



# Mountaineers Pathfinders

## 2025-2026 Handbook

For Youth Members, Parents and Volunteers





## CODE OF CONDUCT

Mountaineers activities are “Challenge-by-choice.” Each member has the opportunity to challenge themselves in new ways, learn new skills, and try new things. Recognizing that we all have areas of comfort and discomfort, members are encouraged to challenge themselves in a way that is appropriate for them. We all have different skills and expertise, and we have a responsibility to provide a supportive learning environment for one another.

*Maintain a safe and respectful environment.* Pathfinder members are expected to be intentionally inclusive of others, respect those talking and/or teaching, and refrain from inappropriate discussions and profanity. Be present in meetings (no texting), take responsibility for making safe decisions outdoors, and make an effort to get to know all members.

*Be an active participant.* Members are expected to attend as many meetings as possible, stay connected through email, and participate in events as well as outings.

*Volunteer your time.* Members are expected to pass on their skills and experiences with others, in the Mountaineers tradition. Teaching skills helps you hone and refresh the skills you have and pass forward the instruction you received from another volunteer.

## **PARTICIPANT COMMITMENT**

Pathfinders are year-round programs that are not only a fun way to spend time outside participating in a group setting, but also rely on the community formed among the members to be successful. *To get the most out of these programs, participants and parents should plan for Pathfinders trips and meetings, which are typically listed on the Pathfinders calendar months in advance.* Advisors, officers and trip leaders put significant effort into organizing fun and safe events. To ensure the greatest opportunity for success, participants must make a commitment to the program. If that commitment is not fulfilled, a participants' continued membership with the clubs may be terminated or suspended for the remainder of the year.

### **TRIP ATTENDANCE**

Trip attendance is not required. However, participants *must* sign up in advance (by the date stated on the activity page) for a trip in which they choose to participate. Last minute cancelations are generally unacceptable, though we understand things come up and people get sick. Canceling after sign-up has closed on more than 2 trips will put a participant's membership at risk.

### **MEETING ATTENDANCE**

Club members are expected to attend 75% of the combined Pathfinder meetings (10 meetings/year). Members should not miss more than 2-3 meetings.

### **COMMUNITY**

Above all, Pathfinders are communities of young people and families who love the outdoors. With up to 16 member families in each cohort, each person inherently finds folks they connect with more than others, and there is plenty of down time on our trips and before and after meetings to catch up with those people. We also expect all our members to contribute to and be a part of our whole community. This means getting to know members you may not know as well, being a part of the group during campfires, meetings, etc., and offering to help others if needed. This usually looks like Club trip leaders and staff encourage students to hike/climb/partner up with someone new every outing.

## **PARENT/SPONSORING ADULT COMMITMENT**

### **PATHFINDERS HANDBOOK**

Parents are expected to read and understand the Pathfinders Handbook, and to support and encourage your participant's commitment and participation.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Parents are expected to make sure communication with advisors happens on behalf of their youth participant(s). Parents are encouraged to check the website frequently and share in email communications.

### **PARTICIPATION**

We understand that every family has different commitments and ability to participate in Pathfinders. As this is truly a community of families learning from and with one another, we encourage parents to participate as much as possible. While chaperoning and driving is not a requirement, we could not run outings without parent drivers. We encourage parents to review the schedule and sign up to help with driving and chaperoning as much as possible. Staff will provide skill-building opportunities for parents, and the more parents that share leadership roles throughout the year, the more the whole community will benefit.

## **CONTACTS**

Alvaro Juarez, Seattle Youth Clubs Manager – [alvaroj@mountaineers.org](mailto:alvaroj@mountaineers.org)

Becca Polglase, Director of Programs & Operations – [beccap@mountaineers.org](mailto:beccap@mountaineers.org)

## **HOW IT ALL WORKS**

### **CALENDAR AND REGISTRATION**

The Pathfinders calendar follows the school year calendar – September through August. Program Registration is available only in October each year. Existing members are asked to renew their membership dues by October 15 in order to continue with the program.

### **AGE RESTRICTIONS**

Pathfinders is for youth ages 6-9. In order to enroll, youth must turn 6 or 8, respectively, by January of the school year in which they join.

### **FEES AND WHAT THEY COVER**

Pathfinders have an annual program fee of \$1600. Families are requested to pay the full program fee upon registration in October. If that creates financial hardship, an installment plan is available by request. Pathfinder fees include: transportation to and from outings, parking fees (like USFS passes, sno-park passes), instruction, breakfast and dinner on overnight trips (participants bring their own lunch), equipment use (tents, snowshoes, harnesses, helmets, etc.) campground fees and staff coordination, oversight and supervision. Because Pathfinders are year-round programs, participants can *only* enroll in October and, if spaces remain, January. If membership is dropped for failure to pay dues, participants cannot re-enroll until the next enrollment period.

