

# Virginia Commonwealth University

## Youth Programs Manual

Division of Community Engagement  
[www.community.vcu.edu](http://www.community.vcu.edu)

Updated 10/19/18



# VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Office of the Provost | Division of  
Community Engagement

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Division of Community Engagement wishes to thank the many people who have been involved in the development of this manual. The workgroup was comprised of the directors of our youth programs, Ron Brown and Tina Carter; the Executive Director of Partnership for People with Disabilities, Donna Gilles; and a representative from our service-learning program, Erin Brown. They ensured that the existing procedures were documented accurately, as well as identifying issues that needed more clarification. We would like to thank Tia Campbell, School Health Specialist from Virginia Department of Education, for her review of the food allergy procedure. We would also like to thank those across the university who provided feedback: Karen Hill from VCU Health Systems, Susan Lipp from VCU School of Nursing, and Pat Stauffer from VCU Athletics. Finally, we are grateful to Caren Putzu, a doctoral student in the School of Social Work, who diligently worked to research and document the guidelines found here. She reviewed the manuals of local and national youth programs (including Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Communities In Schools, AmeriCorps, and the Afterschool Alliance), consulted with various people and programs inside and outside of the university, and incorporated VCU policy and local and national laws impacting youth programs.

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## **PHILOSOPHY OF DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT YOUTH PROGRAMS**

The Division of Community Engagement (DCE) youth programs are committed to nurturing the potential of every child, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. DCE youth programs provide support and opportunities for youth to feel safe, build relationships with caring adults, acquire knowledge and skills, and engage in meaningful activities. Employees and volunteers will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, courtesy, and understanding. Employees and volunteers will respond to parents, children and each other with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, disability, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.

## **VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY CODE OF CONDUCT**

All employees and volunteers will adhere to VCU's Code of Conduct (see [codeofconduct.vcu.edu](http://codeofconduct.vcu.edu)):

Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to an environment of uncompromising integrity and ethical conduct. Our ethical standards are the foundation for our decisions and actions. As members of the faculty, staff and administration of VCU, and as volunteers, your actions will be guided by these principles and values:

**Respect** - We will respect individuals, diversity and the rights of others.

**Honesty** - We will act and communicate honestly and candidly. We will not mislead others.

**Excellence** - We will strive for excellence in all that we do.

**Responsibility and accountability** - We will be responsible and accountable for our decisions and actions.

**Stewardship** - We will be good stewards of the resources entrusted to the university.

**Compliance** - We will understand and comply with the codes, laws, regulations, policies and procedures that govern our university activities.

We recognize that our decisions and actions reflect not only upon our individual reputations but also upon the reputation of the university. Our actions will be guided by these ethical principles even when confronted by personal, professional, social or economic pressures.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Employee:** Anyone who is receiving a wage from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

**Volunteer:** A person who performs a service willingly and without pay. May or may not be employed by, or have an affiliation with, VCU. Examples include: service-learning course work for students; employees utilizing community service leave; parents helping with their child's program.

## EMPLOYEE REQUIREMENTS

All employees will adhere to VCU's Safety and Protection of Minors Policy.

### CRIMINAL CONVICTION INVESTIGATION

All employees are required to have a [criminal background check](#) upon hiring in accordance with VCU's Criminal Conviction Investigations policy.

In addition, employees who work with youth must have the [multi-state sex offender check](#). \*All full-time employees working with youth must have these background checks repeated every two years. Any seasonal employees who work with youth must have the complete background check (criminal and sex offender) even if they are a rehire (e.g. summer camp counselor).

### MANDATED REPORTER

According to changes to the [Child Abuse and Neglect Mandated Reporting Law § 63.2-1509](#), individuals, 18 years and older, who are associated with, employed or volunteer at VCU are mandated reporters. Accordingly, all individuals, 18 years and older, who are associated with, employed or volunteer at VCU who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately to the local child protective services department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred (if you are unsure which county or city to report to, then report to the Virginia Department of Social Services' toll-free-child abuse and neglect hotline at 1-800-552-7096) **and** to the VCU Police, **and** to their VCU Supervisor. The VCU Police number is 804-828-1234 and the child abuse and neglect hotline numbers for Virginia are: Toll free: 1-800-552-7096; Virginia: 1-804-786-8536. See the *Child Abuse and Neglect* section of this manual for further Mandated Reporting Procedures.

### TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

All employees are required to attend an orientation and training session that will be scheduled by their respective program director. Mandatory trainings and certifications include, but are not limited to: CPR/First Aid certification for full time staff and a yearly [Safety and Protection of Minors Online Training](#). Staff are required to take other trainings at the discretion of the program director.

Each program will provide the initial orientation and requirements for continuing employment. All employees will read the DCE Youth Programs Manual and will sign the Code of Practice for Working with Youth stating he or she has read and understood the guidelines and procedures.

The nature of interaction with youth will determine the type of background checks and training required. The table, [Minimum Requirements for Individuals Engaged in Programs & Activities Involving Minors](#) outlines requirements for youth program staff and volunteers.

## VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for volunteer participation in DCE programs.

## APPLICATION AND SCREENING

Through an application process staff will identify volunteer skills and areas of interest so that appropriate placement can occur. This will enable volunteers to be placed in a job that is appealing as well as satisfy program needs.

DCE accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of DCE. Volunteers understand that DCE may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to end the volunteer relationship. The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to end the volunteer's relationship with DCE. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's supervisor.

All volunteers are required to complete a volunteer application which will include: the Information Sheet, Volunteer Release of Liability and Volunteer Statement of Disclosure. If an individual volunteers several years in a row their application is still valid, however, volunteers must notify program supervisor if any of their application information changes such as contact information or criminal charges/convictions.

## TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

All volunteers will read the DCE Youth Programs Manual and will sign the Code of Practice for Working with Youth stating he or she has read and understood the guidelines and procedures.

All volunteers are required to attend an orientation and training session that will be scheduled by the program director. The volunteer must attend the orientation and training session prior to beginning work.

Volunteers who may have 1:1 interaction with a minor will annually complete the Safety and Protection of Minors Policy Training. Additionally Volunteers who do not have 1:1 interaction with minors will complete the training at the discretion of the program director.

## MANDATED REPORTER

According to *Changes to the Child Abuse and Neglect Mandated Reporting Law § 63.2-1509*, individuals, 18 years and older, who are associated with, employed or volunteer at VCU are mandated reporters. See the Child Abuse and Neglect section below for Mandated Reporting Procedures.

## ATTENDANCE

Becoming a volunteer with the DCE youth programs means making a commitment to be available as agreed except in cases of illness or emergency. Lateness or absenteeism results in inconvenience and reduction or loss of services to participants for which volunteers are so vital. Therefore, DCE youth program employees and participants depend on volunteers to honor their commitments to the program.

**If a volunteer is not able to attend, he/she will notify the program director at least one week in advance. If an emergency arises, he/she will immediately contact the program director. More than two episodes of poor attendance may result in termination of volunteer service.**

## PROGRAMMATIC GUIDELINES

### STAFF TO YOUTH RATIO

To be in compliance with Virginia Department of Social Services standards, the following ratios are required:

- Age of eligibility to attend public school (5 years by Sept. 30) – 8 years: 1 staff: 18 children
- 9 years to 12 years - 1 staff: 20 children
- Mixed-age groupings - 1 staff: 14 children

In accordance with the American Camp Association ratings, the following ratios are recommended:

- 4 to 5 years – 1 staff: 6 campers
- 6 to 8 years – 1 staff: 8 campers
- 9 to 14 years – 1 staff: 10 campers
- 15 to 17 years – 1 staff: 12 campers

See More Resources for more information on staff to youth ratio.

### MONITORING AND SUPERVISION

The following are best practices to protect you and the youth you serve:

- Work with youth should be in an open environment, never behind closed doors or completely out of view of others.
- If the nature of an activity requires a closed door, individuals should make every effort to have at least another adults present.
- If circumstances prevent two adults from being present; every effort should be made that two youth or more are present.
- Individuals should never be one on one with youth behind closed doors. **This includes classrooms without windows, and trips in a vehicle.**

### ELECTRONIC USE

Cell phones should be turned off and are not to be used (e.g. texting, talking, checking email, etc.) while working directly with the youth unless otherwise stated by the program director.

All users of the computers and internet must adhere to university policy, including the [Guidelines for Faculty and Staff Use of Communication Media](#) and the [Computer and Network Resources Use Policy \(#3409\)](#).

The internet is a valuable tool; however like any other tool, it can be misused or dangerous in certain circumstances. Although most online experiences are positive, cyberspace does have a dark side; it includes people who attempt to exploit youth and others through the internet as well as materials on the internet that are adult-oriented and inappropriate for youth. In order to ensure the safety of the youth, all youth will not be allowed to wander aimlessly on the internet. Youth should primarily engage in academic and/or enriching sites or games that will benefit the youth. Employees and volunteers can provide an opportunity to teach the youth how to use the internet and related technologies within the context of well-organized, purposeful and engaging activities in an adult-supervised environment.

For those programs that provide computer access to the community, community members are prohibited from downloading software and/or modifying any of the settings on the computer without permission from the program director. Community members must bring a removable storage device as personal files will not be stored on any computer.

The computers will not be utilized in the following manner: use any computer for “hacking” or other unlawful activities; engage in any activity which is deliberately and maliciously offensive, libelous or slanderous; display images, sounds, or messages in a way that will negatively affect those who find them objectionable or offensive; or represent oneself as another person for purposes of fraud or other illegal activity. The program director must inform any person of these rules prior to using a computer. If an employee or volunteer wants to use a personal computer or electronic device in the program, permission must be granted by the program director.

