

YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES



**Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks
of the United States of America**

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Mission Statement

It is the intent of the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks to provide activities and programs for the benefit of youth. These activities must be conducted in a safe and structured environment free from drugs or destructive influences.

The following recommended policies are intended to provide guidance to local Lodges, members, committees, and volunteers to protect our youth while they are interacting with the Elks. The guidelines set appropriate boundaries, encourage transparent interactions, and provide for privacy protection. As you use these Guidelines, keep in mind that legal requirements vary from State-to-State, so it is a good idea to consult with your Lodge's attorney in that particular location to see how the laws in your state or locality can affect your Youth Protection Program.

We must be vigilant in the safety of our young people so that we aid in character development, recognize their many contributions, and encourage them as they mature into tomorrow's citizens.

Statement of Philosophy

The Elks are proud of our involvement with the youth of our communities. Our philosophy of sponsoring beneficial activities for education and enjoyment is an objective local Lodges should consider and implement.

Ongoing relationships with caring adults are one of the basic needs of today's youth. These relationships provide youth with guidance, support, and connection to the skills they need to succeed as an adult. By encouraging local Lodges to participate in youth activity programs, we have a greater opportunity for our members to connect with youth and become mentors.

The Grand Lodge offers its assistance to local Lodges in the establishment of these programs but will not be responsible for monitoring or controlling them. The recommended guidelines that follow attempt to aid local Lodges with the establishment of such program policies so that our youth, members, and volunteers are in a safe environment.

It is strongly recommended that Elks Lodges conducting youth activities that are ongoing (e.g., Antlers, Youth Groups, etc.) establish a Youth Protection Policy in their Lodge.

If the Lodge is conducting single day youth activity events such as the Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot, Christmas Party, etc. where the parents are present and have direct control over their children, it is not necessary to create a separate Youth Protection policy, but any volunteer working with youth in these events should read and understand the Youth Protection recommendations of the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks (the guidelines contained in this booklet). Lodges are encouraged to have members sign the "Acknowledgement of Youth Protection Guidelines" Form; a sample of which is at the back of this booklet.

Youth Protection Policy Development

It is recommended that the Exalted Ruler appoint a committee of his/her choosing for the implementation and oversight of youth protection policies. The Youth Protection Committee would be responsible for:

- Developing Youth Protection Policies & Procedures.
- Developing a screening program for volunteers working with youth.
- Developing and conducting an ongoing training program on Youth Protection.
- Developing procedures to follow in a crisis or emergency.
- Maintaining documentation of each volunteer's acknowledgement of the Youth Protection Guidelines, Incident Reports, Consent Forms, and Background checks.
- Establishing policies on document handling and retention, including confidentiality of such documentation.
- Establishing an observation schedule of youth activities to identify any potential youth safety issues, and if found to resolve them immediately. A standardized report should be used to document that those observations are taking place.
- Developing ways for volunteers and participants to provide feedback on whether policies and procedures are being followed.
- Reviewing any proposed youth activity programs and determining the training or experience that would be required to conduct such programs safely.

Youths in the Antlers Program

The Antlers Program is conducted by local Elk Lodges for young people aged 12-20. When developing Youth Protection Policies for the Lodge, it is recommended that a youth be defined as being under 18 years of age.

In any case, the Youth Protection Program conducted by the Lodge must conform with any local, state, or federal laws, policies, or procedures applicable to such activities, including any requirements for criminal background checks. If there is a conflict with school policies or rules, local, state, or federal laws or regulations, the highest applicable standard shall prevail.

Volunteer Selection and Screening

No volunteer screening method can entirely eliminate the possibility of abuse and harassment, but a thorough process can identify applicants with a history of inappropriate conduct and prevent them from gaining access to youth participating in Elks programs.

A rigorous screening and selection process signifies to potential volunteers that the Elks are committed to youth protection, and gives participants, parents, and others involved in Elks youth activities confidence that the Elks are doing everything possible to keep children safe.

Interviews

It is recommended that adult Elks members and volunteers who will be working with youth on a regular basis be interviewed by the Youth Protection Committee to determine their experience level of working with youth, prior youth protection education, and why they want to work with the youth participants. It is recommended that open-ended questions be used to encourage discussion. Screening of volunteers interested in working with youth would be the first line of defense to preventing an offender from gaining access.

Reference Checks

Reference checks can also provide additional information. When using reference checks, it is recommended to have verbal conversations with the individual, as these can elicit much more information than a written response. All such conversations should be documented and kept confidential.

Some sample reference questions may include:

- How would you describe the personal characteristics of the volunteer?
- How does the volunteer interact with youth?
- Why would this person be a good candidate for working with youth?
- Have you seen the applicant discipline youth (other than their own children)?

Other Sources to Consider

- Checking the candidate's record within the Lodge
- Internet Search (be careful to assure that it is the same person)

Adult Youth Leader Requirements

Background Checks

It is recommended that a criminal background check be conducted on any adult volunteer working directly with youth groups such as the Antlers program. This includes members and non-members who may be involved in transportation or chaperoning youth during activities taking place off premises. This may not be necessary if parents must be present for the activity, or for public activities such as the Hoop Shoot and Soccer Shoot where adults working with youth are in clear view. Several states mandate that background checks be done on any individual volunteer working with youth. Each Lodge should check with their attorney regarding any state that may have laws that require such background checks.