### **OTHER EXPENSES**

In most cases, families will not incur any extra expenses. On occasion we may stop for dinner on the way home from a trip, so bringing some spending money is a good idea. Trips that use contracted services with a per-person fee will cost extra for participants. For example, renting kayaks, hiring a rafting company, or renting cross-country skis. Other per person fees like ski trail passes or staying in a youth hostel or Mountaineers lodge will have a nominal fee at the time of registration of that activity.

### **HOW TRIPS WORK**

Trips are coordinated either by the Youth Clubs Coordinator, Clubs Associate Manager and/or Trip Leader (e.g., parent/volunteer). The Trip Coordinator will get necessary permits and reserve campgrounds if needed, plan the itinerary, complete the trip sheet to give to all participants, arrange for group gear and arrange meals for overnight programs. Trip Coordinator(s) will also help arrange carpools. Trip Coordinator(s) should submit receipts for meals, campgrounds and any necessary supplies for reimbursement (found in course material tab on course page). Participants bring their own lunches, but breakfasts and dinners are prepared as a group, and the Trip Coordinator(s) will assign youth/chaperones to help with tasks around camp. Participants are expected to help carry group gear (ropes, anchors, stoves, tents, etc.).

### **FAMILIES**

While Pathfinders is a program geared towards youth ages 6-9, we welcome parents and/or siblings to join our trips. When siblings come, parents must accept full responsibility and understand that Pathfinders members will have priority in participating in activities, and we will encourage siblings to participate if equipment and time allow. Our hikes will be geared toward a 6–9-year-old pace. Parents are welcome to bring younger siblings but must accept responsibility for siblings if they cannot keep up. Older siblings are welcome to come and act as “helpers,” unless they are a disruption. Mountaineers Staff may designate some outings as “Pathfinders-only” if they feel it is necessary for safety reasons.

Registration priority will go to Pathfinders members. Siblings will be allowed to join only within the final week preceding a trip, if there is space available.

ALL FAMILY MEMBERS who plan to attend a trip must register on the website, so that we have an accurate head count. Parents should sign up as "chaperones." Siblings will need to be manually added by staff, so parents will need to notify staff by email if a sibling is coming.

## **FRIENDS**

Pathfinder's members are welcome to bring a friend aged 6-9 on a trip, following the same guidance as above for families. Friends must sign up for a Guest Family account, complete *all* youth paperwork, and Pathfinders members will need to notify staff so that they can be manually added to the roster. In keeping with our guest policy, friends may only participate in two activities, after which they will need to sign up for a paid Mountaineers Membership. If spots remain, they will be invited to join Pathfinders.

## **CARPOOLING / TRIP TRANSPORTATION**

All Pathfinder meetings, workshops, and skills nights happen at The Mountaineers Seattle Program Center. Outdoor trips begin at the trailhead of the activity location. While we do not arrange transportation for youth to and from the Mountaineers Program Center (or other designated meeting place), we do encourage carpooling. When you register, we will ask you to sign up on the carpooling page sent to you by Alvaro/trip coordinator. We encourage families to carpool to and from meetings and trips.

We rely on chaperones to drive youth to and from our trips. When you register, you will be asked to give permission for your child to ride with other parent chaperones, and you will have an opportunity to list any parents you do not feel comfortable allowing your child to ride with. This information will be kept confidential.

## **TRIP COMMUNICATION AND REGISTRATION**

All Pathfinders trips will be posted online as activities within the Pathfinders course page. Trips will be posted with an allotted number of slots for youth as well as volunteers. Each trip will include a trip sheet, created by the trip leader - this trip sheet will be sent out 2 weeks before the trip via e-mail, as well as posted to the activity page for the trip. Families are expected to check these sources often and are expected to attend meetings to stay apprised of upcoming trips.

Note: Trip sheets will list departure time and *approximate* return time. Because every trip has many variables (such as weather, traffic, etc.), we list a target return time and notify parents when we have a better estimate of our exact return time. Typically, trip coordinators/chaperones call parents when we are approximately 1 hour away from Seattle or when we reach cell-service. If we predict that we will be *much earlier* or *much later* than listed on the trip sheet, we will do our best to notify family members in advance.

## **ELECTRONICS**

Cell phones, music, and/or video games are typically not a part of the Pathfinders program. They detract from the wilderness experience and from the community. Youth are encouraged to leave all electronics out of sight (or at home) during Mountaineers programs. We respectfully ask parents to role model a technology-free environment. Youth who choose to use cell phones for pictures or music to fall asleep to may do so if it creates no disruption of the wilderness experience for others. The Mountaineers is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged electronics.

