

Qualified Youth Leader
2015-2016 Handbook
For Staff, Parents and Volunteers



How to Use this Handbook

This handbook is designed to be used as a guide and a resource for Staff, Parents and Volunteers working with youth in Mountaineers programs. Introducing Youth to the outdoors is a fun and rewarding experience. It is also a key aspect of our mission as an organization, and we encourage volunteers to discover the rewards of teaching youth about the outdoors. This handbook is an educational tool that can help prepare volunteers for working with youth. It will help the reader understand the unique risks inherent to youth programming and how to minimize those risks. It is also a resource of ideas for successful programming.

Who needs to be a Qualified Youth Leader?

Anyone who volunteers with youth on a regular basis must be a Mountaineers Qualified Youth Leader. Volunteers and leaders who help with internal Youth Programs (MAC, Explorers, Pioneers, Summer Camp), Family Programs or Youth Partner Programs (Mountain Workshops, HARK, Salmon Safaris) must be Qualified Youth Leaders. Volunteers (who are not the leaders) at public events that may include youth do not need to be Qualified Youth Leaders. Volunteers working as Youth Program Assistants in adult programs with youth participants do not need to be Qualified Youth Leaders. To be a Qualified Youth Leader

1. Read this introduction section (the Qualified Youth Leader Handbook) in its entirety *and* all sections pertaining to the program(s) you intend to participate in. The sections include:
 - a. Youth in Adult Programs Handbook
 - b. Family Activities Handbook
 - c. Mountaineers Adventure Club Handbook
 - d. Explorers Handbook
 - e. Pioneers Handbook
 - f. Mountain Workshops Handbook
 - g. Summer Camp Handbook
2. Complete the online training found at www.mountaineers.org/QYLtraining
3. Once you've successfully completed the online training, you'll receive a consent to background check, and then a separate email from TalentWise which will guide you through a background check. Note: The email from TalentWise will say that you are receiving a "pre-employment screening," which is actually your pre-volunteerism screening.
4. When we receive a clear background check, we will issue you a Qualified Youth Leader badge, which will be good for 3 years, at which point you will need to reapply.

About Youth

Teaching youth in an outdoor setting can be one of the most rewarding ways to volunteer your time. Kids look up to their instructors and soak up everything they're being taught.

When working with youth, it's important to understand a little bit about what makes each age group unique, and what makes kids unique from adults. When you know what age group you'll be working, take a minute to review their typical developmental characteristics so that your teaching can match the students' social, emotional and cognitive readiness.

First, some basics.

Kids aren't what they seem. It would be convenient if kids developed all aspects of themselves at the same

time, but they don't. Remember the really smart kid who was shorter than everyone until 10th grade when she suddenly caught up? Our physical, emotional, social and cognitive selves don't develop in sync, which is what makes growing up even harder, and makes things confusing for adults! Add to that family expectations, school culture, and any extra-curricular activities a child does, and you never know what you're going to get. Two kids the same age may have very different cognitive abilities, social skills and emotional intelligences. Understanding that kids will be very different from one another is the first step to student-centered teaching.

Kids make mistakes. All the time. But they are also smart and want to be liked and respected, just like the rest of us. What does this mean?

- Start with a structured environment. Kids can feel in control and can be successful when they are given a structure that is clear and reasonable. Free play and free exploration can happen later, once a culture of structure has been set.
- Set clear boundaries and stick to them. When we are inconsistent with our expectations, it confuses kids and makes it impossible for them to do what's expected of them.
- Repeat instructions, and ask participants to repeat them back to you.
- Treat kids with respect, and expect the same from them. This includes using "please" and "thank you" as often as possible.
- Let kids know that you trust that they are capable. If a 10-year-old claims they know how to tie a climbing knot, let them. Then check it.
- Listen to what kids have to say, and believe them. But also look for signs that may indicate otherwise. For example, kids often have a hard time recognizing temperature problems. They may tell you they are fine when they are too cold or overheating. It's our job to make sure they are safe.

Kids notice everything. And they look up to you. When working with youth, it is critical that you act as a role model the entire time. It's also important to remember that we are teaching *other people's kids*, and must do our best to support what's being taught at home. Since everyone's family culture is a little bit different, youth leaders have a responsibility to maintain a conservative atmosphere that supports appropriate behavior. Here are some guidelines that Youth Leaders are expected to share with other volunteers at the start:

- Use clean language. Avoid swearing (including the borderline words that some families are okay with and others aren't), and avoid discussing "adult topics".
- Keep conversations inclusive. Consider that our youth come from many different backgrounds and family styles. Avoid heavily opinionated discussions, and discussions that may be perceived as judgmental by youth or adults in the group.
- Avoid sarcasm. Sarcasm can be misinterpreted and can compromise an emotionally safe environment.
- Wear the clothes & gear you're asking the kids to wear.
- Put cell phones away and leave them away.
- Avoid discussing the program, the participants or reading any evaluations until all participants are gone.

Mandatory Reporting

Many states, including Washington, have laws requiring youth workers to report suspected child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services. Mandatory Reporting laws exist to protect the welfare of children, and CPS staff are trained to handle reports in ways that are respectful and protective of everyone involved, including the reporter.

What is a Mandatory Reporter? A Mandatory Reporter is a person whose role requires them to report suspected child abuse. For example, if a pediatrician notices patterns of bruising on a child and does not report it, s/he is inherently enabling child abuse by looking the other way. As someone whose profession is to promote child health and well-being, s/he is negligent by not reporting suspected abuse.

Mountaineers Youth Volunteer Leaders are mandatory reporters under Washington State Law when they are supervising other volunteers who they suspect are being abusive or neglectful of children in the program. Mountaineers Youth Volunteer Leaders are NOT mandatory reporters if they have reason to believe a child is being abused by someone other than a Mountaineers volunteer OR if they are not serving in a supervisory role. However, it is important that all Youth Volunteers review and understand how a child abuse report works. Although not required by law, any Mountaineers Volunteer *can* report suspected abuse and will receive the same protections that a Mandatory Reporter would receive.

Please take some time to review the written material and slideshow about Washington State Mandatory Reporting.

Washington State Mandated Reporter Training:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/MandatedReporterTraining.pdf>

Safe Supervision

Safe and consistent supervision is essential in running safe programs with youth. Here are just a few reasons why:

Youth need help making safe choices. Preschoolers and teenagers alike have been known to go too close to cliff edges, say things that are hurtful to others, and test boundaries to see what they can get away with.