You can save time (and money) by delaying criminal background checks until the end of the screening and selection process.

You must obtain permission from the prospective volunteer before beginning a criminal background check. You should inform them it is a requirement for volunteering to work with youth. Criminal background checks are considered confidential, and access to the results should be limited to only those who have completed a thorough screening and who need the information to conduct their roles in administering the program. Please note that in some states, the misuse of information contained in a criminal records check can be a violation of the law, so this requirement should be taken seriously.

Ensure that your Lodge's process for conducting criminal background checks is legally sound and complies with all applicable local, state and federal laws. Consult local, county, state, and federal laws and regulations, as well as your Lodge's attorney and the Elks Insurance Department as needed.

The following should be considered as disqualifying one from working with youth:

- Any type of abuse, assault/battery, whether physical or sexual
- Rape
- Any crime of a sexual nature, including possession or dissemination of pornography
- Homicide or Manslaughter of any degree
- Attempted Murder
- Domestic Violence
- Child Neglect
- Felony Drug Crimes
- Animal Cruelty
- Theft/Robbery
- Forgery/Fraud
- Kidnapping
- Arson
- Weapons Violations; and
- Any crime, misdemeanor, or felony involving children as either an accomplice or a victim.

If the person has a disqualifying offense, it is recommended that they be disqualified from participating directly with the youth while the Lodge is conducting a youth program. They can however be assigned to positions where they will not have access, care, custody, or control of the youths, at the discretion of the decision maker within the Lodge.

Other potential disqualifiers should be left to the discretion of the decision maker within the Lodge to decide. These include, but are not limited to:

- Driving under the Influence/Driving while intoxicated within the last 15 years—this should be considered if there is a possibility that the person will be driving youth at any time.
- Multiple driving citations/accidents within the last 15 years—This should also be considered if the person will be driving youth.
- Misdemeanor drug charges within the last 15 years—This potentially shows the presence of drug possession, and the person should be closely evaluated before allowing them to have a leadership role among youth.
- Petty theft or related crimes within the past 15 years—This should be a disqualifier if the person will be handling finances in any way.

Background checks on adult leaders should be conducted every five years. As part of the criminal background check, many states offer a Sex Offender registry that may be checked as well. Anyone found in one of these registries should be considered disqualified for working with youth.

It should be noted that Lodges should not rely on a background check alone. It should be one of several tools that can be used to determine whether a volunteer is suitable for a position working with young people. Dangerous people, and even repeat abusers, may not have criminal backgrounds if they have never been caught or have never been prosecuted.

While background checks are important, the adult leaders and volunteers need to be vigilant in recognizing offenders before they can commit abuse. There are three things that are needed:

- Access
- Privacy
- Control

Offenders often seek volunteer work with youth. They sometimes befriend parents or attempt to build a good reputation with parents or adult leaders by doing favors, giving gifts, or being especially friendly. By doing so, they gain **“Access”** to the youth.

Offenders also look for opportunities to be alone with youth, such as taking them to the bathroom, offering rides, private lessons, meeting in places out of sight of others, or volunteering for late or overnight activities with children. By doing so they can gain **“Privacy”**

Offenders also test children’s boundaries and find ways to gain their trust. They often become friends with them rather than maintaining the boundaries that are appropriate between adults and youth. They may also manipulate a youth into breaking rules, so they have a way to threaten or intimidate the youth. This is their method of **“Control.”**

Adult leaders of Elk youth activities should be constantly on guard to recognize these behaviors, and to report them to the Youth Protection Committee.

Training

A strong youth protection policy can fail if volunteers are not properly trained. Training is essential not just because it teaches volunteers how they can help keep young people safe, but also because it conveys and cultivates a commitment to protecting youth.

Each member or volunteer taking part in an Elk youth activity should have a copy of these Youth Protection Guidelines. The Lodge should require volunteers to sign the Acknowledgement Form (Exhibit A) stating that they have read and understand the policies and return it to the Lodge prior to engaging in any youth activity.

All volunteers should learn about these topics:

- How sexual offenders behave and how they manipulate others.
- How to recognize abuse and harassment.
- How to behave in ways that keep participants from feeling uncomfortable.
- How volunteers can protect themselves from false allegations by following guidelines for appropriate behavior.
- How to recognize grooming behavior and respond to it.
- How to report alleged or suspected abuse or harassment, or behavior that causes concern.

For training to be effective, it needs to be specific, frequent, and applicable to a volunteer’s role in Elk youth activities.

Each Lodge should hold trainings on a regular basis that cover the Elk youth protection policies, and the topics outlined above. In developing the training programs, Elk Lodges can use the Internet to review the latest information on Youth Protection Policies utilized by other organizations. In doing so, new methods of inappropriate behavior may be recognized and prevented.