## **WEAPONS**

Weapons, which include knives with blades longer than 3", are never permitted on any Pathfinders activity. Youth/chaperones who are found with weapons will have the weapon confiscated by Mountaineers Staff and will be dismissed from the program without refund. Youth dismissed from the program for possession of a weapon may return the following year on a probationary basis.

## **DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO**

Illicit drugs (including cannabis), alcohol, and tobacco are never permitted on any Pathfinders activity. Youth/chaperones who have or are under the influence of these will be sent home immediately and dismissed from the program without refund. Youth dismissed from the program for possession of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco may return the following year on a probationary basis.

## **MEDICATION**

Medication prescribed by a licensed medical professional must be reported to The Mountaineers using the Mountaineers Medical Administration Form. This information will be shared with chaperones who are leading any trip that the youth is participating in. If the doctor does *not* authorize the youth to self-administer, the medication will be kept with adult chaperones, who will administer the medication according to the doctor's orders. All controlled medication and medication requiring hypodermic needle administration (except for EpiPens) must be stored with Mountaineers staff or designated volunteer leaders. All medication must be current and kept in its original bottle.

Over-the-counter medication such as ibuprofen, allergy medication, antacids or topical antibiotics may be kept by youth participants or parent chaperones in their personal first aid kits. These medications should be listed on the Mountaineers Youth Information Form and kept in a clearly marked container with expiration date.

Mountaineers staff and volunteers may carry over-the-counter medication such as ibuprofen, allergy medication, antihistamine, antacids or topical antibiotics. Staff and volunteer leaders may provide these medications to youth as needed unless otherwise indicated on the youth's health form. All medication administration will be recorded by trip leader for inventory purposes and will be communicated to student's parents e.g., Student falls and scrapes their knee. Trip Leader uses sterile alcohol pads with gloves to clean wounds and apply antibiotic cream if needed and bandaged up. Staff will make parents aware of the injury and communicate steps taken by staff/trip leader to address injury.

## **MEDICAL CLEARANCE**

Pathfinder's members spend a lot of time in remote areas and on technical terrain, where group safety is paramount. In some instances, Mountaineers Staff may require medical clearance and/or instructions from a licensed medical professional for a youth to participate in the program. Examples include but are not limited to: injuries, surgery, eating disorders, psychological and nervous disorders, developmental disorders, heart conditions, diabetes. Mountaineers Staff will disclose this information only to the people who need to have it to maintain a safe environment. In some cases, Mountaineers Staff may, at their discretion, may not allow participation on a trip if they feel the circumstances of the trip make it too difficult to safely manage the participant's medical needs or limitations.

The youth participant's "Youth Information Form" should list their insurance information, which is the most important item to be provided to medical personnel in the event of an emergency.

## **COVID**

Please check [The Mountaineers org-wide guidelines](#) document for the most up to date information regarding COVID.

# **MASTER PACKING LIST**

Different trips will require different gear from this list.

## **11 Essentials**

- Food (plus extra just in case)
- Water (plus extra just in case)
- Extra clothes
- Shelter (emergency blanket)
- First Aid Kit
- Sunscreen, SPF lip balm & Sunglasses
- Map & Compass
- Repair kit (pocketknife, duct tape)
- Firestarter
- Headlamp/flashlight x2 (or one plus extra batteries)
- Whistle

## **Day Trips**

- Lunch
- Water bottles
- Day Pack
- Hiking boots
- Toilet paper/WAG bag

## **Camping**

- Breakfast/dinner food
- Stove & fuel
- Kitchen gear
- Mess kit
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping pad
- Tent (with rain fly, ground cloth, stakes)
- Tarps
- Camp Shoes
- Toiletries

## **Winter**

- Skis, poles, ski boots
- Snowshoes

## **Backpacking**

- Water filter/iodine tablets
- Bearproof food containers or rope & bags for food hangs
- Overnight backpack
- Pack rain cover
- Trekking poles

## **Clothes**

- Underwear
- Long underwear (top & bottom)
- Zip off/athletic pants
- T-shirts (non-cotton)
- RAIN GEAR- always
- Fleece/softshell pants
- Fleece/softshell/down heavy coat
- Liner socks
- Wool or fleece outer socks
- Warm hat
- Gloves
- Neck Gaiter/scarf
- Sun Hat
- Gaiters
- Bandanna/handkerchief

## **Rock Climbing**

- Helmet
- Harness
- Rock Shoes
- Belay Device
- Carabiners (locking)
- Personal Anchor
- Webbing/runners
- Belay gloves
- Large Day Pack (that can hold your stuff plus a rope)

## **Miscellaneous**

- Camera
- Book
- Playing cards/other games
- Swimsuit
- Bug repellent
- Watch
- Cell Phone
- Hand Warmers
- Money for food
- Clean Clothes for the car ride

# **TRIP LEADERSHIP IN 10 STEPS (FOR PARENTS/VOLUNTEERS)**

## **Step 1: Choose an activity**

Hiking, climbing, car camping, kayaking, xc skiing, snowshoeing, backpacking, mountain biking, paddle-boarding, etc.

