

Appendix 7

Sample Policies and Procedures for Junior Helper Programs

Our organization's staff and volunteers must be committed to maintaining a culture of safety to serve our minors most effectively. We also want to encourage the professional development of adolescents who accept leadership positions in programming by providing ample learning opportunities and guidance on interacting with minors.

"Junior helpers" refers to minors aged 12–17 who volunteer in ministry programs under adult supervision, who take on leadership roles within a program but are still considered program participants and are not program supervisors or paid staff. Junior helpers may include, but are not limited to, counselors-in-training and leaders-in-training.

1. Define the Junior Helper Program.

- i. What is the goal of the program?

For example, is the program designed for older minors who desire to become camp cabin leaders, or is it designed for minors too old for the program but who still want to participate?

- ii. How does the program fit the mission of the organization?
- iii. What is/are the junior helper's role and responsibilities in the program? Ensure the junior helpers* are NOT responsible for the direct supervision of minors.
- iv. What are the age requirements for participating in the Junior Helper program?
- v. Who is responsible for supervising the adolescent program?

2. Create specific policies for the Junior Helper program.

- Define the age difference requirements between junior helpers and the minors they will work with. Consider requiring at least a three-year gap in age between junior helpers and the minors they will be working with. For example, 15-year-old counselors-in-training can help with campers 12 years old and younger.
- Outline appropriate and inappropriate physical, verbal, emotional, and behavioral boundaries between junior helpers and **adult staff and volunteers**.
 - Define appropriate and inappropriate physical boundaries. Examples of appropriate physical interactions can include high-

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fives, fist bumps, and side hugs. Examples of inappropriate physical interactions include full frontal hugs, back touches, and kisses.

- Define appropriate and inappropriate verbal boundaries. Examples of appropriate verbal interactions can include appropriate jokes, strength-based conversations, and positive reinforcement. Examples of inappropriate verbal interactions can include oversharing personal history, harsh language, and compliments relating to physique.
- Outline appropriate and inappropriate physical, verbal, emotional, and behavioral boundaries between **junior helpers and other minors**.
 - Define appropriate and inappropriate physical boundaries. Examples of appropriate physical interactions can include high-fives, fist bumps, and side hugs. Examples of inappropriate physical interactions can include full-frontal hugs, back touches, tickling, piggyback rides, lap sitting, kisses, and touching the bottom, chest, or private areas.
 - Define appropriate and inappropriate verbal boundaries. Examples of appropriate verbal boundaries can include appropriate jokes, encouragement, and praise. Examples of inappropriate verbal interactions can include shaming, secrets, cursing, derogatory remarks about the minor or their family, and name-calling. Outline appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication between junior helpers and other minors.
 - Define appropriate and inappropriate communication between junior helpers and other minors who were friends, classmates, or acquaintances before programming.
 - Inform junior helpers and minors about electronic communication best practices, such as positive digital citizenship.
- Prohibit junior helpers from being one-on-one with other minors.
- Prohibit junior helpers from dating or engaging in any kind of romantic relationship with minors they are serving with

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- For overnight programs (i.e., residential camp), define appropriate interactions during off-hours for junior helpers, if they are allowed time away from the program:
 - Establish rules for junior helpers who may have off-time with adult staff/volunteers.
 - *For example, are junior helpers permitted to hang out in areas reserved for staff/volunteers?*
 - Consider designating separate spaces for off time.
 - Determine whether junior helpers can meet off-site during off-hours.
 - *Can junior helpers go off-site? With adult staff/volunteers?*
 - *Can they ride in vehicles together? With adult staff/volunteers?*
- Create outside contact rules for junior helpers and minors that govern things like dating, hanging out, going to the movies, etc. Avoid one-on-one interactions between adult staff/volunteers and junior helpers:
 - If the need arises for one-on-one meetings, define specific, pre-approved job duties, and require the meeting to be on-site or in view of other approved adults.
 - Require another individual to be present where they can hear and view both individuals.
- Prohibit junior helpers from escorting minors to the bathrooms.
- Prohibit junior helpers from assisting minors with changing their clothes.
- Require junior helpers to wear clothing or lanyards that identify them as leaders-in-training and differentiate them from adult staff/volunteers and younger campers.
- **Create Screening Practices for the Junior Helper Program.**

