

ESTABLISHING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

1. Adults should work with young people in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter. (NOT behind closed or locked doors.)
2. Be aware that while spending time alone with a single youth can be positive and helpful, it may also create reasons for concern.
3. Always welcome and encourage parents and guardians to attend meetings and events.
4. Respect privacy of youth especially when clothes are changed or showers are taken. Adults should get involved when there is a health or safety issue.
5. Be alert to the physical and emotional health of the young people you work with.
6. Never use physical punishment.
7. Never deny basic necessities, such as food, shelter or medical care.
8. One unrelated adult should not be lodged with one youth during an overnight stay.
9. There shall be a minimum of one responsible adult (at least age 18) for every 10 youth for any events including an overnight stay. This is consistent with national 4-H guidelines (12/1/93). (Younger children usually require a higher ratio of adults to youth.)

The following policies and processes are best youth development practices and are designed to protect youth, adults, families and the organization.

Participation Form – Health Form; Media Release; Code of Conduct

Every youth and adult participant must complete a “Participant Form,” and have it available on file at an Extension program. The Participant Form includes a Health Form; a Media Release Form; and Code of Conduct. This information is important to the health, care, and well-being of the individual if an emergency occurs.

Every adult is expected to function within the guidelines of the “Adult Agreement” while working in an Extension program role, or when supervising youth.

Insurance

Personal Liability

It is important that every adult act in a reasonable and prudent manner when working with youth. A reasonable and prudent person will use this document to understand personal obligations and responsibilities related to promoting the well-being of youth in Extension programs.

It is critical that the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and staff who work with youth, be documented in written form before an accident happens. Extension volunteers and staff must record activities and related plans through participation rosters; job descriptions; and/or reports.

A volunteer is protected under the Florida law, if the volunteer:

- Is acting in a reasonable and prudent manner;
- Is enrolled or registered, as a volunteer with a local or state Extension program;
- Is functioning within a role sanctioned for a youth program of the University of Florida, IFAS Extension programs;
- Understands he/she is acting on behalf of the University of Florida at this activity.

Automobile Liability

Volunteers need to rely on their own vehicle insurance policies when working with a youth program. It is recommended that all volunteers and staff review their personal property liability coverage and consider a personal/family umbrella liability policy.

Safe Operation of Motor Vehicles, Machinery and Equipment

Anyone who transports youth to participate in Extension youth program activities and events must possess a valid motor vehicle operator's license. Volunteers must also have liability insurance coverage to meet minimum state law.

Adults are role models. Adults are responsible for the safety of youth they work with and influence the development of lifelong safety habits in youth program participants. Adults need to use safe practices and common sense when equipment, lawn and garden equipment, chemicals, pesticides, and/or shooting equipment. Protective clothing (helmets, ear and eye protection, etc.) should be used as appropriate for the situation.

Safe Handling and Care of Animals

Adults and youth in Extension programs are often involved in situations where animals are present and/or part of the learning environment. Extension volunteers and staff are expected to handle animals in a responsible manner and prevent physical mistreatment. In addition, Extension volunteers and staff will teach youth appropriate animal care practices. Some specific animal care practices include:

- Providing animals with clean, fresh water and sufficient food.
- Keeping the animal cage or stall, by cleaning and disposing waste frequently.
- Supplying adequate shelter and bedding.
- Using approved handling procedures.

Anti-Discrimination Policies

Using the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent legislation as a guide, Extension volunteers and staff will plan, promote, and implement programs to meet the needs of all youth and adults. **Those who represent the University of Florida must ensure programs are equally accessible to anyone who wants to participate, without regard for race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation or handicap.**

The intent of Affirmative Action is to strengthen and expand Extension youth program opportunities to all youth and volunteers, particularly those who have not had full access to programs in the past. In addition, it ensures that programs are being fairly and equally delivered to the people who have funded them. Inclusion of diverse participation brings varied perspectives and experiences, which enriches learning and developing life skills necessary to live in a multi-cultural society.