



Delaware Nature Society Youth Protection Requirements

For Program Participants and Groups Renting Facilities

Delaware Nature Society (DNS) places the greatest importance on creating the most secure environment possible for its youth participants and guests (under age 18). To maintain such an environment, DNS has adopted a Youth Protection Policy. The following requirements apply to all individuals participating in a program and/or renting a DNS facility.

DNS policies are aimed at keeping children safe by striving to eliminate opportunities for harm within DNS programs and rentals. Background checks are performed on all DNS staff members and appropriate volunteers and they receive regular youth protection training. Program participants and groups renting facilities are required to adhere to the following procedures:

ADULT LEADERSHIP AT ALL DNS PROGRAMS AND OUTINGS IS REQUIRED: At least one adult staff leader is required but two are preferred for all DNS programs. All facility rentals require at least TWO ADULT LEADERS (provided by the renter) to be with the group at all times.

ONE-ON-ONE CONTACT BETWEEN ADULTS AND YOUTH IS PROHIBITED: In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults or children.

Youth will be directed to use the "buddy system" of travelling with at least one other youth when unaccompanied by an adult or if only one adult is present.

PRIVACY OF YOUTH RESPECTED: Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth participants in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.

INAPPROPRIATE USE OF CAMERAS, IMAGING, OR DIGITAL DEVICES PROHIBITED: It is inappropriate to record or transmit visual images when participants are in an area where privacy is expected, such as bathrooms, showers, etc.

NO BULLYING: Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited at DNS.

OTHER INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT PROHIBITED: Physical violence, theft, verbal insults, drugs and alcohol have no place in a DNS program or on any of the sites and may result in removal of the participant from the program and/or being prohibited from participating in future DNS programs.



EXCEPTIONS: Situations may arise where requirements of these policies conflict, such as where the need to protect the health and safety of a participant conflicts with the privacy policy above. In such cases, leaders will protect the health and physical safety of the participant first but will attempt to do so in a manner that is as respectful of the participant's privacy as possible under the circumstances. In such situations, the leader will be asked to prepare an Incident Report which outlines the circumstances of the exception.

REACTING & REPORTING: All persons involved in DNS shall follow these guidelines when either witnessing an infraction of this policy first hand, being told by another person of an alleged infraction, having a concern of an infraction based on some visual evidence seen after the fact, or other objective basis.

CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT OR DEPENDENCY: The State of Delaware has a mandatory child abuse, neglect and dependency reporting requirement: if you have reason to suspect abuse you must call 1-800-292-9582. All persons having reasonable suspicion must report directly to the hotline and may not rely on another to make the report on their behalf.

EYE WITNESS: If you witness infractions of this policy, take reasonable steps to stop it based upon the nature of the issue. In cases of imminent danger to individuals this may include calling 911. The incident must be reported to your supervisor and you must submit an Incident Report with a DNS staff member. Whenever the police are called the following must be called immediately:

Executive Director Anne Harper at 302-239-2334 x141 (office), 501-558-9070 (cell)

Deputy Director Joanne McGeoch at 302-239-2334 x103 (office), 601-513-2054 (cell)

OTHER REPORTED INCIDENTS: An Incident Report must be filed if a leader hears of or learns of suspected physical or sexual abuse or other serious violation of this policy. The leader also must report this to a DNS staff member or supervisor as soon as possible so that the concern can be investigated. The supervisor will meet with the Executive Director to evaluate and discuss next steps. For other infractions, based on their severity, the leader may choose to involve the supervisor and complete an Incident Report.

FOLLOW-UP: All leaders will be informed of the outcome of any Incident Report filed. If at any time the leader is unhappy with the response or there is a lack of follow-up, any staff member or program participant may contact any DNS Officer.

NO RETALIATION: DNS has adopted a policy of non-retaliation for reports of observations made in good faith by an employee or volunteer. No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee in such instance for following our reporting policy, however, reporting does not immunize an employee from responsibility for his or her own actions even if they are disclosed in the context of reporting neglect or abuse or violations of DNS policies. DNS would consider voluntary self-reporting violations of the policies a mitigating circumstance.



Acknowledgement *

I have read and been informed about the content, requirements, and expectations of the Youth Protection Requirements for Program Participants and Groups Renting Facilities at DNS. I have received a copy of the requirements and agree to abide by the requirements as a condition of my participation with a program or facility rental at DNS.

Please read the Youth Protection Requirements for Program Participants and Groups Renting Facilities carefully to ensure that you understand the requirements before signing this document.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____