PROTECTING MINORS AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

GENERAL GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

Cornell University (“University”) is committed to the protection of minors participating in university-sponsored programs. The University does not tolerate abuse or neglect of minors in university-sponsored programs. This document provides guidance to Program Directors and staff responsible for operating programs that serve minors. The Office of Risk Management and Insurance can work with individual programs to develop program-specific guidelines and practices to fit the needs of each program.

SCOPE

The guidelines apply, but are not limited to, faculty, staff, volunteers, graduate and undergraduate students, interns, employees of temporary employment agencies, and/or independent contractors/consultants.

The guidelines apply to programs and activities designed to include minors offered by various academic or administrative units of the University, student organizations, or external groups using University facilities, including but not limited to workshops, camps, residential programs, commuter programs, conferences, internships, and similar activities.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Minor**: Any person under the age of 18 who is not (a) enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a University degree program at the undergraduate, graduate or professional level or (b) an employee of the University.

2. **University Facilities**: Facilities owned by, or under the control of, the University.

3. **Programs**: Programs and activities designed to include Minors offered by various academic or administrative units of the University, student organizations, or external groups using University facilities, including but not limited to workshops, camps, residential programs, commuter programs, conferences, internships, and similar activities. “Programs” does not include: general events open to the public that are not targeted solely to minors, such as sporting events or concerts; the placement of students with external entities, externships for example; the undergraduate admissions application process and related information sessions led by undergraduate student ambassadors (but does include university-sponsored pre-enrollment overnight visits); the employment of persons under the age of 18 by the University; or University research involving participants under the age of 18, which is governed by SOP 11: Informed Consent, Enrollment, and Other Considerations for Research Involving Children and therefore is not addressed in these guidelines.

4. **Registered Programs**: All multi-day Programs, overnight Programs, and Programs run by registered student organizations or external groups. Registered Programs...
must be registered with the Office of Risk Management and Insurance. See Section 3: Program Registration and Information.

5. **Authorized Adult**: Individuals, age 18 or older, paid or unpaid, who interact with, supervise, chaperone, or otherwise oversee minors in University-sponsored program activities and/or residential facilities. This includes but is not limited to faculty, staff, volunteers, graduate and undergraduate students, interns, employees of temporary employment agencies, and independent contractors/consultants. The Authorized Adults’ roles may include positions such as counselors, chaperones, coaches, instructors, etc. Certain Authorized Adults are mandated reporters under New York state law.

**INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS**

**Physical and verbal interactions with minors**: Programs should clearly define appropriate physical and verbal boundaries with minors in program manuals, policies or handbooks, including the following:

1. Appropriate physical and verbal contact between Authorized Adults and minors based on the age of the minor and the nature of the program activities.
2. Authorized Adults participating in Programs shall not touch any minor in a sexual or other inappropriate and/or illegal manner.
3. Authorized Adults participating in programs shall not engage in abusive behavior of any kind – such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, using profanity, or degrading language—toward, or in the presence of, a Minor.
4. Appropriate physical and verbal contact between minors based on the age of the minors and the nature of the program activities.
5. Authorized Adults participating in Programs should not have private, one-on-one contact with Minors, absent exigent circumstances. Any one-on-one interactions should be conducted in a public place or, if in an office or laboratory or other potentially private space, with the door and/or windows open. Another Authorized Adult should be notified about the meeting. Ideally, at least two Authorized Adults would be in the room to eliminate private one-on-one interaction.
6. Authorized Adults participating in Programs should not engage in private telephonic or electronic communications (including all forms of social media) with minors.
7. Authorized adults participating in Programs should not provide minors with gifts.
8. Authorized Adults participating in Programs should not provide alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco or inappropriate sexual materials to any Minor.
9. Authorized Adults participating in Programs should not provide prescription drugs or any medication to Minors unless specifically (1) authorized in writing by the parent or legal guardian as being required for the Minor’s care or the Minor’s emergency treatment or (2) verbally authorized by the parent or legal guardian as allowed under a New York State camp permit.
Transportation: Programs should clearly define transportation procedures in program manuals, policies or handbooks, including the following:

