



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

Volunteer Handbook

Boys and Girls Clubs of the Leech Lake Area

11/26/2013

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Club Contact Information

Administrative Office.....(218) 335-8144

Cass Lake Club.....(218) 335-4058

Deer River Club.....(218) 246-3440

Eagleview Club.....(218) 659-4738

Walker Club.....(218) 547-1853 Ext. 2

Welcome to the Boys and Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your time and commitment to providing a safe and nurturing place for the youth of our area. The Boys and Girls Club of America has been dedicated to enriching the lives of youth who need it most since 1860, beginning with a small group in Hartford, Connecticut. Since these humble beginnings, the idea has spread and created Clubs across the nation, as well as several international affiliates. Each club is focused on creating a safe environment for members using proven effective programs, and the staff and volunteers involved are one of the most crucial aspects of assuring a successful and supportive space for children.

The Boys and Girls Club of Leech Lake Area is unique, as are the members that fill our facilities. Your role as a volunteer is to provide the support they need, a critical aspect of which is to be a positive role model. Your engagement and presence is evidence that caring individuals have confidence in the potential of our members, inspiring them to achieve their capabilities. Your time and commitment makes a difference, and we want you to know we appreciate your attention to the youth of our area.

This handbook is meant to acquaint you with the basic policies of our club- both to help ensure the safety of the members as well as make you as comfortable as possible. The club is open to your suggestions, and we value the talents and creative ideas volunteers can bring to the club. If you have any questions, feel free to ask a staff member about any needs you might have. Many of the logistical details involved in your application and role as a volunteer are in place to make the safest environment for members, and we appreciate your cooperation.

As a volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club of Leech Lake Area, you are helping making a positive difference in your community, and more importantly in the lives of the members you meet. We thank you for your service.



Volunteer Positions

- Mentor
- General Volunteer
- Special Events Coordinator
 - See Attached Sheets for Volunteer Position Descriptions

Volunteer Rights

- Be informed of your schedule and expectations before making commitments.
- Have worthwhile assignments with attention to your stated interests and talents.
- Have support from staff and administration, with attention paid to your needs and suggestions.

Volunteer Responsibilities

- Ask questions when you are unsure of what your position includes, including what you are expected to be able to handle and what you should report to a supervisor.
- Make sure any and all activities you partake in are approved by the supervisor. Do not expect a reimbursement for any materials you purchase unless the cost and purpose has been preapproved by the Club.
- SHOW UP when you commit to a time, knowing that the kids and staff rely on you.
- Believe in the potential of club members. Going through the steps won't make you a good role model, but showing you care about them could be life changing.
- Respect the confidence of members when possible; if a situation needs to be reported, do so, but for others realize you have earned the trust of a member who might not have many others to rely on.
- Do not affiliate the Boys and Girls Clubs with any personal opinion or activity that you hold or partake in, unless as part of an approved event with the involvement of your supervisor.
- Make reports when necessary; see the mandated reporting section, and always use good judgment. When in doubt, informing your direct supervisor is the best option.

At Will Voluntarism

- You have the right to terminate your relationship with the club at any time if needed; along these lines, the Club may also terminate or dismiss volunteers at its discretion.

Checking In and Attendance

- When you arrive at the club, report to the volunteer check in area to store your belongings. Make sure you sign in for your shift, both for safety and record keeping purposes. Take note of any posted updates.
- Your attendance is important to keeping the Club in order. If you know in advance you cannot make a session, please let your supervisor know; if it is not possible to verbally inform your supervisor, leave a note in the volunteer area or with another staff member. If you have an emergency situation or last-minute reason you cannot make a session, please call the Club to let them know.
- Remember to check your schedule before you depart, as well collect anything you came with.

If you have a Concern or Grievance

As volunteers at the Club, your comfort is a priority. If you have a complaint, need, or suggestion that you would like addressed, bring it to the attention of your supervisor. Remember to solve conflicts or address needs early, as that saves time and frustration for all parties involved. Your time with the Club should be valuable to you as well as members and staff, and clear communication can help ensure this.

