

Inspire's SAFE CHILD POLICY

MISSION

This policy is intended both to foster a safe environment for children and youth and to educate regarding inappropriate behaviors during classes and activities at Inspire Community Fine Art Center (hereafter referred to as ICFAC.)

Inspire adopts the following policy for working with children and youth (18 years and younger, hereafter referred to as “minors”), as policy for all programs and activities at ICFAC.

POLICY

ICFAC will provide a safe, secure environment for the minors who participate in all programs and activities. Our actions regarding employees and our guidance of volunteer leaders of minors will protect those young persons from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, and also will protect our staff and volunteers from false accusation.

DEFINITIONS

1. **PROTECTION FROM “ABUSE”:** For purposes of this policy, “abuse” is any action—or lack of action—which endangers or harms a minor’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. “Abuse” may occur in different ways, and includes the following:
 - a. *Physical abuse:* any physical injury to a minor that is not accidental, including, but not limited to beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
 - b. *Emotional abuse:* emotional injury when a minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, including, but not limited an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
 - c. *Sexual abuse:* any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or any activity defined by law as “assault” between a minor and another minor. By Texas Law, there is no “consensual contact” below the age of 18, but an “affirmative defense” is mutual consent between the ages of 14 and 17 where the age differential is within three (3) years.
 - d. *Neglect:* depriving a minor of essential needs, including, but not limited to adequate food, water, shelter, medical care, or ordinary supervision that might put the minor at risk of physical harm.

2. **SUPERVISION AND PARTICIPATION WITH MINORS:** All persons in supervision or active participation with minors will complete a background check and sign a confirmation that they have read, understood, and will abide by this policy, as detailed for different types of participation:
 - a. *Paid Staff:* All paid employees and independent contractors at ICFAC.
 - b. *Inspire Volunteers:* Persons in active leadership and interaction with minors in a supervisory or teaching capacity. All regular volunteers must sign an

acknowledgement form showing they have read the safe child policy, and agree to abide by it.

- c. *Auxiliary Organizations*: Organizations in any formal relationship with ICFAC will submit documentation of their organization's protection policy annually to insure that it meets the standards of this policy. In cases where the rules and policy of the auxiliary differs from this policy, the more stringent rule will apply. In all cases, this policy is a minimum requirement. All paid staff of the organization will provide certification of a completed background check and sign a confirmation that the policy of the organization and/or of Inspire has been read, understood, and they will abide by the terms every three years.
- d. *Facilities Users*: Organizations that use or rent Inspire facilities and have participants in the activity under the age of 18 must agree to abide by the Inspire Safe child Policy. The renting representative must sign a form indicating that the policy has been read and the organization will comply.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFE CHILD PROCEDURES

1. **TRAINING**: Training sessions that cover the content and expectations of this policy shall be conducted no less frequently than once per year. Staff, regular volunteers, and persons responsible for auditing compliance to this policy shall be required to attend at least once every two years. Logs of attendance at these sessions shall be filed for audit, and "read and agree to comply" forms must be signed.
2. **REQUIRED BACKGROUND CHECKS**: Paid workers and regular volunteers working with minors must give permission to have a background check completed. No regular volunteer may begin work until a background check has been completed. If an individual declines to sign the permission form, s/he will not be allowed to work with minors.
 - a) Confidential background screening will be performed by the Executive Director through DPS. If a person "fails" the background check, the Executive Director will provide a copy of the summary to them.
 - b) The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file in a secured safe at the ICFAC office for seven years from the date of the check.
 - c) Background checks will be performed every three years from the date of the previous inquiry.
3. **THE "TWO ADULT RULE"**: A minimum of two unrelated adult workers must be present for supervision in the area at all times during Inspire classes and activities.
 - a) In cases where only one approved regular adult is in a room, there will be another approved adult in the area who may be supervising more than one room.
 - b) We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult for any reason (such as a mentor or counseling session) without the signed permission from the parent or guardian, naming the adult.

- c) If it is impossible to have two adults within the room, e.g., in classes with one adult teacher available for the class session, in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open.

4. **DISCIPLINE:** It is the policy of ICFAC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There shall be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of minors. Workers shall consult with the Executive Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

5. **ACCIDENTAL INJURIES AND MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:** Medical emergencies are always unique cases, and require whatever actions are necessary to bring aid. In all cases, an adult in charge should attempt to contact the parents and/or the Executive Director to secure permission to take the minor to receive medical attention. Medical information obtained with the release form should be available for guidance. In the event that a minor is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- a) For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, ointments) as appropriate and will notify the parent/guardian of the injury at the time the minor is picked up from our care.
- b) For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent/guardian will IMMEDIATELY be summoned, in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- c) Once the minor has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

INVESTIGATING AND REPORTING INFRACTIONS

1. **REPORTING ALLEGED INCIDENTS:** Staff members have an obligation to monitor activities among minors in their care, and to report inappropriate behavior to the Executive Director and to the parents/guardians of the minors involved.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this center during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure will be followed:

- a) The parent/guardian of the minor will be notified.
- b) The alleged perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be removed from ICFAC, and will not be allowed to return pending an investigation.
- c) Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
- d) We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
- e) We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.

2. **INVESTIGATING:** Any reported alleged incident will first be addressed by the Executive Director, who may also ask the assistance of an appropriate professional or relevant staff member. A personal contact will be made as soon as possible to inquire about the needs of those involved and to communicate the care of the center and the carefulness of an investigating process. Every attempt will be made to communicate the center's concern and

compassion for all involved. Discretion and confidentiality will govern any disclosures or communications to protect all persons.

- a) If the event has been reported to state or local agencies, the Executive Director will abide by any provisions or instructions.
- b) In the event there is no report of the incident to state or local agencies and initial inquiries are not sufficient, an Investigating Team will be formed by the Executive Director and approved by the board to study the circumstances of the incident. The team shall act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or an attorney, and report its progress and findings to the board.
- c) The Executive Director or a person designated by the board will be the spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless s/he is alleged to be involved. NO OTHER PERSON shall speak to the media.
- d) Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from any contact with minors.