## **Step 2: Choose a date**

Should be at least one month from now. As a trip leader, you should choose a date that works for you and your family and does not conflict with already scheduled events (see calendar links below). It's a good idea to pick two dates that work so you have a back-up if no chaperones are available or if the place you want to go to is booked on one of the dates.

Calendars: [MAC](#) | [Jr MAC/Explorers](#) | [Pathfinders](#)

## **Step 3: Choose a location**

If location is most important to you, you could choose the location first, then choose the date that works for that location. Ensure that there are no conflicting activities scheduled at that [route/place](#), by viewing the "activities" list for that route/place.

## **Step 4: Determine the trip size**

Determine the maximum number of youth participants and chaperones. This might be dictated by land managers (USFS party size is 12), or by the number a volunteer leader has given you (climb leaders dictate their maximum number on a climb), or by campsite capacity, as examples. For day trips, we need a 1:4 adult:youth ratio so we can ensure enough drivers. Overall, we need 1:6. So, for example, a hike on USFS land would have a maximum of 9 youth and 3 chaperones

## **Step 5: Who will be the qualified leader?**

Are you going to be the qualified leader, or do you need someone else to be the qualified leader? If you plan to be the leader and don't have the proper badge, figure out your plan to acquire the badge. See our [Badge Resources folder](#) for information on pursuing leadership certifications. If this is your first year with Clubs/Mountaineers, you may need to adjust timelines/expectations as receiving certain badges takes time.

## **Step 6: Create a preliminary trip sheet and/or group organizing sheet (for larger trips)\***

Create a preliminary trip sheet by using the [template](#) provided. This should include:

- Trip goal
- Parking passes needed
- Tentative itinerary
- [Group Carpool Page link](#) (make a new carpool page and send THAT link)
- Driving directions
- Trip cost
- Any additional notes/details
- [See examples in the trip sheet archive](#)

Group organizing sheet can be used on larger trips to keep individuals organized in areas like:

- Camping/campsites/where people are staying
- Group meal preparation, meal clean-up, other campsite duties
- Group gear inventory, group gear carrying assignments
- Individual gear checkout inventory
- [Example](#) (MAC Kickoff 2022), [Example](#) (Exp/JM Kickoff 2022)

Send a link to the program manager or youth field coordinator with a link to your trip sheet and ensure it is stored in the proper folder within the youth clubs Google Drive.

- [MAC](#)
- [Explorers/Junior MAC](#)
- [Pathfinders](#)

## **Step 7: Post the Trip on the Website!**

See our [Trip Posting, Communication, and Other "Need-to-Knows"](#) document for an in-depth guide on posting your trip and communicating with participants according to the youth club protocols.



### Step 8: Create Emergency Action Plan (EAP), Emergency Documents

- During the week prior to the trip, create an EAP using the [template](#) provided; email this to the Program Manager or Youth Field Coordinator as appropriate, as well.
- Be sure to print and/or save to your device the "youth flag report" of your trip. See instructions below:
  - [Step 1](#)
  - [Step 2](#)
  - [Step 3](#) (Save and/or print the Youth Flag Report as a PDF and/or paper copy in the LANDSCAPE format)

### Step 9: Any other prep needed?

- Do you need a pre-trip meeting with everyone?
- Any specific skills people need to learn and/or demonstrate proficiency in?
- Gear check out logistics? Program Manager/Youth Field Coordinator will support upon request.
- Let the Program Manager or Youth Field Coordinator know if you'd like to be added to the meeting agenda
- Need to email the participants any additional information?

### Step 10: After the trip

- Email Participants
  - Reimbursement Form: Available for mileage and group meal expenses. [Forms located on course pages in "program materials" section](#). Send the form to [accounting@mountaineers.org](mailto:accounting@mountaineers.org) with [alvaroj@mountaineers.org](mailto:alvaroj@mountaineers.org) on CC for approval. Include receipt images and/or [Google Maps PDF](#) showing your route/mileage.
  - Photo Upload Link: Request link from Program Manager or Youth Field Coordinator.
- Share debrief info with Program Manager or Youth Field Coordinator
- Close the Roster (from the Activity Page)
  - Step 1: [Open "Manage Roster"](#). Ensure participant list is accurate, [remove/add people as necessary](#).
  - Step 2: [Assign volunteer hours](#) to leaders, co-leads, assistant leaders, instructors as appropriate.
  - Step 3: [Mark trip as "successful", save changes](#)
  - Step 4: [Close activity](#)

## RESOURCES FOR TRIP PLANNING

### ADVISORS

That's what we're here for. If you need help choosing a location, finding volunteer chaperones, or figuring out a good schedule, check in with Tom or a fellow parent who has led trips in the past.