Youth are growing, some have limited body awareness, and are therefore accident-prone. We need to help keep them safe.

In our programs, we teach safety in high-risk activities, empowering youth to be safe and competent outdoor recreationists and conservationists. We can monitor and manage the level of risk when we are present. We can't when we're out of sight.

We believe that our members, staff and volunteers are caring, responsible and trustworthy individuals. But we can't let that trust endanger our youth. In the 21st Century, when we have data that informs us of cycles of abuse and patterns of sexual predators, we must design procedures to protect our youth. These same procedures exist to protect our members, staff and volunteers from destructive false accusations.

There are a million worst-case scenarios, which probably won't happen. But we can't afford to run our

programs on luck. We have children, whom their parents have trusted in our care, that we are responsible for. Our minimum expectation is to return every youth to their parents at the end of the program. Our goal is to return them better – healthier, more competent, more confident, more responsible, and more compassionate. We cannot allow foolish risks that happen out of our sight to harm youth in our programs.

Who is responsible?

This will be covered in more detail in each section. Here is a quick glance at who the primary responsible party is for each type of Mountaineers program:

Youth in Adult Programs – there must be one clearly designated adult over 18 who is not the program leader who has primary responsibility for supervision of each youth. If a parent is present, this designated adult can be the parent. However, in a course setting, we recommend that a volunteer instructor other than the parent be the designated adult supervisor because in many cases, this creates the most successful learning environment.

Family Programs - there must be one designated adult over 18 who is not the program leader who has primary responsibility for supervision of each youth.

Internal Programs (MAC, Explorers, Pioneers, Summer Camp) – The Program Leader has primary responsibility for the safe supervision of youth in the program. The Program Leader can delegate to Assistant Leaders to share the responsibility (eg. climbing groups at a crag). However, even when parents are present, Program Leaders and Assistant Leaders have authority and responsibility for safe supervision of youth participants. Exception: when a youth participant's parent and sibling attend a program (eg. Explorers), the parent is responsible for supervision of the sibling. Program Leaders and Assistant Leaders are still responsible for the enrolled program participant. Program Leaders are responsible for clearly identifying roles and responsibilities to all parties.

Partner Programs – While Program Leaders and Assistant Leaders are responsible for safe instruction and programming, Partner Chaperones are responsible for supervision of youth, including behavior management and bathroom monitoring.

Public Programs – In Public Programs, youth participants are the responsibility of the adults with whom they attend. Mountaineers staff and volunteers are responsible for creating a safe environment to minimize risk, but all supervision is the responsibility of the adults who bring youth to the program.

So what is safe supervision?

Children and Youth under the age of 18 are NEVER left unsupervised. Young children (usually under 14) should be in the sight/sound of a trained adult at all times, including during bathroom breaks. All youth must be appropriately supervised at all times. This means that adults know EXACTLY where each youth is and how long they should be there at all times. When a group of youth is split up, leaders must know which children are in which group. Never assume a youth who is not with you is with another adult. If a child who was in your group is no longer in your group, it is imperative that you verify that they have moved to another adult's group.

Every effort should be made to provide at least two adults to supervise youth. When there is only one

adult, it is impossible to provide constant supervision unless all youth are in the same place at all times. When emergencies, or even difficult situations arise, it is necessary to have one adult deal with the situation while another adult works with the rest of the group. In situations where adults must split up (eg. Driving youth, running rotational activities), a communication plan should be decided upon in advance so the supervising adults can provide support for each other if needed. Check-in times, written rosters and walkie talkies work well for this.

One adult should never be alone with one youth. This practice prevents uncomfortable or dangerous situations and protects adults from false accusations. Predators are skilled at creating alone-time with youth. This practice prevents that from ever happening. Youth can misinterpret the intentions of an adult's words or actions. This makes youth feel uncomfortable and/or prompts them to report benign behavior as inappropriate. The presence of another person reduces the vulnerability of the situation, and provides witnesses should an accusation be made. Exceptions: some programmatic situations inherently create a 1:1 situation (eg. Multipitch Climbs). In these cases, steps should be taken in advance to minimize risk to the youth and adult leader.

Ratios

Recommended adult:youth ratios (parents and youth agency chaperones can be included in ratio *as long as* they understand and accept their leadership role):

Ages 0-3 – 1:3

Ages 4-6 – 1:8

Ages 7-12 – 1:10

Ages 13+ - 1:12

Suggested adult:youth ratios for high-risk activities:

Swimming: 1 Lifeguard:25 Swimmers (all ages) and/or 1 non-swimming adult water watcher:10 swimmers

All other high risk activities: not recommended for youth under age 7; maintain at least a 1:6 ratio, depending on level of risk and maturity/ability of the group

Leadership

Activity leaders must ensure that there is at least one Qualified Youth Leader present during the activity, that all Youth Program Assistants are following the guidelines for the type of program they are running, and that one person is the *designated* QYL each day. Designated Qualified Youth Leaders are responsible for ensuring that adult volunteers and staff have a clear understanding of their role in the program, and any special considerations they must make to provide a safe environment for the youth participant(s). Qualified Youth Leaders must take responsibility for creating programmatic structures that ensure that the safety of the youth and of the adult volunteers is not compromised.

Whenever possible, activity leaders should act as “floaters”. This means activity leaders are not counted in ratio. It is helpful if activity leaders are not teaching, but roaming and providing support for other volunteer

instructors.

Situations requiring extra vigilance

Transportation – whether in carpools or in a bus, groups of youth become split up or mixed together, which makes it easy to assume but difficult to know that all youth are accounted for. Best practice is to have a list and take attendance.

Program transitions – when groups of youth are rotating from one activity to the next, kids can get mixed up in groups or lost. It is a good idea to have a system in place for knowing which kids belong where at what time, and check that they are there.

High risk activities – the risk of minor injuries (slips, falls, pinched fingers, etc) exists all the time with youth, even indoors. But when we take youth into situations where the potential for serious injury or death exists (exposed trails, crags, steep snow slopes) we must be extra vigilant with supervision. This may include providing a higher adult:youth ratio, sequencing activities so that youth take turns in high risk territory, or providing extra safety equipment or site rules that exceed what we'd provide for adults. Remember – we must be more intentional about creating a safe environment for youth than we are with adults because youth are not able to take full responsibility for their own safety.

Water activities – all water activities, including swimming at public waterfronts, stream exploration, river and lake activities, boating and beach exploration, should be considered high-risk activities. Like unexpected rock-fall at a crag or someone accidentally backing off the edge of a cliff, drownings happen quickly and without warning. Unlike a rock-fall incident where you see the injured person you need to attend to, in a drowning you can only see a space where that person once was. Unlike a fall from a ledge which is often accompanied by a scream, drownings are usually silent.

