



Youth Program Parent and Participant Handbook

Youth Protection Program:

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo is committed to ensuring the safety of Youth on our campus, in Cal Poly programs, and within our community. This handbook outlines the screening, selection, and training processes for staff and volunteers, along with key policies and practices we employ to protect Youth participants.

Screening, Selection, and Training:

Offenders often act in predictable ways and effective training can provide staff and volunteers with the information needed to identify high-risk patterns of behavior and high-risk program characteristics.

All staff and volunteers must submit an application to the Program Coordinator or Director indicating their request to work with a youth program. Staff and Volunteers are required to provide at least one personal reference and two professional references on their application, and will have a face-to-face interview, background check, and references checked prior to any interaction with Youth.

Before interacting with Youth, all individuals are required to complete training on recognizing and responding to signs of abuse, understanding appropriate behavior, and maintaining a safe environment. Training modules are available through CSU Learn and Praesidium Academy.

Program Staff Code of Conduct:

Our Youth Protection Code of Conduct sets forth clear expectations for staff behavior when interacting with Youth. Staff and volunteers must treat all Youth with respect, prohibiting engagement in any kind of abuse, whether sexual, verbal, physical, or mental. One-on-one interactions must take place in open, observable settings, and private meetings outside of established program activities are prohibited without prior consent from a Youth's parent or guardian.

Adult-to-Youth Supervision Ratios:

Specific Adult-to-Youth ratios help define the level of supervision necessary to be effective and safe. Ratios also enable staff, volunteers, and supervisors to easily identify when additional personnel are necessary.

	Adult to Youth Minimum Ratios	
Age of Youth	Day Program	Overnight Program
4-5	1:6	1:5
6-8	1:8	1:6
9-14	1:10	1:8
15-17	1:12	1:10

Digital Communication and Safety:

Cal Poly’s Youth Protection Program includes specific guidelines for interacting with Youth through digital channels to ensure a safe and professional environment.

- **Email:** All communication with Youth must be conducted through Cal Poly-issued email accounts. Personal email addresses should not be used for program-related correspondence.
- **Social Media:** Program staff and volunteers are prohibited from communicating with Youth on social media platforms, except through official Cal Poly or auxiliary-owned accounts.
- **Personal Accounts:** Staff and volunteers are not permitted to use their personal social media or communication accounts to interact with Youth. All digital interactions should be conducted through approved, program-related channels to maintain appropriate boundaries and transparency.

These guidelines are in place to ensure that all digital communication remains professional, secure, and in alignment with Cal Poly’s commitment to Youth safety.

Reporting Incidents and Areas of Concern:

Reporting is a proactive approach to safety. Cal Poly encourages anyone to speak up if they encounter an unusual or concerning event. Reporting early ensures that issues can be addressed quickly and effectively, before any harm occurs.

These types of concerns related to Youth programs at Cal Poly can be reported by contacting Youth Protection Programs at (805) 756-0842 or by emailing us at youthprograms@calpoly.edu, and/or submitting the [Youth Program Incident/Accident form](#).

All individuals involved with Youth programs are mandated to report any suspected abuse or policy violations. Cal Poly adheres to California's Executive Order 1083, requiring that suspected child abuse be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities. Youth Program Coordinators are available to assist with any concerns or reports related to the program.

Youth Code of Conduct:

Abuse or Mistreatment:

Cal Poly's top priority is Youth safety. Any form of abuse or mistreatment of Youth, staff, and volunteers is prohibited. Youth shall not abuse or mistreat staff, volunteers, or other Youth in any way. Use of abusive language, obscene or profane language, including racial, religious, gender

identity or sexual references directed at other people will not be tolerated. It is important to treat others as you would like to be treated.

Youth shall not engage in the verbal or emotional abuse or mistreatment of other Youth, staff, or volunteers.

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions for Youth</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions for Youth</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Bullying • Ridicule or Humiliation • Discussing sexual encounters • Cursing • Hazing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate other youth • Derogatory remarks about another youth or their family • Inappropriate games like <i>Truth or Dare</i> and <i>Never Have I Ever</i>

Youth shall not engage in the physical abuse or mistreatment of other Youth, staff, or volunteers.

