



YOUR GUIDE TO WORKING WITH MINORS

What you need to know



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INTRODUCTION

California State University, Sacramento serves thousands of minors annually. University students, faculty, and staff interact with youth in many ways. You may be a coach, counselor, mentor, researcher, teacher, or volunteer. Perhaps you are with an outside group, such as a school or camp that brings kids to the campus.



Whatever your role, this guide will help you work effectively with youth. It offers good practices, describes the signs of child abuse and neglect, and explains your legal duty to make a report. Following this guide will help you protect youth and also protect yourself.

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUTH

Keep kids out of danger.

The #1 priority is to keep children and youth out of dangerous situations. Some dangers are obvious, such as crossing a busy street. Others are more subtle, such as a heat injury. Kids do not always have good judgment, and some activities suitable for adults are unsuitable for younger people. Climbing ladders is risky for youth, as is operating machinery. Younger children might not know to take shelter in an approaching thunderstorm. Part of your role in working with minors is to anticipate and avoid dangers.

If youth are engaged in laboratories or research activities, seek advice on appropriate training and protocols. Do not assume that minors are fully informed and competent.

Avoid being alone with a minor.

One-on-one situations create the risk of child abuse. If you are teaching a child to read or to play a sport, stay in an open area with other people around. Do not be alone in an office or classroom with a single child. Remaining visible to other people protects the child and also protects you.

If you need to check on a minor in a private area such as a sleeping room, locker room, or bathroom, bring another adult along.

If you have an important reason to be alone with a child, such as for music lessons or individual counseling, discuss safeguards in advance with your director or supervisor and obtain written permission from the child's parent or guardian.



Stay vigilant.

If you are supervising kids, keep your attention on them. Avoid distractions including personal electronics and conversations with other adults. The moment your attention wanders is the moment a problem will occur or a participant will slip away.

Steer clear of transportation complications.

Watch for problems when parents pick up children. Know who is authorized, and not authorized, to pick up each child. Don't release a child to someone else. Unless you have written permission from a parent or guardian, do not transport a minor yourself. You can, of course, transport your own kids.

Avoid abuse.

Don't engage any abusive conduct toward a youth or in the presence of youth. Take special care not to touch minors inappropriately. Never under any circumstances use corporal punishment or any discipline designed to humiliate a minor. Discuss questions and concerns with your director or supervisor.

Keep kids away from drugs, alcohol, and sexual materials.

Sacramento State does not tolerate the use or possession of illicit drugs. Do not provide illicit drugs to minors or use drugs in the presence of minors. Everyone knows that drinking before age 21 is illegal. Youth should not possess or consume alcohol. Adults should not drink when they have responsibility for the wellbeing of youth. Do not use any form of tobacco in the presence of minors under your care. Do not allow them to use any form of tobacco during the time they are on campus or in the campus-affiliated program.

Are the youth under my care permitted to receive or use prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications? Consult your program director or supervisor about obtaining written parental permission.

Sexual topics are off limits.

Avoid risqué jokes, even if youth are telling them. Do not share sexual material with any minor. If sexual content may be relevant to an academic course, counseling session, or other professional setting, follow professional norms. As always, discuss any issues with your director or supervisor.

Enjoy working with youth, within boundaries. Enjoy the opportunity to serve as a role model, teacher, and guide to minors. At the same time, maintain boundaries and take your responsibilities seriously. Treat youth with respect at all times. Avoid singling one child out from a group to become your special friend.

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the highest standards of personal behavior when interacting with youth. • Stay vigilant at all times when you are responsible for youth. • Conduct necessary one-on-one interactions with minors in a public environment where you can be observed. • Have another adult present when you are working with minors in an unsupervised setting. • Follow the rule of three. Have two adults present with a single child. • Listen to minors. Provide praise and positive reinforcement. If a minor expresses discomfort, tell your supervisor. • Treat all minors in a group consistently and fairly, with respect and dignity. • Be friendly with minors within the context of the formal program or activity, while observing appropriate boundaries. • Maintain discipline. Challenge minors if they engage in inappropriate behavior, including inappropriate touch or language. • Know who is authorized to pick up a child and bar others from doing so. • Be aware of how your actions and intentions might be perceived or misinterpreted. • Consult with other adult supervisors or colleagues when you feel uncertain about a situation. • Enjoy the opportunity to serve as a role model, teacher, and guide to minors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't spend time alone with one minor away from the group or interact with minors in private. • Don't engage in inappropriate touching or have any physical contact with a minor in private locations. • Don't use inappropriate language, tell risqué jokes, or make sexually suggestive comments around minors, even if minors themselves are doing so. • Avoid driving alone with a single child. Don't drive any children in your private vehicle without written parental permission. • Don't give personal gifts to, or do special favors for, a minor or do things that may be seen as favoring one youth over others. • Don't engage in rough or suggestive games including horseplay. • Don't strike or hit a minor. Don't use corporal punishment or other punishment involving physical pain, discomfort, or humiliation. • Don't share information with minors about your private life or have informal or purely social contact with minor program participants outside of program activities. • Don't date or become romantically or sexually involved with a minor. Don't show pornography to minors or involve minors in pornographic activities. • Don't provide alcohol, drugs, or tobacco to minors or use them around minors. • Don't undress or shower around minors or sleep in the same room. • Don't relate to minors as if they were peers, conduct private correspondence, or take on the role of "confidant" outside of a professional counseling relationship. • Don't tell a child "this is just between the two of us," or otherwise encourage a child to keep secrets from parents or guardians.



