

Georgia College Procedures - Protection of Non-Student Minors

Georgia College offers a variety of camps, clinics, and activities that bring non-student minors onto campus. These include but are not limited to continuing education camps, athletic camps, after school programs, science camps, music camps, and enrichment programs. These programs are of great educational value and serve to benefit both the institution and the larger community. Through these procedures, Georgia College seeks to promote the safety and welfare of the minors who participate in these programs and activities.

12.9.1 Scope

These procedures apply broadly to interactions between minors who are not enrolled as Georgia College students and institution faculty, staff, students, and volunteers in Authorized Programs, as defined herein, on property owned or leased by Georgia College or in Georgia College sponsored programs at other locations. These procedures also establish requirements for non-Georgia College entities that operate such programs for minors on the GC Campus or on behalf of Georgia College.

12.9.2 Definitions

Authorized Adult or Program Staff: A person, paid or unpaid, who may have direct contact, interact with, treat, supervise, chaperone, or otherwise oversee minors. This definition does not include temporary guest speakers, presenters, or other individuals who have no direct contact with program participants other than short-term activities supervised by program staff; or individuals whose only role is as a participant in the education, services, or programs offered.

Authorized Program: A program, activity, or service operated or sponsored by Georgia College or by a non-GC entity using Institution Facilities during which agents, employees or volunteers of Georgia College or the non-GC entity are responsible for the care, custody, or control of participating minors, rather than their parents or guardians. For purposes of these procedures, Authorized Programs do not include events that are open to the general public and that minors may attend at the sole discretion of their parents or guardians; Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) supervised research activities; school field trips, campus visits, or other events where minors remain under the care or control of another entity such as parents, teachers, coaches, or guardians; campus orientations for admitted students; or other programs as may be designated from time-to-time by the appropriate institution official as exempted from these procedures or specific provision(s) of these procedures after approval has been obtained in advance and in writing from the USG Office of Internal Audit and Compliance.

Child Abuse: Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means; neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof; sexual abuse of a child; or sexual exploitation of a child.

Institution Facilities: Buildings, structures and improvements of all types, outdoor areas, campus grounds, and athletic venues owned or leased by Georgia College.

Mandatory Reporter: A person who is required by Georgia law to report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities. Mandatory Reporters include but are not limited to faculty/teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, psychologists, law enforcement personnel, and other persons who participate in providing care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs or shelter to minors. Mandatory Reporters whose communications would otherwise be legally privileged are generally required under Georgia law to report suspected child abuse.

Minor: A person who is less than eighteen years of age and, for purposes of these procedures, who is not enrolled as a student at Georgia College and who is not employed by GC.

Program Administrator: The person(s) who has primary and direct operational responsibility for managing an Authorized Program.

Guidelines and Responsibilities

Georgia College has established the following administrative procedures that address the safety of minors on campus. These procedures provide the minimum responsibilities of all Authorized Programs. Each Authorized Program may have procedures which are more stringent than the following:

- A. **Program Registration:** Georgia College, through the Academic Affairs Office, maintains a registry of Authorized Programs for minors. The registry includes pertinent information about each Authorized Program such as the name of the Program Administrator, the number of participants, whether participants reside overnight, and the number of Authorized Adults or Program Staff. The minimum staff to minor participant ratio will be 18 to 1. These are the minimum standards. Specific programs and camps may have smaller ratios, but in all instances involving minors, no program will have a ratio greater than 18:1.
- B. **Mandatory Reporting:** Any Authorized Adult or Program Staff or other Mandatory Reporter under Georgia law who has reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred, shall immediately report the suspected abuse to the Georgia College Department of Public Safety and the appropriate supervisor or Program Administrator who can take immediate action. (It is further expected that any other GC employee, whether a Mandatory Reporter or not, will also appropriately report suspected child abuse.) Georgia College will ensure that the Division of Family and Children Services is notified of the suspected abuse immediately and in no case later than 24 hours after the Authorized Adult or Program Staff (or other reporter) first had reasonable cause to suspect the abuse.
- C. **Background Investigations & Screening:** Georgia College shall conduct background investigations and appropriate screening of all Authorized Adults or Program Staff participating in GC-sponsored Authorized Programs in accordance with USG Human Resources Administrative Practice Manual: Background Investigation. In addition, Georgia College employees working with minors under the age of 13 will be subject to pre-employment and random drug testing.

Employees may not begin work until cleared by Human Resources. Each Authorized Adult or Program Staff must undergo a background investigation at least once every three years. Procedures for appropriate background investigations are found in the Human Resources Administrative Practice Manual: Background Investigation. Non-GC entities using Institutional Facilities for Authorized Programs are required to certify that they have conducted appropriate screening and background investigations and that the results and methods are sufficient to meet institutional standards prior to the start of the Authorized Program. The cost of the screening and background investigations are to be borne by the non-GC entity.