<i>Appropriate Physical Interactions for Youth</i>	<i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions for Youth</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Verbal praise • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated areas • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Exposing oneself • Any type of massage given by or to youth • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the staff or volunteer • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting • Spanking • Shaking • Slapping • Unnecessary restraints • Viewing or showing others pornographic materials
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Personal Relationships:

Appropriate personal relationships between Youth are encouraged. However, Cal Poly strongly discourages romantic relationships between Youth while in programming. Youth are not permitted to hold hands, sit on others’ laps, use full-frontal hugs, or kiss other Youth while in programming.

There should never be, under any condition, a romantic or otherwise personal relationship between a Youth and a staff member or volunteer.

One-on-one Interactions:

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a Youth, or when a Youth is alone with another Youth. Cal Poly aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by Cal Poly administration.

If you observe one-on-one interactions between staff or volunteers and Youth, you should report this to the Cal Poly Youth Protection Program, at (805) 756-0842 or by emailing us at youthprograms@calpoly.edu, and/or submitting the [Youth Program Incident/Accident Form](#).

Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco:

Possession and/or use of alcoholic beverages, drugs and tobacco products while on the Cal Poly campus or engaged in any Cal Poly programming is strictly prohibited.

Youth will not be permitted to participate in any program while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or illicit substances. Possession of these substances will result in confiscation and/or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program. Parents/guardians will be notified as appropriate.

Weapons:

Cal Poly should be a safe place for Youth, staff, and volunteers. Weapons and items that may be considered weapons are prohibited. This includes laser pointers. Possession of these items will result in confiscation and/or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program. Parents/guardians, and/or the authorities will be notified as appropriate.

Violence:

Cal Poly seeks to provide a safe environment for Youth, staff, and volunteers in our community. Violence and threats of violence including but not limited to destruction of property, bullying, physical fighting, and assault, will not be tolerated at Cal Poly, on our campus, in campus facilities, in other facilities being utilized by Cal Poly, or during Cal Poly sponsored activities and events.

Staff are available to assist in the resolution of differences. Engaging in violence will result in disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program. Parents/guardians will be notified as appropriate.

Disruptive Behavior:

Inappropriate or disruptive behavior is not permitted at Cal Poly programs. This includes, but is not limited to graffiti, littering, spitting, or throwing objects that could intentionally or unintentionally harm others or cause disorder. Engaging in disruptive behavior will result in disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program. Parents/guardians will be notified as appropriate.

Bullying:

Cal Poly will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one Youth by another Youth. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms including:

Physical bullying – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.

Verbal bullying – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful name.

Nonverbal or relational bullying – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.

Cyberbullying – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
- Pretending to be someone else to make that person look bad; and
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
- Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that

involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all Youth, staff, and volunteers. Engaging or participating in bullying will result in disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program. Parents/guardians will be notified as appropriate.

Reporting:

Cal Poly is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, thus it is imperative that everyone, including Youth, actively participate in creating a safe environment and Youth protection. If any one Youth, staff, or volunteer observes suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations by a Youth, staff, or volunteer that person must report their observations. Reports will be taken seriously.

Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Staff/Volunteers and Youth

- Violation of this policy or any abuse prevention policies outlined by Cal Poly.
- Seeking private time or one-on-one time with youth
- Buying gifts for individual youth
- Making suggestive comments to youth
- Picking favorites

Youth are encouraged to report concerns or complaints about Youth, staff, or volunteers to a program supervisor, or directly to the Youth Protection Program, at (805) 756-0842 or by emailing us at youthprograms@calpoly.edu.

Methods for Maintaining Ongoing Awareness of Abuse Risk and Prevention

Research has shown that repeated training sessions and reinforcement activities are essential for both changing behavior and sustaining those changes over the long term. To ensure ongoing awareness and effective implementation of abuse prevention policies, we employ a variety of methods designed to keep abuse prevention at the forefront of our activities.

