

The Boys & Girls Club of McAlester Inc.

**SAFETY POLICIES:**

**Background Checks**

Every potential employee or volunteer is required to complete an annual background check. The check will consist of social security verification, sex offender registry, comprehensive local criminal to include a national, statewide, and county search. This must be completed prior to employment or volunteering.

**Child Abuse Prevention Policy**

The priority of Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester is the physical and emotional safety of its members, staff, and volunteers. Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester maintains a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse.

Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester implements policies and procedures for members, employees, volunteers, visitors or any victims of sexual abuse or misconduct to report any suspicion or allegation of abuse.

**DEFINITIONS**

**One-on-Contact Prohibition**: Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester prohibits isolated one-on-one interaction between Club participants and staff or volunteers, including board members. This includes prohibiting one- on-one contact at any time at the Club, in vehicles or by phone, text, social media or any other means.

Exceptions may only be made when delivering approved medical or counseling services by a licensed, trained therapist or similar professional according to professional guidelines. All staff and volunteers, including minor staff (under age 18), are strictly prohibited from meeting Club participants outside of any Club-sponsored activities. The only exception to this rule is if the Club participant is a child or sibling of a staff member or volunteer.

Child abuse is when an adult or another child, whether through action or by failing to act, causes serious emotional or physical harm to a child. Sexual abuse or misconduct may include but is not limited to:

• Any sexual activity, involvement or attempt of sexual contact with a person who is a minor (under 18 years old).

• Sexual activity with another who is legally incompetent.

• Physical assault or sexual violence, such as rape, statutory rape, abuse, molestation, or any attempt to commit such acts.

• Unwanted and intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, brushing, massaging someone’s neck or shoulders and/or pulling against another’s body or clothes.

• Inappropriate activities, advances, comments, bullying, gestures, electronic communications, or messages (e.g., by email, text, or social media).

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or trafficking. Grooming behaviors may include but are not limited to:

• Targeting specific youth for special attention, activities, or gifts.

• Isolating youth from family members and friends physically or emotionally. This can include one-on- one interactions such as sleepovers, camping trips and day activities.

• Gradually crossing physical boundaries, full-frontal hugs that last too long, lap sitting or other “accidental” touches.

**MANDATED REPORTING**

Every staff member or volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester who becomes aware of or has suspicion of child abuse or neglect must immediately report to Club leadership. Club leadership is responsible for reporting the incident immediately to the appropriate authorities according to statewide mandated reporting laws, as well as to Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) within 24 hours via the critical incident system.

**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester conducts and reports through a BGCA-approved process the following training for all staff members and volunteers with direct repetitive contact with young people (at the intervals noted for each).

Before providing services to young people, and annually thereafter:

1. BGCA-approved child abuse prevention

2. BGCA-approved mandated reporting

3. BGCA-approved grooming prevention

Annually:

• All the policies, including all safety policies, for Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester.

**PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS**

Every staff member and volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester is required to maintain appropriate physical contact with minors. Appropriate and inappropriate interactions include but are not limited to the following:

**Appropriate**

• Side hugs

• Handshakes

• High-fives and hand slapping

• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)

**Inappropriate**

• Full-frontal hugs or kisses

• Showing affection in isolated area

• Lap sitting

• Wrestling or piggyback/shoulder rides

• Tickling

• Allowing youth to cling to an adult’s leg

**VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Every staff member and volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester is required to maintain appropriate verbal interactions with minors. Appropriate and inappropriate interactions include but are not limited to the following:

**Appropriate**

• Positive reinforcement

• Child-appropriate jokes (no adult content)

• Encouragement

• Praise

**Inappropriate**

• Name calling

• Inappropriate jokes (adult-only content)

• Discussing sexual encounters or personal issues

• Secrets

• Profanity or derogatory remarks

• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate youth

**ABUSE AND SAFETY RESOURCES**

Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester prominently displays BGCA-approved collateral that shares ethics hotline, crisis textline and safety helpline information with members, staff, volunteers, and families. We also share all safety policies with parents and guardians upon receiving a youth membership application.

Boys & Girls Clubs of McAlester is committed to providing a safe environment for members, staff, and volunteers. To further ensure their safety, the organization prohibits all one-on-one interactions between Club members and staff and volunteers (including board members). All staff and volunteers must abide by the following:

• Ensure all meetings and communications between members and staff or volunteers are never private (see definition below).

• Ensure in-person meetings take place in areas where other staff and/or members are present.

• Communicate to another staff member whenever an emergency arises that necessitates an exception to this policy.

• Never initiate private or isolated one-on-one contact with a member.

• Never have a private or isolated meeting or communication with a member. This includes in-person meetings and virtual communications such as texting, video chat and social media between only a staff member or volunteer and a single member.

• Never transport one Club member at a time. This includes transportation in Club or leased vehicles.