Supervision Ladder

The Club Director is your direct supervisor, but some questions can be handled by other paid and trained staff. If you are unsure who to ask about an issue of safety (see section on mandated reporting), be sure to address the concern to your supervisor.

Commitment

- Many of the club members value the stability found here. For this reason, it is important that volunteers respect that need and stay firm with their commitments. We recognize situations change, and many issues are outside of personal control. We request notification in as much advance notice as possible if a volunteer has to terminate their relationship with the club, be it temporarily or permanently.
- You have a right to terminate your relationship with the club at any time; for our records, we ask that you complete an exit interview. This is to help us address the needs of volunteers and to clarify position requirements and descriptions.
- Your continued presence at the club is valued, which is another reason why checking in is important. Recognition of volunteers will be ongoing and may vary depending on the resources available.

Club Policies

Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace

- Tobacco, drugs, and alcohol are not allowed at any Club or any other Club function. The use, possession, sale, or influence of any substance is prohibited. Smoking is also prohibited on Club premises, as Staff and Volunteers are prohibited from smoking in front of club members or parents. If a volunteer believes another individual is under the influence or has possession of any substances, they should communicate this with their supervisor as soon as possible. The unlawful use of lawful substances is prohibited, including prescription drugs and alcohol. Disregard of this policy is unsafe for members and can result in immediate dismissal.

Dress Code

- Dress can be casual and appropriate attire and one should take into account activities and participation. Clothing that advocates violence, drugs, or inappropriate or suggestive behavior is forbidden. Also avoid clothing that is too tight or exposes more skin than is acceptable.

Cell Phone Use

- While you are allowed to have your cell phone on you and are encouraged to have it available for emergencies, personal use during your volunteer time is prohibited. Full attention should be paid to the task at hand. The Club is not responsible for any damage or loss of your personal property.

Injuries

- Member injuries should be reported immediately, and volunteers are not responsible for administering first aid unless your certification is discussed with your supervisor. If it is an emergency, use your judgment on dialing 911. Letting staff know as soon as the incident occurs is essential.
- Try to avoid unsafe situations before they occur! Be aware of dangerous settings and notify staff or your supervisor if you see unstable furniture or objects that may pose a threat to members or staff.
- If a volunteer is injured, inform your supervisor. If any situation makes you uncomfortable due to your capabilities and restrictions, let staff or your supervisor know before going through with it. You are responsible for the decisions you make, and taking on more than you can handle is a danger to yourself and club members.

Tardiness/Absence

- If you know you will be late or absent, please call ahead. A history of unexcused absences or unreliability could result in dismissal, as reliability is crucial to club members.

Bringing objects from home

- Any objects must be approved before being shared with members. For reasons of safety, volunteers may not share food, drink, or medicine with club members. If a club member asks for an item, such as a cough drop, snack, sunscreen, etc. the volunteer must consult a supervisor or explain it is not allowed. This is especially important when considering unknown allergies and medical liabilities.

Confidentiality

- Members may trust you in ways they can't trust other adults. Respect their confidence when possible, however, if you need to report something a club member shares with you, please notify your supervisor. See the section on "Mandated Reporting" for more information. Be honest with the member and let them know that you appreciate their confiding in you. Let them know that you are concerned for their safety. Any questions or concerns, please consult your supervisor.

Relationship with Club Members/Transportation

- For member safety as well as your own, the Club prohibits outside relationships with members. You may not continue a tutoring session or any activity outside of club hours without prior approval from your supervisor. Do not promise a member that you will visit, and see the section on "Helpful Hints" for dealing with members for more information.
- Volunteers are not allowed to transport members without prior approval from their supervisor, and only after all safety requirements and liability issues have been addressed. Only volunteers already existing on the authorized list for a member may transport said member.

Club Closings

- If the Club is closed due to weather conditions, it will be broadcast on the local radio stations. Area Schools are also notified. Typically, when our local schools close due to weather conditions, our Clubs close after school as well for the safety of the youth and families. To check if the club has closed for safety reasons, call your local Club.
- If you feel your driving or travel conditions are unsafe, you can call the club and inform them. There will be no penalty or negative response if you are avoiding a dangerous situation.