1. Authorized Adults participating in Programs should not provide transportation to a Minor other than the driver’s own child, except as specifically authorized in writing by the Minor’s parent or legal guardian, or when providing transportation is an acknowledged component of a Program as authorized by the person responsible for the Program.
2. At least one Authorized Adult should sit in the front of the vehicle and one should sit in the back of the vehicle, whenever possible.
3. The vehicles should be equipped with mirrors inside the vehicle to eliminate blind-spots.
4. Authorized adults should document attendance every time minors are loaded into a vehicle.

SUPERVISING MINORS

General supervision guidelines: Programs should clearly define practices for supervising minors in program manuals, policies or handbooks, including the following, including the following:

1. Supervisors should ensure that Authorized Adults actively supervise minors during program activities, especially in high-risk locations such as bathrooms, locker rooms, residence hall rooms, offices and other isolated locations.
2. Ensure that Authorized Adult-to-minor ratios follow State of New York ratio requirements. The number of Authorized Adults necessary to ensure adequate supervision will depend on whether the minor participant’s parent or guardian is present, the number and age of participants, the activity(ies) involved, the type of housing if applicable, the age, experience and role of the Authorized Adult, and controlling applicable law (for example, New York State Health Department of Health regulations pertaining to camps).
3. Establish check-in and checkout procedures at the beginning and end of daily program sessions.
4. Provide minors with easily identifiable clothing or lanyards to wear during program activities.
5. Authorized Adults should not be allowed to use cell phones or computers for personal use while supervising minors.

Supervision guidelines in residence halls: Programs offering overnight stays or use of University residence halls should have additional procedures included in program manuals, policies or handbooks, including the following:

1. Age appropriate curfew
2. Guests of participants should be restricted to visitation in common areas and only
during approved hours specified by the program.

3. Compliance with all applicable policies regarding University housing.

4. Supervision plan that includes regularly scheduled and random check-ins on bedrooms. All checks should be documented.

5. Separate accommodations for adults and minors should be required, other than the minors’ parent or guardian or University students hosting high school students in connection with University-sponsored pre-enrollment visits, including prospective athletes.

6. In the case of Authorized Adults supervising minors overnight, Authorized Adults should not enter a Minor’s room without another person present unless exigent circumstances require departure from the practice against private one-on-one contact.

**TRAINING**

**Training Authorized Adults:** Programs should train authorized adults on the policies and procedures established for the program.

1. Authorized Adults should complete first aid and medical training requirements prior to having access to minors.

2. Authorized Adults should complete mandatory reporter training prior to having access to minors.

3. Authorized Adults should be trained on how to identify suspicious and abusive behaviors, including behaviors exhibited by adults towards minors, between minors and how to prevent false allegations.

**SCREENING AUTHORIZED ADULTS**

University Policy 6.6.2 describes the reference check and information verification procedures for working with minors. Positions that require working with minors and present the possibility of care, supervision, guidance, or control of minors are considered “Designated Positions.” Designated Positions receive additional scrutiny during the reference check and information verification process than other positions. Please see University Policy 6.6.2 – Reference Checking and Information Verification for more information. Here is a link to the policy: [https://www.dfa.cornell.edu/policy/policies/reference-checking-and-information-verification](https://www.dfa.cornell.edu/policy/policies/reference-checking-and-information-verification).

**REPORTING**

**Mandatory Reporting:** Authorized adults who are mandatory reporters should be aware of their obligation, and know how to report suspicious behaviors and suspected abuse.

1. New York state law mandates that certain professionals report suspected child abuse or maltreatment when they reasonably suspect abuse or maltreatment while acting in their professional capacity. State law defines child abuse or maltreatment as an act,
or failure to act, by any parent or caretaker responsible for a child under the age of 18.

2. Many Authorized Adults are mandated reporters under New York state law, including counselors, coaches of sports camps, and day care workers. The entire current list of mandated reporters can be found in Article 6 Title 6, Section 413 of the New York State Social Services Law.

