

YOUTH PROGRAM
ROCHESTER ZEN CENTER

ABUSE PREVENTION
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Dear Volunteer or Staff Member:

Welcome to the Youth & Family Program!

The Youth Program takes our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Youth Program volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of the Youth Program. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Ven. Lila Redding
Rochester Zen Center
Sangha Programs Coordinator
Volunteer Coordinator

lilar@rzc.org
585-473-9180

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW OF THE YOUTH PROGRAM SAFETY SYSTEM	4
CHILD SAFETY POLICY	5
PARENTAL CONTACT	5
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.....	5
VOLUNTEERS PARENTS	5
RELEASE OF CHILDREN	5
ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN	6
BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE.....	6
VERBAL INTERACTIONS	7
PHYSICAL CONTACT.....	7
MEDICATION	7
GIFT GIVING	7
INTERNET/ELECTRONIC MEDIA.....	8
TOBACCO.....	8
INTOXICANTS.....	8
SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS	8
SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS.....	8
NUDITY	8
REPORTING POLICY VIOLATIONS	9
OUR COMMITMENT	9
REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS.....	9
REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE	9
ABUSE TOLERANCE.....	9
REPORTING POTENTIAL ABUSE	9
CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT.....	9
RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE	10
WHEN A CHILD HAS BEEN VICTIMIZED	10
STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES....	11

Overview of the Youth Program Safety System

Because we care for children and desire to protect them, the Rochester Zen Center requires all volunteers and staff members to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** *before employment or volunteer work begins*.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Training

The Rochester Zen Center's policies and procedures require that volunteers and staff members avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Volunteers and staff members are required to report any policy violations to the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, Cecily Fuhr, Eryl Kubicka, or James Thompson.

Volunteers and staff members should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip the Youth Program volunteers and staff members with information necessary to protect a child from sexual abuse or maltreatment, the Rochester Zen Center requires all volunteers and staff members to complete the Sexual Abuse Awareness Training provided online through Abuse Prevention Systems (www.AbusePreventionSystems.com).

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training is required for all volunteers and staff members and must be renewed every year.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and relevant volunteers are required to complete the Youth Program's Screening Process, which requires volunteers and staff members to:

- 1) Complete a Youth Volunteer or Employment Application.
- 2) Complete a face-to-face interview.
- 3) Provide references to be checked.
- 4) Provide a list of previous employers to be verified.

The Head of Zendo will document interview notes, reference checks, employment verification notes and store documentation online, through Abuse Prevention Systems (www.AbusePreventionSystems.com), and will be saved as a paper copy in a secure (locked) location.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Volunteers and staff members are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating they have read and understood the material and agree to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

The Rochester Zen Center requires that all staff members, Youth Program volunteers and other relevant volunteers undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Positions of the greatest authority and responsibility, including but not limited to: Teachers, Priests, Youth Program leaders, Sesshin teachers, Sesshin monitors, and affiliate leaders, will undergo an initial background screening from Abuse Prevention Systems (APS) at a level 5. Every subsequent three years they will undergo a background screening from APS at a level 3. All other employees will initially receive a level 2 screening. Every subsequent three years they will undergo a level 1 screening. Upon a tentative acceptance into training, all short-term trainees will receive a background screening at a level 1. All short-term Youth Program volunteers will receive a background screening at a level 1.

Child Safety Policy

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave their children in the care of Youth Program staff members and volunteers for services and activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Youth Program activities.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents with children who are 5 years or younger are required to always supervise their children. All parents are encouraged to be a part of all services and programs in which children are involved. A parent accompanied by a child to any Youth Program activity is responsible for their child's safety.

VOLUNTEERS PARENTS

A parent who desires to participate in such a way as to have ongoing contact with children in the Program other than their own will be considered a Volunteers Parent. All Volunteer Parents will be required to complete a Youth Program Volunteer Application.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At the end of the program day or activity, Youth Program volunteers and/or staff members are responsible for releasing children into their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated in writing by parents or legal guardians.

If a staff member or volunteer is uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact the parent who dropped off the child, before releasing the child.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

The Rochester Zen Center recognizes that meeting program objectives may occasionally require that staff members and volunteers interact with children on an individual basis. Workers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with children:

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual child at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. There will be no one-to-one meetings between a staff member or a volunteer and a child behind closed doors. If a circumstance arises where a private one-to-one meeting does occur, the staff member or volunteers will notify another Youth Program Coordinator immediately before or after the meeting.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

- 1) Children should never be transported without parental permission.
- 2) Children should be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops should be made.
- 3) Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- 4) No cell phones may be used by the driver while providing transportation for children.
- 5) No drivers under age 25 may provide transportation for children.
- 6) No driver may use a Rochester Zen Center vehicle to transport children without satisfactorily completing a Vehicle Authorization Form with the Business Manager.
- 7) Children should not use a vehicle belonging to a staff member or volunteer.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, they should seek out another worker to accompany them. If another worker is not available to accompany, try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Youth Program staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission to provide nurturing care to children. Staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

