

**What is this policy?**

Whether you are a faculty member, staff member, student, or volunteer working with minors entrusted to the university’s care, each of us have an important role. Together, we share the responsibility of providing enriching experiences for the nearly half a million minors who participate in more than 600 programs sponsored by the university each year.

The purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and welfare of minors who participate in these activities and programs. To support the protection of minors, this policy outlines what is required of personnel and volunteers who work in activities and programs with minors and informs individuals of their reporting obligations in instances of known or suspected abuse or neglect of minors.

*Policy Requirements:*

- Activities and programs must be registered;
- Individuals working in these activities and programs must receive training, know reporting obligations, and sign standards of behavior, all of which are included here; and
- Those with care, custody, or control of minors must successfully complete a background check.

The policy includes an important focus on reporting obligations in instances of known or suspected abuse or neglect of minors.

**Ask your supervisor if you have questions regarding your responsibilities within the policy or view it at <http://hr.osu.edu/policy/policy150.pdf>.**

**What is child abuse?**

When a child has suffered or faces a substantial threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability or condition that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect.

**What are some signs of child abuse?**

You might notice some of these common signs of abuse when working with minors. It is important to remember, however, that not all children will exhibit all of these symptoms. They may exhibit alternative symptoms.

<b>Physical Abuse:</b> any physical injury inflicted other than by accidental means.	<b>Emotional Abuse:</b> a pattern of harmful interactions between an adult and child such as criticizing, belittling, and rejecting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unexplained bruises or burns</li> <li>– Fear of going home</li> <li>– Fear of going with a particular staff member or person</li> <li>– Physical force used to correct behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Not eating or overeating at meals</li> <li>– Extreme nervous habit behaviors</li> <li>– Parent/child interactions using inappropriate language or name calling</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual Abuse:</b> when a person uses power and directly involves the child in any sexual act, involves the child in pornography, or forces the child to witness sexual acts.	<b>Neglect:</b> the failure of an adult to provide for a child’s basic, educational, or medical needs (i.e., food, shelter, supervision, and clothing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unusual sexual knowledge or behavior</li> <li>– Child-to-Child sexual contact</li> <li>– Bruises on inner thighs or other “no touch” areas</li> <li>– Fear of being alone with a particular person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stealing food</li> <li>– Poor shower habits/poor hygiene</li> <li>– Dirty clothes or clothes with numerous stains and/or tears</li> <li>– Low body weight</li> </ul>

**How can I help prevent child abuse?**

- Recognize and understand signs of child abuse. Be alert and act on your suspicions.
- Know the procedure for reporting child abuse.
- Always use proper touches when working with children. Some examples include: hand to shoulder contact, side by side hugs, pats on the

head, high fives, handshakes, eye contact, and smiles.

- Only use physical restraint in situations when a child puts herself/himself or others in danger.
- Minimize high-risk opportunities for child abuse.
- Avoid one adult/one child interactions. Unless pre-approved, don’t be alone in private spaces with a child.
- These tips not only help to protect children, but also yourself from potential false allegations.

**REPORTING**

**YOU MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY**

**If you witness or believe that there is a substantial threat of child abuse**

Under this policy, you are required to *immediately report* all incidents whether you observed them directly, someone reported them to you, or you believe that there is a substantial threat of child abuse.

You may also be a mandated reporter under Ohio law. A complete list of mandated reporters can be found at <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2151.421>.

**2 CALLS: You must report in any of the above circumstances in the following order:**

1. Imminent danger or life-threatening: 911 **or** Non-life threatening: Children Services Agency - 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline at 855-OH-CHILD
2. University Police at 614-292-2121

**1 REPORT:** Complete the **Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, or Neglect Incident Report** form which can be found online at [hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/150abuse.pdf](http://hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/150abuse.pdf).

OSU policy and state statutes may provide protection for those making reports in good faith.



**Standards of Behavior for Employees and Volunteers Working in Activities and Programs with Minor Participants**

*This Standards of Behavior is an agreement accepted by employees/volunteers who work in an activity or program with minor participants. The primary purpose of these standards is to promote the safety and wellbeing of all activity/program participants. Employees/volunteers are expected to function within these standards.*

**I will:**

- Accept supervision and support from professional staff while involved in the activity/program.
- Accept the responsibility to professionally represent the activity/program and The Ohio State University.
- Conduct myself in a courteous and respectful manner, exhibit good sportsmanship and be a positive role model for minors.
- Respect, adhere to and enforce the rules, policies and guidelines established by the activity or program and the university.
- Refrain from engaging in any criminal conduct.
- Comply with all applicable civil rights laws and policies, including and not limited to Ohio State equal opportunity and nondiscrimination policies.

- Perform duties in a responsible and timely manner as outlined in the position description.
- Report any child abuse or neglect in accordance with university policy.
- Self-disclose felony or misdemeanor convictions that occur within three days of pleading guilty or being convicted.
  - If I have been background checked and have had a break of service for less than 12 months, I will disclose any convictions that occurred during the break within three business days of commencement of participation in activities and programs with minors. If the break in service is longer than 12 months, I must be background checked again.
- Not intentionally or purposefully place myself in a situation where I am alone with a minor unless authorized by the dean/vice president (or designee). Approved one-on-one interactions may only take place in open, well-illuminated spaces or rooms observable by other adults from the activity or program. If the dean/vice president (or designee) determines that meeting in this manner is not practicable and approves other arrangements, an exemption request form must be submitted following the exemption process outlined in the policy.

- Not, under any circumstances, physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally abuse or fail to provide the basic necessities of care applicable to the activity/program, such as food or shelter, to participants.
- Endeavor to provide a safe and healthy experience for all participants.
- Report red-flag behaviors to the activity or program administrator of the activity or program with minors that I am working or volunteering in. If I am an activity or program administrator, I will review red flag behaviors and work with those working and volunteering in my activity or program to correct these behaviors.

I have read and understand the standards of behavior outlined above. I understand and agree that any act or omission on my part that contradicts any portion of these standards may be grounds for immediate suspension and/or termination of my employee/volunteer status with The Ohio State University.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee/volunteer printed name Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee/volunteer signature Date

*Please submit this form to activity or program director to retain for their records.*