### **MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH MINORS**

Communication, including social media, between minors and employees/volunteers is prohibited; unless there is an educational or programmatic purpose and the content of the communication is consistent with the mission of the program/activity and VCU. If there is a legitimate reason for communication to occur with the minor after the program is over, the employee/volunteer should seek approval from the program supervisor and parent/guardian.

Any images/videos taken during youth programs or activities can only be shared with written permission from a parent/guardian. No images/videos should be taken in private areas like locker rooms, residence hall rooms, bathrooms, or at the pool.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Employees and volunteers will respect the confidentiality of all information regarding the children attending DCE youth programs. Employees and volunteers will not share personal information about any child with anyone other than the program director or other site employees. Employees and volunteers will not reveal the names of the children or their family members served during any DCE youth program related activities. Employees and volunteers will not take pictures of the children unless prior approval is obtained from a parent/guardian, through a [Media Release Form](#). Employees and volunteers will not discuss the children or the families served by DCE youth programs or post images on any personal public forum such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, or other social media. Only pictures, posts and comments from the program’s social media outlet can be shared on personal outlets.

Every DCE youth program participant shall have a right of privacy with respect to the records kept on him or her. Personal identifiable records or reports of a participant, and any personal information contained therein are confidential. Youth program employees shall not release such records, reports or information without the written consent of the parent or guardian.

DCE youth program employees must conform to the laws of confidentiality as to participant information, unless disclosure is required to prevent clear and imminent danger to the participant or others, or when legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed. Youth program directors shall consult with the vice provost if in doubt when information is requested.



## DRESS CODE

Employees and volunteers are expected to be suitably attired and groomed during working hours. Casual clothing is acceptable for our work environment. Listed below is a general overview of acceptable casual attire as well as a listing of some of the more common items that are not appropriate for our work environment. Neither listing is intended to be all inclusive. Rather, these items should help set the general parameters for proper casual attire wear and allow you to make intelligent judgments about items that are not specifically addressed.

*Acceptable:* T-shirts, polo shirts, sweaters, knit tops, sweat shirts, jeans, casual pants, capris, or shorts, athletic shoes, or other shoes appropriate for the activity.

Be conservative when selecting work attire. If there is doubt as to whether a piece of clothing or outfit is appropriate, do not wear it in the workplace. Proper appearance includes personal hygiene. Daily grooming and bathing is required. Perfume, cologne, and aftershave lotion should be used in moderation, as some individuals may be sensitive to strong fragrances.

*Unacceptable:* Short shorts, tops with spaghetti straps, tank tops, midriff length tops, strapless or short blouses/shirts showing the stomach and midriff, see-through clothing, low-cut tops that show cleavage, pajamas, provocative attire and sagging pants/trousers/shorts. Back of tops must cover the back shoulder blades. Undergarments must not be worn over outer clothing and undergarments are not to be visible. The buttocks must be covered completely.

Employees may not wear any clothing, jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol, or other insignia that advocates or encourages the use or abuse of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol; expresses vulgarity or advocates prejudice or discrimination against people based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, disability or sexual orientation; or advocates or encourages violence, profanity, sexual or illegal activity.

The program director is responsible for adherence to this policy for all employees and volunteers. If the program director determines your personal appearance is inappropriate, you may be asked to leave the workplace and return properly dressed or groomed. Under such circumstance, staff will not be compensated for the time away from work. Disregarding or failing to comply with this standard of dress code could lead to disciplinary action.

## BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH

Every program director must delineate their site's behavior guidelines, including participant suspensions and special accommodations. Site behavior guidelines will be outlined and made available to parents and partner organizations. Behavior rules will be clearly posted in each site.

The program director will create all guidelines and expectations to support positive behavior reinforcement. Guidelines should be positively stated in order to communicate the desired or expected behavior. The following guidelines are suggested:

1. Honesty- being true to yourself and to others
2. Respect- acting in a way that is positive towards others and property
3. Teamwork- working together to accomplish a task or goal
4. Caring- being a friend to everyone
5. Responsibility- doing what you are supposed to do at all times

Contracted programs will establish behavior guidelines with the DCE youth program(s), including guidelines for managing disruptive behavior.

Participants have the right to<sup>1</sup>:

1. Attend the program and have a chance to participate fully in program activities.
2. Be told of all rules and the consequences of breaking those rules. It is the responsibility of the participants to know and follow all rules, and accept the consequences of their behavior. The participants should understand the program's rules and expectations.
3. Have all steps of guidelines followed fairly.
4. Use the program grounds and materials appropriately during program hours.
5. Hear, see, and say different ideas. This shall include freedom to say, write or draw their ideas. It is the responsibility of the participants to respect the thoughts of others that might be different from their own. These ideas must not offend or hurt others.
6. Discuss or seek guidance regarding challenges experienced in the program.
7. Be respected by other participants and staff. It is the responsibility of the participants to show respect to other participants and staff.
8. Take part in activities for which they are permitted. Participants must not be kept out of activities because of gender, color, race, religion, or nationality. It is the responsibility of the participants to follow the rules of the activities. The participants should cooperate and demonstrate a positive attitude.
9. Enjoy a fair amount of personal privacy. If program personnel have a reason to believe that the participants have items that are against the law, they may check the participants and their belongings. It is the responsibility of the participants to keep themselves and their belongings free of items that might cause harm, be against the law, and/or be against program rules.
10. Be free from bullying, name calling, or harassment. It is the responsibility of the participants to avoid and discourage such behavior or to report it to program staff.

