Ensuring a Safe Environment for All Participants in Youth Programs

The following guidelines help establish positive environments and program barriers that promote safety and well-being for all program participants.

- To protect all individuals, volunteers and staff need to work with young people in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter (not behind closed doors).

- Be aware that while spending time alone with a single child can be positive and helpful, it also can be a reason for concern for everyone involved. When you are working with young people, the recommendation is to follow the “rule of three.” Always have at least three people present during programming or transporting:
  - Two adults and one youth or
  - One adult, one family-related youth and one nonfamily-related youth

- Extension paid staff and volunteers are reminded that adult behavior can have an impact on youth in many situations and environments during Extension programming and outside of those responsibilities.
  - Adults will not use alcohol or illegal drugs or be under their influence while at youth programs or while having responsibility for youth in NDSU Extension Service programs. Adults should inform others that alcohol or illegal drugs are not allowed at Extension youth programs.
  - Adults are expected to use appropriate language (no swearing, ridiculing of others or aggressive behavior). Adults also should keep personal religious or political beliefs to themselves.

- Extension staff and volunteers will not, under any circumstances, discipline youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food and shelter.

- An adult should not share a room with one minor child who is not his/her child. Youth should room with other youth. If the situation dictates that an adult and a youth must share a room, several (three or more) youth should be present with a single adult.

- Parents and guardians are always welcomed and encouraged to attend Extension youth program meetings and events.

- Respect privacy. Adults need to respect the privacy of youth. The privacy issue is especially relevant in situations where youth are changing clothes or taking showers in facilities lacking privacy. In these situations, staff (volunteer and paid) should intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires.

- A minimum of one responsible adult (at least 18 years old) will be available for every eight to 10 youth for any NDSU Extension Service youth-related activities involving an overnight stay.

- Paid staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional well-being of youth under their supervision. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse or neglect should be reported.

- When using social media for programming purposes, do not post photos/information without parental or participant permission.

- When working with young people, set appropriate boundaries:
  - Do not share personal information.
  - Do not accept or give personal gifts.
  - Never be alone with a youth in your program after hours or off-site.
  - Maintain appropriate communication and contact regarding programming.
  - Avoid repeated lengthy personal communication with individual participants.