Exceptions may only be made when delivering medical or counseling services by a licensed, trained therapist or similar professional. All exceptions shall be documented and provided to Club leadership in advance.

If an emergency arises that necessitates an exception to this policy, the emergency exception shall be communicated to Club leadership as soon as practicable, and ideally before engaging in one-on-one interaction.

**ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTION POLICY GUIDANCE**

The following guidance should be used when implementing related policies and procedures.

Definition of one-on-one interaction

One-on-one interaction is defined as any private contact or communication (including electronic communication) between any Club participant and an adult, including adult staff, minor staff, volunteers, board members and others who might encounter members during regular programming and activities.

• Private contact/communication is any communication, in person or virtual, that is between one youth member and one adult (18 or over) that takes place in a secluded area, is not in plain sight and/or is done without the knowledge of others. Private places can include but are not limited to vehicles, rooms without visibility to others, private homes, and hotel rooms. Examples of private contact include but are not limited to:

o Meeting behind closed doors (in rooms without windows or visible sightlines) or any spaces that are not visible to others.

o One staff member transporting one member in a vehicle.

o Electronic communications (text, video, social media, etc.) between one member and one staff member or volunteer.

• Public contact/communication is any communication or meeting, in person or virtual, that is between at least three individuals, including two staff and one member, one staff and two members or variations of these combinations. Examples of public contact include but are not limited to:

o Meeting in plain sight of others (e.g., in a quiet corner of an active games room).

o Transporting members via public transportation (bus, taxis, train, air, etc.) or transporting multiple members.

o Electronic communications (text, video, social media, etc.) between multiple members and adults (e.g., group chats).

o Public places can include but are not limited to buses, airports, shopping malls, restaurants, and schools.

Impact on mentoring programs

Mentorship is a key component of Boys & Girls Club programming and has tremendous positive impact on members. Prohibition of one-on-one interaction does not have to negatively affect mentor programs and/or relationship building. Mentors can adjust their practices to include:

• Holding mentor and coaching sessions in areas where other staff and/or members are present or can see you – for example, in large rooms where meetings are visible but not heard.

• Copying parents, staff, or other members (when appropriate) on written and/or electronic communications.

• Scheduling meetings during Club hours and at the Club site.

• Documenting interactions between mentors and youth.

Impact on partnerships with local mentoring organizations

• All local mentors are required to abide by Club policies, including background check requirements and prohibition of one-on-one interaction.

• External mentors are required to abide by all Club safety policies and procedures.

• A written agreement should be in place to determine how and when the external organization assumes custody and responsibility of the member; these procedures should be clearly communicated to parents or guardians.

• Every interaction between mentor and youth will be documented and maintained

Impact on travelling to off-site events and activities

• When travelling to external events such as Keystone, Youth of the Year or other off-site events, the one-on-one policy shall continue to be followed.

• Should the Club take responsibility for transporting members to and/or from an event, one staff member should not transport one single child at any time in a vehicle. Accommodations shall be made to ensure at least three people (two staff and one member or one staff and two members) are together when traveling. As an alternative, public transportation may be used (e.g., taxi, Uber, public transport).

• If this arrangement presents staffing or budget challenges, consider the following:

o Inviting parents or guardians to attend and/or chaperone their child.

o Including additional youth (e.g., Junior Youth of the Year) and/or staff in travel plans.

o Coordinating with other Clubhouses or nearby organizations to travel together.

o Travelling with additional staff or members.

• Parents and guardians should also provide written consent in each instance in which a member travels to any off-site event. NOTE: Parents or guardians are never allowed to provide consent for one-on-one interaction.

• Similar practices should be in place when coordinating field trips.

Impact on transportation to and from the Club

• When transporting members to and/or from a Club-sponsored event or activity, single members should not be transported alone with one staff person.

• Consider the following to accommodate single children:

o Modify bus or van routes so single children are not picked up first or dropped off last.

o Use a bus aide if available.

o Pick up and drop off children in groups.

o Modify staff schedules to ensure multiple staff are present.

Exceptions to policy

Exceptions to the one-on-one policy can be made under the following circumstances:

• When delivering medical or counseling services by a licensed, trained therapist or similar professional (e.g., counselors, social workers).

• When the emotional or physical safety of a member is at risk and a private, one-on-one communication is deemed necessary by Club leadership.

• In emergency situations that could create a safety risk, exceptions can be made (e.g., if a member is not picked up by a parent and leaving them alone at the Club could be a safety risk).

Should exceptions need to be made, the Club shall have policies in place to monitor interactions, including but not limited to:

• Disclosing the meeting to Club leadership and regularly checking in with the member and adult during conversations.

• Placing time limits on conversations.

• Meeting in rooms with clear sight lines (e.g., rooms with windows or glass doors).

• Documenting the interaction.

• In an emergency, disclosing the situation to another staff member before engaging in one-on-one interaction.