

Dakar Academy Code of Conduct for Child Safety

Background

The welfare and safety of children are paramount in all of Dakar Academy's policies and procedures. This includes valuing them, regarding them positively, and treating them with respect and care at all times. Adult staff and volunteers assume the full burden of setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all interaction with children.

The most effective way to prevent abuse of children is to be vigilant. By being vigilant in following the following standards for interaction with children we hope to protect them from abuse.

All staff and volunteers who have roles with children are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring, responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. All adult staff and volunteers are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others in order to maintain our high level of professionalism.

This Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to the following expectations of staff and volunteers.

Code of Conduct

Visibility

All work with children shall be planned in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working with children.

This can be accomplished by planning activities in areas where other adults are present and at a time when other activities are occurring. It can also be accomplished by installing windows in all classrooms and other rooms occupied by children or keeping doors open.

Overcoming Isolation

At least two unrelated adults shall be present in work with children. When this is not possible, reduce isolation by having a minimum of two children present, informing the child's parent of your meeting, and doing it during a time and/or in a location where your interaction with the child is visible to others. Isolation could be overcome, for example, by taking two or more children to the bathroom together rather than only one, dropping off siblings last in a carpool, or taking your own child or spouse along when providing rides. We expect an adequate number of adults to supervise youth events, especially overnight activities.

Accountability

When ministry to a child involves one-on-one contact, the following procedures shall be followed, as applicable. Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with youth or children.

Counseling or other necessarily confidential meetings with children shall be done in an office with a window in the door and only when another adult is in close vicinity, aware that the meeting is occurring, and willing to stay in the vicinity until it is completed.

Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with youth or children. For example, before transporting a youth or child, keeping a child after school or a youth activity, or when tutoring a child or youth.

In an emergency situation, find someone to go with you if at all possible, or notify whoever is available.

Supervision

Supervision also reduces risk. Program administrators shall periodically and randomly inspect classrooms, offices, work areas and other areas where children and adults are together.

Technology

Technology should be used appropriately to protect children or youth from abuse and exploitation, for example, to prevent downloading pornographic material from the Internet, access to inappropriate emails, chat rooms, or movies.

Discipline

Discipline should be used to teach and correct rather than punish. It should not include slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child.

Touch

Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply. Touch shall be open rather than secretive. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors. Touch should be in response to the need of the child, and not the need of the adult. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult. It should be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected. Touch should always communicate respect for the child. Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including dressing, bathing, etc.

Adults and other youth or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts: verbal praise, side hugs, shoulder to shoulder hugs, pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate). For smaller children, touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs, or holding them when others are present.

The following behaviors between staff or volunteers and children are inappropriate or may be perceived as inappropriate and shall not be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs; showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child; sleeping in bed with a child; inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development; flirtatious or seductive looks; any form of affection that is unwanted by the child; showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child; any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.

Team members shall monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

Verbal Interaction

Words can also be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming,

belittling, humiliating, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate the child, cursing, or making derogatory remarks about the child. Adults shall avoid favoring or showing differential treatment to particular children or youth to the exclusion of others.

Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes telling off-color or sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling inappropriate secrets, or inappropriately discussing sexual encounters or desires with children.

Parent Involvement

Parents are responsible for knowing where their children are at all times. Therefore, parents shall be informed of planned school or dorm activities (e.g. trips included in the schedule for the term). Parents shall be encouraged to make unannounced visits to program activities, as this also reduces the risk of abuse