Although participants possess the above-mentioned rights, certain rights can be revoked in the event of violations of the disciplinary code of conduct.

Participants Responsibilities:

1. Dress appropriately for program activities.
2. Behave in an orderly and cooperative way.
3. Show respect toward property that belongs to all of the community.
4. Attend the program ready to participate with an open mind.

## FOOD AND DRINK

Unless a DCE youth program participates in Kids Cafe, the following procedures will be followed:

Hand washing or sanitizing should take place prior to snack distribution. Snacks should be served and eaten inside unless a specific outdoor activity with snack is planned. Snacks should consist of a drink and a food product. Milk, water, or 100% juice, and a healthy snack (e.g. fruit, vegetables and dip, trail mix,

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<sup>1</sup> The participant rights and responsibilities are adapted from RPS  
<http://web.richmond.k12.va.us/Portals/0/assets/Students/pdfs/StandardsStudentConductElementary2013.pdf>

yogurt, cheese and crackers, whole grain cereal and milk) should be purchased. Site program directors are responsible for monitoring any known participant food allergies before ordering and dispensing snacks.

Food and drink items should be purchased and served from original containers. Bulk items may be purchased and served to participants in individual cups, napkins or plates. For example: a large box of trail mix may be served by giving each participant a portion on a napkin, or fruit juice may be poured from a gallon container and served to participants in paper cups. Bulk items must be new and unopened when received for distribution. An ingredient list must be supplied for all food items prepared at home or made onsite.

All food items must be stored in a secure location. Food items may not be left on the ground. Any opened containers must be appropriately sealed and dated.

### **Food Allergies**

Providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment is a goal of the Division of Community Engagement. This includes avoiding and managing severe allergic reactions so that all children can fully and safely participate in the activities.

Allergic reactions are an immune-system hypersensitivity to a particular substance called an allergen. For many allergic individuals, exposure to an allergen results in mild symptoms. But for some people, allergic reactions can be life threatening. The most dangerous symptoms include difficulty breathing and a drop in blood pressure, which are potentially fatal. Called anaphylaxis, this severe and lightning fast allergic reaction may affect children with known allergies and those without known allergies.

Because it is difficult to predict the time or severity of an allergic reaction, it is vital to be prepared to respond rapidly in order to maintain a safe environment for all children. Supporting the success of a child with a severe allergy requires a team approach and a coordinated plan, so that all team members understand their roles. Team members include the parent/guardian, child, program staff members, and healthcare provider.

A component of emergency response plans; these severe allergy guidelines outline the roles of individuals responsible for the health and wellbeing of children with severe allergies, supporting inclusion of all children in activities. These guidelines also encourage age-appropriate child education and self-advocacy.

- Parents/guardians (or employees of a contracting organization) are responsible for notifying program employees of a known food allergy.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for providing appropriate medication (e.g. over the counter medication, prescription medication, etc.) to manage and treat known food allergies.
- Allergy medication will be stored and administered according to the medication procedures.
- The ingredients of all food provided by the DCE must be made available to review prior to consumption, including any food prepared by employees, parents/guardians, etc.
- Food sharing among children is prohibited.
- A [Food Allergy Action Plan](#) will be completed by the parent/guardian for each child who is identified as having a food allergy. The Plan will be reviewed and followed by all employees of the youth program and kept in the child's file.
- If a child who has not been identified as having an allergy exhibits symptoms of an allergic reaction, 911 is to be called immediately.

- Any child given epinephrine must be transported to the hospital.

## MEDICATIONS

In accordance with Virginia Department of Social Services Code 22.1-296.2, medication will not be dispensed to any child without advance written consent from the parent or guardian. Prescription medication may be given only to the child for whom it is prescribed. Over the counter medication must have the child's name clearly printed on the container. The parent must complete a [Permission to Administer Medication form](#) and give the form and the medication directly to the program. If the medication must be given for longer than 10 workdays, the prescribing physician must complete part B of the Permission to Administer Medication form. All medication must be in its original container. If these steps are not completed, medication will not be administered. The program director must maintain all medications in a locked cabinet or drawer.

In order to dispense medications (including over the counter medications), each program must have at least one employee who has completed the [Medication Administration Training \(MAT\)](#). Only employees who have successfully completed the MAT may dispense medications.

## FIELD TRIPS AND TRANSPORTATION

A field trip is defined as any time children participating in a DCE youth program leave the youth program's primary location (which includes other areas on the VCU campus) unless previously specified in the program permission form.

When a field trip is planned for off-campus, the program director will put the field trip on the DCE calendar.