- Operations Calendars are posted at each club. Each Club plans to update notifications of any operational changes of closures and event schedules.

Mandated Reporting

As a volunteer, you are obligated to let someone know if you believe a child is being neglected or abused. In cases of child safety, even a suspicion of neglect/abuse is enough to make a report. If a member confides in you, or you notice signs of neglect/abuse, please report your findings to your supervisor. Confidentiality is important for the safety of the child, so do not repeat information you've been told or have collected to any unnecessary parties. You may have to answer questions to your supervisor or a child protection investigator, but do not share information with any other outside parties. Your supervisor will help you fill out necessary forms and reports if the need should arise, but be sure to err on the side of caution when reporting incidents to your supervisor. If you think it might be an issue, it's safer to share, and don't disregard 'feelings' you may have.

Harassment

Boys and Girls Clubs of America are made to be inclusive, which means volunteers should be safe to be themselves as well. You should serve in an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual preference, national origin, disability, marital status, or any other protected status. Please alert your supervisor if at any time you feel you are being discriminated against/harassed, or seek another advisor if you feel uncomfortable discussing it with your supervisor.

Examples of harassment included;

- Any unwanted advances or requests. Subtle and blatant references are included, and any mention of advancement or consequence regarding your position in the Club based on these favors is harassment.
- Jokes, comments, and stories that make you feel uncomfortable based on gender/race/origin or any other characteristic can be considered harassment. If you are offended, it is best to raise awareness to the issue in a calm setting.
- Harassment works in both directions; be aware of others boundaries, sensitivities, and personal space. Being friendly is encouraged, but be aware of other's zones of comfort.

The following is taken from the John Avery Boys and Girls Club Volunteer Handbook

Child Abuse and Neglect

Under US Code, Title 42, Chapter 67 of The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform, [BGCLLA] is required to report all suspicions of child abuse, neglect, or endangerment immediately. Volunteers are obligated to report any information to [BGCLLA] staff. In no way should any suspicion of abuse be overlooked or unreported. Volunteers should not assume responsibility for notifying law enforcement when abuse or neglect is suspected. This is the sole responsibility of [BGCLLA] personnel.

The following information is a general reference for volunteers to familiarize themselves with the indicators of abuse and neglect. Due to individual differences in how children cope with maltreatment, not all of the signs will be present in all victims. Furthermore, not all children with symptoms commonly associated with abuse are the victims of abuse or neglect.

- Abuse
 - Is an overt act, whether intentional or not, that may injure or otherwise cause harm to a child.
 - Physical abuse refers to an injury to the child by an adult caused by hitting, kicking, biting, punching, burning, or otherwise causing trauma to the child. The adult may not have intended to harm the child, but the injury is not accidental. If a child is the victim of physical abuse, other forms of abuse are likely to have occurred; emotional abuse is nearly always present when another form of abuse has been substantiated.
 - Emotional abuse refers to actions by parents or caretakers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. Emotional abuse also includes threats that cause extreme fear in the child and the use of extreme or bizarre forms of punishment (such as confining a child in a dark closet), even if the child does not show evidence of harm.
 - Sexual abuse refers to any sexual activity between a child and an adult of significantly older child.
 - Sexual exploitation usually refers to forms of sexual abuse involving child prostitution or child pornography.

Once a child is old enough to walk unassisted, some bruises and scrapes can be expected as part of normal childhood activities. Normal cuts and abrasions are generally located on the leading edges of the body, such as shins, knees, palms, and elbows. The outward signs of physical abuse, however, are not typical of the normal wear and tear of childhood and may include the following:

- Unexplained bruises or welts on
 - Face, lips, or mouth
 - Torso, abdomen, back, neck, buttocks, or thighs
 - Upper arms (where tightly gripped)