Monitoring Bathrooms

Modified from The Redwoods Group Risk Management Services, 2006

Bathrooms are a place of privacy...so most of us have been taught from childhood. That privacy is good...it allows users a degree of modesty and it allows others separation from activities in which they don't wish to participate. However, it can also provide seclusion...a site for inadequate supervision. Inappropriate behavior in bathrooms is increasing significantly. Without proper supervision the bathroom environment allows children the opportunity to explore their curiosity, which can lead to inappropriate behavior. Unmonitored and accessible bathrooms can also provide predators with secluded access to children.

Whether the abuser is an adult or child, the necessary factors for inappropriate behavior normally are contact, seclusion, and influence. Most of the incidents [youth serving agencies] see involve a lack of supervision...a lack that allows seclusion for peer to peer abuse to occur or for a perpetrator to abuse.

Bathrooms and restrooms are the most frequent sites of sexual abuse of participants in youth programs, apart from sleeping and napping areas in childcare and camp settings. We must control these spaces and the activity in them if we are to provide a safe environment for the young people we serve.

During Youth Drop-off Programs (especially Summer Camp)

One adult staff or volunteer should directly supervise children in bathrooms with multiple stalls from the

bathroom doorway. By standing in the doorway with the door open, general oversight will be maintained without infringing on the personal privacy provided by the individual stall, and the supervising adult is in public view.

There should never be more youth in the bathroom than available stalls (even in the case of bathrooms with urinals). This helps to prevent horseplay as well as inappropriate behavior.

In the case of single-stall bathrooms, staff & volunteers must monitor bathroom use from the hallway, regulating that one person is going into the bathroom at a time.

Any assistance needed by youth while in the bathroom (or dressing) must be attended to by two adults OR the youth's parent or guardian

During Youth Partnership Programs, this monitoring is done by staff from the visiting agency.

During Family Programs, the above procedures apply unless youth are in the bathroom with their own parent/guardian AND no other youth are in the bathroom at the same time.

During Adult Programs with youth *and* programs for teens, youth may be sent to the bathroom without direct supervision as long as:

Leaders are aware of group dynamics and don't allow a group to go to the bathroom that may set the stage for bullying or other peer-on-peer abuse.

Strive for the rule of three...i.e., each group has at least three youth (never just two as has historically been done because such a practice creates the potential for peer-on-peer abuse). In Adult programs, youth participants should NEVER go with only one adult. Group bathroom breaks are best; otherwise a closely-monitored solo-trip to use the bathroom is acceptable.

Time away from the programming area should be monitored; for example,

Staff and volunteers know the necessary travel time and enforce immediate returning to the program area.

Youth should get specific permission to leave the program area.

Youth should report to the staff member who authorized the bathroom trip upon their return.

If necessary to ensure the children's safety, a staff member should send the youth into an otherwise empty bathroom one at a time while supervising the rest of the children outside the door.

Carefully monitor behavior during group use times in the restrooms, e.g., changing for swimming or any other similar activity.

Remember, the goal of bathroom monitoring procedures is to minimize or eliminate opportunities for youth to be in a secluded environment with another individual. Mountaineers programs happen in diverse environments, and judgment will need to be exercised in many cases. Bathroom Monitoring procedures will need to be modified for the environment.

Creating a safe and effective learning environment

Mountaineers leaders should strive to create physically and emotionally safe environments that facilitate effective learning. While true for all Mountaineers programs, it is especially important in youth programs because youth are not fully capable of speaking up for themselves and ensuring that their own needs are met.

The hierarchy of human needs shown below, presented by Abraham Maslow in 1943, illustrates needs that must be met in order for humans to be able to learn. The needs listed at the bottom of the triangle, according to Maslow's theory, are needs that **MUST** be met before a person can focus on needs that are higher up on the triangle. For example, it is impossible for a person to focus on making friends in a new place if they do not feel that they are safe. All of their energy goes into their need to feel safe. Likewise, a person cannot learn new skills if they are hungry, thirsty, very cold, very hot or sleep deprived. These are basic needs that will monopolize a person's attention until they are met.



When working with youth (and adults), we must identify the learning goals of the activity and create an environment that makes those goals achievable. For example, if the program goal is to teach knots, we can ensure physiological needs are met by creating a comfortable environment, providing snacks (or reminding kids to bring snacks) and scheduling bathroom breaks. We can ensure safety needs are met by providing name tags, presenting ourselves with a friendly demeanor and creating a positive atmosphere by reminding kids to be supportive and helpful of one another. We can create a sense of belonging by positioning the group in a circle so that everyone feels included and no one feels left out.

Take hiking as another example. It's a good idea to double check that everyone has enough food, water and clothing before the hike. If one of your learning goals is that kids learn to come prepared, you may choose not to double check, because there is value in learning experientially. However, be sure to think of what situations may arise and what the consequences may be. If a youth participant fails to bring enough water, there is valuable learning in that moment of realization. However, a positive learning experience can turn into a negative, uncomfortable or even dangerous experience if the leader isn't prepared to control the learning. Leaders should be prepared in this situation to ensure that participants' basic needs are met. If the leader brings extra water that s/he does not tell the kids about, s/he can offer that water to the youth who has had enough time to realize the repercussions of not bringing enough water. In this way, the leader facilitates the best possible learning environment.

Age Group Characteristics

Groff, J. Training Trainers to Teach. Raleigh, North Carolina: North Carolina State University.

Characteristics of 6-8 year olds:

Physical:

Are mastering physical skills. Have better control over large muscles than small muscles.

Social:

Are becoming more aware of peers and their opinions and are beginning to better observe other people.

Are beginning to experience empathy for others, but still learning about and wrapped up in self.

Are still family oriented.

Emotional:

Seek parental approval but are becoming emotionally steadier and freer from parents.

Tend to behave in ways to avoid punishment.

Intellectual:

Generalize from own experiences and are more interested in process than product.

Base their thinking in reality and accuracy.

Are learning to sort things into categories and arrange in a series.

Handle only one mental operation at a time.

Environmental education activities for this age group should focus on building knowledge about the natural environment. Lessons that incorporate utilizing the five senses, provide opportunities for collecting and sorting of seeds and allow for the development of cause and effect relationships, such as the relationship of plants to water and sunlight, will provide the learner with stimulating activities that will allow them to achieve success.