### USEFUL WEBSITES:

[www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org) – to find trails you'd like to explore

[Mountaineers.org/activities/routes](http://Mountaineers.org/activities/routes) – map view to see where Mounties have been climbing before

[www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) – to find and reserve campgrounds.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r6/recreation> - Interactive map to find campgrounds in Forest Service Land that do not take reservations (includes campgrounds like Klipchuck and Lone Pine in the North Cascades) These are first come first served campgrounds but are often a great choice.

[www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com) – to calculate round trip distance

**The Mountaineers Book Store** – there are lots of books you can browse through to find what you're looking for. Go to [www.mountaineersbooks.org](http://www.mountaineersbooks.org) to find something that might be useful. Your advisors can help you access the book you need.

## **TRIP SHEET GUIDE**

**Trip name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Trip Leader(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose:** What are you going to do/learn on this trip? Is it a prerequisite for other trips? Include a “sales pitch” here. Convince people who’ve never done this activity to come.

**Chaperones/drivers:** Which advisors are coming on this trip? Are other adults welcome?

**Pathfinder members:** Who is this trip open to? Are there prerequisites? Is there a limit on how many can come?

**Tentative schedule:** Include the date of the trip

- When and where are you meeting in the morning?
- Plan on some time to gather gear and divide it into car loads, so don’t plan on leaving right when people show up
- Estimate the driving time—when will we get to the trailhead?
- Estimate a time for leaving that gives us enough time to drive home (stopping for dinner?) and still get home by a decent hour

**Driving directions:** For the chaperones. Google maps works okay, but try to look up the destination in guidebooks if it’s something past the main roads (Google maps doesn’t do very well on Forest Service roads and the like). Is there a parking fee or pass required?

**Trip cost:** Most trips are included in monthly dues. Not included are extra accommodations (hostels, hotels), guide services (like raft guides) or equipment rentals. Those you would need to list the price for, and it would make for an additional fee for the trip.

**Gear to bring:** You don’t have to list every specific thing on here, go with general categories. Also make a note if The Mountaineers can supply gear (like harnesses and helmets) if people don’t have them. Remember group gear—make sure you know how many tents/stoves/etc. you’ll need and who can bring them. Use the master packing list on the website to help you think of everything. Think about:

- Clothes—warm clothes? Rain gear?
- Shoes—hiking boots? Rock shoes?
- Technical equipment—rock climbing gear? Other gear?
- Food—which meals are bring-your-own, and which are group meals?
- Money for dinner if you’re stopping on the way back, and how much (estimate)

**Notes:** Anything else special about the trip? This might include chaperone fees. Normally, chaperones don’t pay for outings. However, if there are certain per-person expenses (i.e. raft guide services or overnight accommodations like cabins), or if food costs will be especially high, chaperones may have expenses to pay. You can also note if this is designed as a skill-building trip or simply a fun outing

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Pathfinders rely on volunteers to provide our youth participants with the best possible mentorship to help them develop technical skills, leadership skills and competence in the outdoors. All volunteers play a vital role in the success of our program. THANK YOU for volunteering!

### **FOOD**

During day trips, please bring your own lunch and snacks. During overnight trips, we will feed you breakfast and dinner.

### **CAMPING**

We welcome volunteers to join us at our campsite! You are welcome to hang out with the kids, spend time with the other adult volunteers, or hang out by yourself.

### **DOGS**

There are some Pathfinders trips where volunteers' dogs are okay to come and others where dogs are not appropriate for a variety of reasons. If you wish/need to bring your dog, please check with the staff first.

### **THINGS TO KNOW**

We have a strict "no drugs, cannabis, alcohol or tobacco" policy that we ask all volunteers to adhere to while you're volunteering. This includes at the campsite.

Please use appropriate language and keep comments and stories "PG", even if you are only talking to other adult volunteers. We are committed to a diverse and inclusive program. This means that we welcome participants and volunteers of all backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicities, vocations, family models and lifestyles. We ask that volunteers, including parents, acknowledge this diversity and refrain from conversations that may be perceived as offensive to others.

### **QUALIFIED YOUTH LEADER**

All Pathfinders volunteers must be [Qualified Youth Leaders](#). To do this, contact [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org). You will receive an email with a DocuSign form that includes acknowledgment of the Youth Manual as well as permission for a background check. Once you have completed that form, you'll receive an email from SterlingOne that walks you through the background check. It's a simple process. Below are some pieces of our youth policies manual that are particularly relevant to Pathfinders. While our Qualified Youth Leaders need to be familiar with the entire Youth Manual, Pathfinders volunteers should be especially familiar with the policies and procedures below.

