

VCU Youth Program Staff Code of Conduct

Individuals interacting with minors in a youth program conducted by VCU or on VCU's campus must comply with the following conduct expectations in order to provide a safe environment for minor participants.

VCU youth program staff members are expected to:

General Conduct

- Demonstrate civility, respect, decency, and sensitivity in their communication with all participants and their parents/guardians.
- Conduct themselves with the highest standard of moral and ethical behavior.
- Treat all youth equitably: fairly and consistently, regardless of their actions or behavior, sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, culture, place of birth, age, class, ability, health, citizenship, language, or other identities.
- Address problems that are brought to their attention and report incidents as mandated (see VCU [policy](#)).
- Inform the Program Supervisor of any criminal convictions and, if transporting minors, any traffic violations accrued since their most recent background check (see VCU [policy](#)).
- Create an atmosphere where youth feel empowered to tell adults about any boundary violations, harm, or uncomfortable situations they experience or observe.

Boundaries with Minor Participants

- Prior to the start of the program, disclose to the program supervisor any pre-existing personal relationships (child, sibling, etc.) with a participating minor. For the duration of their affiliation with this program, the program staff member will follow these university conduct standards for all minors, regardless of pre-existing personal relationships. Any exceptions (ex. transporting their own child in a car) should be cleared in advance with the program supervisor.
- Immediately disclose to the Program Supervisor if they are the recipient of any inappropriate interactions from a minor, including physical assault, inappropriate physical or sexual touch, or the recipient of a gift from a minor.

Interactions with Minor Participants

- All contact with minors must be observable and interruptible, and whenever possible, include at least one other authorized program staff member.
- Be mindful of maintaining appropriate authorized adult-to-minor ratios throughout the program.
- Report any incident (injury or illness, accident, program rules violations, or other event that poses a threat to safety or health of a minor) immediately to the Program Supervisor.
- Engage in virtual programs with the same professionalism as in-person programs, including appropriate clothing and awareness of appropriate video backgrounds.
- Include another program staff member or a parent/guardian in any direct electronic communication with a minor.
- Monitor interactions among minors and take steps to address the following types of inappropriate conduct: bullying; hazing; derogatory name-calling; ridicule or humiliation; sexual harassment or touching; harassment or discrimination.
- Not knowingly friend/follow or otherwise engage with participants on social media from non-VCU group pages or accounts.

Prohibited Behaviors:

- Engaging in any form of physical or emotional abuse of a minor. This includes withholding food, water, or access to the restroom as a form of punishment.
- Engaging in sexually inappropriate conduct of any kind toward or in the presence of a minor, including but not limited to:
 - Sexual abuse of a minor;
 - Touching a minor in an inappropriate or illegal manner;
 - Dating or any other romantic involvement with a minor;
 - Making pornography or other sexually inappropriate materials in any form available to a minor or assisting a minor in gaining access to such materials.
- Neglecting the duty of care for a minor under your supervision, including but not limited to:
 - Failing to protect a minor's health and safety (e.g. exposure to unreasonable risk of injury or extreme weather);
 - Failing to ensure the use of appropriate protective equipment (e.g. in laboratory or athletic participation);
 - Leaving a minor consistently unsupervised;
- Bullying (including cyberbullying), harassing, or using derogatory, demeaning, vulgar, or humiliating language towards another person or group of people. This includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about program staff or participants online.
- Engaging in inappropriate physical contact with minors, including but not limited to: kissing, full-frontal hugs, lap sitting for children older than preschool age, massages or rubs, piggyback rides, tickling, wrestling, touches on the buttocks, chest, upper leg, or groin; any touching conducted in private, or any contact unwanted by the minor.
- Showering, bathing, or dressing with or in the presence of minors.
- Engaging in one-on-one contact with a minor unless authorized by the Program Supervisor.
- Possessing during the program, allowing to be visible on video during program activities, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, vapes, marijuana, illegal drugs, or weapons.
- Enabling, facilitating, or failing to appropriately address a minor's use of alcohol or illegal/non-prescribed drugs.
- Sharing details about your personal life with or in front of minors, including stories about partying, drinking or drug use, or sexual activity.
- Contacting a minor participant through electronic media or messaging a minor privately for any reason outside of direct program needs, including after the program's conclusion.
- Saving participants' confidential information on any personal electronic devices.
- Taking a photo or video of a minor or a screenshot or recording during a virtual program that includes the image, voice, or personal information of a minor for any reason other than direct program needs, and only if the minor's parent or guardian has signed a media release waiver.
- Offering or making a gift to a minor for the purpose of engaging in any prohibited conduct, including sexual conduct.
- Picking up or dropping off minors from their homes before, during, or after the program.
- Any other behavior prohibited by VCU policies (see [VCU Code of Conduct](#)).

All violations of this code of conduct should be reported through a [Youth Program Incident Report](#) and any other applicable reports (law enforcement, Title IX, etc.). Violation of this Youth Program Staff Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the position as Program Staff.

