to work with minors is essential. Background checks per USU standards should always be included as part of a screening process. Preparatory training on safety, youth development and program-specific topics ensures that those selected are equipped for success.



USU employees or volunteers are screened for suitability, background checked and receive more than 8 hours of training.



USU employees or volunteers are screened, background checked but receive only 2-8 hours of training.



USU employees or volunteers are not screened but are background checked and receive only 2-8 hours of training.



USU employees or volunteers are not screened, but are background checked; receive less than 2 hours of training.



USU employees or volunteers have not been screened, background checked or trained.



REDUCING RISK



Tips for reducing risk for Screening & Training

Screening

- Whether hiring for a temporary or permanent staff position, or selecting a volunteer, it is important to assess their suitability to interact with youth. It's always best to hire people who have some experience working or volunteering in a group-oriented youth setting, ideally working with the same age as your program participants.
- Review your program activities, functions of the position and craft questions relating to these and the type of youth you serve.
- Ways to screen can include having them complete an application, doing an interview, and checking professional references. The more responsibility the position requires, the more rigorous your screening should be, e.g., including all three of the above components.
- Even in a relatively informal screening process, say with volunteers, it's always helpful to ask a couple of questions on an application or in an in-person screening. Example questions: "Why are you interested in volunteering with us?" and "Have you worked with youth before?"

Background checks:

- When in doubt about whether a certain employee or volunteer should have a background check, err on the side of having one done. You may also consult with USU Human Resources.

Training:

- Consider what a staff person needs to know in order to effectively do their job. Important topics include:
 - Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect (Required of any covered program authorized adult) [Online training available](#)
 - Safe interactions with youth (Required of all covered program employees) [Online training available](#)
 - Conduct expectations for staff and participants
 - Emergency response and preparedness
 - First Aid, managing medications
 - Parent communication (as applicable)
 - Youth Development- how to safely and effectively work with the with the specific age of youth you are serving. Especially important if no prior experience with youth or this age group.
 - HR and personnel related policies
 - Tips on facilitating activities with youth
 - Handling conflict between youth
 - Equity and inclusion in youth programs
- A way to make the most of limited in-person pre-service time with your staff is to offer training online ahead of time. Follow up on these topics in person to reinforce key points. Reserve content that is best addressed in person for your pre-service training day.
- Develop a tracking system to ensure that all employees and volunteers complete required trainings.



INTERACTION WITH MINORS

The interactions that adults have with youth can promote safety, or can create risk for abuse, injury or other negative outcomes.



One-time interaction less than 8 hours in length; adults with small groups of youth; no virtual communication
Examples: "Rule of three" i.e., one adult two children, two adults one child.



Recurring interactions during weekday business hours.
Examples: weekly after school tutoring program; summer day camp.



Recurring interactions during evenings or weekends; any physical contact between adults and minors above and beyond minimal touch (e.g., handshake, high five).
Examples: Regular evening or weekend social, academic or sports activities; using games or activities that require physical contact.



1:1 adult/youth in-person interaction in a public setting where other adults are present; virtual contact between adults and youth using e-mail or social media accounts that can be monitored.
Examples: Individual tutoring or mentoring in a classroom or other public area in a school; an official Facebook account only used by program staff and participants.



Overnight stays; 1:1 adult/youth private in-person or virtual interaction that cannot be monitored.
Examples: Overnight retreats or camps; 1:1 mentoring or tutoring in settings where other known adults are not around; communication through personal e-mail or social media accounts

REDUCING RISK

Tips for reducing risk for Interactions with Minors

- Set guidelines for interactions that are agreed to by youth and adults. A way to accomplish this is through a code of conduct, and also through group agreements made at the beginning of a program.
- **TRANSPARENCY** is key- avoid any interactions that are not part of the program activity plan, or that a parent has not consented to.
- Interactions between adults and youth should be actively monitored in any program setting. Supervisors or program managers should incorporate this into their responsibilities as a regular practice. Regular presence by a supervisor is effective. Unannounced monitoring is also and discourages anyone to think there is a time where no one is watching. Virtual interactions should also be monitored if this is part of your program model.
- Limit the need for adults to be alone with children. This is possible to do in most youth oriented environments.
 - Use the 'rule of three,' i.e., two adults and one child or two children and one adult when accompanying children to locations in small groups or individually
 - If a youth needs to be pulled aside for an individual conversation, do so in the same room as where the rest of the group remains
 - Even one on one work such as individual tutoring sessions can be done in a group setting with other adults around.
- One-on-one mentoring as part of a program brings unique value and also unique challenges. Ways to reduce risk in mentoring settings include:
 - Be very aware of risks associated with allowing mentor and mentees to communicate virtually via social media, e-mail, or text which are difficult to monitor. A way to reduce risk in these kind of exchanges is to set aside official program social media accounts, phones, or email-addresses for use by the mentor.
 - Set limits on allowable locations for mentoring to occur. At the school where the youth attend, in certain public settings on campus, or other locations where known adults will be present are optimal for ensuring transparency.
 - Set limits on the frequency and timing of mentoring encounters. Encourage certain mentoring schedules than exclude late night or weekend interactions when possible. Create a regular schedule and share with parents of the youth to reinforce transparency of the encounters.
 - Set limits on what mentors and youth discuss. Mentors in USU programs typically have a specific academic or career focused purpose underlying the relationship. While the personal connection and rapport between mento and mentee is important, coach the mentor to channel the rapport they have built into a meaningful conversation about the future career or education interests of the youth.
- Think about the timing of your program. Evenings and weekends can bring less transparency or visibility to your interactions, especially on campus since there are far fewer people around. Is it necessary for your program to run during the evening or weekend? Is that out of conveniences for you, or for the youth?



