

# Policy Handbook

Volunteer Policies & Procedures for GUIDE and Georgia Teen Institute

## Introduction

This Policy Handbook is designed to provide the information and tools necessary to protect the integrity and safety of our agency, programs, staff, volunteers and participants. It is reviewed regularly by agency and Program Directors and is subject to change.

All paid and volunteer staff will be asked to read this handbook thoroughly and sign a statement verifying receipt and agreement to comply with the enclosed policies.

Volunteers found to be in violation of any portion of this policy will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/volunteer status.

*Volunteer*, for the purpose of this handbook, includes any person serving in a volunteer or staff capacity for GUIDE or any of its programs, events or activities. It also includes volunteers or staff receiving stipends or other payment for their training or staffing services.

*Youth*, for the purpose of this handbook, includes any participant or volunteer under the age of 18 or registered as a youth participant for any GUIDE program or event.

## Equal Opportunity Employment

GUIDE is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Applicants and/or employees will be treated fairly in hiring, promotions, pay, job assignments, training opportunities, benefits, discipline and all other employment-related actions. Employees will not be discriminated against on

the basis of race, creed, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, political affiliation, marital status, disability or age. Employment opportunities will not be distinguished on the basis of gender unless gender is a bona fide occupational qualification. Employment opportunities will not be distinguished on the basis of age except where age is reasonably taken into account as a factor necessary to the normal operation or achievement of any statutory objective of a program or activity administered by GUIDE.

## Americans with Disability Act

GUIDE is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. We recognize that some employees may have a disability that may require an accommodation in order to ensure that they can perform the essential functions of their job. Employees requiring such accommodations should discuss their needs with their immediate supervisors. The supervisor will discuss their needs and alternative solutions with the employee and see to implement a reasonable accommodation to the employee's disability.

## No Harassment Policy

GUIDE does not and will not tolerate harassment of its employees. The term "harassment" includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes and other verbal, graphic or physical conduct related to an individual's race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, citizenship, age or disability. "Harassment" also includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, offensive touching and other verbal, graphic or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made directly or indirectly a term or condition of a person's employment or submission or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the person. This policy covers sexual harassment by members of the opposite sex and by members of the same sex.

Unlawful harassment also includes creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment for another on the basis of one's race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, citizenship,

disability or age. A hostile or offensive working environment is determined based on particular circumstances but shall include severe or pervasive written, verbal or physical conduct directed toward an employee on the basis of his/her gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, disability or age. Violation of this policy will subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate discharge.

### **Criminal Records Investigations**

In compliance with GUIDE policies and procedures, all volunteers 18 years and older who will be working in positions having direct care or custodial responsibilities for children and youth shall undergo a criminal record history investigation. GUIDE requires that each volunteer pending a criminal records investigation shall complete and submit to GUIDE signed consent to administer the criminal record history investigation. An adverse background report will result in termination as a volunteer with GUIDE and its programs. This includes any arrest or conviction involving crimes against children or youth, sex crimes or any felony conviction.

### **Confidentiality**

Volunteers must treat personal information they learn from participants with confidence and respect, subject to the policies on reporting abuse, neglect and threat of serious harm, as referenced in the section on Child Protection Policies in this handbook.

Volunteers will treat all participant protected health information (PHI) that is received during pre-program or program sessions with the utmost respect and confidentiality. PHI is protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and includes information that is oral or recorded in any form or medium that relates to the past, present or future physical condition of an individual.

### **Administration of Medicine & First Aid**

#### First Aid & Emergency Care

A first aid kit is kept onsite for all programs and events. The first aid kit, along with other medical, hygiene and sanitary supplies, can be found in the staff headquarters, known as Command Central, at Georgia Teen Institute. The Program Director or Event Coordinator will notify volunteers of the location of the first aid kit for other initiatives.

It is the decision of the Program Director or Event Coordinator to determine when emergency medical services should be called, and it is their responsibility to ensure all advice given is followed.

#### Administration of Medicine

Youth Volunteers are not authorized to administer medicines of any type, including over the counter drugs. Medicine must be administered and documented by the Program Director, Event Coordinator or other authorized staff. Georgia Teen Institute Leadership Team members are included in this group of authorized staff.

When administering medicine, staff must:

- Check to see if the participant has any medicinal allergies by consulting their registration or waiver form;
- Consult the Medicine Report Form to confirm that the same medicine has not already been administered within the prescribed time frame or that another, interacting medicine has been administered within the prescribed time frame; and
- Complete an entry on the Medicine Report Form, which is located in the front pocket of the Registration Notebook. All fields must be completed, including Name of Participant, Name of Person Administering Medicine, Time and Date of Administration, Name of Medicine and Dose (including strength and amount).