- In various stages of healing (of different colors)
- That appear clustered, forming regular patterns that reflect the shape of the article used to inflict pain, or damage (for example: electric cord, belt buckle, hand or fist...)
- Several different surface areas
- Regularly appearing after absences or vacation
- Unexplained burns
 - Cigar or cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back, or buttocks
 - Burns from being immersed in hot liquid (sock-like, glove-like, or doughnut shaped burns on buttocks or genitals)
 - Patterned like an electric burner, iron, radiator grate, or some other object
 - Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso
- Unexplained Fractures
 - To skull, nose, or facial structure
 - In various stages of healing
 - Multiple or repetitive fractures
 - Spiral fractures, from forcefully jerking or twisting the arms
 - Swollen or tender limbs

There are other explanations for some indicators of abuse; however, when no plausible explanation for a child's injuries exist or when a child's behavior undergoes dramatic changes, abuse or neglect may be the cause. In no way should any suspicion be overlooked or unreported.

As a volunteer, it is not your responsibility to investigate, but it is your responsibility to notify adult staff (preferably a supervisor) before leaving the building for the day.

- Neglect
 - Child neglect is the failure to provide for the basic needs of the child when resources are available. It is important to distinguish between willful neglect and a parent or caretaker's failure to provide for the child because of poverty or cultural norms. State laws often distinguish several types of neglect
 - Physical neglect includes refusal or delay in seeking health care (often called medical neglect), abandonment, providing inadequate supervision, and expulsion from home or not allowing a runaway to return home.
 - Educational neglect includes permitting chronic truancy, failing to enroll a child of mandatory school age in an approved educational program, and inattention to special educational needs.
 - Emotional neglect includes chronic or extreme spouse abuse in the child's presence, permitting drug or alcohol abuse by the child and refusing or failing to provide needed psychological care.

Unless a case is severe, it may be difficult to prove that the child is being neglected. If this is true, a child protective services agency may not be able to help the family; however, Club Staff has a responsibility to report suspected neglect, whether or not they think the authorities will be able to help. Here are some signs of physical or emotional neglect:

- Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, or inappropriate dress
- Chronically unattended physical problems or medical needs
- Begging, stealing food
- Extended stays at school or at the Club (early arrival and late departure)
- Constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep
- Child reports that there is no caretaker in the home

Often the scars of abuse and neglect are emotional, rather than physical. These may manifest themselves in behaviors that are outside the norm. The following are examples of behaviors that may indicate abuse or neglect:

- Little or no ability to concentrate, to listen, to play
- Antisocial or destructive behavior (e.g. damaging property, deliberately breaking equipment or toys, etc.)
- Social withdrawal, introversion
- Behavior that is not age appropriate: overly adult or overly childish; pants wetting or not going to the bathroom at the appropriate time
- Promiscuity
- Attempted suicide
- Premature alcohol or drug use
- Theft or runaway behavior

Handling Abuse Disclosure from a Club Member

- Children and teens may disclose sexual or physical abuse in a variety of ways. Unfortunately, direct disclosure is one of the least common ways for children to disclose abuse. The following are more common ways that children and youth disclose that they are being abused.
- As youth prepare to tell you something, they may start with “do you promise not to tell anyone?” An honest response is “I can’t promise but I will keep what you tell me as private as I can. Sometimes, I might need to get help from a staff member or other professional to help keep you safe.”

Indirect hints: (*“My brother wouldn’t let me sleep last night.” “Mr. Jones wears funny underwear.” “Daddy is trying to poison me.” “My baby-sitter keeps bothering me.”*)

- A youth may use indirect terms because she/he hasn’t learned more specific vocabulary, feels too ashamed or too embarrassed to talk more directly, has promised not to tell, or a combination of these reasons.

- Encourage him/her to be more specific, within the limits of her/his vocabulary. But bear in mind that in order to make a report you do not need to know exactly what form the abuse has taken place.

Disguised disclosure: (*"I know someone with a touching problem." "What would happen if a girl told her mommy a grownup was touching her private parts but her mommy didn't believe her?"*)

- Here a youth might be talking about a friend or sibling, but is just as likely to be talking about her/himself. Encourage the youth to tell you what he/she knows about the "other child." It is probable that the youth will eventually tell you whom s/he is talking about.