Characteristics of 9-11 year olds:

Physical:

Are quite active with boundless energy.

Are maturing at different rates between the sexes. Girls will be maturing faster than boys and some may be entering puberty.

Are increasing in manual dexterity, small muscle coordination.

Social:

Generally see adults and authority.

Feel loyalty to group, club, gang. Enjoy code language and passwords.

Identify with same sex group. May prefer to be with members of the same sex.

Prefer working in groups in cooperative activities.

Expand and use reasoning skills to solve problems, negotiate and compromise with peers.

Emotional:

View right behavior as "obeying" rules set by those in power.

Accept parent/family beliefs.

Admire and imitate older boys and girls

Are developing decision-making skills.

Are beginning to question parental authority.

Need involvement with a caring adult.

Intellectual:

Have increased attention span, but have many interests which change rapidly.

Are beginning to think logically and symbolically. Still prefer concrete ideas.

Are learning to use good judgment.

Judge ideas in absolutes; right or wrong, fabulous or disgusting, etc. Do not tolerate much middle ground.

Want to use their skills to explore and investigate the world.

Activities dealing with the value of the natural world can easily be understood by 9 to 11 year olds. Experiences that incorporate physical activity along with opportunities to explore and investigate the world are very appropriate for this age group. Pond studies and insect catch and release programs are favorites, by allowing students to see the importance of all members of the ecosystem. Students begin to understand the role that member of the ecosystem plays, therefore insects, arachnids and reptiles are no longer good or bad in their eyes, but valued for their uniqueness and contributions.

Characteristics of 12-14 year olds:

Physical:

- Exhibit a wide range of sexual maturity and growth patterns between genders within gender groups.
- Experience rapid changes in physical appearance.

Social:

- Are interested in activities involving the opposite sex; learning to live with opposite sex.
- Are looking more to peers than parents. Seek peer recognition.
- Seek acceptance and trust.
- Tend to reject ready-made solutions from adults in favor of their own.
- Question authority and family values.

Emotional:

- Compare themselves to others.
- Are concerned about physical development and emerging sexuality.
- Are concerned about social graces, grooming and being liked by friends.
- Abandon view of parents as all powerful.
- Strive for independence, yet want and need parents help.
- Need information for making decisions.
- Seek privacy from parents/adults.
- Want to be part of something important.

Intellectual:

- Find justice and equality to be important issues.
- Think abstractly and hypothetically.
- Are developing skills in the use of logic. Can understand cause and effect.
- Can solve problems that have more than one variable.
- Can imagine consequences.
- Are ready for in-depth, long-term experiences.
- Challenge assumptions.
- Want to explore the world beyond their own community.
- Are curious about the environment.

Youth ages 12 to 14 would thrive in curriculum activities that focus on developing attitudes about the natural world. Looking at community environmental issues and defining their feelings about those issues through research and investigation provides youth to challenge assumptions and redefine their beliefs based on real life experiences.

Characteristics of 15-18 year olds:

Physical:

- Are concerned about body image.
- Exhibit smaller range in size and maturity among peers.

Social:

- Make commitments.
- Can commit to follow through with service.
- See adults as fallible.
- Desire respect.
- Are apt to reject goals set by others.
- Want adult leadership roles.

Emotional:

- Desire respect.
- Are beginning to accept and enjoy their own uniqueness, but still seek status and approval of peer group.
- Look for confidence of others in their decisions.
- Develop their own set of values and beliefs
- Take on multiple roles.
- Gain autonomy.
- Are introspective.

Take fewer risks.
Can initiate and carry out their own tasks without the supervision of others.
Search for career possibilities.
Desire a role in determining what happens in their world.

Intellectual:

Are mastering abstract thinking. Can imagine impact of present behavior on the future.
Can consider many perspectives and a given issue.
Develop theories to explain how things happen.
Create new possibilities from information.

Fifteen to 18 year olds are ready for authentic experiences in the environment that foster commitment and skill development to protect and improve the environment. Service learning, teaching others and authentic leadership roles around the environment provide 15 to 18 year olds with opportunities to impact their world and challenge others to do the same.

Diversity and Inclusion

Our youth program serves youth all over the Puget Sound region, and many come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and from families from various economic levels. Because The Mountaineers is dedicated to access to the outdoors for all people, many of our youth programs work with underserved youth receiving financial assistance for our programs, and many of these youth come from traumatic backgrounds.

Definitions:

Underserved Youth: Youth who historically have inadequate access to basic resources such as quality food, water, housing, and education. This includes youth of color and low-income youth.

Youth from Traumatic Backgrounds: Youth who have experienced one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (see resources below), such as emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, neglect, a parent with a mental illness, loss, or grief.

How do we work with Underserved Youth and Youth from Traumatic Backgrounds if we're not from these groups? If we don't come from the same background as the youth we work with, we can still have tremendous, positive impact on the work we do with these youth!

Tips for working with youth who come from different backgrounds than you:

Get to know their name. It's ok to not remember a person's name, and ask for it as many times as you need to. If you're embarrassed, say so. "I'm sorry, I'm so embarrassed, I know you've told me your name ten times! But can you tell me one more time? I really want to get it right!" Pronunciation *is* important; repeat an unfamiliar name back to the child until they say you've got it right. They may laugh at you – that's ok! It's important that they know that their name is important to you.

Refrain from physical touch. Many children are uncomfortable with physical touch when they don't know someone that well, even if it seems harmless, like a light hand on the shoulder or a ruffle of the child's hair. Avoid physical touch, and use your words to connect with a child instead. For example, instead of hugging a child that has just come down from the climbing wall, tell them, "That was amazing! I'm so proud of you for finishing that climb!" A touch that is always celebratory and appropriate is a high five. If a student initiates touch with you, like hugging you for belaying them, it's definitely ok to hug them back!

When getting to know the youth, focus on the activity you're working on, or on play. Getting to know a child is an important part of being a positive role model for them, so ask them lots of questions, and tell them about yourself! Because it's hard to reveal more personal parts of their lives to near strangers, focus first on asking questions about the activity you're doing, like "Have you ever rock climbed before?" or "How was that climb for you?" "Did you feel supported?" "How do you like to feel supported while I'm belaying you? Can I cheer you on?" More personal questions can be painful for youth, like "What part of Seattle do you live in?" if the child is homeless, or "Do you like

to go outdoors with your family?” if they are part of the foster system. But if you focus on the activities that you’re completing together, you are still building trust and getting to know the child without bringing up personal subjects.