### **General Conduct**

Volunteers will treat all participants, volunteers, event attendees and community members affiliated with the agency with respect regardless of racial, ethnic, religious,

cultural and sexual identity and will not discriminate based on age, veteran or disability status.

Volunteers will conduct business and portray a positive image of the agency and its programs including, but not limited to, maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, honesty, courtesy, tact and maturity.

Volunteers are expected to uphold professional standards of conduct at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, timeliness, appropriate interactions with participants and other volunteers, dress, speech, preparation and flexibility. Additionally, volunteers may not use a GUIDE event to promote personal gain in any way. Any and all inquiries for services from participants at an event must be responded to in a manner that promotes GUIDE and its programs and should be passed along to the Program Director.

Volunteers will not use profanity or discuss adult subject matters in the presence of participants or while conducting business.

Volunteers will adhere to the dress code for specific events. In general, volunteers are prohibited from wearing t-shirts or articles of clothing containing advertisements, slogans, logos or references to alcohol and tobacco products, illicit drugs, sexual activity and adult conduct, profanity or any form of discrimination. Clothing with degrading or offensive language should not be worn. Clothing should be modest and appropriate for the event or meeting.

Volunteers are prohibited from having firearms or other weapons on agency grounds or on the premises of any agency or program event. This policy includes water guns and toy weapons.

Materials will be provided to volunteers when staffing an event of any kind. Volunteers are expected to take good care of the materials during events and ensure that they are returned to GUIDE in good, working condition. After an event, materials should be sorted and all trash, including materials that cannot be used again, should be removed.

## **Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Use**

The nature and philosophy of our agency and its programs require that volunteers serve as positive role models for a healthy lifestyle. As such, GUIDE has adopted a strict policy regarding the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Volunteers, regardless of age and volunteer status, must abstain from tobacco and illicit/illegal drug use at all times. Use of these substances during a volunteer's personal time may result in termination of volunteer status. Use of these substances during agency or program events will result in immediate dismissal from the program and termination of volunteer status.

All volunteers under the age of 21 are prohibited from the use of alcohol. Violation of this policy may result in termination of volunteer status. Repeated violations will result in termination.

Volunteers 21 and older may not consume alcohol during any agency or program event, whether on-duty or not. Violation may result in termination of volunteer status.

Volunteers 21 and older that choose to use alcohol in their personal lives are asked to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes a responsible, low-risk lifestyle. Volunteers 21 and older are prohibited from wearing clothing or promotional items that associate them with GUIDE, its programs or events while consuming alcohol. Repeated or extreme violations of this responsible consumption policy may result in suspension or termination of volunteer status.

Volunteers 21 and older are prohibited by law and this policy from providing alcohol to minors, including volunteers under the age of 21. Violation of this policy will result in immediate termination of volunteer status.

Volunteers are required to report violations of these policies to the GUIDE staff member, lead trainer, Program Director or Event Coordinator in charge of the event or program for which the violator is serving.

## **Personal Communication Devices**

Personal communication devices include cell phones, tablets, laptop/notebook computers, web cams, music

players that have internet access and all other electronic communications devices.

Regardless of whether the agency owns the device or volunteers are using their own device for program purposes, conduct on these devices will adhere to professional behavior at all times.

Personal communication devices are only to be used at designated times defined as follows:

1. Unless given prior permission, volunteers may not use devices during the day from the time the morning staff meeting begins until responsibilities are completed at the end of the day. During the day, devices should be left in personal dorm rooms. Devices may not be used as time pieces.
2. During program hours, volunteers may use devices during designated break times only. Break time is defined as not being assigned to a Family Group, Team Meeting, Workshop or Check-in Team. Prior to using devices, volunteers must check in at Command Central to see if anything needs to be done. Upon approval from the Program Director, volunteers may use devices in designated areas only.
3. Devices may only be used in designated areas such as personal dorm rooms and other areas selected by the Program Director.
4. At specific times during the program, volunteers may be asked to participate in GUIDE and Georgia Teen Institute's social media sites. It is acceptable for volunteers to use devices during these specific times.
5. If given prior permission to use devices during the program, volunteers must have devices turned off or set on "silent" during meetings, events, training sessions and other direct delivery of programs. Unless specifically asked to do so for program purposes, devices should not be active while supervising participants.