Youth Requirements

Medical Forms

All youth taking part in the Elks “Antlers” program should have a completed Parental Consent and Medical Authorization Form (Exhibit B) on file with the Lodge.

Parental Consent

Parental Consent and Medical Authorization should be obtained for any youth taking part in an Elks youth activity where the parent will not be present, or if there is the possibility of injury such as in sporting events (i.e., Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot, etc.).

A sample Parental Consent and Medical Authorization Form (Exhibit B) can be found in the back of this booklet. For the Hoop Shoot and Soccer Shoot, this authorization can be found on the registration form for those activities.

No Parental Consent Form would be required for youth participating in events in which the parent is present, and their son/daughter are under their direct responsibility. (e.g., Children’s Christmas Party.)

Privacy

All documentation and personal identifying information for adult and youth participants in Elk’s youth activities shall remain confidential. Access to this information should be on a “need to know basis” limited to only senior leadership, and only if access is necessary to fulfill responsibilities of their position. This includes criminal background checks, applications for membership, medical consent forms, and other documentation that holds personal information. This information should remain at the Lodge and locked in a secure location in the Secretary’s office.

In addition, adult leaders should not disclose the sexual orientation or gender identity of any participant in an Elk activity. However, discussion of these items by the Youth Protection Committee for local internal policy purposes is allowed if deemed necessary. In these policy discussions, no personal identifying information of any participant in the activity or program should be disclosed.

The issue of disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity is a potential legal issue that may vary from state to state. It is therefore recommended that the Lodge review this issue with their attorney when establishing youth protection policies in the Lodge.

Supervision and Care of Youth During Elks Youth Activities

Elks who supervise youth during Elk youth activities are responsible for observing the environment and equipment used for unsafe situations, removing participants from potentially dangerous conditions, and reporting any problems at once.

The following is a list of recommended policies and procedures for Elk Lodges to follow when conducting a youth activity or program.

Two-Adult Rule

During Elks-sponsored youth activities, more than one adult age 21 or older must be present when working with a youth or group of youths engaged in Elk youth activities. If only two adults are present, the adults must not be related family members (a married couple would be considered related).

For small groups where only one adult supervises a group of youths, two or more groups must be in sight and sound of each other.

Unplanned Situations with only One Adult

Should a situation arise in which an adult leader finds themselves without another adult present due to unforeseen circumstances, it is recommended that the adult contact the committee chairman or Exalted Ruler for guidance. If they cannot be contacted, then the activity should be cancelled, the parents contacted, and the youth(s) sent home.

Four-Year-Older Rule

Adults supervising youth will be at least four years older than the oldest youth present. When college-age persons are taking part in an activity with youth, they should be paired with another adult during the activity.

Hands Off Rule

Touching should be prohibited between youth participants and between the youth and adults. A handshake or small gestures of approval (i.e., high-five, fist bump) being the only exceptions.

Adult/Youth Ratio

The adult/youth ratio for Elk youth activities is to have at least 1 adult for every 5 youth if the youth are of high school age (14 years old and above). If the youth are younger (below 14 years of age), then the ratio would be 1 adult for every 3 youth.

One-on-One Contact

One-on-One contact between Elks and youth members is prohibited both inside and outside of the Lodge during Elk youth activities. The only exception is when the youth is with their parent(s).

Mixed Youth Groups

When an Elk youth activity has both male and female youth members, there must be both male and female adults present at the activity.

Bullying and General Harassment

Adults overseeing an Elks youth program must be vigilant to prevent any bullying or harassment of youth in the program. This includes any bullying or harassment taking place between youths or between youths and adults. The adult leaders overseeing the youth program should intervene appropriately within these guidelines.

This also includes cyber-bullying and cyber-threats which can take place online. Social media, texts, and e-mails can be used and designed to tease, humiliate, threaten, or pressure the participant. It is important to educate both adults and participants about these dangers, and to report any concerns to the Youth Protection Committee.

Hazing & Secret Ceremonies

Hazing is prohibited and will not be included as any part of any Elks youth activity since it will not be tolerated. Nor will there be any secret ceremonies.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual conduct that either creates a hostile environment or is presented as a demand in exchange for gaining something (“quid pro quo”). Such behavior is prohibited at all Elk Youth Activities and programming, and will not be tolerated. Sexual Harassment encompasses a broad spectrum of behaviors including, but not limited to, the following:

- Visual: Ogling or staring; inappropriate posters, pictures, magazines, or fliers
- Verbal: Repeated requests for dates, questions about personal life, lewd comments/jokes, or whistling
- Written: Love letters, obscene letters, lewd bumper stickers, or cards.
- Touching: Violating space, patting/grabbing, pinching, caressing, or kissing
- Power: Relationships; using position to request dates, sex, etc.
- Threats: Quid pro quo demands (I’ll give you preferential treatment if . . .)
- Force: Physical sexual assault or rape

Adult leaders involved in Elk Youth Activities should be vigilant to watch adults and youth for any of the above and address the issue immediately as may be required by state law.