- D. **Training:** Georgia College provides appropriate training to all Authorized Adults and Program Staff. Training topics include, but are not limited to, safety, security, job duties and expectations, codes of conduct, appearance, parent/guardian pick-up policies, emergency procedures, and mandatory reporting requirements and procedures. Each program may add additional training opportunities specific to the individual Authorized Program.
- E. **Code of Conduct:** Georgia College has established a code of conduct for Authorized Adults or Program Staff that addresses appropriate behavior and prohibited conduct when interacting with minors. This Code of Conduct is given at the time of hire and reviewed annually. Authorized Adults or Program Staff should be positive role models for minors and act in a responsible manner that is consistent with the mission of the institution. **The approved Code of Conduct may be found at:**
- F. **Facility Use Agreements:** At times, Georgia College enters into agreements licensing, leasing, or allowing the use of Institutional Facilities by non-GC entities for Authorized Programs. These agreements include language in a binding written agreement requiring the non-GC entity to comply with these procedures and to identify Authorized Adults or Program Staff (including certification that each has been the subject of an appropriate criminal background check with satisfactory results and that each has been properly trained). In accordance with Board of Regents Policy 9.10.6.3, the form used for such agreements must be USG-approved.
- G. **Participant Requirements:** Parents or legal guardians of minors must submit required forms before minors will be allowed to participate in Authorized Programs. These forms may include (if applicable) but are not limited to a registration form, health form, emergency contact form, authorized pick-up form, proof of medical insurance, medical release, release of claims/waiver of liability, media/photo/video release, participant code of conduct, and notice of non-licensure. **Approved forms may be found at:**
- H. **Other Requirements:** Prior to the operation of any Authorized Program on campus, other requirements must be addressed and documented by the appropriate Program Staff. Such requirements include, but are not limited to:
1. Appropriate staffing and supervision ratios;

2. Safety and security planning;
3. Arrangements for required transportation needs;
4. Housing and food services needs;
5. Response protocols for injuries or illnesses;
6. Response protocols for accusations of misconduct;
7. Insurance requirements;
8. Licensing or exemption therefrom by the applicable government agency(ies).

Institutional Procedures

Compliance to these procedures will be overseen by Legal Affairs. Failure to comply with these procedures may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination, in the case of employees; may prevent a program from becoming Authorized; and/or may terminate the relationship or take other appropriate actions against non-University entities.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Georgia College is committed to the safety and protection of children. This Code of Conduct applies to all faculty, staff, employees, volunteers and students who represent the school and who interact with children or young people in both a direct and/or unsupervised capacity.

The public and private conduct of faculty, staff, employees, students, and volunteers acting on behalf of Georgia College can inspire and motivate those with whom they interact, or can cause great harm if inappropriate. We must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany our work.

We should be aware of our own and other persons' vulnerability, especially when working alone with children and youth, and be particularly aware that we are responsible for maintaining physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries in such interactions. We must avoid any covert or overt sexual behaviors with those for whom we have responsibility. This includes seductive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that exploits, abuses, or harasses. We are to provide safe environments for children and youth at all campus locations.

We must show prudent discretion before touching another person, especially children and youth, and be aware of how physical touch will be perceived or received, and whether it would be an appropriate expression of greeting, care, concern, instruction, or celebration.

Georgia College personnel and volunteers are prohibited at all times from physically disciplining a child.

Physical contact with children can be misconstrued both by the recipient and by those who observe it, and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private. One-on-one meetings with a child or young person are best held in a public area; in a room where the interaction can be (or is being) observed; or in a room with the door left open or a window providing clear visibility, and another staff member or supervisor is notified about the meeting.

We must intervene when there is evidence of, or there is reasonable cause to suspect, that children are being abused in any way. Suspected abuse or neglect must be reported to the Georgia College Department of Public Safety as described in the Protection of Non-student Minors Policy of Georgia College.

Faculty, staff, employees, and volunteers should refrain from the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, and from the use of tobacco products, alcohol and/or drugs when working with children. Adults should never buy alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, videos, or reading material that is inappropriate and give it to young people. Staff members and volunteers should not accept gifts from, or give gifts to children without the knowledge of their parents or guardians.

Communication with children is governed by the key safety concept of transparency. The following steps will reduce the risk of private or otherwise inappropriate communication between parents, administration, teachers, personnel, volunteers, and minors:

- Communication between Georgia College (including volunteers) and minors that is outside the role of the professional or volunteer relationship (teacher, coach, host, etc.) is prohibited.
- Where possible, email exchanges between a minor and a person acting on behalf of the school are to be made using a school email address.
- Electronic communication that takes place over a school network or platform may be subject to periodic monitoring.
- Faculty, staff, and volunteers who use any form of online communications including social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and text messaging to communicate with minors may only do so for activities involving school business.

Statement of Acknowledgement of Code of Conduct

I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth participating in Georgia College programs.

I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Never be alone with children and/or youth at activities without another adult being notified.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Maintain appropriate physical boundaries at all times and touch children – when necessary – only in ways that are appropriate, public, and non-sexual.
- Comply with the mandatory reporting regulations as detailed in the orientation and this document.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

I will not:

- Touch or speak to a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Inflict any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading children and/or youth.
- Smoke or use tobacco products, or possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while working with children and/or youth.
- Give a child who is not my own a ride home alone.
- Accept gifts from or give gifts to children or youth without the knowledge of their parents or guardians.
- Engage in private communications with children via text messaging, email, Facebook, Twitter or similar forms of electronic or social media except for activities strictly involving university business.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth at any time.

I understand that as a person working with and/or providing services to children and youth under the auspices of Georgia College, I am subject to a criminal history background check. My signature confirms that I have read this Code of Conduct and that as a person working with children and youth I agree to follow these standards. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from my position and/or Georgia College.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____