*Adapted from YMCA Employee Handbook*

### Social Media, Online Communications & Text Messaging

In general, GUIDE views texting, emailing, social media sites, personal websites and blogs positively and respects the right of its volunteers to use them as a medium of self-expression and communication.

Some readers of such online communications or text messaging may view the volunteer as a representative or spokesperson of GUIDE or otherwise develop certain impressions of GUIDE and its programs, activities, participants and volunteers based on the volunteer's behavior.

In light of this possibility, GUIDE requires, as a condition of volunteer status, that individuals observe the following guidelines regarding use of personal communication devices and how online or text communications can occur during Georgia Teen Institute.

1. Volunteers must be respectful in all online and texting communications related to or referencing Oxford College and GUIDE, its programs, activities, participants and volunteers.
2. Volunteers must have usernames or handles that are not considered to be offensive, negative, harmful or explicit.
3. Volunteers must not use obscenities, profanity, profane or offensive slang or vulgar language.
4. Volunteers must not use online or texting communications to disparage Oxford College or GUIDE, its programs, activities, participants and volunteers. Volunteers' use of any Georgia Teen Institute-related hashtags in any online communications must accurately represent GUIDE and Georgia Teen Institute.
5. Volunteers must not use online or texting communications to harass, bully or intimidate participants or other volunteers. Behaviors that constitute harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, comments that are derogatory with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability status; sexually suggestive, humiliating or demeaning comments;

and threats to stalk, haze or physically injure a participant or other volunteer.

6. Volunteers must not use online or texting communications to discuss engaging in conduct that is prohibited by GUIDE or program policies, including but not limited to, the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment and bullying.
7. Volunteers are prohibited from taking pictures or videos of participants or other volunteers that are considered to be inappropriate, offensive, negative, hurtful or explicit. No pictures or videos may be taken in the bathroom, shower area or other private areas.
8. Volunteers are prohibited from posting pictures or videos and using names of participants or other volunteers on a website without obtaining written permission. Likewise, volunteers may not “tag” anyone but themselves, including participants or other volunteers, in pictures or videos posted on other websites.
9. Volunteers are prohibited from sharing the location of GUIDE’s programs or activities through geographic location services or “checking in”.
10. Volunteers are prohibited from creating or maintaining social media pages, websites, blogs or “groups” in the name of or referencing GUIDE, its programs or activities. Likewise, the use of GUIDE and the agency copyrighted name or logo is not allowed without written permission.
11. For online and texting communications, volunteers above the age of 18 can only connect (“Friend”, “Follow”, etc.) with other volunteers above the age of 18. Volunteers below the age of 18 can only connect with participants and other volunteers below the age of 18. If a volunteer has connected with a participant or other volunteer prior to involvement with GUIDE/Georgia Teen Institute, this connection will be accepted.
12. GUIDE and the Program Director request that any online communications during Georgia Teen Institute are relevant to the program in order to send the message that our volunteers are actively engaged in our program. It is inappropriate for volunteers to view, download or engage with

material from the internet during program hours that is not a program necessity or in alignment with other volunteer policies.

13. If requested by GUIDE or the Program Director, volunteers must provide GUIDE with access to any websites maintained or controlled by the volunteer, including personal websites and blogs.
14. Volunteers are requested to connect (“Friend”, “Follow”, etc.) with GUIDE and Georgia Teen Institute on all social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and LinkedIn). The most current links for these can be found on the Georgia Teen Institute home page at [www.georgiati.org](http://www.georgiati.org).

Consequences for noncompliance with this policy may range from confiscation of devices until the end of the program to immediate dismissal from the program. It is at the Program Director’s discretion to determine the consequence resulting from the infraction.

### Gossiping Policy

Gossip is an activity that can drain, distract and downshift meaningful experiences and relationships. We have all participated in gossip, yet most of us say that we don’t like it. In order to create a safer and more positive environment during GUIDE programs and events, we are making a commitment to change our behavior and atmosphere to be gossip-free.

Gossip is:

- About a person who is not present;
- Negative or personal (confidential) information about a person or organization;
- Often critical and derogatory
- Unsubstantiated information about organizational policies or decisions; and
- A verb, which means it’s something you DO. This also means that it is something you choose NOT to do and choose to STOP.

