



Policy: Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons

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Authorized by: Monica Conrad

Signature:

Purpose:

Parks and Recreation is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children in its care and vulnerable persons accessing Parks and Recreation programs and services. Parks and Recreation seeks to promote safe environments and practices to protect children and vulnerable persons from abuse and exploitation.

Definitions:

Child: The U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services in regards to child abuse and/or neglect states: "A 'child' under this definition generally means a person who is younger than age 18 or who is not an emancipated minor.

Vulnerable person: An adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who is or may be unable to protect themselves from abuse. The vulnerability of an adult is related to how able the adult is to make and exercise their own informed choices free from duress, pressure or undue influence of any sort, and to protect themselves from abuse. Vulnerable persons may be at risk of one or more types of abuse including physical abuse or neglect, or emotional abuse, sexual abuse and financial abuse or exploitation.

Neglect: A child whose health or welfare is harmed-or threatened with harm-when his or her parent, guardian, or other person exercising custodial control or supervision:

- Engages in a pattern of conduct that renders the parent incapable of caring for the immediate and ongoing needs of the child, including, but not limited to, parental incapacity due to alcohol and other drug abuse.
- Continuously or repeatedly fails or refuses to provide essential parental care and protection for the child, considering the age of the child.
- Does not provide the child with adequate care, supervision, food, clothing, shelter, education, or medical care necessary for the child's well-being.
- Fails to make sufficient progress toward identified goals as set forth in the court-approved case plan to allow for the safe return of the child to the parent that results in the child remaining committed to the Cabinet and remaining in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.

Abuse - Physical and/or Emotional: Children and vulnerable persons may be at risk of one or more types of abuse including physical abuse or neglect (defined above), or emotional abuse, sexual abuse and



financial abuse or exploitation. Emotional abuse of a vulnerable person is any act which may lessen the sense of identity, dignity or self-worth of a person, such as: confinement; physical and social isolation; verbal assault, harassment, humiliation, or intimidation; denial of information, privacy, visitors; coercion. Sexual abuse of a vulnerable person is any act involving unwanted touching/activity of a sexual nature, or a situation in which an adult consents or submits to sexual activity because a person in a position of trust or with authority has used that trust/authority to gain that consent. Such acts include: sexual assault, sexual harassment, any act designed to use the vulnerable person for the perpetrator's sexual gratification. Financial abuse or exploitation is any act involving the misuse or abuse of funds or assets belonging to a vulnerable person. Examples include obtaining property and funds without the person's knowledge or consent, or by using undue influence; or where a person is not mentally competent, or not acting in the person's best interest. Alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse of a vulnerable person may constitute a criminal offence and the police should be informed.

Policy:

Parks and Recreation seeks to promote safe practices and to protect children and vulnerable persons from abuse and exploitation. Any concerns that a child or vulnerable person might be abused or at risk of harm should be reported to the appropriate Child Protection Authority and to law enforcement. This policy applies to all Parks and Recreation staff and volunteers. In addition, specific areas of Parks and Recreation operations (i.e. ESP, Athletics, and Community Centers) develop and implement additional protection policies in accordance with regulations and the needs of those programs.

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons:

Parks and Recreation staff or volunteers who encounter and interact with children and vulnerable persons should treat them with respect and dignity, helping them grow and develop to their full potential in a safe and caring environment. Staff and volunteers are required to follow the Code of Conduct that describes good practices and includes practices to be avoided or never sanctioned. The practices outlined below clarify what is and is not acceptable behavior when working with children and vulnerable persons. By defining what is and is not acceptable behavior, good practice can be promoted, and the potential for abuse or allegations of abuse minimized.

Good Practice when interacting with children:

- Treat all children with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Make requests in clear terms geared to the child's level. Offer choices if you can.
- Give encouragement, in words or as a smile.
- Ensure the number of staff (minimum of two staff members) is appropriate to safely conduct and supervise program activity.
- Involve parents whenever possible and reasonable.
- Ensure that children are not left alone.
- If a child appears to be under distress, contact a parent, guardian or caregiver of the child. If you are not able to contact someone, notify the police and your supervisor.



Good Practice when interacting with vulnerable persons:

- Treat all people with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Give full consideration to the needs, interests and wishes of vulnerable persons.
- Consider mental capacity and participation in decision-making.
- Respect the privacy of persons.

Prohibited Practices:

- Corporal punishment
- Depriving a child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing, bedding or participation in activities (unless in conjunction with specific additional protection or conduct policies)
- Leaving children unsupervised
- Deliberately using harsh or degrading measures on the child that would humiliate the child or undermine their self-respect
- Locking exits of a center for the purposes of confining a child
- Using a locked room or structure to confine a child when separating them from other children
- Any form of abuse - physical, sexual, emotional and/or neglect
- Interacting or relating to children or vulnerable persons outside of Parks and Recreation program activity (e.g. avoid off hours, social media, calling or online chatting, etc.)

Any reports involving breach of this policy or the Youth Program Code of Conduct shall be taken seriously and will be investigated by management. Individuals who violate this policy or the Youth Program Code of Conduct and/or this policy are subject to disciplinary or corrective action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer assignment.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Parks and Recreation seeks to promote safe practices to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or abuse.

Parks and Recreation provides oversight of a protection framework that includes establishing policies and procedures, and monitoring ensuring systems are in place for regular review, reporting and evaluation of effectiveness of child and vulnerable persons protection initiatives.

Managers and Supervisors have responsibilities for maintaining a safe environment in all facilities and programs by: Ensuring all staff and volunteers receive training on this policy; Ensuring recruitment includes background checks; Ensuring programs are developmentally appropriate; Maintaining physical security and other safeguards to protect children accessing Parks and Recreation programs; Responding promptly to any complaints, reports or allegations against staff or volunteers.

All Staff and Volunteers are expected to abide by this policy that includes: Participating in mandatory and refresher training in protecting children and vulnerable persons; Producing requested and required police records/re-checks; reporting to Lexington Police immediately any suspicions of child abuse according to KRS620.030; Notifying their supervisor or staff contact that a report has been made. For further



guidance, staff should call 877-KYSAFE1 or utilize the Child Abuse Reporting Guide (see Related Documents).

Strategies to Enhance our Commitment to Protecting Children and Vulnerable Persons:

Parks and Recreation seeks to an ongoing strategy for the protection of children and vulnerable persons and maintaining safe environments, which includes:

- Training and education to increase knowledge and awareness of individual and organizational roles in protecting children and vulnerable persons, and ensures the effectiveness of this Policy.
- Providing feedback and appropriate response to complaints or disclosures.
- Periodically review and update the Youth Program Code of Conduct.

Monitoring:

The Director of Parks and Recreation and Senior Management shall review programs and policies regularly to identify any potential barriers and strategies for maintaining safe Parks and Recreation environments.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Child Abuse Reporting Guide – Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services handbook for reporting abuse, neglect and dependency -

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dpp/Documents/reportingchildabuseneglecthandbook.pdf>

Youth Program Code of Conduct – Provides specific consequences for behavior exhibited during youth programs. The Code of Conduct is signed by the youth participant and parent/guardian.

Barring Policy – This policy is for banning of an individual from Fayette County parks and/or Parks and Recreation programs, based on inappropriate or illegal behavior by individuals while participating in or while attending parks or Parks and Recreation programs. This policy can be utilized to protect children and vulnerable persons from people whose actions have shown to be a danger to others in parks and/or programs.

Altercation Policy - Provides an environment where participants can grow, not only physically, but also mentally. Issues responsibilities to leaders, participants and fans/spectators to provide an example of self-control and integrity so that others follow their example.

