

Child and Youth Protection Policy

The City of South Miami is committed to the protection of all children and youth from abuse and neglect while participating in any program and/or activities sponsored by the City and the prevention of child abuse in the community at large.

In furtherance of these commitments, the City of South Miami enforces a zero tolerance policy for any act of abuse or neglect committed by any employee or volunteer.

The City of South Miami prohibits and does not tolerate physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse in the workplace or in any sponsored program or activity whether committed by an employee, volunteer, or participant. This policy provides procedures for employees, volunteers, family members, parents, and or victims to report abuse and disciplinary penalties, up to and including termination of employment/exclusion from participation for those who commit such acts.

In addition to disciplinary action, all credible allegations of physical and/or sexual abuse will be promptly reported to appropriate law enforcement agencies and regulatory agencies for appropriate investigation and action.

I. Definitions

For purposes of this policy the following terms shall have the meanings set forth below.

Child- any person 11 years of age or younger.

Youth – any person between the ages of 12 and 17.

Adult – any person age 18 or older.

Adult Volunteer – an adult who has completed the City’s Volunteer Application and Background Screening process and has been cleared for participation.

Youth Helper – a youth aged 15 through 17 who has completed the City’s Volunteer Application and Background Screening process and has been cleared for participation. Youth helpers may assist with programs and activities for children or youth, but may not be treated as Adult Volunteers or staff members. They may not supervise any child or youth activities on their own, or solely with other Youth Helpers. Youth Helpers should be supervised during all interaction with program participants.

Abuse—Abuse includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and/or verbal abuse.

Emotional abuse – any pattern of behavior capable of causing harm to the cognitive, emotional, psychological, and/or social development of the victim. Emotional abuse

includes, but is not limited to, verbally assaulting, terrorizing, bullying, and/or neglecting the victim.

Physical abuse – Intentional contact intended to cause feelings of physical pain, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm

Sexual abuse -- the use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or sexual contact. Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to, sexual molestation, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or sexual injury.

Verbal abuse – a pattern of verbal communication with the intent or effect of belittling, shaming, ridiculing, or verbally threatening the victim.

II. Screening and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

The Human Resources Department is responsible for implementing and evaluating the process for recruiting, screening and selecting employees, adult volunteers and youth helpers for the City of South Miami. Any person seeking to work with any youth program or activity sponsored by the City of South Miami must complete the City's Volunteer Application and submit to the required background screening. All adult volunteers and employees must pass the Level II background standard set forth in Chapter 435, Florida Statute. Youth helpers must pass the local criminal records check. No volunteer or employee shall provide any service or assistance until officially cleared by Human Resources personnel. Violation of this policy may result in the disqualification of the volunteer from service and/or withdrawal of any employment offer. Further, employees who knowingly permit unauthorized volunteers shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to including termination of employment.

III. Supervision of Children and Youth

A. Classroom Activities

1. In general, all non-classroom activities involving children or youth should be supervised by a minimum of two screened adults. Youth helpers may not be substituted for required adult staff members or volunteers.
2. All classroom activities involving children in Kindergarten through third grade shall be supervised by two screened adults who are not related to each other, by blood or marriage. Youth helpers may not be substituted for required adult staff members or volunteers.

3. All classroom activities involving children in fourth through sixth grade shall be supervised by at least one screened adult. Two adults are preferred.
4. All classroom activities involving youth in grades seven through twelve shall be supervised by one screened adult. Youth helpers may not be substituted for required adult staff members or volunteers.
5. In addition to the required adult supervision, all classrooms shall be periodically checked by a designated staff member who shall provide additional assistance and/or supervision as needed.

B. Non-classroom activities

At least two screened adults shall be present for all non-classroom activities. Where the activities involve multiple groups, the program shall strive to maintain the same child/youth to adult ratio for both classroom and non-classroom activities.

C. After Program/Activity Release of Children and Youth

Upon enrollment in any City of South Miami sponsored program or activity, the parent or guardian shall be required to designate the adult(s) authorized to pick up the child/youth following the conclusion of the activity or for early release. A copy of the list of persons so authorized shall be maintained in a location accessible to the designated employee responsible for monitoring the sign-out and release of children/youth. Verification of identity of persons not personally known by the designated personnel shall be made by photo identification. No child or youth shall be released to an unauthorized person or to an individual whose identity cannot be verified by staff.

IV. Prohibited Conduct

All employees and volunteers involved in any program or activity sponsored by the City are required to adhere to the requirements set forth in this policy and in a manner consistent with reasonable standards for those charged with the supervision of children and youth.

All acts of abuse, whether sexual, physical, verbal, and/or emotional are strictly prohibited. Employees determined to have violated the provisions of this policy are subject to immediate dismissal from employment. Volunteers acting in violation of this policy are subject to immediate and permanent disqualification from participation as a volunteer in any further City sponsored programs, events and/or activities.

V. Reporting Allegations of Abuse

A. Duty to Report

Any employee or volunteer who becomes aware of or suspects that any child or youth is a victim of physical and/or sexual abuse must immediately report such suspicion to the Parks & Recreation Director and/or the Human Resources Director. Such report shall be made promptly. Failure to report reasonable suspicions of abuse under this policy is grounds for immediate dismissal from employment and/or disqualification from volunteer service.

B. Investigation Procedure

1. Upon receipt of a report of suspected abuse, the Parks & Recreation Director shall document the allegations and refer the report to Human Resources for investigation on the same day the allegation is received.
2. If the accused is an employee, he or she shall immediately be suspended and prohibited from contact with children or youth in South Miami sponsored programs. If the accused is a volunteer, she or she shall immediately be suspended from all contact with children or youth in South Miami programs.
3. The allegations shall be promptly reported to the Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-960 ABUSE (1-800-962-2873) and the City of South Miami Police Department (305- 663- 6301).
4. The victim's parents or legal guardians shall be notified of the allegations. However, if one or both of the parents/guardians is the alleged abuser, staff shall follow the directions provided by the authorities concerning parental notification.
5. All employees and volunteers are required to fully cooperate with any investigation into allegations of abuse contacted by the City, law enforcement, and/or other regulatory agencies. Refusal to cooperate with an investigation is grounds for disciplinary action, including termination of employment.
6. The City will make every effort to keep the matters involved in the allegation, including the identification of the parties confidential to the extent allowable under the circumstances.

C. Anti-retaliation

The City of South Miami strictly prohibits retaliation against any person who reports a good faith complaint of abuse under this policy or who participates

in any investigation arising from or related to such a complaint. Retaliation is a separate offense under this policy. Individuals determined to have engaged in retaliation are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.