All participants must have a signed and dated "Field Trip Permission Form." (See Releases and Forms Section) Verbal permission will not be permitted, and only those authorized persons from the enrollment form are allowed to sign the field trip permission form. All field trip permission forms will be maintained in the child's file. If multiple field trips are planned and the dates are known, one permission form may be used to encompass all of the planned field trips.

Employees are not to transport youth in their own vehicles except in cases of emergency. In accordance with the [Vehicle Accident Prevention and Safety Policy](#) all employees and students who drive a VCU vehicle must be at least 19 years of age with a valid driver's license for a minimum of one year. All university employees and students who drive a VCU vehicle must read and sign the Vehicle Accident Prevention and Safety Policy and submit a copy of their driver's license and driving record. Employees who drive passenger vans and/or have regular driving responsibilities must complete and pass the university approved defensive driving course within 30 days of being assigned a driving responsibility. Volunteers are not permitted to transport children.

When transporting youth, all employees and students should follow the Monitoring and Supervision best practices outlined on page 7.

## SIGN-IN AND SIGN-OUT PROCEDURES FOR YOUTH

DCE youth programs' will only release a child to the child's parent/guardian or persons who have been designated, in writing, by the child's parent/guardian. In cases of emergencies, permission to release a child can be given verbally. Any time a child is in a DCE youth program, the custodial parent(s)/guardian(s)

shall be admitted to observe the program. Unless a child is attending a DCE youth program via a contract with another agency, the following procedures will be observed.

When participants are dismissed from the DCE youth program, the parent/guardian/authorized person must come to the program site to sign his/her complete name, (initials are not permitted) participant's name, date and time on a sign-out sheet. The parent(s) must designate, on the enrollment form, persons authorized to pick up their child from the program. Only authorized persons can pick up the child. All authorized persons, including parents, must provide a photo ID in order to sign-out a child. If a person does not have a photo ID and still removes a child from a DCE youth program, VCU Police will be called. (Please be aware that the sign-out sheet could become a court document.) Only employees will be responsible for sign-out.

- Dates of sign-out sheet signatures must agree with the dates of the participants' attendance.
- Every day, programs will mark "absent" on the sign out sheets for every participant that did not attend the program so that parents will not accidentally sign out on the wrong date the following day.
- If a parent requests that a child under the age of 18 pick up a participant, a written, dated, and signed letter stipulating their wishes must be placed in the participant's file.
- If a situation occurs where a person is not listed on the enrollment form for release of a participant, the participant will be kept at the program site until the parents or legal guardians are notified.

Middle and high school age children may sign themselves out of a program with written permission from their parent or guardian. All other participants may not sign themselves out of a program.

**Late Pick-Ups:** Any parent/guardian running late for pick-up must immediately notify the appropriate program director. For participants remaining after the program has ended whose parents have not called, the program director will call all phone numbers listed on the enrollment form in an attempt to reach the parent. If a child has not been picked up by 15 minutes after closing, emergency contacts will be called. If a child has not been picked up by 45 minutes after closing, Child Protective Services (800-552-7096) will be called. If a child has not been picked up by 1 hour after closing, the VCU Police (804-828-1234) will be called. If Child Protective Services and/or VCU Police are called, the program director must document the incident in the child's file and notify the vice provost. Each program will determine its policy for parent/guardian's non-compliance with the pick-up policy. If an agency is responsible for transportation and are late, the agency will be contacted.

**Restricting Access:** If a parent/guardian wishes to restrict access to their child by another of the child's parents/guardians, the DCE youth program must be provided the appropriate legal documentation detailing the custodial parent/guardian's right to do so. Without such legal documentation, the DCE youth program cannot restrict access. If the DCE youth program has the appropriate legal documentation required to restrict access to a child by a parent/guardian the employees of the DCE youth program will restrict such access, as required by the legal documentation. If a parent/guardian who has been denied such access to a child attempts to enter the DCE youth program, or otherwise access the child while the child is participating in the DCE youth program, the employees of the DCE youth program shall immediately contact VCU Police. The legal documentation will be maintained in the child's file.

**Additional Authorized Person:** If a parent/guardian wishes to add another authorized adult permission to pick up their child, the parent/guardian must provide the DCE youth program written permission. No child will be released to an unauthorized adult without written permission. All written communication from the

parent/guardian must be maintained in the child's file. If a parent/guardian is unable to provide prior written permission for another adult to pick up his or her child, an employee must document the name of the person that will be picking up their child on the sign-out sheet.