Sexual Assault

Sexual Assault includes physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person’s will or where a person is incapable of giving consent because of his or her temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity, because they are below the minimum age of consent, or because they are incapacitated due to the use of drugs or alcohol.

Adult leaders involved in Elk Youth Activities should be vigilant to watch adults and youth for any of the above and address the issue as may be required by state law.

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual Exploitation includes taking sexual advantage of another person for the benefit of oneself or a third party without consent. This includes, but is not limited to sexual voyeurism, indecent or lewd exposure, recording any person engaged in sexual, private, or intimate activity in a private space without that person’s consent, distributing personal sexual information, images, or recordings, or inducing incapacitation in another person with the intent to engage in sexual conduct.

Adult leaders involved in Elk Youth Activities should be vigilant to watch adults and youth for any of the above and address the issue as may be required by state law.

Stalking

Stalking is engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to (A) fear for their safety or the safety of others; or (B) suffer substantial emotional distress. While stalking is often considered a physical act, stalking also includes conduct that occurs via electronic communications, including social media (i.e., cyberstalking).

Adult leaders involved in Elk Youth Activities should be vigilant to watch adults and youth for any of the above and address the issue as may be required by state law.

Grooming

Grooming is establishing an emotional connection with someone to lower their inhibitions and gain their trust with the intent to be sexually abusive. This can include: (1) the giving of gifts or rewards to a participant; (2) giving gifts in secret; and (3) sexually oriented or explicit gifts. Such gifts include, but are not limited to, clothing, cell phones, tablets, or other electronic devices intended to be used for private communication between an adult and youth, jewelry, money, or other high value items, trips, outings, or meals outside of the group, alcohol, drugs, pornography, or other illicit or illegal items.

However, the giving of gifts to the entire group of participants, giving an award or other recognition at an event or group setting, and the giving of a gift to a single participant or smaller group with the prior approval of their parents is acceptable.

Adult leaders involved in Elk Youth Activities should be vigilant to watch adults and youth for any of the above and address the issue as may be required by state law.

Sexual Activity and Public Displays of Affection

Whether it be between youths or between adults, all sexual activity and public displays of affection are prohibited during or at any Youth Activity. This includes making sexual comments, telling sexual jokes, or sharing sexually explicit materials. Additionally, engaging in or allowing youth to engage you in conversations of romantic, sexual, or related matters is prohibited.

Use of Alcoholic beverages, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances

While attending any Elks activity that is produced primarily by or for the benefit of youth, adults and the participating youths are expected to refrain from using or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and/or marijuana products, even if prescribed for medicinal use. In addition, the use and/or possession of illegal drugs or the improper/illegal use of legal drugs is also prohibited.

Prescription Medications

The possession of prescription and non-prescription medications by youth involved in Elk youth activities should be allowed only by the written permission of the parent/guardian.

Adult leaders are not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to youth under our care.

Verbal Interactions

Keeping verbal interactions between adults and youth appropriate is as important as maintaining physical boundaries. Unacceptable verbal interactions include:

- Name Calling
- Adults discussing sexual encounters or their personal problems with youths
- Adults asking youths to keep secrets of any kind
- Cursing
- Discriminatory or sexual jokes
- Shaming or belittling
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate youths

- Making negative remarks about a participant or their family, culture, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or background
- Commenting on or complimenting a person's body or body development

Positive reinforcement, jokes in general, encouragement, and praise are acceptable.

Discipline

Should a youth's parent not be present, the adult leaders should talk with the youth and state clearly what the problem behavior is, and what the youth should do instead.

1. If the problem behavior continues, the adult leaders should issue a warning.
2. If the problem behavior continues after the warning, the youth should be removed from the activity, but remain visible to the adult leaders. (e.g., "Time-Out" away from the group)
3. If the problem behavior continues after the warning and removal from the activity, the adult leaders should contact the youth's parent(s) and inform them that the youth may not continue taking part in the event or activity and to decide how supervision will be transferred back to the parent.

Disciplinary actions involving isolation (youth should never be left alone), humiliation, ridicule, or corporal punishment should be prohibited. If a youth is causing a disruption to the peace and harmony of the activity, a minimum of two adults must handle the situation by following the guidelines above. If a participant is a danger to themselves or others, call 911.

Counseling

Elks are seen by a young person as an adult they can trust with personal and/or sensitive information. Elks should refrain from counseling youth, and instead find, or help the young person in finding proper expert help.

Travel and Transportation

While transporting youths, the best practice is to always have at least three people in the vehicle and that there should be documented approval from a parent or guardian for the transportation. All transportation decisions should be made following local laws.

For any travel of more than 150 miles, or out of the country from their home residence, it is recommended that the youth should have adequate insurance for the duration of the trip, including coverage of emergency medical care and evacuation, repatriation of remains, and legal liability in amounts satisfactory to the Lodge or State Association that organizes the travel.

Youths under 18 in an Elk youth program should not drive other youth in the program unless they are family members, and only if a parent is also in the vehicle. Those over 18 may do so only with parental consent of those under 18 being transported.