Be open, and avoid judgment. When a child does open up to you about something personal, it is because they have begun to trust you. Be open to what they have to say, even if it is surprising to you, and be mindful to withhold your initial judgment. It is human to judge other people, but if a student opens up to you about their son or daughter, an abuse situation, or being homeless, it’s important to show that you’re listening and empathetic. If you find yourself in a place of non-judgment, you can ask questions, like “How do you work through that?” or “What’s that like?” Another approach you can use is “I haven’t been through that experience myself, but I feel for you and let me know how I can support you today.”

Don’t make promises that you can’t fulfill. If you find yourself wanting to say “You can climb with me next” or “We can definitely climb this route right after Kenji finishes climbing it,” notice that you’re about to make a promise that you may not be able to fulfill, which can break trust between an adult and a child. Say instead, “I’ll try to climb with you next, but Mika is in line before you, so I may be climbing with her” or “We’ll try to climb this route next, but it looks like John may want to climb it too, so you may have to wait a bit longer.” Avoiding promises and instead telling youth that you hear what they want and you’ll try to fulfill their wishes both shows that you care and builds trust with them.

Avoid swearing, sarcasm, and playful teasing. Many youth do not understand sarcasm or teasing as friendly senses of humor, even though many adults use it to form relationships with one another. Be mindful of saying exactly what you want to say and avoid saying the exact opposite, even in a friendly or “clearly sarcastic” tone. What is an obvious tone to you may not be an obvious tone to a child, and sarcasm or teasing are often taken seriously for young people.

Talk to youth like they’re your equals. Youth are more successful if you use similar tones with them that you’d use with an adult. It’s ok to still state boundaries and consequences, but using an adult tone helps the student know that you still respect them, even if they aren’t acting the way you’d like them to. If a student is being unsafe, it’s still ok to tell them what to do differently, or if they’re insulting another student, it’s ok to tell them that what they said is not ok, and to ask for an apology for that student.

Stay calm if a child is experiencing trauma. If a child is stuck on the rock wall or is upset on the ground, the best thing you can do is to make sure that you’re breathing and keeping your face and voice calm for them. Tell them that you, or someone else, are going to help them. Remind them that they are safe frequently to calm them down. Get a staff member for support.

Have an attitude of working in solidarity with these youth, not as if you’re helping them, giving charity, or doing a favor for them by being there. Charity looks like this: “I am here because you are worse off than me, and I feel sorry for you and want to help change that for you! I have already overcome challenges and experienced these things, so you are here to learn from me.” Solidarity looks like this: “I am here because not all youth are given the same resources, and I believe that we all are worse off until all people are given access to the same resources. You and I are in this together, enjoying the outdoors together and experiencing challenges and overcoming challenges together. You have unfamiliar experiences and I can learn from you, and I have unfamiliar experiences and you can learn from me.”

Be forgiving of yourself. These are a lot of guidelines, and you, volunteers, and staff will certainly not get these right all of the time! Be forgiving of yourself and others, ask for support and feedback if you have questions about your interactions with youth, and offer support and feedback to others.

More Resources:

If you're interested in learning more about Diversity and Inclusion in general, ask staff from the Education Department, and read these resources:

Introduction to the concept of White Privilege: <https://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/white-privilege.pdf>

Every human has implicit biases. Learn about them at Project Implicit: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

If you identify as part of the white middle class, then your culture is so engrained in American culture that it is sometimes difficult to identify. Learn more about the Elements of White Middle Class Culture: <http://www.stevebozzone.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Elements-of-White-Middle-Class-Dominant-Culture.pdf>

Adverse Childhood Experience Study: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>; <http://acestoohigh.com/>

Some Great Teaching Techniques

Feed their eyes. Use props. Hold things up.

Break skills down into small, achievable steps.

Number the steps: say "There are three things we are going to do next"

Praising kids at the end, when they've completed the entire task, is not enough. They need positive feedback from us as they master steps along the way.

The more specific the praise, the better. "Good job, you're doing great!" is not as effective as "You're waiting to pull until everybody gets to where you are; that's really patient; thanks for hanging in there for us" (Describe it, Label it, Praise it)

Use repetition. Say key things in different ways so that they are said more than once.

Say key things in different ways so kids can hear them more than once.

Demonstrating is better than talking. Try to *show* as much as possible.

Show not only what to do but also what *not* to do. Do this with a positive tone. "When you are holding the paper, it won't look like this, because then it's facing the wrong way; it will look like this, the way I'm holding it now"

Involve others in your teaching. Get another kid up in front so that they are demonstrating with you. Show the ones up front how to do it in the course of showing everyone and you will find that the attention of the entire group goes up.

As they do steps, have them stop and show you and/or teach each other what they've done so that you can make sure everyone is OK and to celebrate success and build confidence as you go along.

Motivate and personalize the learning process by telling kids how and where *you* learned what you are teaching them.

Try to make what you are teaching special or unique. For example, if true, you can say that most people don't know how to do it, which makes it more motivating for kids to learn.

Help kids deal with imperfection by telling them in advance, if true, that when you learned how to do this, it didn't come out perfectly the first few times. Tell them what you did to learn to do it better.

When a step does not have to be done perfectly, tell them.

During teaching, we are constantly telling people what to do. **Always say please.** Always say thank you. Being respectful builds a better learning relationship.

ASK QUESTIONS! The more questions, the better teaching. Say “What do you think is the best way to do this?”

Emotional Intelligence

In fostering positive social development in children and youth, it is essential to consider all of the various ways of being intelligent and how each of them fosters relationships as well as learning. Emotional intelligence is as much a predictor of success as is IQ and conversely, research has shown that a high IQ with a low emotional intelligence is one predictor for low success rates as an adult.

Emotional Intelligence will provide children/youth with the skills to succeed in the changing work environment—skills that include:

- Being able to work with diverse groups of people
- To teach oneself
- To work in teams
- To communicate successfully
- To problem solve through critical thinking skills

There are five domains within emotional intelligence. These are:

1. **Knowing one’s emotions:** self-awareness, including the ability to recognize a feeling as it happens, is critical to psychological insight and understanding.
2. **Managing emotions:** Expressing feelings in appropriate ways is an ability that builds on self-awareness
3. **Motivating oneself:** Channeling emotions to achieve a goal enables outstanding performance of all kinds. “Attitude is everything”
4. **Recognizing emotions in others:** Empathy is the fundamental people skill.
5. **Handling relationships:** The art of relationships can be considered a skill in managing emotions of others. Mastery of the previous four skills is essential for handling relationships: identifying and managing one’s own emotions, while recognizing emotions in others and *changing* our actions and reactions in response to others’ emotions.