In order to create a safer, more positive environment, our volunteers commit to:

1. Not speak or *insinuate* another person’s name when that person is not present unless it is to compliment or reference that person’s work;

2. Refuse to participate when another person mentions someone who is not present in a negative light;
3. Choose not to respond to a negative email or other kind of virtual message to pass on private or derogatory information about any staff or participant; and
4. Not speak about Georgia Teen Institute, GUIDE or its volunteers in a negative light to volunteers, participants or professionally related individuals.

Additionally, our volunteers commit to intervene if they witness staff or participants choosing to gossip.

1. Volunteers will look for an opportunity to intervene appropriately. Decide if the situation warrants an immediate action or if a conversation can be conducted in private. If a conversation is going to happen, initiate it as soon after the incident as possible.
2. Volunteers will have a conversation with the staff or participant who is gossiping.
3. If the conversation doesn't work or if it was a difficult situation, volunteers will discuss the experience with their supervisor or, at Georgia Teen Institute, their Connection Group Leader.
4. If the situation continues to happen, volunteers will meet to discuss the situation with their supervisor and the Program Director or, at Georgia Teen Institute, their Connection Group Leader.

### Modeling Positive Peer Interactions

The way in which volunteers interact with each other will be observed and imitated by participants. Positive volunteer interactions are essential in creating an environment and atmosphere for youth to feel emotionally safe, secure and happy.

#### The importance of modeling positive behavior:

- When youth see volunteers speak to each other respectfully and supportively and see them resolve differences fairly, youth, in turn, will begin to use these strategies to communicate and resolve conflicts with their peers.

- Volunteers must be emotionally available, sensitive and responsive to other volunteers and youth, modeling levels of security and support.
- Modeling positive peer interactions will be enhanced when we maintain an awareness of our verbal and body language.
- Negative and inappropriate interactions will also be picked up by youth.
- Unresolved and poorly managed conflict between volunteers can cause stress and impact overall morale.
- Issues with communication or conflict can result in misunderstandings about the program, operations, supervision and volunteer relationships, having a potential negative effect directly or indirectly on the participants.

#### Behaviors to model when working together:

- Be sensitive, courteous and patient with each other
- Demonstrate respect and trust for each other
- Use calm and friendly voices
- Actively work together by pooling ideas and resolving differences of opinions and conflicts
- Support one another in your work
- Communicate clearly and effectively
- Welcome and support all new people; model how to develop effective and inclusive relationships
- Openly reflect and improve interactions and relationships with each other and youth; discuss issues together allowing for self-reflection or improvements in teamwork
- Respect and value the beliefs and attitudes of other staff; guide youth in developing positive attitudes towards the different backgrounds and abilities of others

### Personal Relationships

Acknowledging that supportive and developmentally appropriate relationships are important to the positive and healthy development of youth, GUIDE and its programs encourage, promote and in some cases

facilitate friendships and mentor: mentee relationships between youth and adults, participants and volunteers.

Recognizing that close personal, particularly sexual, relationships with youth may be against the law, exploitative or result in preferential treatment, GUIDE and its programs also discourage and in some cases prohibit such relationships between youth and adults.

For the purpose of the policies outlined below,

- *Youth Participant* refers to any participant under the age of 18,
- *Youth Volunteer* refers to Georgia Teen Institute Youth Staff and any other volunteer under the age of 18.
- *Adult Volunteer* refers to Georgia Teen Institute Young Adult Staff, Adult Staff, Leadership Team and any other volunteer 18 years of age or older.

The following policies outline permitted and prohibited types of relationships between youth and adults, participants and volunteers. When permitted, all contact between volunteers and participants outside of agency sponsored programs and events is on the behalf of the volunteer and not as a representative of GUIDE or its programs. Volunteers are prohibited from using GUIDE or its programs' names as grounds or justification for out-of-program contact with participants. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to maintain the *rule of three* when engaging in out-of-program contact with participants to preserve their personal integrity and the integrity of the agency and program.

It is the obligation of all volunteers to report to agency or Program Directors any problems with or suspicions of inappropriate or prohibited contact or relationships, including suspicions or feelings or coercion or harassment by youth or adult, participant or volunteer.

#### **YOUTH VOLUNTEER: YOUTH PARTICIPANT**

Youth Volunteers are permitted to engage in friendships with Youth Participants during and outside of agency programs, events and activities. Such relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times,

including, but not limited to, phone calls, text messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation.

Youth Volunteers are permitted to engage in dating relationships with Youth Participants during and outside of agency programs, events and activities. Such relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times, including, but not limited to, phone calls, text messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation. Dating relationships should not interfere with the performance of assigned duties, the atmosphere of programs and events or the general purposes and philosophy of the agency. Public displays of affection during programs, events and activities are strictly prohibited.

