



#99 Youth Protection: Safe and Appropriate Environments



Photo Courtesy of San Benito Co.

The University of California 4-H Youth Development Program engages youth in reaching their fullest potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults. Consider the following guidelines to help establish positive environments and program barriers that promote safety and well-being for all:

Ensuring a Safe & Appropriate Environment for All:

- In an effort to minimize the potential for child abuse and/or false accusations, all 4-H YDP staff and volunteers shall follow the policy and procedures outlined in the 4-H YDP Policy Handbook, Chapter 11, IV. Youth Protection (<http://4h.ucanr.edu/Resources/Policies/Chapter11/>)
- Adults who have not gone through the volunteer screening process should not have unsupervised contact with youth.
- Maintain an appropriate volunteer to youth ratio based upon the developmental level and needs of youth, the setting, and the project(s). Ensure the ratio supports positive risk management and provides youth with positive relationships with caring adults.
- Use constructive forms of discipline and positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism.
- Physical or emotional hazing and initiation rituals that lead to embarrassment or that require youth to be singled out or do anything that makes them fearful or uncomfortable are strictly prohibited.
- Adult volunteers should respond to youth with respect and consideration and treat all youth fairly regardless of sex, gender identity, race, religion, and culture.
- Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment or sexual references in the presence of youth members or parents/guardians is prohibited.
- Youth members shall not be released from care to anyone other than the authorized parent or guardian, or other designated adult.
- Adults who work with youth should use the organization's/club/or group email and social media accounts (rather than personal) for communicating with youth involved in the program.
- When engaged in any 4-H activity, the Adult Volunteer Code of Conduct outlines prohibited behaviors and actions (<http://4h.ucanr.edu/files/16404.pdf>).

Red Flags & Warning Signs: The following behaviors by adults *may* indicate abuse risk

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers time and friendships with children or youth more than adults | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bends the rules for certain children or youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages with youth one-on-one through the telephone, texting, or social media |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignores policies and training related to interactions and discipline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lets youth engage in behaviors parent/guardian does not allow | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to complete required training or documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses inappropriate language or humor with youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goes overboard with touching children or youth |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats children as if they were adults | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favors children or youth with certain physical characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wants to keep secrets with children or youth |

To better help staff and volunteers recognize safe and appropriate environments, Praesidium child safety training videos and resources are available here: <https://campus.extension.org/>