



Protection of Minors Policy

Purpose

The Folk School Fairbanks (herein: Folk School) understands the importance of protecting minors in the community and in our programs and therefore wishes to provide a safe and secure environment.

The Board Of Directors of the Folk School has adopted this policy on 3/8/2021 in order to provide practices that will protect minors from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior and also protect the employees and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions

Staff – all employees, full and part-time, including instructors, independent contractors, and program volunteers that have any contact with minors or access to facilities

Minors – individuals 17 years of age or younger

Executive – an officer of the Board

Screening

All Folk School staff will be screened in accordance with this policy. Screening will include at least the following:

Written Application

All potential staff must complete and sign a written application form. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, reference, and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in a personnel file at the Folk School administrative office.

Personal Interview

A personal interview will be conducted with the applicant by management staff to discuss the position and the applicant's talents, qualifications, and abilities. Multiple and/or group interviews may be conducted as appropriate.

Reference Checks

All applicants must provide at least three (3) references. References may be personal or professional and be presented in written form or by providing phone contact information. All references will be confirmed by management staff and documented in the applicant's personnel file. At least one reference will be from a personal contact if available.

Criminal Background Check

Criminal background checks will be conducted for all potential staff after they've completed an application. Background checks will comply with applicable regulations governing programs. Applicants will not be considered for positions when checks show evidence of convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to the mission of the Folk School. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form may also terminate an individual's application.

Training and Education

All staff will receive an orientation that includes:

- Review and receipt of the Folk School Code of Conduct; an original signed copy will be kept in the individual's personnel file – at the time of activation
- Review of policies related to prevention and reporting of child abuse and emergency procedures - within the first week of their activation
- Training in recognizing signs of suspected child abuse - within three months of activation
- Training in the prevention of "Bullying" - within three months of activation
- Supervisors will be trained on hiring and screening potential staff members – within three months of activation
- Policy volunteers will review this policy as part of their initial orientation
- Staff training and orientations will be updated and refreshed each year
- Documentation of all training will be maintained in each individual's personnel file.

Supervision

Supervision of minors, programs, facilities and staff will be designed to protect minors and staff at all times.

Practices to ensure a safe and caring environment will include:

- Management staff will make unannounced visits at least two times per month to every program for minors.
- A minimum of two staff should be assigned to each program, operating site and vehicle.
- Staff members will never be alone with an individual minor where they are not observable by others.
- Non-adult (minor) staff will not be included in prescribed staff to minors ratios.
- Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room. All storage, maintenance and utility area doors will be secured when not in use.

- All sites of operation will have access to a telephone on location during operating hours.
- Written restroom use practices will be in place for all programs for minors.
- Facilities will be well lighted indoors and out.
- Guests, service and contractors will sign-in to all facilities.
- Staff will never release minors to anyone other than the authorized parent(s), guardian(s), or an individual authorized by parents in writing or verified by phone.

Sign-in and sign-out will be in place for all programs for minors.

- Staff will check for signs of physical injury or emotional abnormality each time a child reports to program.
- Staff will utilize constructive methods for maintaining group control and managing the behavior of minors.
- Staff will not disrobe a child other than outer garments without the presence of another staff member.
- Staff will not disrobe in front of minors.

Contact with Minors

It is understood that caring quality staff will develop positive relationships with minors while involved in Folk School programs. The following practices will be followed to ensure the protection of both minors and staff outside of Folk School programs.

- Staff will not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for minors outside of Folk School programs and activities, including baby-sitting or private instruction. Staff with prior or family relationships to minors may be relieved of this restriction with prior documented Executive approval.
- Staff will not communicate with minors outside of Folk School programs via written, electronic or other means without express Executive approval.
- Staff will appear and behave in a manner consistent with the mission and values of the Folk School at all times while on or off duty; including electronic, written and verbal communications.

Communications

The Folk School will promote positive values and strategies to protect minors in its programs, facilities, with parents and in the community.

- Parents will receive regular information about the programs content and schedules; feedback regarding their child's participation in program including behavior and general health; and an introduction to the program staff.
- Parents will be allowed to observe programs at any time as appropriate
- Parents and the community will be made aware of the Folk School minors protection efforts through regular written and/or electronic communication including: the staff code of conduct, abuse prevention training for staff and minors, how to report suspicious behavior and that staff is not allowed to contact minors outside of programs.

- The Folk School will designate a spokesperson to the media and community in the event of any incident concerning abuse or neglect.

Reporting Requirements

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. All Folk School permanent staff are recognized as mandatory reporters and will report known or suspected child abuse immediately or as soon as practically possible.

The Folk School will follow current regulations and guidelines for the reporting of abuse.

Staff will follow an internal chain of command for the reporting of abuse and may report directly to local authorities if their supervisor does not handle any report immediately.

If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at or during Folk School programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified
- The appropriate authorities will be notified; consistent with local, state and/or federal regulations
- The alleged perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from the Folk School pending an investigation
- The insurance company will be notified, and an incident report will be completed
- The Folk School will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a management team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
- Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with the Folk School

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed and updated as needed by the Folk School Board of Directors or its designee on an annual basis.

Adopted on 3/8/2021 by the Folk School Board of Directors.