## **SAFETY**

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES TO ENHANCE THE SAFETY OF YOUTH**

The following provides a framework and set of values for ethical and safe practice when working within the DCE youth programs. The primary consideration of the employees and volunteers is the youth with whom they engage. The relationship between an employee/volunteer and a child can be an important source of personal support for the child. However, the relationship is a professional one and is intentionally limited to protect both the child and the employee/volunteer. Employees and volunteers will maintain the integrity of these limits, recognizing the tensions between developing supportive and caring relationships with the youth and the need to preserve the boundaries of the professional relationship. All practices throughout the DCEs' Youth Programs will be created and maintained in order to ensure a safe and caring environment that includes:

- In order to protect the employees, volunteers and program participants, at no time will an employee or volunteer be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others.
- Employees will never leave a child unsupervised.
- Employees will only release a child to authorized persons as listed on the enrollment form or an individual authorized by parent/guardian in writing. In cases of emergencies, permission to release a child can be given verbally.
- Classroom 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. All storage, maintenance and utility area doors will be secured when not in use. Buildings need to take into consideration fire code requirements.
- Employees will not disrobe a child, other than outer garments, without the presence of another employee or volunteer.
- Employees and volunteers shall not abuse children. The following may be examples of abuse:
  - Physical abuse – striking, spanking, shaking, slapping
  - Verbal abuse – humiliating, degrading, threatening, yelling
  - Sexual abuse – inappropriate touching or verbal exchanges
  - Mental abuse – shaming, cruelty
  - Neglect – withholding food, water or basic care
- Physical restraint will not be allowed, unless there is likelihood of harm to self or others.
- Smoking, using tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children or parents during work hours is prohibited. Using alcohol or illegal drugs prior to working with youth is also prohibited (see VCU Alcohol and Drug Policy).
- Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment are prohibited.

### **ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMODATIONS**

Programs are responsible for working with families to make programs accessible to any child who is interested in participating. It is important to recognize that children have unique needs and require some minor adjustments to programs or alternative arrangements to ensure they can participate as fully as



possible. Working with families is the first step to determine support. Health concerns should be gathered from families and potentially the child's doctor. The process can take time so families should complete the [Accessibility Form](#) within a reasonable amount of time (ideally 4 weeks prior to the start of the program) in order to discuss the information shared. Once received, programs can initiate a conversation with the family to understand what accommodations might be necessary. Programs may not be able to provide personal aides, assistants, or assistive devices, but can discuss what reasonable accommodations can be made.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. All DCE youth program employees and volunteers are recognized as mandated reporters and will report known or suspected child abuse immediately as required by section 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia.

*When a case of child abuse or neglect is suspected or if a child discloses abuse, observe the following procedure:*

- The employee or volunteer must immediately notify the program director and together they must immediately contact Child Protective Services (800-552-7096) to make a report. In addition, the program director will also call VCU police (804-828-1234).
- The reporting employee or volunteer is required to put in writing on the [Incident Form](#) what they either observed or were told. If appropriate, use a diagram of the human body to indicate signs of abuse, including a description of any marks. The Incident Form should be signed and dated by the reporting employee or volunteer. If more than one employee or volunteer is involved, each person must complete a separate Incident Form.
- All employees and/or volunteers involved in the reported incident will follow the direction of Child Protective Services regarding completion of written reports.
- If the parent or legal guardian of the child is suspected of abuse, employees will follow the guidance of Child Protective Services regarding notification of the child's parent or legal guardian. Employees should not notify the alleged perpetrator of the child abuse or neglect that a report of has been made, or that there is a pending investigation unless compelling reasons exist to do so.
- At no time will an employee or volunteer conduct an investigation into the allegation.
- Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect will be prosecuted in accordance with section 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia.

Within 2 hours:

- The program director will notify and send a copy of the Incident Report(s) to the vice provost who will then notify the appropriate university personnel.

*If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at or during a DCE youth program or activity, the following procedure shall be followed:*

- The employee or volunteer must immediately notify the program director and together they must immediately contact Child Protective Services (800-552-7096) to make a report. If a child is in immediate danger, the program director or designee will call VCU police (804-828-1234).
- The program director or designee will immediately notify the vice provost. If the program director is the alleged perpetrator, the reporting employee will notify the vice provost. If a volunteer witnessed

the alleged abuse or neglect, the volunteer will notify another employee who will then contact the vice provost.

- The reporting employee or volunteer is required to put in writing on the Incident Form what they either observed or were told. If appropriate, use a diagram of the human body to indicate signs of abuse, including a description of any marks. The Incident Form should be signed and dated by the reporting employee or volunteer. If more than one employee or volunteer is involved, each person must complete a separate Incident Form.
- The vice provost, or designee, will notify the VCU Police.
- The program director or vice provost will notify the parents or legal guardians of suspected abused children.
- The alleged perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from the DCE youth program pending an investigation.
- The DCE youth program will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a management team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident.
- Employees who are accused of child abuse will be suspended or given leave (with/without pay), pending investigation of the accusation. Such employees may also be removed from the DCE youth program and given a job that does not require interaction with children. However, no accusation or affirmation of guilt will be made until the police investigation is complete. Caregivers found guilty of child abuse will be dismissed for cause.
- Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect will be prosecuted in accordance with section 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia.

## PROCEDURE TO ENSURE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

This procedure is written to ensure the safety of the youth as they walk along and cross a street.

