

OUTright Youth of Catawba Valley

Interaction with Youth

The mission of OUTright Youth of Catawba Valley (OYCV) is:

“To create a safe environment where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth may meet, interact, participate in educational and recreational activities and obtain referrals to resources that will help promote their health, safety and well being.”

In the pursuit of that mission there will be significant interaction with youth in our community. As an organization we are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for children and young people. Their welfare is paramount and all reasonable steps must be taken to protect them from harm. Ensuring that commitment is the foundation for all of our youth work.

This policy is non-contractual but indicates the way in which OYCV is committed to interacting with youth and applies to all stakeholders of the organization to include board members, facilitators, volunteers, employees, workers (to include any freelance contractor or temporary agency staff), and guests of the organization.

The term youth is to include children under the age of 18 and young persons who are those over compulsory school leaving age but aged 23 and under.

Legislation

There is a considerable body of legislation designed to ensure that children and young people are protected and it is important to understand that everyone is responsible for the safety of our youth. These policies and guidelines are not intended to circumvent or replace any statutory requirements or obligations, but rather to supplement them.

Criminal Records

All stakeholders in the organization (as defined above) must declare all criminal convictions, however long ago and regardless of the jurisdiction and these will be taken into account when deciding on their suitability for working with youth. No-one will be permitted to undertake a role which involves regular contact with youth without a satisfactory Criminal Records check as determined by the ORCV Board of Directors.

Planning and Supervision

All activities or assignments involving youth shall be planned in advance to ensure that those engaged in that activity fully take into account the age range and ability of the participants. All stakeholders involved in the activity should be competent and trained to be so. Supervision must take into account the age, gender, nature of the activity and any special need of the individuals.

OYCV stakeholders are prohibited from working alone with any youth/client of the organization. They must plan their work so that at least two adults are present at any time. If this is not possible, the work location must be moved to a location where both the stakeholder and the youth are visible to another adult.

Physical or Personal contact

Contact should not be made with any youth for any reason unrelated to a particular program or assignment.

Specifically, all stakeholders are required to do everything to maintain our reputation for integrity and responsibility in dealing with youth and should not enter into any social or non-work related arrangements with them.

On no account should any stakeholder have any physical contact with a youth unless it is to prevent an accident or an injury either to themselves or anyone else (e.g. to prevent a fall), or in the case of medical assistance being required (e.g. to administer first aid) in which case the prior consent of the affected person must be requested when feasible.

If a youth is hurt or distressed stakeholders must do their best to comfort or reassure the affected person without compromising their dignity or doing anything to discredit their own behavior.

Communication

Where appropriate, consent from parents or those with parental or caring responsibility must be obtained.

Communication with youth is vital in establishing relationships built on trust. Those working with youth must listen to what they are saying and respond appropriately. Youth are entitled to the same respect as any stakeholder in the organization. It must also be made clear to the youth what standards of behavior and mutual respect are expected of them.

Suspicious of abuse

Anyone who witnesses or suspects abusive behavior towards a youth should record the details and report it to the President or Vice-President of the Board. It is NOT our responsibility to investigate our suspicions – this requires expertise we are not expected to have. Our role is only to properly report the incident.

Any allegations of abuse made against any stakeholder of OYCV will be thoroughly investigated and dealt with through our disciplinary procedure. Serious breaches may lead to dismissal. The President and/or Vice-President will appropriately record an allegation or reported incident. They will be responsible for contacting the statutory child protection agency or the police if warranted.

The President and/or the Vice-President will be responsible to strictly adhere to all of the statutory requirements without exception.

Behavior and abuse

We must all aim to promote an environment of trust and understanding. Those working with youth must not tolerate unsociable behavior and must ensure good working relationships.

All stakeholders at OYCV have a strict duty never to subject any youth to any form of harm or abuse be it physical, emotional or otherwise.

It is unacceptable to treat youth in the following ways:

- to cause distress by shouting or calling them derogatory names
- to slap
- to hold them in such way that it causes pain, or to shake them
- To physically restrain them except to protect them from harming themselves or others
- to take part in horseplay or rough games
- to allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind
- to do things of a personal nature for a youth that they can do for themselves
- to allow or engage in sexually suggestive behavior within a person's sight or hearing, or make suggestive remarks to or within earshot
- to give or show anything which can be construed as pornographic
- to seek or agree to meet them anywhere beyond the normal workplace without the full prior knowledge and agreement of the parent, guardian or caregiver

Safety

The safety of all stakeholders is paramount and we are therefore committed to provide a safe environment. Those working with youth should ensure all appropriate and reasonable risk assessments and security checks have been carried out prior to any program or assignment. This could include first aid, cover and incident reporting.

If transporting youth, the transport must be checked to ensure it is roadworthy and adequate for the purpose. Any equipment used must be safe and used only for the purpose for which it is intended. Users must be adequately trained. Appropriate insurance must be up-to-date and adequate to cover such assignments or programs and should cover all engaged stakeholders.

Requirements for permission and/or waivers must be executed prior to the inception of any program or assignment.

Confidentiality

All information regarding any stakeholder in the organization must be held in strict confidentiality unless there is a required need-to-know basis for appropriate persons.

Gifts and inducements

On no account should anyone from OYCV give a youth a gift or purchase anything (including refreshments) which could be in any way considered as a bribe or an inducement to enter into a relationship with the OYCV stakeholder or give rise to any allegations of improper conduct against the individual.

Group leaders, or program directors, may, however, provide refreshments or other amenities to any authorized OYCV event as long as the cost is borne by OYCV and made available to all youth attending the event.

OYCV stakeholders are prohibited from serving or providing alcoholic beverages to any OYCV youth/client regardless of their age.

Communicating this policy and concerns

All stakeholders at OYCV will be made aware of this policy and a copy will be included in all handbooks or manuals issued by OYCV.

All stakeholders will be required to sign a statement that they have received this document and that they are fully responsible for reading, understanding and abiding by its full content.

Furthermore, a copy of this policy will be available to all relevant individuals or bodies with whom we work if requested, and will be made available via our website to parents, guardians and caregivers of the youth with whom we plan to work.

Any concerns about the assignment or people involved should be addressed to the President or the Vice-President of the Board of Directors.

Breach of this policy

Failure to follow the guidelines in this policy is considered a serious offense and will be investigated thoroughly. Serious breaches may lead to dismissal. The President or Vice-President will appropriately record an allegation or reported incident. They will be responsible for contacting the statutory child protection agency or the police if warranted.

Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy

This policy will take effect immediately. The President has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation (at least annually) and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in legislation or to our working practices. All inquiries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the President.

SUMMARY OF DON'Ts

- **Don't** allow adult facilitators to EVER be alone with a youth. Two adults must be together at all times
- **Don't** have any physical contact with youth unless it is to prevent accident or injury
- **Don't** have inappropriate communication with youth
- **Don't** cause any emotional or physical distress to youth
- **Don't** give youth any gifts or inducements
- **Don't** socialize with youth in our group
- **Don't** ever allow any alcohol or drugs at any youth events
- **Don't** transport youth without their parent's or legal guardians consent
- **Don't** put unreasonable expectations on youth – routine attendance, being spokespeople or “out” in the community
- **Don't** be paternalistic toward youth. Youth will have great ideas and plans for their group; treat these with respect
- **Don't** hold meetings in someone's home
- **Don't** think you can save all LGBT youth
- **Don't** give out names of youth to anyone
- **Don't** forget how important this work is! And...
- **Don't** forget to have fun