3. All Authorized Adults who are mandated reporters have an affirmative duty to do the following:

4. Make an oral report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment to the NYS Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) by calling 1-800-635-1522, and immediately notify the Chief of the Cornell University Police Department by calling 607-255-1111. This affirmative duty extends to suspected abuse of any child under the age of 18, not just Minors as defined in these guidelines.

5. Authorized Adults should also immediately report suspicious activity to their immediate supervisor.

PROGRAM REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION

1. Registered Programs must register with Risk Management no later than two-weeks prior to the commencement of the Registered Program. There are two ways to register: (1) when submitting an Event Registration form (UUP), or (2) simply by emailing Risk Management at risk_mgmt@cornell.edu.

2. Units sponsoring Registered Programs and/or units responsible for University Facilities housing Registered Programs must maintain an up-to-date inventory for each such program. That inventory must include each Registered Program’s dates, times, location, and attendance (age range and number of participants). With regard to Minor participants, the inventory must include a list of all such Minor participants (including gender, age, address, and phone number(s) of a parent or legal guardian), if known, their local room assignment, if applicable, as well as emergency contact information. Prior to the commencement of the Registered Program, the Program must provide Risk Management, the Cornell University Police Department and Cornell Health with the phone number of an Authorized Adult who can be contacted at that phone number, and access the inventory, at any time when the Registered Program is in session (24/7 for overnight Registered Programs). (Note: inventory requirement can be delegated to external organization using University Facility)

3. Registered Programs must obtain all media releases and assumption of risk forms, if applicable, as a part of the registration process.

4. Registered programs must complete a thorough reference check and information verification on all applicants that will work with minors. Please see University Policy 6.6.2 – Reference Checking and Information Verification for more information. Here is a link to the policy: https://www.dfa.cornell.edu/policy/policies/reference-checking-and-information-verification.

5. Registered programs should comply with New York State’s laws governing the
HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

1. Programs in which Minors participate, in whole or in part, without a parent, legal
guardian or chaperone present must provide written information to parents and
legal guardians detailing the manner in which a Minor participant can be contacted
during the Program.

2. Programs in which Minors participate, in whole or in part, without a parent, legal
guardian or chaperone present are also required to establish procedures for the
notification of a Minor participant’s parent or guardian in case of an emergency,
including medical or behavioral problems, natural disasters, or other significant
program disruptions. Authorized Adults with the Program, as well as participants and
their parents or legal guardians, must be advised of this procedure in writing
prior to the participation of Minors in the Program.

3. Programs in which Minors participate, in whole or in part, without a parent, legal
guardian, or chaperone present must provide and collect appropriate medical
treatment authorization forms and other appropriate forms regarding administration of
medication. Note that authorization forms must be presented to health care providers
before medical treatment can be administered. Programs are asked to consult with
Risk Management and Cornell Health to determine what authorizations, if any, are
appropriate for the Program, how administration of medication will be managed, and
whether the Program must comply with New York state health laws.

4. Programs in which Minors participate, in whole or in part, without a parent, legal
guardian or chaperone present must assign a staff member who is at least 21 years of
age to be accessible to participants. In the case of residential Programs, that same staff
member or an additional staff member who is at least 21 years of age must reside
in University housing with Minor Program participants, and be accessible to
participants. [Note: RHDs would meet this requirement for residential Programs,
including pre- enrollment visits.

EXTERNALLY-SPONSORED PROGRAMS HELD ON CAMPUS

1. Contractual agreements with external organizations for the use of University facilities
in connection with a Program should include compliance with these guidelines as a
material term of the contract. Such contracts should also include an indemnification
provision in which the University is held harmless for acts or omissions arising from
or related to the Program. The contracts should also include an agreement that the
external organization will submit proof of liability insurance upon request.

employment of minors. Here is a link to the website:
https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/laborstandards/workprot/minors.shtm
CONTACTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please contact the Office of Risk Management Insurance for additional guidance and answers to questions.

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