The Youth Program is committed to protecting the children in our care and has implemented a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of Youth Program staff members or volunteers must always foster trust – personal conduct must be above reproach. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working with the Youth Programs:

- 1) Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in the Youth Program setting.
- 2) Physical affection should be appropriate to the child's age. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection should be immediately reported to the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, Cecily Fuhr, Eryl Kubicka, or James Thompson.
- 3) Physical contact and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children or Youth Program staff and volunteers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when more than two individuals are present, and the touch is open to observation.
- 4) Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

MEDICATION

Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer with a doctor's prescription. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over-the-counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream, after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian.

GIFT GIVING

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing special gifts to any individual child. Special occasions or special accomplishments should receive group acknowledgement and can easily be rewarded with group recognition (i.e., mention during announcements; have the entire group sing Happy Birthday, etc.) Any requests for variance from this policy must be addressed to the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, Cecily Fuhr, Eryl Kubicka or James Thompson.

INTERNET/ELECTRONIC MEDIA

No computer at or related to the Rochester Zen Center is to be used by staff members, volunteers, children, or volunteers to engage with Zen Center children in computer chat room discussions. Violation of this policy will lead to discipline from the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, or the Ethics and Advisory Committee. Any questions about the inappropriate use of computers or the suitability of a particular website should be discussed with the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, Cecily Fuhr, Eryl Kubicka, or James Thompson.

TOBACCO

The Youth Program requires staff members and volunteers to refrain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility, and while in the presence of children. The Youth Program staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing tobacco products to children.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in the facility, during a Youth Program activity, or while working with children at the Rochester Zen Center. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing alcohol or illegal drugs to children.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children. Staff members and volunteers are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the program. This provision includes the use of cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, instant messaging, and online chat rooms.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Youth Program volunteers and staff members are prohibited from displaying any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, etc.) in the presence of children.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers at the Youth Program's should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

Reporting Policy Violations

OUR COMMITMENT

The Rochester Zen Center is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children. Youth Program staff members and volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Youth Program policies and are responsible for reporting any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness inappropriate behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse (i.e., policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.). Staff members and volunteers are required to immediately report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, Cecily Fuhr, Eryl Kubicka or James Thompson.

Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Ethics and Advisory Committee, in consultation with the Directors; if there is not a clear resolution, the final decision may be turned over to the Board of Trustees.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

ABUSE TOLERANCE

The Rochester Zen Center has a **zero tolerance for abuse**. It is the responsibility of every volunteer and staff member to act in the best interest of each child in every program. In the event that a volunteer or staff member suspect abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report the observations to the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, Cecily Fuhr, Eryl Kubicka or James Thompson.

REPORTING POTENTIAL ABUSE

All questions or concerns related to abuse of a child should be directed to the Head of Zendo, a Spiritual Director, Cecily Fuhr, Eryl Kubica or James Thompson, and will be reported to the Ethics and Advisory Committee.

CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from all child interaction and Youth Program activities. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or child protective agency.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children or vulnerable populations in the Youth Program. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from The Rochester Zen Center.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children or vulnerable populations at The Rochester Zen Center.

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

The Ethics and Advisory Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the Youth Program when a report of abuse occurs and will report suspicions of abuse in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Police Department, Child Protective Services, and other appropriate agency.

WHEN A CHILD HAS BEEN VICTIMIZED

If a staff member or volunteer has knowledge or a suspicion that a child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the information will be reported to supervisory staff and the appropriate authorities as outlined above.

In addition to notifying the appropriate authorities (if required), the Rochester Zen Center will recommend to the child or the child's parent/caregiver/guardian to obtain assistance from Bivona Child Advocacy Center: www.bivonacac.org, who can assess for abuse and maltreatment and who offers comprehensive support in all areas of rehabilitation.

Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement of Policies and Procedures

I have received and read a copy of the Youth Program's Safety Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at the Rochester Zen Center.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by the Rochester Zen Center.

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my position description. I understand that I am serving as a volunteer and that I may choose to end this service at any time.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this policy statement in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between the Rochester Zen Center and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for the hours I work.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of this Youth Program Policies and Procedures Manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page to remain attached to the Youth Program's Safety Policies]

Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement of Policies and Procedures

I have received and read a copy of the Youth Program’s Safety Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at the Rochester Zen Center.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by the Rochester Zen Center.

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my position description. I understand that I am serving as a volunteer and that I may choose to end this service at any time.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this policy statement in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between the Rochester Zen Center and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for the hours I work.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of this Youth Program Policies and Procedures Manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer’s name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer’s signature

Date: _____

[This page to be signed, detached and delivered to the Sangha Programs Coordinator.]