If transporting a group of girls, an adult male driver must have an adult female with him. If transporting a group of boys, an adult female driver must have an adult male with her in the vehicle. If there is a mixed group of boys and girls in the same vehicle, there must be one adult female and one adult male also in the car. Two adult males can drive a car of boys and two adult females can drive a group of girls.

Adults who are transporting youths in an Elk youth program should carry adequate insurance on their vehicle should there be an accident. If a motor vehicle accident takes place while an Elk member is

transporting youths as part of an Elk youth program, they must at once inform the youth's parents, and assure them that the youth's immediate medical needs are taken care of by medical professionals. The adult must also notify the Lodge, complete an incident report, and inform the Elks Insurance Department.

Parental Authorization

Written parent/guardian authorization for transporting youths in an Elk youth activity should always be obtained. A sample authorization for this purpose can be found at the back of this booklet (Exhibit E).

Written parent/guardian authorization can override the above listed transportation rules. For example, a parent or guardian can give permission for a certain youth to ride a specified distance with a specified adult when traveling to and/or from an Elk activity. If there is more than one guardian, all signatures would be needed. A sample override authorization is available at the back of this booklet (Exhibit F).

Overnight Events

Supervision

- Screen and train all adult volunteers who will be staying overnight with youth, in advance. Talk about safety procedures, abuse prevention, and emergency management.
- Prevent all unsupervised individual contact, including contact between youth or contact between a youth and an adult.
- Hold a meeting with all volunteers to review policies and procedures and discuss the general risks of overnight trips as well as risks specific to the activity.
- Assign volunteers to specific groups of participants to supervise. They should account for everyone in their groups regularly throughout the activity.
- Have volunteers sleep in shifts so that supervision is available during sleeping hours.

Facilities

- Clearly define the physical boundaries of the facility and/or area where the overnight activity will take place. Show them to the volunteers and youth program participants.
- Assign volunteers to monitor high risk areas, such as toilets, entrances, exits, hallways, stairwells, unlocked rooms, classrooms, offices, or out-of-the-way locations.
- Establish safety procedures for showering and using toilet facilities. As an example, if many participants need to use the toilets at the same time, allow only one participant to use each stall and plan to have different age groups use the toilet facilities at different times. Adults should never use the toilets or shower facilities with participants but should supervise from outside the bathroom or shower area.

Shower Times

- When needed, it is recommended that separate shower times for the youth and adults should be set to prevent adults and youth showering together, (i.e., YMCA with open showers). Private shower times may be offered but are not mandatory in the context of gender identity, however, if private shower times are offered, they must be offered to all participants.
- Adult leaders or chaperones should remain within hearing distance of youth during shower and changing times but not within eyesight, or they risk violating youth privacy and safety.

Sleeping Arrangements

Adults and youth should not share motel/hotel rooms unless the adult is a parent of the youth with whom they share the room. If dorm rooms are used, youth assigned to a room should be of the same gender. The use of dorm rooms with a combination of youth and adults is acceptable when all persons sharing the room are the same gender. If adults and youth of the same gender occupy a single room, there must be a minimum of two adults of the same gender in that room. Gender identity in this context shall be governed by state and federal law, or the rules of the facility in use.

Participant Attire

It is recommended that all participants in an Elks youth activity wear clothing and bathing suits that cover genitals, breasts, and buttocks. Any participant whose clothing does not meet these standards will be asked to change into clothing that meets these standards.

Crisis Management Plan

It is recommended that the Youth Protection Committee establish a crisis management plan for handling emergencies involving youth in an Elks youth program or activity. Types of crises/emergencies include:

- Accidents
- Violence
- Natural Disasters
- Political Instability
- Illness

This includes establishing procedures for communication, dissemination, and gathering of information. Also, procedures for media, and expenses incurred to meet the needs of the emergency.

Communications and Media**Communication between Adults and Youth**

Private online communications (texting, phone calls, chats, Instant Messaging, Online Gaming, etc.) shall have at least one more adult included in the conversation (e.g., group e-mail or text). Any communication made through social media must include another adult.

In any electronic or online interaction, the following should be avoided:

- Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, derogatory, or humiliating comments
- Sexual conversations or images
- Posting inappropriate comments on photos

Personal Information

All documents bearing personal information of any youth taking part in Elk youth activities, including registration forms, medical information forms, permission to treat forms, etc., should be treated as confidential.

Processes that protect this information must be created, including minimizing the number of people who have access to any such documents. The documents shall be kept for a period of time as required by applicable state laws and regulations. Each Lodge should consult with its local attorney regarding document retention laws in this area.

After the minimum maintenance period has expired, the documents shall be destroyed in a way that keeps confidentiality, such as shredding. The disposal and destruction of all confidential information shall conform to applicable state laws and regulations.

Use of Press and Social-Media

Elk Lodges and Committee members should not publish the name of any youth taking part in a youth activity or program on social media. Professional media such as Newspapers, Radio, Television may be used with parental permission only (Exhibit C).

Media Coverage

It is recommended that the Elk Lodge conducting a youth activity should not provide the names, addresses, telephone numbers, school names, or any other identifying information to the media unless they have obtained parental permission from the participating youths (see Exhibit C).