#### **ADULT VOLUNTEER: YOUTH PARTICIPANT**

Adult Volunteers are permitted to engage in friendships and mentor: mentee relationships with Youth Participants during and outside of agency programs, events and activities. Such relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times, including, but not limited to, phone calls, text messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation.

Adult Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in dating relationships with Youth Participants.

#### **YOUTH VOLUNTEER: YOUTH VOLUNTEER**

Youth Volunteers are permitted to engage in friendships with other Youth Volunteers during and outside of agency programs, events and activities. Such relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times, including, but not limited to, phone calls, text messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation.

Youth Volunteers are permitted to engage in dating relationships with other Youth Volunteers during and outside of agency programs, events, and activities. Such relationships are discouraged as they may be a disruption of program activity and intent. If they occur, dating relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times, including, but not limited to, phone calls, text

messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation. Dating relationships should not interfere with the performance of assigned duties, the atmosphere of programs and events or the general purposes and philosophy of the agency. Public displays of affection during programs, events and activities are strictly prohibited.

#### **ADULT VOLUNTEER: YOUTH VOLUNTEER**

Adult Volunteers are permitted to engage in friendships and mentor: mentee relationships with Youth Volunteers during and outside of agency programs, events and activities. Such relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times, including, but not limited to, phone calls, text messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation.

Adult Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in dating relationships with Youth Volunteers.

#### **ADULT VOLUNTEER: ADULT VOLUNTEER**

Adult Volunteers are permitted to engage in friendships and mentor: mentee relationships with other Adult Volunteers during and outside of agency programs, events and activities. Such relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times, including, but not limited to, phone calls, text messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation.

Adult Volunteers are permitted to engage in dating relationships with other Adult Volunteers during and outside of agency programs, events and activities. Such relationships are discouraged as they may be a disruption of program activity and intent. If they occur, dating relationships must not violate any policies outlined in this handbook. Observation of these policies must occur at all times, including, but not limited to, phone calls, text messages, letters, online communications and in-person visitation. Dating relationships should not interfere with the performance of assigned duties, the atmosphere of programs and events or the general purposes and philosophy of the agency. Public displays of affection

during programs, events and activities are strictly prohibited.

### **Supervision**

Volunteers will never leave a youth participant unsupervised.

Volunteers will never be alone with a youth participant and must observe the *rule of three* whenever feasible—at least one other person must be present if a volunteer is with a youth.

In general, interactions with youth should be interruptible and observable. If a situation arises where a volunteer must be alone with a youth, that interaction should take place in a setting that is open and observable by other staff or volunteers or, if a closed-door meeting is necessary, observable through a window.

Volunteers must respect the privacy of youth in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Volunteers must protect their own privacy in similar situations.

### **Behavior Management**

Volunteers will use positive guidance techniques including redirection, anticipation and elimination of potential problems, positive reinforcement, support and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, criticism or humiliating discipline techniques.

Volunteers will not abuse participants or other volunteers. Abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Physical Abuse: Strike, spank, shake, slap

Verbal Abuse: Humiliate, degrade, threaten

Sexual Abuse: including inappropriate touching and conversation

Mental Abuse: Hazing, negative manipulation

Neglect: Withholding food, water or basic care

### **Child Protection Policy**



Volunteers are required by state law to report any suspected abuse or neglect of youth to the Program Director or other designated member of the Response Team so that it may be reported to the appropriate authorities (law enforcement and the Department of Family and Children Services).

Reporters do not have to be sure maltreatment has occurred, and reports are confidential according to state law.

Volunteers are additionally required by this agency to report any suspicions relating to a participant or fellow volunteer being at risk of serious harm or danger, including self-inflicted harm such as suicide.

#### Signs of Abuse/Neglect

- Physical signs of abuse/neglect include youth being frequently hungry, dressed inadequately for the weather or having bruises and/or other marks of physical violence.
- Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common, but physical problems associated with anxiety, such as chronic stomach pain or headaches, may occur.
- Emotional or behavioral signs are more common and may include “too-perfect” behavior, withdrawal, depression and unexplained anger and rebellion.
- Nightmares and bed-wetting in children who have previously outgrown it could occur.
- Cruelty to animals and fire-setting may be additional signs of sexual abuse.
- Children/youth who have been sexually abused may harm themselves physically, make degrading remarks about themselves or experience falling grades.
- Sexual behavior and language that are not age-appropriate can be red-flags.
- Use of alcohol or drugs at a premature age can be a warning.
- Finally, be aware that in some youth there are no signs whatsoever.