*Adult to Child Ratio:* Follow staff to youth ratios noted in the above section, "Program Guidelines." One employee will lead the youth, and if there is another adult, that adult (can be employee or volunteer) will walk behind the last child. The youth will line up in pairs. For youth ages 5 or below, the children will line up in pairs and will each hold onto the rope. If there are more than 12 children, the other adults will be interspersed among the children.

*Walking Along and Crossing a Street:*

- Walk on sidewalks or paths. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible. No running is allowed.
- Cross at an intersection or crosswalk, if available. Stop at the curb, the edge of the road, or the corner before proceeding. Look left, then right, then left again for traffic in all directions. If you see a car, wait until it goes by. Then look left, right, left again.
- Don't enter the street from between cars or from behind bushes or shrubs. Darting into the street accounts for the majority of child pedestrian fatalities.
- Understand and obey all traffic signals and markings. A flashing "WALK" sign is not an automatic "go" signal. It means a pedestrian has permission to cross but must first stop and look both ways for cars.
- A flashing DON'T WALK signal means you should not start to cross the street. However, if you have already started crossing when it begins flashing, continue walking.
- If you see a steady DON'T WALK signal, don't begin to cross the street. Wait for the next WALK signal.



- Look left, right and left again when crossing, and keep looking as you cross. Walk, do not run, across the street.
- Be a safe pedestrian around cars. Watch for cars that are turning or backing up.
- If a car is parked where you are crossing, look to make sure there is no driver and the car is not running. Then go to the edge of the car and look left-right-left to see if cars are coming.

*Additional Guidelines:*

- All of the adults must be on alert. At no time should the supervising adults be on their cell phone, listening to music, or participating in any other distraction that may lead to the harm of a child.
- Remember, this is an excellent opportunity to educate the children about pedestrian safety. All adults should serve as a safe and responsible role model for the children.
- If a child runs away from the group, one adult will go after the child. The remaining adult(s) will make a determination if it is safe to proceed to their destination. If the adults decide it is not safe to proceed, they will immediately call for additional help. The employee involved will document the incident on the Incident Form.

## ACCIDENTS AND ILLNESS

Parents or guardians shall be notified immediately of any illness or injury to the participant, especially head injuries. If the parents or persons designated in case of an emergency, serious illness, or injury cannot be reached, DCE youth program employees will contact those individuals designated on the participant's enrollment form. If those designated individuals cannot be reached or do not arrive to the program site by the time a participant must be transported by ambulance to a hospital, a DCE youth program employee must accompany the child to the hospital. The DCE youth program employees witnessing the illness or injury must document the incident on the [Incident Form](#) and place it in the child's file. If the incident requires further medical attention a copy must be sent to the vice provost. The program director must notify the vice provost immediately in the event of an emergency.

## EMERGENCIES

During an emergency, remain calm, use common sense and give assistance as needed. Here are specific steps you can take to stay safe during an emergency:

- Call the VCU Police at (804) 828-1234 or the Richmond Police by dialing 911.
- Evacuate buildings immediately upon fire alarm activation or upon request of authorities.
- Shelter in place upon hearing a campus siren or upon seeing activation of an Alertus warning device.
- Know the location of at least two emergency exits close to your working/living areas.

### What not to do in an emergency

- In order to keep lines open, do not use the telephone except to report the emergency situation.
- Do not use elevators.
- Do not jeopardize your life and the lives of others by attempting to save property.

Please note all VCU personnel are reminded to report any suspicious activities to the VCU Police as well as to local law enforcement. VCU has procedures in place to report to city, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

For more information on do's and don'ts of specific emergencies, please see <http://alert.vcu.edu/know/emergency.php>

## HANDLING OF BLOOD SPILLS OR OTHER BODY FLUIDS

Some diseases, e.g., AIDS/HIV infections and Hepatitis B, can be spread by contact with blood and blood products. Although the chance of spreading these diseases in the youth program setting is very low, precautions must be taken in the handling of blood and body fluids, or items soiled with blood or body fluids, in all youth program settings. These guidelines must be followed whether the person whose blood or body fluids have spilled is known to have the infection or not. All incidents must be immediately documented on the "Incident Form" and a copy sent to the vice provost. If the incident involves a child, the parent/guardian must be immediately notified by the program director and a copy of the Incident Form placed in the child's file.

All DCE youth programs will have a supply of non-latex gloves (universal size is acceptable) and a bottle of spray disinfectant (e.g. Clorox, Lysol, CaviCide, etc.). General precautions to be followed for all children, employees, and volunteers:

- Employees and volunteers should wash hands before and after involvement in the hygiene of all individuals.
- Disposable gloves must be worn by employees who are handling items soiled with blood or body fluids (such as urine, feces, saliva, or vomit).
- Gloves must be worn when caring for oozing lesions that cannot be covered or when the employee has open skin lesions.
- When a blood spill occurs, or feces, vomit, urine, or saliva contaminate a surface, spray a disinfectant on the area and dry the area with paper towels and then dispose. The person doing this should wear disposable gloves and wash his/her hands after removing gloves.
- All items soiled with blood or body fluids should be sealed in plastic containers and disposed of with no additional precautions.
- All sharp items (scissors, knives, woodworking tools, etc.) that have been soiled with blood should be thoroughly cleaned with a disinfectant.