Online Safety

The Internet is used by both adults and youth and poses potential risks. This includes risks to physical, psychological, reputational, legal, identity, property, and community safety.

It is recommended that the Elk Lodge conducting a youth activity does not publish the names or any identifying information on the Internet, Website, or on social media per the Elks Social Media Guidelines.

It is further recommended that youth not be “tagged” in social media as this could be a violation of their privacy as well as threaten their safety by revealing their interests and locations they visit.

Photography & Video

Inappropriate use of smart phones, cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited. The use of any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in or near showers, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is to be expected is inappropriate. Recording visual images in or around such areas should be prohibited.

No photos or videos should be shared with the media without express written permission of the parent (Exhibit C).

Investigation and Reporting of Incidents

Responding to Inappropriate Behavior

How the Lodge responds to suspicious, inappropriate behavior, policy violations, or allegations of abuse or harassment can have a direct impact on how much harm participants experience. It can also prevent or reduce damage to the reputation of the Lodge and the Elks.

If improper behavior is not addressed because it seems harmless, it can worsen. Ignoring it creates an environment where abuse is more likely to happen. In other words, don't allow inappropriate behavior to become normalized.

If inappropriate behavior is witnessed, ensure the safety and security of the youth by removing them from the situation immediately, and preventing contact with the alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the youth that this is for their safety, and not a punishment. The adult should be removed from contact with any youth.

Take all reports of inappropriate behavior seriously. Act as soon as possible to prevent it from continuing or worsening and handle all allegations according to local and state law.

Reporting Requirements

The Youth Protection Committee should establish a clear process by which reporting incidents involving allegations of inappropriate behavior of officers, members, volunteers, or other participants is conducted. The process should involve submitting an incident report to the Committee. At least two Committee members should be identified as being responsible for receiving these reports and to bring the issue to the Youth Protection Committee which would review every incident that is reported.

In no case should the incident reports be filed with an alleged perpetrator of inappropriate behavior.

All reports and allegations should be reviewed to prove basic fact. The circumstances surrounding the incident should only be discussed with legal advisors, the Elks Insurance Department, and law enforcement if required.

For any incident report filed with the Youth Protection Committee, the privacy of both the alleged perpetrator and victim should be maintained and not discussed publicly.

The Youth Protection Program policies and the incident reporting process should be made clear to all, including volunteers, parents, and participants, and in all cases, the **Lodge should consult their state's requirements to ensure that their Youth Protection policies and Incident Reporting are consistent with local and state law.**

A sample incident report (Exhibit D) is included at the back of this booklet.

Media Coverage of Incidents

Child abuse incidents are newsworthy to the public and the media. To the extent possible, preliminary allegations or facts should not be provided. If it is necessary to respond, the response should be made by a designated person who has received legal advice.

Additional Resources

There is an abundance of information on the Internet regarding Youth Protection Policies and how to develop them to ensure protection of youth participating in our programs. It is recommended that Elks Lodges use this booklet "Elks Youth Protection Program Guidelines" as a starting point for policy development and supplement their policies with the latest information available on the Internet. Below is some guidance that can be found online regarding this topic. These links are being provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only; they do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by the Elks of any of the products, services or opinions of the corporation or organization or individual. The Elks bear no responsibility for the accuracy, legality or content of the external site or for that of subsequent links. Contact the external site for answers to questions regarding its content.

- **Best Practices for Child Abuse Prevention, version April 15, 2015**
<https://ascip.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Child-Abuse-Best-Practices.pdf>
- **Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-Serving Organizations**
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingchildsexualabuse-a.pdf>
- **Good Touch and Bad Touch for Staff**
<https://adventistrisk.org/Adventist—Risk/media/ARMSiteContent/Safety%20Resources/English/IFS-AppropriateTouch-Guidelines-ALLEN.pdf>
- **Child Protection Resources Guide for Seventh-Day Adventist Pastors**
<https://adventistyouthministries.org/files/safety-guidelines/child-protection-resource-guide.pdf>
- **10 Tips for Working with Youth**
<https://vfwauxiliary.org/wp-content/uploads/Tips-for-Working-with-Youth.pdf>
- **Key Principles in Youth Protection: Considerations and Action Steps**
<https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/key-principles-in-youth-protection-considerations-and-action-steps/>
- **Vital Partners in Youth Protection: Engaging Parents and Caregivers**
<https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/vital-partners-in-youth-protection-engaging-parents-and-caregivers/>
- **Cyberbullying & Cyber Threats to Young People**
<https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/cyberbullying-cyber-threats-to-young-people/>
- **Policy – Child Supervision – AYSO Volunteer Resources**
<https://aysovolunteers.org/policy-child-supervision/>
- **Policy – Criminal Background Checks – AYSO Volunteer Resources**
<https://aysovolunteers.org/policy-criminal-background-checks/>
- **Creating a Safe Environment to Prevent Abuse in Youth Sports: A Parent Checklist**
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Creating-a-Safe-Environment-to-Prevent-Abuse-in-Youth-Sports-A-Parent-Checklist.aspx>
- **Successful Strategies for Recruiting, Training, and Utilizing Volunteers**
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/volunteer—handbook.pdf>
- **Rotary Youth Protection Guide**
<https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/document/abuse-and-harassment-prevention-training-manual-and-leaders-guide>

Exhibit A: Acknowledgement of Youth Protection Guide

(Lodge Letterhead)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Date _____

I am a volunteer of _____ Lodge No. _____ of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the Youth Protection Guidelines as adopted by the Lodge.

