

## Lesley University

### Guidelines for Interacting with Children

These Guidelines for Interacting with Children apply to all faculty, staff, students, and volunteers who interact with children through University-sponsored programs and activities on or off campus. These Guidelines are related to the University's [Protocol for Programs Involving Children](#). If your Program is governed by the Protocol, please read and retain these Guidelines and sign and give the last page to the Program Supervisor.

#### Appropriate Conduct and Boundaries with Children

When interacting with children, Lesley University expects everyone to:

- Maintain the highest standards of personal and professional behavior at all times
- One-on-one meetings with a child should be avoided, but if necessary, the meeting should be held in a public area, in a room where the interaction can be observed, or in a room with the door left open
- Treat all children in a group consistently and fairly, and with respect and dignity
- Maintain discipline and discourage inappropriate behavior by children
- Children must be accompanied and supervised at all times
- Children must only be released to a parent/guardian, or to an adult expressly authorized in writing by the child's parent/guardian
- Report accidents, injuries, or illnesses of a child to the director of the program and to Public Safety
- Be aware of how your actions and intentions might be perceived and could be misinterpreted
  - Be friendly with children within the context of the program while maintaining appropriate boundaries.
  - Physical contact with children can be misconstrued and should only occur when nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private. Prudent discretion must be used in determining whether physical contact would be appropriate. Acceptable forms of physical contact with children can include handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps, and an occasional pat on the back.
  - Use appropriate language. Because children may not understand idioms or abstract language, use concrete language to avoid misinterpretation by children.
- Consult with the director of the program or Public Safety if you feel uncertain about a situation

#### Prohibited Conduct

When interacting with children, Lesley University expects everyone to avoid:

- Being alone with a child, particularly in areas that are not part of the regular, daily operation of the program, such as vehicles, isolated areas, and dorm rooms
- Any type of physical discipline, including corporal punishment
- Any type of inappropriate contact or touching, such as massage, back rubs, hugs, caressing, and intimate touching
- Any type of physical contact or touching that could be misinterpreted, such as horseplay, roughhousing, wrestling, piggyback rides, and tickling. Generally, touching should be in the open and for a clear educational, developmental, or health-related purpose.
- Relating to a child as if the child is your peer or taking on the role of confidante

- Using any type of vulgar or sexual language, comments, gestures, or jokes
- Possessing or using sexual materials, literature, or media of any kind or helping a child gain access to such materials, literature, or media
- Sleeping in the same room as a child
- Showering or changing clothes around a child
- Dressing inappropriately or provocatively
- Possessing or using firearms or weapons of any kind
- Possessing, distributing, or using illegal drugs, marijuana, alcohol, or tobacco products
- Being under the influence of illegal drugs, marijuana, or alcohol
- Hazing or bullying of any kind, or using any type of language that could harass, intimidate, berate, or degrade another
- Disclosing inappropriate personal information about yourself, such as dating or relationship history, or seeking to learn personal information about a child
- Giving your cell phone number to a child or seeking the cell phone number of a child, unless there is an educational or program-related purpose
- Meeting a child outside of program hours or program facilities
- Dating or becoming romantically or sexually involved with a child

### **Communicating with Children**

Communications with children, including communications by telephone, e-mail, text, Facebook, social media, or through any other electronic medium, are allowed only for program-related objectives and must be consistent with communications with all children in the program.

Before any program-related communications are sent, the program must inform parents and guardians how faculty, staff, students, and volunteers associated with the program will communicate with children.

Private communications with children for purposes not related to the program are prohibited.

### **Photographs/Videos/Recording**

Photography, video, and recording of children is prohibited unless it is for a program-related purpose and the child's parent/guardian has provided an express written release for the taking and use of photographs and video. Publishing or posting of photographs, video, or recordings of children is prohibited except in accordance with the program.

### **Gifts**

Faculty, staff, students, and volunteers are prohibited from giving gifts to children and from accepting gifts from children.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Faculty, staff, students, and volunteers are prohibited from possessing, using, and/or being under the influence of illegal drugs, marijuana, or alcohol when interacting with children. Faculty, staff, students, and volunteers are also prohibited from possessing or using tobacco products when interacting with children. In addition, faculty, staff, students, and volunteers are prohibited from providing illegal drugs, marijuana, alcohol, or tobacco products to children.

## **Transportation**

Transportation of children by faculty, staff, students, volunteers, or others (e.g. contracted vendors) may occur only if it follows a written transportation plan developed by the program and reviewed by the University General Counsel. In general, transportation of children should be carried out by a contracted vendor. The University General Counsel should review the contract.

