

DOs and DON'Ts of Working with Minors

DOs:

- Maintain the highest standards of personal behavior at all times when interacting with minors.
- Whenever possible, try to have another adult present when you are working with minors in an unsupervised setting. Conduct necessary interactions with minors in a public environment where you can be observed.
- Listen to and interact with minors and provide appropriate praise and positive reinforcement.
- Treat all minors in a group consistently and fairly, and with respect and dignity.
- Be friendly with minors within the context of the formal program or activity while maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- Maintain professional discipline and discourage inappropriate behavior by minors, consulting with your supervisors if you need help with misbehaving youth.
- Be aware of how your actions and intentions might be perceived and could be misinterpreted.
- Consult with other adult supervisors or colleagues when you feel uncertain about a situation.

DON'Ts:

- Don't spend time alone with one minor away from the group or conduct private interactions with minors in enclosed spaces or behind closed doors.
- Don't engage in inappropriate touching or have any physical contact with a minor in private locations.
- Don't use inappropriate language, tell risqué jokes, or make sexually suggestive comments around minors, even if minors themselves are doing so.
- Don't give personal gifts to, or do special favors for, a minor or do things that may be seen as favoring one minor over others.
- Don't share information with minors about your private life or have informal or purely social contact with minor program participants outside of program activities.
- Don't strike or hit a minor, or use corporal punishment or other punishment involving physical pain or discomfort.
- Don't relate to minors as if they were peers, conduct private correspondence, or take on the role of "confidant" (outside of a professional counseling relationship).
- Don't date or become romantically or sexually involved with a minor. Don't engage in intimate displays of affection with others in the presence of minors. Don't show pornography to minors or involve minors in pornographic activities.
- Don't privately email, text, or engage with minors through social media. Group messages and posts are acceptable and must be viewable by all participants.
- Don't provide alcohol or drugs to minors, or use them in the presence of minors.
- Don't permit hazing, harassment, or any type of bullying behavior, including cyber-bullying.