### **USE OF PHOTOS**

We encourage you to take photos of your programs and share those photos with the program participants and Mountaineers Staff. The Mountaineers maintains an internal database of photos, SmugMug, which can be used to upload photos so that others may view and download them if trip participants send them a link.

By default, The Mountaineers maintains the right to use images taken on our trips, including of students, in Mountaineers website postings, magazine publications, or other promotional materials. Families may opt-out of these uses by written request sent to the program manager.

### **FORMS AND PAPERWORK**

Every Pathfinders Youth must have on file our standard Youth Information Form, as well as any pertinent medication authorization forms (including permission to apply sunscreen). Other forms we require for Pathfinders include:

- Youth Information Form – parents give basic medical history for their child, including red flags and allergies, and sign a statement granting health care providers permission to treat the child in an emergency even if we cannot reach the parents. **It is important that this form is quickly accessible to hand to a medical professional should an accident or injury occur.**
- Youth Programs Form
- Drop-off & Pick-up Form – parents can opt to allow their child to leave with any adult (or transport themselves – walk home, take the bus, etc.), or they can designate specific people who are authorized to pick up their child at the end of a program. If the parent requests that we monitor who the participant leaves with, Mountaineers staff and volunteers must ensure (and may check ID) that we release Pathfinders only to those people designated on the child's drop-off & pick-up form.
- Drivers for Trips form – On this form, parents acknowledge that we facilitate carpools to trailheads or other program locations. Parents can choose to allow their child to ride with any volunteer or staff member, or they can choose to list drivers their child may not ride with, or they may choose to list an exclusive list of drivers that their child can ride with. Mountaineers staff and volunteers must ensure that we abide by these requests.
- Special Circumstances – parents list any confidential circumstances or needs their child has. Parents also specifically designate who this information may be disclosed to, and it is critical that our staff and volunteers honor those requests.
- Disaster Preparedness Form – parents list an out of state contact and any medical circumstances we may need to know in the event that we must care for their child for an extended period of time due to a natural disaster such as an earthquake.

It is important that Pathfinders leaders have read the forms submitted by the parents and file them in a way that they are accessible. The forms can be found in the "youth forms" section of member's profiles.

Our website is designed to provide critical information to trip leaders for youth on the roster. Trip leaders must ensure they have printed the Youth Flag Report, and that youth have copies of their Youth Information form / other health forms with them. Staff can help volunteers locate these forms if needed.

### HEALTH HISTORY & MEDICATIONS

All participants must have on file a medical history current within two years. **We encourage all youth to carry a copy of their health forms (which Mountaineers staff can print and provide upon request) in a zip lock bag inside of their personal first aid kits.**

Program leaders must have a "permission to treat" form for each participant, signed by the participant's parent/guardian, with them or accessible on site.

Youth prescription medications must be discussed with the program leaders and accompanied with Doctor's orders. It is imperative that program leaders know what medications are present, what the appropriate dosage is, and the effects of not taking the medication, the effects of overdose and the potential side effects of the medication. If the participant self-administers the medication, we must have written permission from the parent.

Controlled medications (federally listed controlled substances which includes any potentially addictive substance such as codeine, oxycodone, Adderall, Ritalin, Xanax, Ativan and others) and the accompanying Mountaineers Medication Administration form must be kept with Mountaineers adult staff or volunteers in secure storage and administration must be supervised by Mountaineers staff or volunteers. With written parent permission, youth may administer this medication themselves.

Hypodermic needles that are required for medical administration and the accompanying Mountaineers Medication Administration form must be kept with Mountaineers adult staff or volunteers in secure storage and administration must be supervised by Mountaineers staff or volunteers. Exception: EpiPen auto-injectors may be carried with the youth to whom it is prescribed.

Diabetes monitoring plans must be discussed in detail and presented in writing to Mountaineers staff and volunteers, signed by the participant's parents, even if the youth self-monitors. Plan must include daily routine, possible complications, signs and symptoms and appropriate response.



## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

Many youths have life situations that may impact their participation in Mountaineers programming. These situations may be medical, physical, dietary, religious, emotional, family-related, school-related or trauma-related. To best serve each youth, we request that parents/guardians share this information with us on a "Special Circumstances" form. Special Circumstances forms will not be shared with anyone other than the program leader(s) without specific consent from the parent/guardian.

We will make every effort to accommodate any needs associated with a youth participant's special circumstances. If a program is such that special accommodations are not practical, Mountaineers Staff and/or Volunteer Leaders must communicate this to the family in advance of the program, so that they can decide whether to participate.