TRANSPORTING YOUTHS

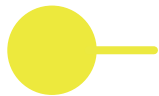
The more often youth are moved from one location to another, and the further from a secure environment, the greater the risk.



Youth spend the program in one secure location.
Examples: Use of a room or rooms solely dedicated to your program; dedicated, secure outdoor space only accessible to a youth program.



Youth are moved around campus during the program to relatively secure locations.
Examples: On-campus "field trips" to the NEH Museum; moving from classroom to an outdoor meeting space; moving from residence halls to a classroom.



Youth are moved around campus to relatively unsecured locations.
Examples: TSC common areas, the Quad, athletic facilities or fields that are not dedicated to a specific youth program.



Youth are transported off-campus to a relatively secure youth-appropriate location.
Examples: Field trip to a museum, the zoo, etc.



Youth are transported to an unfamiliar, crowded, or non-youth oriented location.
Examples: downtown areas, out of state or country.



REDUCING RISK



Tips for reducing risk for Transporting Youths

- When transporting youth around campus, even on foot, there are vulnerabilities- a child can separate from the group, or struggle to keep up with the pace of the group. Staff attention is divided between moving from one place to another and supervising the children. Ways to reduce risk include:
 - Ensure there are adequate adults to support any transition in location.
 - Have a routine group walking plan that includes staff positioning, walking route, formation of the group, etc.
 - Monitor the front and back of the group as well as the middle, depending on age of children or size of the group.
 - Avoid paths of travel that are busy with other people, have trip or fall hazards, or have poor line of site of the whole group.
 - Communicate ground rules to youth for your travel, and enforce these roles.
- When transporting youth off campus in vehicles, ensure that vehicles have proper safety equipment for the age group and size of children you are transporting.
 - Communicate and enforce special ground rules to youth for field trips in unfamiliar or crowded locations. Communicate to youth what to do if they are separated from the group.
 - Have additional adult presence to manage smaller groups of youth in a busy or unfamiliar environment.
 - Have youth and adults wear visual identifiers such as t-shirts that allow youth to be easily recognizable.



YOUTH AGE

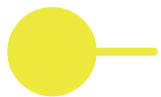
This continuum portrays risk according to the ability of a youth to operate independently; other variables may pose different age-based risks.



Age 18+
Examples: Legal adults.



Age 16 - Age 17
Examples: Older high school.



Age 12 - Age 15
Examples: Middle school, early high school.



Age 6 - Age 11
Examples: Elementary school children.



Birth - Age 5
Examples: infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers.



REDUCING RISK



Tips for reducing risk for Youth Age

- The overarching principle when it comes to youth age is that in most cases the younger age of the youth, the more supervision and support responsibilities your program will need to have. The age of the group will dictate particular risks associated with certain activities, and specific needs in terms of supervision.
- First, what does not change, regardless of age:
 - Parental consent is required for all ages.
 - Supervision is also required for all ages while attending your program or event.
 - Children are at risk for abuse no matter the age. The types of risks may change depending on age.
- Age-based considerations are listed below:
 - Pre-K aged children (age 0-5) will need help with basic needs including feeding, toileting, and safely navigating movement between locales. They require very close supervision and a structured schedule.
 - Elementary aged children (age 6-11) are more able to care for their own basic needs but will require somewhat more structured activities, and close supervision at all times.
 - Middle/early high school aged teens (age 12-15) may be able to manage their time more freely than younger children, but still require supervision at all times.
 - Older youth (age 16-17) may come and go to a program independently, such as by car or transit. They also may be able to successfully participate in less structured, more ambitious activities safely. In any case, you still are responsible for providing supervision while participating in your program.
- A mixed age group also presents unique risks that need to be addressed.