DEFINITION AND SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- Abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional harm or risk of harm to a child under the age of 18 caused by any person who acts as a caregiver for the child.
- Neglect occurs when a parent or caregiver fails to provide proper supervision for a child or adequate food, clothing, shelter, education or medical care although financially able or assisted to do so.

The following are common signs of abuse and neglect.

Physical Abuse	
Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
Unexplained bruises and welts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On face, lips, mouth, torso, back, buttocks, thighs in various stages of healing • Clusters, forming regular patterns • Reflecting shape of article used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle) • On several different surface areas • Regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation 	Wary of contact with an adult
Unexplained burns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks • Immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like, doughnut-shaped on buttocks or genitalia) • Patterned like electric burner, iron, etc. • Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso 	Apprehensive when other children cry
Unexplained fractures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To skull, nose, facial structure in various stages of healing • Multiple or spiral fractures 	Behavioral extremes: Aggressiveness Withdrawal
Unexplained laceration or abrasions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To mouth, lips, gums, eyes • To external genitalia 	Frightened of parents or any specific adult
	Afraid to go home
	Reports injury by parent or any specific adult



Physical Neglect	
Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress	Begging, stealing food
Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or long periods	Extended stays at school (early arrival and/or late departure)
Constant fatigue or listlessness	Constantly falling asleep in class
Unattended physical problems or medical needs	Alcohol or drug abuse
Abandonment	Delinquency (e.g., thefts)
	States there is no caregiver

Sexual Abuse	
Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
Difficulty in walking or sitting	Unwilling to change for gym or participate in PE
Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing	Withdrawn fantasy or infantile behavior
Pain or itching in genital area	Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge
Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas	Poor peer relationships
Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens	Delinquent or run-away
Pregnancy	Reports sexual assault by any adult

Emotional Maltreatment	
Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking, etc.)	Behavior extremes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliant, passive • Aggressive, demanding
Conduct disorders (antisocial, destructive, etc.)	Overly adaptive behavior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriately adult • Inappropriately infant
Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, speech disorders, inhibition of play)	



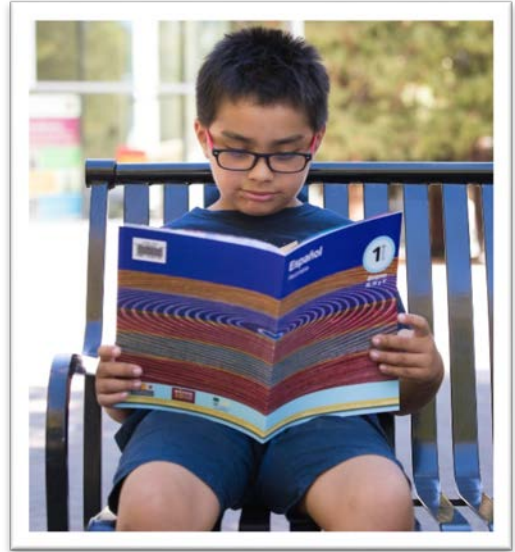
REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Countless minors suffer abuse or neglect each year. The consequences can be deadly. Every year children and youth die from abuse and neglect. Under California law, everyone has a legal duty to report child abuse and neglect. Together we can reduce the emotional and physical pain that minors needlessly experience.

What should you do? If you consider the situation an emergency, dial 9-1-1 immediately.

You must also take these two steps if you suspect or know that a child is suffering abuse or neglect.

- Step 1. Call the toll-free California 24-hour hotline for reporting child abuse and neglect. 1-800-422-4453. If no answer, call the Sacramento County (916) 875-5437 hotline.
- Step 2 Call the Sacramento State Police Department at 916-278-6000 or 278-6900



Make a Report:

- If you know that a minor is suffering abuse or neglect
- If you suspect that a minor is suffering abuse or neglect
- Regardless of who the suspected culprit may be - a family member, teacher, religious leader, student, or coach, well-respected or not
- Regardless of where the abuse or neglect may be occurring, for example in the home, at the University, or elsewhere.

Before making a report, you do not need to conduct your own investigation or be certain that mistreatment has occurred.

You do not need to call the Sacramento State Police Department for abuse or neglect that you encounter in a private capacity, outside the scope of your university role.

Anyone who makes a report in good faith receives legal protection from retaliation.

If you have any questions about your role and responsibilities, get advice. Talk to your program director or supervisor, Risk Management, Human Resources, or the University Counsel.