## **PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND DISCLOSURE**

In each program, Youth Leaders must exercise careful judgment about the disclosure of health and special circumstance information.

Youth health and special circumstance information should not be shared with anyone—other leaders, other participants, youth or adults, without prior consent from the family.

In many cases, disclosure is not necessary for the safety of the program. In the event that disclosure is necessary for safety reasons, youth and parents must be notified in advance, and caution must be exercised to ensure that only those *needing* the information are given the information.

## **DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC**

Most Mountaineers programs happen on public land, which means we are often sharing the land with other recreationists. These other recreationists are often people we don't know. They have not been background checked, and we have no knowledge of their outdoor skills or whether they are able to act safely and responsibly in the presence of other groups. In many cases, the presence of others is a non-issue. However, plenty of us have stories of difficult or dangerous situations that arose due to another party's behavior. Here are some ways to deal with this:

First and foremost, it is important that we are prepared to be safe, responsible and respectful outdoor citizens. This means:

- Ensure all participants (including youth and adults) agree upon and understand the plan for safe travel.
- If horseplay is a part of your program (eg. Water fights while rafting) be sure it is done in a designated time and space so that it does not create a prolonged atmosphere of chaos, and so that it does not disturb other visitors.
- Role model, teach, and expect that all participants treat other visitors with respect by stepping to the side of the trail to let them pass, keeping voices at a reasonable volume, and respecting quiet hours at public campgrounds.
- When sharing recreation facilities such as crags or small public picnic areas, Mountaineers Leaders should approach other parties (groups or individuals) to find out what their plan is and establish how they can both share the facilities. Mountaineers leaders should make specific efforts not to monopolize an area.

In public places, establish your group's area and stay together as much as possible. Most unwelcome encounters can be avoided by the way you physically position your group.

If someone not connected to your group begins talking with a youth, leaders must call that youth over to the group. This removes the youth from the situation. If removing the youth doesn't work and the stranger is persistent, one adult must remove the group and engage them in an activity while another adult talks with the stranger.

## **OVERNIGHT PROGRAMS**

Overnight Programs are opportunities to provide deeper meaningful wilderness experiences for youth. They can provide greater learning opportunities, friendships through common experiences, and memories that last forever. However, overnight programs also require an additional layer of risk management. Supervision is trickier when everyone is asleep, and personal activities surrounding bedtime, such as changing and personal hygiene, need to be supervised safely

and respectfully.

During an overnight program...

Youth should not share sleeping quarters with adults unless:

- The adults are the legal parents/guardians or siblings of that youth.
- The sleeping quarters have individual beds, such as in a cabin or yurt.

Sleeping quarters (especially a tent situation) should be designed and programmed for appropriate supervision. Youth should generally be in tent groups of 3 or more, which creates group accountability and “crowd supervision.” In some cases, it may be appropriate for youth to sleep in solo tents. Tent groups of two should be avoided or treated as a last resort option because it creates an environment that enables bullying, abuse or otherwise inappropriate behavior. Adult tents (and other sleeping quarters) should be positioned in a way that adults can be accessed by youth in the middle of the night, and so that they can provide adequate supervision.

Specific nighttime bathroom procedures must be communicated before dark on the first night. Suggestions include:

- Ensuring everyone knows how to get to the bathroom and knows not to leave their sleeping quarters without a light source and/or whistle.
- Leaving a personal backpack in a designated area to identify that the bathroom is in use and by whom.
- Identifying areas of hazardous terrain to be avoided at night (eg. Stream crossings)
- Encouraging youth to wake an adult (and who to wake) should they need anything.
- Ensuring all youth have working light sources and whistles should they get lost on their way back from the bathroom.

## ON THE TRAIL

When hiking or traveling on a trail, it can be difficult to supervise a group of youth who travel at different paces. Some tips for success:

- Be sure to review/teach trail etiquette and safety before heading out on trail. This includes Leave No Trace principles, scheduled water breaks, and specific hazards of the trail.
- Designate a “lead” and a “sweep.” These can be youth or adults. Let youth know that they must always stay behind the “lead,” and if they get in front of the “lead,” they will be asked to go back and walk with the “sweep.”

## AT THE CRAG

Crags pose some unique safety hazards that leaders must acknowledge and address:

- Potential for natural rock fall.
- Potential for human-initiated rock fall.
- Narrow crag bases.
- Every adult who is belaying a participant is one less adult to problem-solve when a difficult situation arises.

These safety hazards can be minimized through smart programming:

- Ensure that there is one helmet per person at the crag *before you arrive* to avoid the need to “share” helmets.
- Designate a “helmet zone” and require that all participants and leaders wear helmets in this area at all times.
- Teach rock safety *before* arriving at the crag. This includes what to do when someone yells “rock,” etiquette when walking around belayers, where packs will be placed, and any potential hazards of the particular site (snakes, cliffs etc.).
- Ensure that one adult is always a “rover”, not on belay.

