

Policies and Procedures Sexual Abuse Safe Child Standards Child-Safe Environment Policy

Child-Safe Environment

Ranch Hope is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and youth accessing our services. We have taken steps to educate our staff about the risk related to child sexual abuse and instituted this policy to protect children from the risk of child sexual abuse, as well as informed our staff and volunteers about proper reporting requirements.

Definitions

“Child” means any person less than 18 years of age.

“Abuse” - means any physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for the care, custody, and control of the child, which includes any person “exercising supervision” over a child for any part of a 24-hour day.

“Sexual Abuse” - Child sexual abuse involves any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact that is accomplished by force or threat of force, manipulation, and coercion, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual contact between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception, or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. Sexual contact between an older and a younger child also can be abusive if there is a significant disparity in age, development, or size, rendering the younger child incapable of giving informed consent. Sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching, or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure and voyeurism.

“Neglect” - means failure by anyone responsible for the care, custody, and control of a child to provide the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, nutrition or medical, surgical or other care necessary for the child’s wellbeing. This also includes any person “exercising supervision” over a child for any part of a 24-hour day.

Code of Conduct for Ranch Hope Employees /Volunteers /Residents /Board Members /Consultants and all other Guests:

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person, regardless of their abilities, gender, religion, or cultural background.
- I will support all efforts to remove any form of abuse in this organization and encourage a safe and supportive service environment.
- I will ensure that all physical contact with others is appropriate to the situation.

- I **will** use appropriate language in the company of Ranch Hope children.
- I **will** build only positive/healthy relationships.
- I **will not** tell sexual jokes, reference sexually risqué discussions or view any sexually provocative material (pornography, photography, video materials/games, or sexually explicit music or artistic materials).

Hiring Procedures:

Screening for child sexual abuse prevention is an integrated part of the general screening and selection process for all staff at Ranch Hope. Child sexual abuse prevention is one of the many areas considered when deciding whom to select.

Ranch Hope uses criminal background checks (fingerprinting, etc.) and reference checks in order to protect the youth we serve and to select the best possible people for staff positions.

Also, board members, volunteers and summer employees are all required to have fingerprint and background checks prior to working at any and all Ranch Hope affiliated operations.

Process for Reporting Abuse and Neglect:

Step 1: Immediately upon learning of a sexual incident between residents, the **AOD must be advised.**

Step 2: The AOD will make the calls outlined below immediately along with arranging the support of other appropriate staff.

- AOD will ensure that participants are seen by our nurse or taken to the hospital emergency room. (Medical attention is not determined by staff or child.) Child has to be seen by a medical professional; and
- AOD will determine if room or cottage changes are needed and facilitate when appropriate.

Step 3: If the AOD cannot be reached, such an incident must be called into the following places by the staff with first-hand knowledge of the incident:

- The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJDCF) Hot Line –
 - **1-877-652-2873 or 1-609-888-7440.**
- New Jersey State Police – Woodstown Barracks – 1-856-769-0774.
- The DCP&P/CMO Case Worker whose phone numbers are found on the resident’s face sheet.
- The Parents/Guardian whose phone numbers are found on the resident’s face sheet.

These calls should be made immediately of learning the critical information if the AOD does not respond to the call.

Step 4: All phone contacts should be documented on the Critical Incident Form.

Step 5: Critical Incident Reports must be completed immediately.

Who must report:

Every person with responsibility for the care of children is required to make a report.

Generally, this covers anyone dealing with the care or supervision of children. Specifically, it covers **every** Ranch Hope employee, volunteer, board member, youth in the program and those that come in direct contact with Ranch Hope youth.

What requires a report:

A person is required to report when he/she has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.

When a report must be made:

The report must be made **immediately** upon receiving a report of child abuse, or other information regarding child abuse or neglect which gives him/her reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse.

Failure to Report:

Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families by a person required to do so, immediately upon establishing that there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, is a Class A misdemeanor.

The following procedure is to **ensure that peer to peer sexual contact between residents does not occur.**

While at the Ranch Hope Strang School, students may only use the bathroom one at a time. BIT staff at the school will assure this takes place by externally monitoring the residents entering and exiting the bathroom. When residents are going from building to building, from the school to the horse bar, playground areas, and outside, a school staff member must either accompany them or visually be able to monitor them. When children are changing classes in the school, staff members will monitor the residents in the halls. Should a resident be Out of Program (OP) they will be actively monitored by school staff (one-on-one aids or BIT)

While in the cottages, residential staff members will closely monitor residents during waking hours both inside and outside the cottage as well as during sleeping hours. Staff will accompany or

visually be able to monitor residents when they go from building to building, during programmatic activities, as well as free time activities. Residents who are OP will be actively monitored by cottage staff.

In cottages, residential staff must externally monitor each resident as they enter and exit all rooms. When using the bathroom for hygiene purposes such as: brushing teeth, combing hair, washing their face, etc., only one resident can be in the bathroom at a time. In addition, residents must request permission from staff before using the bathroom facilities.

When any one child goes to bed, bedtime monitoring will begin. Bedtime monitoring will involve numerous staggered checks during each hour and the time between bedtime check shall not exceed 15 minutes. Residents with documented histories of sexually provocative behaviors will be closely monitored and separated from each other when possible. In addition, a Night Proctor will remain awake in each cottage during sleeping hours; we also have a Supervising Night Proctor. The Supervising Night Proctor monitors the grounds of the campus during sleeping hours and does face-to-face check with each cottage Night Proctor once every hour. Should a Night Proctor have an emergency situation, they can contact the Supervising Night Proctor by calling their cell phone.

The following procedure is to **ensure that staff members, board members and volunteers are not involved in sexual or inappropriate (abusive) contact with residents.**

Ranch Hope youth participating in activities that involve staff, board members and volunteers (such as working at the Thrift Shop, visitation from special groups, guest speakers, auxiliary activities, etc.) will always maintain a ratio of at least two adults (one must be a staff member) per child at all times. At no time is an individual volunteer or non-direct care staff authorized to be alone with a student unless the AOD has given permission, or the program is a pre-approved mentoring program. Students are not permitted to ride in vehicles with outside community members unless accompanied by direct care staff or with approval from the AOD.

All Ranch Hope staff are expected to follow the above “Code of Conduct” according to job training as per the terms of employment. **All acts of abuse and neglect will be reported immediately to state officials (1 877-652-2873 or 609-888-7440) and are subject to termination and criminal charges.**