The specific characteristics of your organization's junior helper program and responsibilities given to junior helpers will guide the extent to which

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you need to implement a screening and selection process for junior helpers. The following are best practices for screening junior helpers:

- Require junior helpers to fill out an application.
- Check references from the junior helper's parents/guardians, teachers, counselors, and/or coaches. Identify specific questions designed to assess the risk of abuse and the ability to perform junior helper responsibilities.
 - Sample Questions:
 - *How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in stressful conditions?*
 - *How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with minors?*
 - *We need someone who can support and understand a minor's needs. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be genuinely supportive and understanding of a person in need?*
- Interview the junior helpers. Identify specific behaviorally based interview questions to ask junior helpers to assess potential abuse risk and their ability to perform junior helper responsibilities.
 - Sample Questions:
 - *Tell me about a time when you had to learn how to do something quickly. What did you have to learn? How did you learn it? Did you use the new information?*
 - *Often in school or work, we're expected to adhere to policies that don't really make sense to us. Tell me about a time when you had to stick to a rule, even though it didn't seem reasonable. How did you handle that situation?*
- Include the junior helper's parents/guardians in these interviews when possible.
- If the applicant has been a minor participant, examine past behaviors by reviewing files and interviewing staff who worked with the minors.

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3. Train Junior helpers.

- Require junior helpers to attend training on the following topics:
 - Their role as a leader includes what they are and are not allowed to do.
 - The dynamic of being responsible for and supervising younger minors.
 - General abuse risk management, appropriate boundaries, self-protection, and preventing false allegations.
 - Preventing minor-to-minor sexual activity.
 - How to report concerns about themselves, other staff/volunteers, or the minors in the program.
- Train staff/volunteers and supervisors on how to monitor junior helpers.

4. Monitoring and Supervising Junior helpers.

- Designate a specific adult staff member/volunteer to lead the junior helper program and its participants.
- Identify high-risk activities and high-risk areas and ensure junior helpers are not supervising these activities without the presence of an adult staff/volunteer, including:
 - Bathrooms/shower time
 - Transportation
 - Bedtime and changing time in cabins, etc.
 - Field trips/Off-site activities
 - Unused cabins/rooms should be kept locked, and an adult staff member or volunteer should walk through them regularly.
- The program director should conduct daily check-ins with junior helpers and their leader.
 - Create a standardized form with questions that leadership fills out when conducting check-ins.

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- Include questions addressing morale, concerns, and professional development.
- Consider requiring junior helpers to keep a log documenting their daily activities and any problems they encounter. The program supervisor should review these logs. ~~daily.~~

5. Responding

- Minimize barriers to reporting for junior helpers and ensure they have the same reporting methods as all adult staff/volunteers.
 - Empower junior helpers to know how and whom to report any concerns, allegations, or inappropriate behaviors.
- Develop a written procedure outlining the appropriate response to inappropriate behavior or policy violations.
 - Require junior helpers to immediately report any inappropriate or policy violations to their ministry leader or through an anonymous method.
- Develop a written procedure outlining an appropriate response to allegations or incidents of abuse, including how to respond if a minor discloses abuse.
 - Require junior helpers to immediately report any allegations, disclosures, or incidents of abuse to their direct supervisor or through an anonymous method.
 - Require junior helpers to report any allegations or incidents of abuse to the appropriate authorities per mandated reporting requirements. Experienced full-time staff must be present and support the junior helper during any reports to the authorities. The junior helper's parent/guardian must also be notified.
- Develop a written procedure outlining the appropriate response to any minor sexualized behaviors.
 - Require junior helpers to report any minor sexualized behaviors to their ministry leader immediately.