#### Prohibited Acts

The following acts are prohibited by this policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity, event or program. Any observations or personal knowledge of such violations must be immediately reported to the Program Director or other designated member of the Response Team after the safety of the youth involved has been assured.

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse or evidence of abusive conduct towards a youth;
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a youth;
- Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a youth;
- Physical neglect of a youth including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to activities of the agency;
- Causing mental or emotional injury to a youth; and
- Possessing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the agency.

#### Violation Reporting Policy

In order to maintain an environment free of destructive acts toward youth, volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission or situation thought to be in violation of this policy.

All questions or concerns of any suspected abusive behavior or harassment, at the hand of a volunteer, participant or outside party, should be directed to the Program Director or other designated member of the Response Team, or in extenuating circumstances, the Executive Director or Chair of the agency’s Board of Directors.

In the event that a volunteer personally witnesses an occurrence in violation of this policy, that volunteer will be asked to complete a written *Suspected Abuse Incident Report*, a copy of which is provided with this handbook. Anyone who should witness such an occurrence should consider the following recommendations as to how such a situation should be handled to ensure the security of

the youth and to protect against physical, emotional or psychological injury, to all persons involved:

- Personally secure the safety of the youth;
- Report the incident immediately to the Program Director or other designated member of the Response Team and document the report using the *Suspected Abuse Incident Report*;
- Do not leave the youth alone to report the incident;
- Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator of this policy; and
- The Program or Agency Director will be solely responsible for all communications on behalf of the program or agency.

In the event that a youth reports abusive conduct while engaged in agency sponsored activity or involving the staff or volunteers, regardless of where the conduct occurred, the person initially contacted by the youth should contact the Program Director or other designated member of the Response Team and complete a *Suspected Abuse Incident Report*. Record verbatim in the *Suspected Abuse Incident Report* the specific words first spoken by the youth and the conduct and demeanor observed concerning the incident.

#### Consequences of Violation

Any person accused of committing a Prohibited Act, whether a staff member, employee or volunteer, will immediately be suspended from participation in all youth activities and programs of the agency. Such suspension shall continue during any investigation by the agency, law enforcement or child protection agencies.

Any person found to have committed a Prohibited Act shall be prohibited from future participation in all youth activities and programs of the agency. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.

As required by Georgia law, all reports of abuse of youth will be forwarded in a timely manner to the appropriate child protection and law enforcement authorities. Such

reporting must be accomplished in addition to complying with this child protection policy.

Failure to report a Prohibited Act to the Program Director or Response Team member in a timely manner shall be considered a procedural violation of this policy and shall be grounds for termination of a volunteer, staff member or employee and suspension and dismissal from participation in all youth activities and programs of the agency. Any person required to report suspected abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor in the state of Georgia.

#### Response Team

The general Response Team consists of the following people (current staff listed as well):

- GUIDE's Executive Director (Jessica Andrews-Wilson)
- GUIDE's Director of Youth Leadership & Engagement (Mary Kate Chapman)
- Chairperson of GUIDE's Board of Directors
- A parent representative of the Board of Directors
- An attorney
- If not already listed above, the Coordinator or Director responsible for the program or event where violation occurred or the youth involved in the report

If the person suspected of abusive conduct is a member of the Response Team, questions, concerns and reports should be directed to a different member.

#### When a Report is Made

The Program Director or member of the Response Team that received the report will notify the Response Team and convene a meeting immediately. The following actions will be taken:

- Ensure that the accused person has been removed and suspended from duties involving youth pending external and internal investigation;
- Notify the appropriate legal or state authorities by telephone; and

- Review the alleged incident and recommend appropriate action, if any.

The Response Team will develop a plan of action to include the following:

- Cooperate with legal and state authorities in their investigation, if any;
- Notify the insurance carrier of the incident immediately and comply with its investigation, if any;
- Prepare a written statement and designate a spokesperson to respond to media inquiries;
- Provide assistance to the alleged victim and his/her family in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed;
- Provide assistance to the alleged perpetrator and his/her family in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed;
- Respond to the needs of the family of the alleged victim and the accused by providing recommendations for resolution;
- Inform affected volunteers, including the reporter, of the need for confidentiality; and
- Consider and respond to the concerns of other parents/families.