I further acknowledge that I have read and understood the Elks Youth Protection Guidelines and will follow them while working with youth during Elks youth activities.

Printed Name_____
Signature_____
Title, if any

Exhibit B: Parental Consent and Medical Authorization

(Name of Lodge and Address)

PARENTAL CONSENT AND MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION

Name of child/youth: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____
Street/Apt. Number City/State Zip Code

Daytime Phone Number: (_____) _____ Evening Phone Number: (_____) _____

As the parent (or legal guardian) of: _____
Child/Youth's Name

I understand that my child/youth will be taking part in a number of activities for calendar year _____ (Or specific date), which carry with them a certain degree of risk. Some of these activities are swimming, boating, hiking, camping, field trips, sports, Lodge functions and other activities, which the Lodge may offer. I consent for my child to take part in these activities.

Please write down any restrictions on your child's/youth's activities:

_____ I represent that my child/youth is physically fit and has the necessary skills to safely take part in these activities.

_____ I also understand and give consent for my child/youth to travel to and from these events in transportation provided by volunteer drivers.

MEDICAL TREATMENT AUTHORIZATION

It is my understanding that the Lodge will make every attempt to contact me in case of a medical emergency involving my child/youth. If the Lodge cannot reach me, then I authorize the Lodge to hire a doctor or health-care professional, and I give my permission to the doctor or other health-care professional, to provide the medical services he or she may deem necessary. I will pay for any medical expenses so incurred. I will notify the Lodge if I feel there are any health considerations that would prevent my child/youth's participation in any of the activities listed above.

Health considerations or medical conditions: _____

Insurance Company: _____ Policy/Group # _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian _____

Date _____

NOTARY DATE SEAL

Exhibit C: Parental Consent for Publication

(Name of Lodge and Address)

Name of child/youth: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

As the parent (or legal guardian) of _____
Child/Youth Name

I understand that my child/youth participates in an Elks youth activity program, and that the activity may be of public interest, and that I hereby consent and authorize the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks and [Lodge Name and Number] to use and reproduce my child/youth’s name and/or image or likeness, and to circulate the same for all purposes related to the conduct and promotion of the youth activities of which my child/youth is a participant. This includes but is not limited to Lodge newsletters, flyers, brochures, posters, website, and advertising of Elk youth activities to the public and/or the Lodge’s social media pages (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).

I further consent and authorize the use of my child/youth’s name and/or image and likeness to be released to the press for all purposes related to the conduct and promotion of Elks youth activities of which my child/youth is a participant. This includes, but is not limited to the newspapers, television, radio.

I hereby agree to indemnify and hold the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks and [Lodge Name and Number] harmless from all claims, loss or damage to the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks resulting from or related to my child/youth’s participation. By signing below, I have read, and understood the above information, and further acknowledge that my signature verifies that the information is correct and that my consent and authorization may be withdrawn at any time by sending a request in writing to the Elk Lodge conducting the youth activities.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

(Printed Name)

Exhibit D: Sample Incident Report

Incident Report Form

Name of Person Involved _____ Age _____ Sex _____

Youth Program Participant Adult Leader (Elk) Adult Leader (Non Elk) Visitor

Address _____

Phone (of Parent/Guardian if minor) _____

Name of Parent/Guardian if minor _____

Incident Details

Date and Time of Incident: Date: _____ Time: _____

Place of Incident: _____

Name of Program/Activity: _____

Type of Incident: Policy Violation Child Abuse or Neglect Medical Other

Description of Incident: _____

Name of Supervisor/Adult Leader(s) Present for the Incident: _____

Name/Phone Number of Witnesses (You may wish to attach signed statements.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What action was taken by you/others: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian Notified: _____

Date and Time Notified: Date: _____ Time: _____

Person Completing Form:

Printed Name: _____ Position: _____

Signature: _____ Dated: _____

Exhibit E: General Transportation Authorization

— Authorization and Waiver to Transport Child —

Authorization Is Valid from: _____ to _____

Child's First Name: _____ Child's Last Name: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____

I authorize _____ Elks Lodge to transport my minor child in a vehicle driven by an individual authorized by _____ Elks Lodge or authorized by me to transport my child to/from: _____ to/from _____.

I understand my child is expected to follow all applicable laws regarding riding in a motor vehicle and is expected to follow the directions provided by the driver and/or volunteer.

I understand participation in the event or activity is not a requirement for participation in the youth program.

