



# Office of Children and Youth Safety Standards of Behavior for Working with Minors

All members of the Cornell community, including those who work for third parties, who interact with, chaperone, or otherwise oversee minors in programs or activities sponsored by Cornell University, including activities held off-campus or in a virtual environment, are obligated by [policy 8.8](#) Children and Youth Safety to abide by the following behavioral guidelines:

**Awareness:** All members of the Cornell community must be aware of their responsibilities that accompany their interactions with minors, including their [reporting duty](#) outlined in policy 8.8.

**Boundaries:** Be aware of the unique vulnerability of minors and be particularly aware of maintaining appropriate physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries in such interactions. Do not engage in abusive conduct such as hitting, kicking, slapping, shaking, or restraining. Physical contact should only occur when non-sexual and otherwise appropriate and never in private. (Please see next page for more guidance on appropriate and inappropriate verbal and physical interactions with minors). Do not engage in any sexual activity, sexually explicit conversations, or share sexually explicit material with minors. Do not make sexual comments or jokes in the presence of a minor or talk about things of a romantic nature with a minor. Avoid the use of profanity with minors. Do not dress provocatively or inappropriately in the presence of minors.

**Discipline:** Do not physically discipline a minor. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Do not use speech, gestures, or other behaviors that are bullying, demeaning, belittling, hurtful, or meant to embarrass.

**Supervision:** Participants must remain supervised, meaning within sight, except for infrequent momentary periods, and within reasonable hearing distance of an adult trained in reporting duties at all times. The following ratios must be met or exceeded at all times\*:

Participant age group	Number of residential	Number of non-residential	Number of program staff
5 and under	5	6	1
6-8 years	6	8	1
9-14 years	8	10	1
15-18 years	10	12	1

\*A 1:25 ratio may be utilized for certain passive activities - contact the CYS office for guidance.

**One-on-One Interactions:** All interactions must be observable and interruptible and held within a well illuminated area. If that is not appropriate or possible, then the door to the room must be left open, or a window that allows for unobstructed observation should be present. All activities involving minors must adhere to the 'rule of three,' meaning that reasonable efforts have been made to have two or more adults present during activities where single minors are present. Do not meet with minors outside of established program times.

**Drugs, Alcohol, and Other Prohibited Items:** Do not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal or mind-altering drugs while in the presence of minors. Do not use any weapon, explosive device, or sexual materials in any form in the presence of minors. Do not make any of the above items available to minors.

**Gift Giving:** Do not give a minor or their family gifts or special attention or engage in any behaviors that encourage keeping secrets from a parent/guardian.

**Photography:** Do not take or use a photo or video of a minor or post information about minors to social media sites unless the parent/guardian has signed a media release *and* the photo/video is being used for program related purposes.

**Electronic Communication:** Do not have personal, non-programmatic electronic communication with minors, including via email, text, social networking sites, cloud-based gaming sites, or any other form of electronic communication. Except in an emergency, all electronic communication must be open and transparent (adhering to the rule of three).

**Restrooms/Locker Rooms/Changing Areas:** Do not spend time alone with minors in these areas. Two adults should be assigned to monitor the bathrooms of their gender whenever possible. Do not change clothes in front of a minor.

**Overnights:** Do not share accommodations with a minor. At least two adults must be present for room checks. Separate bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers must be used by minors (or be used at separate times).

**Transportation:** Do not transport minors alone in any vehicle except in an emergency. Personal vehicles should never be used to transport minors.

**Noncompliance with these Standards of Behavior may result in discipline up to and including removal from the program or termination and may also be a violation of New York State Law.**

**Please direct questions to the Youth Protection Manager  
Alyson Murphy at [am2987@cornell.edu](mailto:am2987@cornell.edu)**



<b>Appropriate Physical Interactions (with consent)</b>	<b>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Hugging from the side</li> <li>◇ Patting on the shoulder or upper back</li> <li>◇ Shaking hands</li> <li>◇ High fives/fist bumps</li> <li>◇ Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> <li>◇ Other brief contact intended to comfort distressed children below the age of 12 so long as another adult is witnessing it</li> <li>◇ Teaching a physical technique that requires hands-on instruction such as finger placement on a musical instrument or positioning for an athletic activity, so long as it is conducted either in the open or in an interior space (1) with the doors and windows open or (2) in a building open to the public at the time of the touching</li> <li>◇ Any contact to aid an injured minor or a minor in imminent danger of physical harm (such as a struggling swimmer)</li> <li>◇ Separating minors involved in an altercation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Striking, hitting, using corporal punishment, or any other punishment involving physical pain or discomfort</li> <li>◇ Hugging with full body contact</li> <li>◇ Kissing</li> <li>◇ Sitting on someone’s lap (for those above preschool age)</li> <li>◇ Wrestling</li> <li>◇ Carrying a minor/piggyback ride</li> <li>◇ Tickling</li> <li>◇ Massages or rubs</li> <li>◇ Touching on the bottom, waist, chest, or genital area (unless changing diapers)</li> <li>◇ Any physical expressions of affection</li> <li>◇ Sexual contact of any kind</li> <li>◇ Staring at a minor’s body</li> <li>◇ Any intended affection unwanted by the minor</li> </ul>
<b>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</b>	<b>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Praise (e.g.: “Well done!” or “Keep up the good work!”)</li> <li>◇ Encouragement (e.g.: “You can do it!”)</li> <li>◇ Positive reinforcement</li> <li>◇ Asking broad questions about a minor’s day or weekend</li> <li>◇ Using language that is supportive and positive</li> <li>◇ Age-appropriate conversations</li> <li>◇ Appropriate jokes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Calling someone names</li> <li>◇ Adults discussing personal relationships or relationship problems with a minor</li> <li>◇ Asking a minor to keep a secret</li> <li>◇ Cursing</li> <li>◇ Discriminatory or sexual jokes</li> <li>◇ Shaming or belittling someone</li> <li>◇ Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate</li> <li>◇ Negative remarks about a minor or their family</li> <li>◇ Commenting on or complimenting a person’s body or body development</li> </ul>