## **Reporting Known or Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children**

The University expects anyone participating in programs involving children (including faculty, staff, students, and volunteers) who knows, suspects, or receives information indicating that a child has been abused or neglected, or who has other concerns about the safety of children, to immediately inform Lesley's Public Safety Office at 617-349-8888 or call 911. This includes not just information or suspicions relating to on-campus conduct or conduct in the program, but also suspected abuse or neglect by a parent, guardian, or caretaker. Lesley's Public Safety Office is the University's designated agent to receive such reports and will make required reports to state or local agencies, including the Department of Children and Families ("DCF"), as necessary.

## **Additional Reporting Obligations for Mandated Reporters**

In addition to the reporting obligations above, certain individuals are "Mandated Reporters" and have additional obligations under Massachusetts law.

Massachusetts law, M.G.L. c. 119, §21, designates individuals in certain occupations and professions whose work brings them in contact with children as Mandated Reporters and requires these individuals to report to DCF when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering from abuse and/or neglect. Mandated Reporters include, but are not limited to, public or private school teachers, educational administrators, guidance or family counselors, mental health and human services professionals, psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, and child care workers. A complete list of who is considered a Mandated Reporter under Massachusetts law is available at

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/Section21>. Please contact the University General Counsel if you are unsure if you are a Mandated Reporter.

Under Massachusetts law, failure by Mandated Reporters to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect can result in a fine, imprisonment, and/or a report to professional licensing authorities.

Program staff who are Mandated Reporters and become aware of any instance of known or suspected abuse and/or neglect of a child, must immediately report the suspected abuse or neglect by: (1) notifying Lesley's Public Safety Office, the University's designated agent to receive such reports, at 617-349-8888, or calling 911; or (2) notifying DCF directly at 617-520-8700 (the DCF Cambridge office) or, after office hours, at 800-792-5200 (the DCF Child-at-Risk Hotline).

If a Mandated Reporter notifies DCF directly, the Mandated Reporter should notify Lesley's Public Safety Office of the report immediately thereafter so that the University is aware of the report.

Within 48 hours of making a verbal report, Mandated Reporters must file a written report with DCF detailing the suspected abuse or neglect. The written report form can be found on the DCF website at [www.mass.gov/DCF](http://www.mass.gov/DCF). The Lesley Public Safety Office is available to assist Mandated Reporters throughout the process and free online training is available through the Middlesex Children's Advocacy Center at <http://51a.middlesexcac.org/>.

## **Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect**

Information about the warning signs of child abuse and neglect can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/warning-signs-of-child-abuse-and-neglect>. The website lists numerous warning signs, such as the following:

### **Signs of physical abuse**

- Bruising, welts, or burns that cannot be sufficiently explained, particularly bruises on the face, lips, and mouth of infants or on several surface planes at the same time
- Unusual bruising patterns that reflect the shape of the instrument used to cause injury (e.g., belt, wire hanger, hairbrush, hand, human bite marks)
- Clusters of bruises, welts, or burns, indicating repeated contact with a hand or instrument

### **Signs of possible neglect**

#### **Child or youth**

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Is frequently absent from school or child care
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to parent or caregiver's attention

#### **Parent or caregiver**

- Denies the existence of, or blames the child for, problems in school
- Shows little concern for the child
- Is abusing alcohol or drugs

### **Signs of possible sexual abuse**

#### **Perceptible signs of sexual abuse**

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing

#### **Behavioral signs of sexual abuse**

- Withdrawal or chronic depression
- Inappropriate sex play or premature understanding of sex
- Feeling threatened by physical contact, closeness

### **Signs of possible sexual exploitation or human trafficking**

- **Instability in life functioning:** Youth lacks access to basic needs, including stable shelter, and is unable to engage in activities expected of the youth's age
- **Relationships:** Youth's relationships are concerning, placing the youth at risk or in danger
- **Finances and belongings:** Youth has money or material goods that are incongruent with the youth's life circumstances

**Acknowledgement of Receipt and Agreement to Comply with  
Lesley University's Guidelines for Interacting with Children**

I acknowledge that I received a copy of Lesley University's Guidelines for Interacting with Children. I read and understand the Guidelines for Interacting with Children and agree to comply with the Guidelines for Interacting with Children. I understand that I should contact the program supervisor or the University General Counsel with any questions regarding the Guidelines for Interacting with Children.

I certify that I have completed the online training course "Protecting Children: Identifying and Reporting Sexual Misconduct" available on the United Educators' website.

I agree to immediately notify the Office of Human Resources of my arrest or conviction involving crimes of a violent or sexual nature.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name (Printed)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Program**

**Note to Program Supervisors: Retain this page but ensure that the individual signing this form retains the Guidelines for Interacting with Children for future reference.**