I have read, understand, and discussed with my child:

- (1) My child will travel in a motor vehicle driven by an adult and my child is to wear their safety belt during travel;
- (2) My child is expected to listen to supervising staff/driver, respect staff and other children, the vehicles they ride in, and the people they travel with during the trip;
- (3) Riding in a motor vehicle may result in personal injuries or death from wrecks, collisions or acts by riders, other drivers, or objects; and,
- (4) My child is to remain in their seat and not be disruptive to the driver of the vehicle.

I recognize participation in this activity, as with any activity involving motor vehicle transportation, my child may risk personal injury or permanent loss. I hereby attest and verify I have been advised of the potential risks, and I have full knowledge of the risks involved in this activity, and I assume any expenses incurred in the event of an accident, illness, or other incapacity, regardless of whether I have authorized such expenses.

As a condition for the transportation received, I, for myself, my child, my executors and assigns, further agree to release and forever discharge, _____ Elks Lodge and their officers, employees, members, and volunteers from any claim that I might have myself or that I could bring on my child's behalf with regard to any damages, demands or actions whatsoever, including those based on negligence, in any manner arising out of this transportation.

I have read this entire waiver and authorization form, I fully understand its terms and conditions, and I agree to be legally bound by its terms.

Parent/Guardian: _____
Signature

Parent/Guardian: _____
Signature

Printed Name: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Exhibit F: Transportation Authorization Policy Override

— Authorization and Waiver to Transport Child —

Authorization Is Valid from: _____ to _____

Child’s First Name: _____ Child’s Last Name: _____

Child’s Date of Birth: _____

I authorize _____ to transport my minor child in a vehicle from _____ to _____ for the purpose of participating in an Elk’s youth activity.

I understand my child is expected to follow all applicable laws regarding riding in a motor vehicle and is expected to follow the directions provided by the driver and/or volunteer.

I understand participation in the event or activity is not a requirement for participation in the youth program.

I have read, understand, and discussed with my child:

- (1) My child will travel in a motor vehicle driven by an adult and my child is to wear their safety belt during travel;
- (2) My child is expected to listen to supervising staff/driver, respect staff and other children, the vehicles they ride in, and the people they travel with during the trip;
- (3) Riding in a motor vehicle may result in personal injuries or death from wrecks, collisions or acts by riders, other drivers, or objects; and,
- (4) My child is to remain in their seat and not be disruptive to the driver of the vehicle.

Initial Each Statement:

I recognize participation in this activity, as with any activity involving motor vehicle transportation, my child may risk personal injury or permanent loss. I hereby attest and verify I have been advised of the potential risks, and I have full knowledge of the risks involved in this activity, and I assume any expenses incurred in the event of an accident, illness, or other incapacity, regardless of whether I have authorized such expenses. _____

As a condition for the transportation received, I, for myself, my child, my executors and assigns, further agree to release and forever discharge, _____ (volunteer) _____ Elks Lodge and their officers, employees, members, and volunteers from any claim that I might have myself or that I could bring on my child’s behalf with regard to any damages, demands or actions whatsoever, including those based on negligence, in any manner arising out of this transportation. _____

I have read this entire waiver and authorization form, I fully understand its terms and conditions, and I agree to be legally bound by its terms.

Parent/Guardian: _____
Signature

Parent/Guardian: _____
Signature

Printed Name: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Exhibit G: Sample Interview Questions of Volunteers

You don't need to jump right into your Q&A. Instead, take some time to introduce yourself and the Elks. Clarify your program's mission and describe the role and responsibilities of the volunteer. Then, discuss the benefits of volunteering with the Elks. Remember, the interview is also a chance for the candidate to decide whether the volunteer opportunity is right for them. In fact, many candidates will make this decision during or immediately following the interview process. The volunteer interview should be a conversation, not an interrogation. Invite candidates to elaborate and ask questions in return, so that you can come to a collaborative decision about the best course of action moving forward.

The following questions may be used in a personal interview. A single answer should not determine whether a volunteer is selected or rejected. Along with other forms of information, answers to these questions can help you build a more complete picture of a potential volunteer. Here are a few of the questions that an interviewer can ask to determine the eligibility of a volunteer working with youth.

What is your experience working with children or teens?

What type of supervisory situation do you prefer?

If a volunteer is very independent, they may not fit in a group whose policies and procedures require close supervision.

What age/sex of youth do you want to work with? How would you feel about working with a different age/sex?

If a volunteer seems fixated on one age/sex, be wary. However, it may be that the applicant has experience or is gifted with working with certain age groups. Asking follow-up questions about why an applicant a volunteer has a strong preference can help you determine if there is cause for concern.

Is there anyone who might suggest that you should not work with youth? Why or why not?

Why do you want to work with youth?

What would you do in a particular situation?

Set up scenarios that involve potential concerns, boundary issues, or youth protection policies, and interactions to gauge the volunteer's response. Be concerned if a volunteer disregards the youth protection policies and procedures or handle a situation poorly.

What makes you a good candidate for working with youth? What would your friends or colleagues say about how you interact with youth?

What other hobbies or activities do you enjoy?

Determine if applicants have a mature adult relationship—not just relationships with youth.