*Exposure to blood or secretions:* If an employee, volunteer or participant is bitten by a person (and the bite breaks the skin) or cut by a contaminated sharp object that results in a bleeding wound, the wound should be encouraged to bleed. The site of the contact should be thoroughly cleansed with water and soap as soon as possible. If an employee, volunteer or child has contaminated blood splashed on the mouth or eyes, the exposed site should be thoroughly rinsed with water as soon as possible. Anyone exposed to blood or secretions is encouraged to receive a medical evaluation.

## RELEASES AND FORMS

Releases and forms are a critical way to communicate information between the DCE youth programs and the parents/guardians of the youth who attend the programs. They allow for the parents/guardians to authorize their child(ren)'s participation in the youth program and associated activities. They also enable the parent/guardian to provide the employees of the DCE youth programs necessary information about the child's health, etc.

- All participants must have a new permission form, media release and enrollment form completed each year, regardless if the child participated the previous year.
- All participants must have a “Parent Permission Form” signed in order to participate in the program. Both sections of the “Parent Permission Form” must be signed for all participants. All permission forms must be kept in the child’s file.
- A parent/guardian has the right to decline to sign the “Media Release Form” and his/her child is allowed to participate in the program. If a parent/guardian declines to sign a media release, the program director must write the child’s name on a media release form, write “Decline” across it, and place it in the child’s file. Every child must have a media release form in his/her file. The program director must maintain a list of all children whose parent/guardian declined to sign the media release form that is visible to all employees.
- All participants must have a completed “Enrollment Form” for their respective program. An enrollment form must contain at a minimum the following information: child’s name, DOB, grade, gender, parent/guardian’s name, relation to child, address, home phone, work phone, cell phone, email address, two emergency contacts (include name, relation to child, phone), list of persons authorized to pick up child, medical conditions and medications, allergies (medical, environmental, and food), and special accommodations. All enrollment forms must be kept in the child’s file, and the file must be accessible to program employees in order to obtain emergency contact information if necessary.
- Child files, which include releases, enrollment forms, and any other documentation, must be kept for a minimum of 5 years.
- If a child is participating in a DCE youth program as a part of a contracted service, the aforementioned forms are not required; however the host agency will provide the DCE youth program with a copy of each child’s enrollment form and media release form.

## MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENTS (MOA)

Unless a contract is in place, each program will have a MOA with each partner outlining the goals and objectives of the program and the responsibilities of each partner.

## Related Documents

1. Safety and Protection of Minors: [www.policy.vcu.edu](http://www.policy.vcu.edu) [direct link]
2. Criminal Conviction Investigations: [www.policy.vcu.edu](http://www.policy.vcu.edu) [direct link]
3. Minimum Requirements for Individuals Engaged in Programs & Activities Involving Minors
4. Vehicle Accident Safety Policy, <http://policy.vcu.edu/sites/default/files/Vehicle%20Accident%20Prevention%20and%20Safety%20Policy.pdf>
5. **Volunteer Documents:** Information Sheet, Volunteer Release of Liability, Volunteer Statement of Disclosure
6. Incident Form
7. Parent Permission Form
8. Media Release form
9. Enrollment Form
10. Permission to Administer Medication Form
11. Guidelines for Faculty and Staff Use of Communication Media ([http://www.hr.vcu.edu/pdf\\_docs/Communication\\_Media\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.hr.vcu.edu/pdf_docs/Communication_Media_guidelines.pdf))
12. Computer and Network Resources Use Policy (#3409) (<http://www.ts.vcu.edu/askit/3409.html>)
13. Food Allergy Action Plan (<http://www.foodallergy.org/files/FAAP.pdf>)

## More Resources

1. VCU Safety and Protection of Minors Policy Online Training, {Insert Link Here}
2. Criminal History Record Name Search Request Form, <http://www.vsp.state.va.us/FormsPublications.shtm>
3. Verified Volunteers Background Check Platform, <http://mfyc.vcu.edu/youth-on-campus/background-checks/>
4. Sample Communication and Notification Plan, <http://mfyc.vcu.edu/media/community-engagement/mary-frances-youth-center/spm/MFYCCommunicationandNotificationPlan.pdf>
5. Mandated Reporting
  - a. VA Mandated Reporting Law, <http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title63.2/chapter15/section63.2-1509/>
  - b. Department of Social Services Mandated Reporting Training, [http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated\\_reporters/cws5692/index.htm](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated_reporters/cws5692/index.htm)
6. Staff to Youth Ratio:
  - a. Department of Social Services, [http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro\\_page/code\\_regulations/regulations/standards.pdf](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro_page/code_regulations/regulations/standards.pdf)
  - b. American Camp Association, <http://www.acacamps.org/media-center/how-to-choose/safetytips>