Ongoing Training and Web-Based Learning:

- **Webinars and Webcasts:** Cal Poly provides cost-effective abuse prevention training through webinars, webcasts, and computer-based courses. These platforms allow employees and volunteers to receive relevant training on a flexible schedule, ensuring that the information is easily accessible and regularly updated.
- **CSU Learn and Praesidium Academy:** All required training modules are available through the CSU Learn and Praesidium Academy platforms. These platforms offer a variety of training topics, including:
 - Keeping Your Higher Ed Program Safe (Praesidium)
 - Preventing Bullying (Praesidium)

- Preventing Sexual Activity Between Young Children (Praesidium)
- Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse (United Educators)
- Gender Equity and Title IX (United Educators)
- Additional camp-specific training modules
- **Tracking and Compliance:** Youth Program Coordinators will submit a list of program personnel to the Civil Rights & Compliance Office (CRCO), which will assign required training via the platforms. Coordinators will have access to track the progress of training completion. All trainings must be completed before employees are allowed to interact with Youth.

Recommended Reading for Young Children and their Parents/Guardians

We are committed to fostering a safe and supportive environment for all Youth participants. To help empower both Youth and their families, we recommend these carefully selected books, which provide valuable lessons on personal safety, healthy boundaries, and how to recognize and respond to inappropriate behaviors.

If Only I had a Green Nose, by Max Lucado

Theme: Self-esteem, self-acceptance, peer pressure, bullying

Age range: K-8th

Summary: Punchinello is a Wemmick who falls into the trap of peer pressure. Once he stops visiting his maker, he becomes desperate to get a green nose like everyone else. The popular green nose then changed to red, then blue, and so on. Punchinello becomes tired of trying to fit in and becomes sad. His friend, Lucia, lets him know that his maker asks about him every day. He decides to go back to see his master, Eli, and he helps Punchinello be the Wemmick that he made him to be.

Impatient Pamela Calls 9-1-1, by Mary Koski

Theme: Calling for help, patience, and knowing important information

Age range: 1st-4th

Summary: This book teaches a very important lesson about when to call 911 for help. It also stresses the importance of learning pertinent information such as your home address.

Throughout, the book stresses the importance of being patient and waiting to call 911 until there is truly an emergency.

Little Monkey's One Safe Place, by Richard Edwards

Theme: A safe place for children

Age range: K-3rd

Summary: Little monkey searches through the jungle for the one place where he can be safe. He found his one safe place in his mother's arms. This book can help you talk with children about safety, whether it is in the arms of a parent/guardian or in the arms of someone else. This book helps adults work with kids on helping them locate a place where someone makes them feel secure and loved.

My Body is Private, by Linda Girard

Theme: Appropriate touching

Age range: 1st- 5th

Summary: A mother-child conversation introduces the topic of sexual abuse and ways to keep one's body private. The book respects readers' intelligence by using the proper terminology for genitalia and the generic term "bottom" to mean the buttocks. This book is a good teaching tool for discussion of a serious topic. It is one that all ages would find beneficial. Gray areas such as tickling are explored. Tickling can be fun, but it can also go too far where the one being tickled is not enjoying it. That is another example of when to demand that a certain "touch" or tactile activity be stopped. The children are well within their rights to do so at any time. Hugs and kisses are described as generally being welcome and acceptable, but children should not be forced to kiss or endure being kissed by someone who makes them feel uncomfortable.

Something Happened and I'm Scared to Tell, by Patricia Kehoe

Theme: Sexual Abuse

Age range: 1st- 4th

Summary: This book takes an honest approach to the subject and, more importantly, emphasizes that the blame for sexual abuse belongs to the perpetrator not the victim. Many victims have been groomed to believe the opposite and need this message.

Cal Poly Parent/Guardian Participant Agreement:

This agreement must be signed by a parent or guardian prior to Youth participation, linked on the Youth Protection website.

<https://afd.calpoly.edu/risk-management/youth/program-directors>

Liability Waiver Form:

This agreement must also be signed by a parent or guardian prior to Youth participating in a Cal Poly sponsored activity.

<https://afd.calpoly.edu/risk-management/releases>