Settings which foster emotional intelligence allow children to be free to express their feelings, provide adult role models for expressing feelings, and are rich with the use of feeling words and discussions about feelings. Knowing and managing one’s own emotions is a process that all children (and many adults) are working through as they handle relationships with others.

Learning and growth in the area of emotional intelligence can and does take place in a variety of Mountaineers activities. Although awareness of emotions and focus on those of others starts very early in life, much practice and internal growth and development are needed to truly accomplish these skills.

Tools for Behavior Management

A little lesson in neuroscience: flipping your lid

Make a fist with your hand, tucking your thumb under your fingers:

Wrist = spinal cord, carrying messages to the rest of your body

Bottom of palm = brainstem, which connects to the spinal cord and regulates instinctive behavior and involuntary functions

Thumb = midbrain/amygdala where our emotions and memories are created and processed. It also is the location of our fight or flight reflexes

Back of the hand and fingers = cerebral cortex/prefrontal cortex, this is our higher order thinking that allows us to be logical, empathetic, problem solve, etc.

When we are calm and functioning at our best, our brain is intact like our fist. The prefrontal cortex does the work, and regulates the emotional mid-brain.

When someone is triggered and something causes them to become angry, scared, stressed out, they “flip their lid” (open your fist, exposing your thumb as if you’re making a number 4) and there is not a strong connection between their midbrain and their prefrontal cortex. The midbrain/amygdala is exposed and becomes the decision-making driver.

For kids: reasoning with a child will not help because they are not acting out of a place of logic.

Instead, give them space or remove them from the stimulus of the trigger. Then once they have calmed down (put the lid back on) you can ask them about the situation and help them think through what happened and what would help things go better the second time around. Also, keep in mind that children who have been exposed to trauma have more triggers and often take longer to recover from triggers.

For adults: we can “flip our lids” too! Recognizing our triggers and practicing self-awareness actually helps us calm down. Try to be aware of your triggers and what helps you come back to a state of calm and logic.

When participants’ behavior needs redirecting, use some of these techniques:

Level One:

Evasion - Most of the time, 90% or more of participants are already doing what is expected and what is being asked of them. Sometimes a few students will behave in mildly disruptive ways just to get a response out of you. Instead of engaging with the negative behavior, you can use evasion. When you use evasion, you give attention to the positive behaviors you are trying to encourage. You focus on “pro-social” behavior rather than negative behavior.

Some examples of evasion include:

1. Giving the group positive feedback for what is going *well*, instead of acknowledging the disruptive behavior.
2. Giving a verbal statement of expectations to the *whole group*, instead of singling out the disruptive student.

Evasion often has good results. In general, those who are being disruptive want to be noticed. Since only positive and appropriate behavior is being noticed, disruptive students will often change their behaviors. By using evasion, you also avoid getting into power struggles with disruptive students.

Redirect - Sometimes an issue has not progressed to the point of needing conflict resolution; however it cannot be solved using evasion. In such cases, you can often smooth over the situation and redirect students. When you smooth over a situation, you support youth; when you follow that up with redirection, you quickly halt the unwanted behavior. To use this type of intervention, direct students' attention to something new, or offer leadership opportunities to students with behavior issues.

Some examples of redirection include:

1. Moving participants who are disrupting a tetherball game to a 4-square game.
2. Putting one of those participants in charge of "rules" when a question comes up.
3. As they begin the new activity or role, reminding participants what you need from them; for example, by saying, "I need you to leave the square when you out."

When you redirect participants, you often find that the issue has simply "gone away," as the participants are now happily involved in their new activities and roles.

Give Choices – when a child is not doing what's asked or resisting something you need him/her to do, give choices. Example: "you need to clean up the goldfish you spilled or find someone to help you"; "you can either carry your water bottle in your hand, or put it in your backpack and take it out during water breaks"

This for that – when a child or group is not doing what's asked or resisting something you need to have done, you can offer this for that. Example: "If you move all of your packs to the side of the trail before I count to 5, we'll have brownies as our snack"; "if you keep paddling, we'll be done in time to stop for ice cream on the way home"

Smoothing – when kids are uncooperative, stalling, and there isn't much time for a more involved response, try smoothing the situation over to get through it. Example: "I know we're all tired, but let's get through this last five minutes and then we can rest"; "I know this part's boring, but if you pay attention for 10 more minutes, you'll know how to use the compass for the scavenger hunt"

State your expectations – When kids are resisting rules or threatening not to comply, state your expectations clearly. Example: "I asked you to sit at the picnic table while eating. I don't want to find food all over the ground."; "We agreed that we would be respectful of the person speaking. If you are standing next to someone who might distract you, please be responsible and move."

Friendly challenge – When kids won't cooperate, a friendly challenge with an adult can inspire them! Example: "How fast do you think we can get all the harnesses put away? 2 minutes? Okay go!"; "Let's see who can find the most garbage at our campsite in 5 minutes"

Level Two:

Mediation - There are times when conflicts must be immediately and directly resolved; these are cases when participants are physically or emotionally unsafe. In these cases, mediation is the intervention to use. Mediation requires adult support to resolve serious conflict between two or more parties.

Mediation can involve one or more of the following actions:

1. Having a one-to-one talk with each participants to build understanding of what the conflict is about

2. Using “Mirroring” to help participants feel heard and understood. Mirroring involves listening to what the participant has to say, and paraphrasing it back (“I can see that you felt bad when Trey knocked the ball out of your hand....”)
3. Setting up a contract with a difficult participant
4. Resolving a conflict between participants through dialogue (theirs)
5. Mediating a potential resolution: participants may not walk away friends, but there should be a mutual understanding of what is respectful behavior
6. Laying ground rules for the future
7. Mediation, redirection, and evasion are all appropriate techniques for dealing with behavioral issues, both on the playground and in the classroom. These three intervention techniques, when partnered with a set of effective rules and consequences, ensure a smooth outdoor program.

Take child aside to listen/talk – When kids are having trouble cooperating despite your efforts, find out why. Try not to make assumptions, but pull the child aside and ask what’s going on. Perhaps a child feels nervous or self-conscious in a certain activity or setting, or perhaps the child is upset about something. Sometimes children misinterpret adult actions or words and their feelings are hurt. We don’t learn these things unless we ask what’s going on.