## CHAPERONES

On all our trips, parents and sponsoring adults act as chaperones. Chaperoning a trip is fun and does not require technical skill, though it can be an opportunity to learn and play alongside the kids. Chaperones have several responsibilities:

### DRIVE

Most of our trips happen outside of Seattle, and we rely on chaperones to drive youth and/or gear. Chaperones will be reimbursed at a rate of \$.24/mile when they carpool with youth who are not immediate family members. Note: when driving youth, whether to/from the Program Center or to/from a campground, it is very important that all youth are accounted for before *any* drivers leave.

### TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

All adults driving youth as part of a Mountaineers program must be at least 21 years old, carry a valid US Drivers License, carry a minimum of \$300,000 in auto insurance, and have a driving history free of major violations. The Mountaineers will keep copies of driver's licenses, insurance policies and driving record on file.

Note: To purchase a driving record, visit <https://secure.dol.wa.gov/home/>. The process takes less than 5 minutes to complete. On the last screen, be sure to download a PDF of the record. Send that file to [alvaroj@mountaineers.org](mailto:alvaroj@mountaineers.org) who will file the driver record and reimburse the cost for the driving record.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [https://secure.dol.wa.gov/lx/ind/\\_/#16](https://secure.dol.wa.gov/lx/ind/_/#16). The page is titled "Purchase driving record" and includes a navigation bar with "Home", "Request", and "Purchase driving record". The main content area is titled "Type of driving record" and features a "Select record type" dropdown menu with "Full" selected. There are "Cancel", "Back", and "Next" buttons at the bottom. The browser's address bar and tabs are visible at the top, and the Windows taskbar is at the bottom.

When transporting youth, all laws must be followed without exception. This includes speed limits, seatbelt laws and not using cell phones unless pulled over in a safe location.

Vehicles transporting youth must have current registration.

12-passenger and 15-passenger vans are not approved means of transportation.

Vehicles transporting youth must have one working seatbelt per passenger.

When driving more than 4 hours, *one* of the following conditions must be met:

- Driver must not have participated in more than 6 hours of activity prior to driving.
- At least two drivers over the age of 21 must be in the car, and switch driving at minimum every 90 minutes.
- If neither of the above conditions can be met, driver MUST stop driving to rest for a minimum of 20 minutes at least every 90 minutes.

### **ATTENDANCE CHECK**

Chaperones will receive a list of trip participants ahead of time and will share in the responsibility for knowing where all participants are at all times.

### **SUPERVISE PREP WORK**

As participants arrive, help ensure they have the gear they need, listed on the trip sheet. Help to facilitate the packing of cars and group gear. On multiday trips, there is prep work to be done for meals and for each day. We need chaperones to help facilitate this.

### **SUPERVISE CLEAN-UP**

When we return to the program center after a trip, there may be personal gear to be sorted out and group gear to be put away. During multiday trips, there is clean-up to be done after each meal as well as at the end of each day. We need chaperones' help with both things.

### **OTHER**

Chaperones are welcome to participate in whatever activity is happening – whether it's a skills session or an outdoor adventure. This is not a requirement unless the chaperone is also a leader.

In some cases (such as a backpacking trip), chaperones may double as leaders.



## **INSTRUCTORS**

Skilled instructors must meet the minimum requirements for instructing at that level within The Mountaineers. For example, Basic Alpine Climbing skills are taught by instructors who have finished the Basic Alpine Climbing Course. All skills instruction is overseen and vetted by a lead instructor who meets the minimum standards within The Mountaineers.

### **INSTRUCTORS**

Instructors will receive an email detailing the subject to be covered and the plan for the day. Instructors will also receive a brief profile on the group they'll be teaching, and the name of the Lead Instructor for the day. When instructors arrive, they should check in with the lead instructor, help to set up, and plan to spend most of their time *mentoring* older youth to teach younger youth.

### **LEAD INSTRUCTORS**

Lead Instructors will receive an email detailing the plan for instruction, profiles of the youth attending, and a list of the other instructors who will be helping. The Lead Instructor's main job is to manage a safe environment, ensure instruction is within Mountaineers minimum standards, and report back to Pathfinders staff leadership about how each student is progressing towards mastery of the skills being taught.

## **LEADERS AND ASSISTANT LEADERS**

All of our technical trips require a leader who has been vetted by The Mountaineers to be present, leading, teaching and overseeing activities. Leaders will receive an email detailing the plan for instruction, profiles of the youth attending, and, where relevant, a list of the other leaders and assistant leaders who will be helping. Leaders will work together with Mountaineers Staff to develop a specific plan for the day.