



Liability Considerations

When engaging with youth and young adults, there are a variety of safety considerations that should be addressed. Depending on the age range of your group, the considerations will need to be flexible. The following are some basic guideline considerations for you and your organization to keep in mind.

These guidelines are meant to provide a general framework for reducing liability and ensuring the safety of youth. Specific requirements may vary based on the nature of the organization, the activities involved, and state or local laws. Always consult with legal counsel to tailor these guidelines to your specific circumstances.

Under Age 18

When working with youth under age 18 in the United States, it's important to follow specific federal, state, local and/or organizational liability guidelines to ensure their safety and protect yourself and your agency from legal issues. Here is a list of general liability guidelines to consider:

1. Background Checks

- Conduct comprehensive background checks on all staff and volunteers working with youth.
- Include checks for criminal history, child abuse registries, and previous employment or volunteer work with youth.

2. Training and Certification

- Provide mandatory training for staff and volunteers on child protection, mandatory reporting laws, and appropriate behavior with youth.
- Obtain certifications in first aid and CPR.

3. Policies and Procedures

- Develop and implement clear policies and procedures regarding the supervision and care of youth.
- Include guidelines for one-on-one interactions, such as requiring visible and interruptible environments.
- Create procedures for reporting and responding to allegations of abuse or misconduct.

4. Parental Consent

- Obtain written consent from parents or guardians for all activities, trips, and events involving youth.

- Include detailed information about the activities, risks, and emergency contact information.

5. Supervision Ratios

- Maintain appropriate adult-to-youth supervision ratios based on the age and nature of the activity.
- Ensure that supervision is consistent and vigilant.

6. Transportation Guidelines

- Develop clear guidelines for transporting youth, including background checks and driving records for drivers.
- Require written parental consent for transportation.

7. Emergency Procedures

- Establish and communicate emergency procedures for accidents, medical emergencies, and other crises.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are familiar with and trained in these procedures.

8. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Maintain the confidentiality of youth and their families' personal information.
- Implement policies to protect the privacy of youth, including social media and photo-sharing guidelines.

9. Mandatory Reporting

- Familiarize yourself with state-specific mandatory reporting laws for suspected child abuse and neglect.

- Train staff and volunteers on their legal obligations to report any suspected abuse.

10. Insurance

- Ensure that your organization has appropriate liability insurance coverage that includes protection for activities involving youth.

11. Behavioral Expectations

- Clearly communicate behavioral expectations for both youth and adults.
- Enforce a code of conduct and implement disciplinary procedures for violations.

12. Incident Documentation

- Document all incidents involving youth, including injuries, behavioral issues, and allegations of misconduct.
- Maintain accurate and secure records.

13. Health and Safety

- Adhere to health and safety regulations, including those specific to facilities and activities.
- Conduct regular safety inspections and risk assessments.

14. Legal Compliance

- Stay informed about federal, state, and local laws and regulations related to youth programs.
- Consult with legal professionals to ensure compliance and address any legal concerns.