Consequences for non-compliance – When kids are testing their limits, be sure there are consequences that are stated ahead of time and related to the actions. Example: “No, we can’t play camouflage because it took us too long to pack up our lunches and clean up the area.”; “We won’t be able to get on the boulder for the rest of the week because you weren’t following the safety rules we told you about.”

Chat with the group – when kids are having a hard time getting along, it can be a good idea to chat with the group and come with a resolution. If you have been working closely with the group, it can be helpful to have a guest adult come to facilitate the chat. It can be a good idea to have the group draft a behavior contract that they can all agree to.

Special Activity – if a group is struggling and spirits are low, a special activity can help unify them and get them excited to be exploring together again. Be sure to debrief the activity and help them identify how they can continue to have fun together.

Ask a friend how to get through to a child – When you are not getting through to a specific child, asking that child’s parent, friend or sibling can help. For example “It seems like Sam’s not having very much fun this week. You’re his friend, what are some things he really likes that you think might help him have a better time?”

Time Out – When kids are misbehaving, too silly, fighting or not playing by the rules, a time out can help a child refocus or calm down. Example: “Sarah remember we talked about playing rough? Why don’t you take a 5 minute time-out, and then come back and join us playing by the rules”; “Mark, everyone’s trying to listen but it’s hard when you keep doing that. Please take a 5 minute time out, then come back and join us”

Secret signal – Many kids who struggle with behavior *want* to behave but are easily distracted or overstimulated. These kids often appreciate a secret signal which helps them with their own self-awareness.

Example: “Finn, when you’re starting to play too rough, I’ll touch my nose so you know to back off a little.” Kids appreciate this because it helps them stay out of trouble.

Level Three:

Parent Discussion – when a child is defying your or other leaders on a continual basis, parents should be aware that it is a problem. Parents can offer some advice or insight into the situation, which can often give you some tricks and tools you need to resolve the situation. Even if that’s not the case, parents need to be aware of an escalating situation so that if a child needs to be removed from a program, parents are not surprised by this and are aware of the efforts that have been made.

Contract with Child - A written contract that children sign helps them identify and acknowledge the behavior that is unacceptable, agree on a plan to change the behavior, and clearly understand the consequences if the behavior does not change.

Level Four:

Child is dismissed – Some kids are not able to be successful in certain situations during a particular time in their development. When the need to dismiss a child from a program is identified, the Education Director and/or Executive Director should be notified *before* the child is dismissed. Staff need to understand the story behind the dismissal so that they can support program leaders and help parents find a better fit for their child.

Board Policies - Youth & Family

Ed. January 2016

Definitions

1. “Youth” refers to any individual under the age of 18. “Child” is used interchangeably with “youth.”
2. “Youth Leader” refers to any adult age 18 and over who volunteers or is paid to work in a leadership, instructional or supervisory capacity with youth, and has passed a criminal background check and has been trained in The Mountaineers Youth Policies.
3. “Youth Program Assistant” refers to any adult age 18 and over who volunteers or is paid to work in a leadership, instructional or supervisory capacity with youth under the direct supervision of a qualified Youth Leader. Volunteers working with youth are inherently Youth Program Assistants and, unless they are qualified Youth Leaders, should receive training from a qualified Youth Leader about accepted practices in the program for which they are volunteering.
4. “Supervision” refers to oversight of youth, adult participants and Youth Program Assistants in programs as is necessary for the safety of the youth.
5. “Internal Youth Program” refers to youth programs designed for children of Mountaineers members and Youth Members of The Mountaineers, where youth enroll directly in the program on a Mountaineers roster, and Mountaineers Leaders are responsible for the instruction, safety and supervision of the youth.
6. “Partner Youth Program” refers to youth programs offered to youth participants of non-Mountaineer programs or organizations, such as school groups, scout troops, or clubs.
7. “Family Program” refers to programs offered to Mountaineers Members in which parents and children participate together, and children are directly supervised by their parents.

8. “Youth Participants in Adult Programs” refers to any Youth under the age of 18 participating in a program designed for participants over 18.
9. “Public Program” refers to programs offered to the general public, in which any youth participants are directly supervised by a responsible adult, and The Mountaineers is not responsible for the supervision of children.

General Youth Policies

1. All youth participants and adult chaperones and instructors in Mountaineers activities must have on file an Individual Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability, current within one calendar year. Youth participants’ forms must be signed by an adult parent or guardian.
2. All youth participating in Mountaineers activities, with the exception of Public Programs, without the presence of their own parent or guardian must have a signed “Mountaineers Health and Emergency Permission” form on site during the activity. Youth in Partner Programs can have on site the partner organization’s health and permission to treat forms in lieu of The Mountaineers’ forms.
3. Youth may not bring the following items to any Mountaineers program under any circumstances: illegal drugs, marijuana, fireworks, knives greater than 3 inches, hatchets and items that could be used as a weapon. Youth may risk dismissal from program and/or have items confiscated for violation of this policy.
4. The Mountaineers are not responsible for lost, stolen or broken items.
5. Youth are expected to wear appropriate attire during Mountaineers programs. Questions about appropriate attire should be directed to the Youth Leader.
6. Youth may not engage in exclusive or intimate relationships during Mountaineers programming.
7. When parents or guardians are not present, lifeguards with current Lifeguarding, CPR and First Aid certifications from a nationally recognized certifying organization must be present at all youth swimming activities that take place in water greater than 3’ deep.
8. Boating activities must follow all state and local boating laws, and all participants (adults and youth) must wear properly fitted personal floatation devices at all times. All participants under the age of 18 in swimming programs must be swim tested by a lifeguard before participating in swimming activities.

General Youth Program Policies

1. All paid and unpaid adults working in a leadership, administrative, supervisory or instructional capacity on behalf of The Mountaineers with Internal Youth Programs, Partner Youth Programs and Family Programs in any capacity must be qualified Youth Leaders.
2. Public Programs must have a minimum of one qualified Youth Leader in each program area who is responsible for monitoring appropriate behavior of Youth Program Assistants and other adults.
3. When Youth participate in Adult Programs, a minimum of one qualified Youth Leader must be present on site at all times. That Youth Leader is responsible for monitoring the appropriate behavior of Youth Program Assistants and other adults. This includes properly training Youth Program Assistants in appropriate behavior and in specific ways to avoid risk and protect themselves and the youth in the program.

General Youth Leader & Youth Program Assistant Policies

1. All Youth Leaders must have passed a criminal background check within three (3) years, conducted by a third party company contracted by The Mountaineers for the purpose of conducting the background check.
2. All Youth Leaders will receive training on The Mountaineers Youth Policies.
3. Youth Leaders are, by state law, mandated reporters when another volunteer is suspected or alleged to have caused abuse or neglect to a child under the age of 18. All Youth Leaders must review the Washington State document “Protecting the Abused & Neglected Child: A Guide for Recognizing & Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect” annually. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/publications/documents/22-163.pdf>

4. At no time during any Mountaineers program may a Youth Leader or Youth Program Assistant be alone with a single child (other than their own) where they cannot be observed by others. When one-on-one time between a Youth Leader or Youth Program Assistant and a child cannot be avoided (e.g. in the middle of a multipitch climb), steps must be taken to mitigate risk to the youth and the Youth Leader or Youth Program Assistant, according to recommended practices in The Mountaineers Youth Handbooks and training.
5. When camping, or during any overnight program, no youth is permitted to sleep in the same sleeping quarters as an adult other than his or her own parent, guardian or sibling, unless the accommodations are group accommodations such as a yurt or cabin, or unless a parent or guardian has signed a waiver ahead of time allowing this for an overnight trip. Unless circumstances prevent it, youth should sleep in private sleeping quarters or in groups of 3 or more youth.
6. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants shall never leave a child unsupervised.
7. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants shall not abuse children including:
 - a. Physical abuse – strike, spank, shake, slap;
 - b. Verbal abuse – humiliate, degrade, threaten;
 - c. Sexual abuse – inappropriate touch or verbal exchange
 - d. Mental abuse – shaming, withholding love, cruelty;
 - e. Neglect – withholding food, water, basic care, etc

Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate termination of membership.

8. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants must use positive techniques for guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants will have age appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Secret organizations, hazing, corporal punishment and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any Mountaineers activity. Physical restraint is used only in emergency situations necessary to protect the child or other children from immediate harm, and must be documented in writing.
9. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants must respond to children with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, family style or culture.
10. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Children are not to be touched in areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit unless necessary to provide emergency medical care.
11. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants must wear appropriate attire while working with youth.
12. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants will refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children and parents.
13. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or illegal drugs while working with youth is prohibited for Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants during Internal Youth Programs, Partner Youth Programs, Family Programs and Public Programs. When youth participate in Adult Programs, at least one designated Youth Leader must refrain from consumption of alcohol, marijuana or illegal drugs at all times in order to provide reliable supervision for the youth.
14. Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of children or parents during program hours is prohibited for Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants.
15. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life and any kind of harassment in the presence of children or parents are prohibited for Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants. When youth are participating in adult programs, Youth Leaders should carefully monitor and redirect any inappropriate conversation witnessed among other adults in the program.
16. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants must be free of physical or psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's physical or mental health. If in doubt, an expert should be consulted.
17. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact and maturity.

18. Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants may not engage in intimate relationships with program participants under the age of 18.

Internal Youth Programs, Family Programs and Youth Participating in Adult Programs

1. Youth Participants must present signed waiver(s) specific to the type of program the youth is engaging in.
2. Mountaineers Health and Emergency Permission forms must be at the program site with youth participants at all times, and Youth Leaders must know where to access them. Copies will be kept on file at the Program Center for all Youth Members who participate in programs. These must be current within one year of the dates of the youth's participation. Note: while this policy can be waived when parents are present on site, it is recommended that The Mountaineers keep on file Mountaineers Health and Emergency Permission forms for every youth involved in programming as a safety redundancy.
3. Program leaders of Adult Programs are not required to allow youth to participate in their programs.
4. When Youth under the age of 14 participate in Adult Programs, the program leader must ensure that there is an adult other than the leader, even if the youth is the leader's child, who is directly responsible for the youth during the program.
5. When Youth participate in Family Programs, the program leader must ensure that each youth participant has an adult other than the leader, usually the youth's parent or guardian, who is directly responsible for their care and supervision.
6. Youth participating in drop-off programs where Mountaineers staff and volunteers are directly responsible for the youth participants must be signed in by Mountaineers leaders and signed out by a person listed on the Youth's membership as an authorized pick-up, unless the parent or guardian has signed a form waiving the requirement for program leaders to monitor with whom the youth leaves the program. Under no other circumstance should children be released to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian in writing.
7. Restroom Supervision: Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants will monitor bathrooms to ensure that: 1. Suspicious or unknown individuals are not lingering in or near the bathrooms while youth are using them 2. Youth do not engage in horseplay or harassment in the bathrooms 3. No more than one youth participant per bathroom stall is allowed in the bathroom at a time 4. Youth do not linger in the bathrooms. At larger public restrooms with multiple stalls, Youth Leaders should stand in the doorway while children under 14 are using the restroom without parents present. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the Youth leaders and Youth Program Assistants. When parents are not present, always send children in groups of three or more (youth or adults) to the bathroom, and whenever possible with a Youth Leader or Youth Program Assistant.
8. In drop-off programs, when necessary, Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants should conduct or supervise private activities in pairs – diapering, putting on bathing suits, taking showers, etc. When this is not possible, Youth Leaders and Youth Program Assistants should be positioned so that they are visible to others.

Partner Youth Programs

1. Group leaders must present a Letter of Agreement signed by their organization's appropriate authority, also signed by The Mountaineers Chief Operating Officer or Chief Executive Officer, outlining at minimum what facilities, services and other resources each organization agrees to provide, what the agreed up on dates and times of the program are, and when possible an agreement to provide a Certificate of Liability Insurance from their insurance carrier stating that the group will be covered during the dates of The Mountaineers program.
2. Groups should prepare to have at least one emergency vehicle on site. The Mountaineers cannot take responsibility for transporting participants. In the event of an injury or emergency, participants will need to be transported off-site by an ambulance to a medical facility if a group does not come with transportation.

3. All participants must have signed Mountaineers Health and Emergency Permission forms (or equivalent forms provided by the partner organization) on site for the duration of the program. These forms are retained by the group leader. The Mountaineers will not collect these forms.

Responsibilities

1. Staff as designated by the Chief Operating Officer are responsible for administering background checks, collecting and keeping forms and dealing with identified problems.
2. Education Director or designee is responsible for providing updated training materials and current forms and waivers specific to each type of program.
3. Division, branch or staff sponsor of activities are responsible for administering this policy and identifying and reporting problems.

Exceptions

Any exceptions to The Mountaineers Youth Policies must be presented in writing, along with any additional precautions needed to mitigate risk, and approved and signed by both the Education Director and the Chief Operating Officer.