Disclosure with strings attached: (*"I have a secret. But if I tell you about it, you have to promise not to tell anyone else."*)

- Most kids are all too well aware that some negative consequences will result if they break the secret of abuse; often the offender uses the threat of these consequences to force the child to remain silent. Let the youth know you want to help her/him, and that the law requires you tell a staff member if any child discloses abuse. Assure the youth that you will respect her/his need for confidentiality by not discussing the abuse with anyone other than those directly involved in the legal process, such as a staff member and/or a Child Protective Services investigator. Some ways to say this are, "I am really glad you took the risk to tell someone (or "tell me"). I need to help you be safe and will need to call or tell..."
- If a child discloses during an activity, do not panic or express shock. Acknowledge the child's disclosure and continue the activity. Afterwards, find a private place where you can talk with the child. Express your belief that the youth is telling the truth and you appreciate that s/he took a risk by telling you, and reassure the youth that it was right to tell someone. Remember it is not your role to investigate the situation. It is your responsibility to report the abuse to a staff member and to be supportive of the youth.

Volunteering With Kids: A “Youth Development” Approach

As a new Boys and Girls Club Volunteer, you may have little or no experience working with children or youth. Don't worry! Our Clubs are staffed by trained professionals who will be there to give you guidance and support; however, a little bit of advance knowledge never hurts. Kids can be baffling at times. The following section is meant to give you the information that will help you walk through the doors of a Club for the first time, feeling confident and prepared to handle those occasional baffling moments. Of course, if you ever have any doubts about a situation, please don't hesitate to speak to a staff member.

I. Stages of Youth Development for School-Age Children

Research by child development theorists such as Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson has shown that all children go through specific stages of cognitive and emotional development. A brief explanation of these stages may help you understand what drives the actions and thoughts of a child or youth. However, keep in mind that many external forces influence a child's development. Therefore, some developmental characteristics may not be observed at the same age or at the same stage of development in different children.

Early Childhood (Ages 5 to 8)

For younger youth in this age group, the Club may be the first time the child is away from their parent for an extended period during the day. Some have had limited schooling and can feel anxious or scared in the Club environment. This may result in complaints of “I don't feel well,” or “I want my mommy/daddy.” It is helpful to make the experience normal for them by taking a moment to say “this is a new experience, isn't it?” or “the Club feels a little bit big, doesn't it?” or “sometimes when I feel nervous or scared, my tummy hurts too.” By making that connection for the child, and naming what is happening, they often begin feeling better immediately.

Kids in this stage need and seek approval from adults. They enjoy group play. However, by the end of this stage, they begin to prefer same-gender activities. Though they are beginning to experience empathy for other people, they can be very egocentric –especially in the early years. They often cannot view the world from a perspective other than their own, which can lead to conflicts with their peers. They may not be aware that they have hurt someone's feelings or understand why whatever they may have said or did was wrong.

Kids in early childhood are naturally curious and very eager to learn, but they have short attention spans. When it comes to activities, they are more interested in the process, rather than the outcome. They often make up their own rules to games. They have a difficult time differentiating between fantasy and reality. Their thinking is very concrete. They learn better when their senses are engaged through demonstration, rather than verbal instruction alone. They are sensitive to criticism and failure. If a child does act up, avoid asking this age group “why” s/he did something. In this stage of development, the child honestly does not know.

When working with kids in this age group, remember that they have limited abilities, when it comes to attention span and reasoning. Be prepared to move on to something else, when a child gets restless. Let them follow their curiosity and to be creative in their play. Let them work on projects

that they can complete successfully –but emphasize the process rather than the end result. Demonstrate whatever you are trying to teach, rather than just talking about it. Finally, small group activities will give them a chance to practice their social skills, while providing an opportunity for one-on-one attention. But don't emphasize competition and failure. Instead, promote cooperation and provide positive feedback.

Youth in this age group respond well to a brief introduction to the activity and behaviors you expect before starting. This increases their ability to be successful and creates more enjoyment for all involved!

Middle Childhood (Ages 7 to 11)

Kids in this age group seem to have endless energy. At this point in their lives, girls are maturing faster than boys. They still enjoy group activities. But they prefer same-gender peer relationships. They are impressed by older role models and are learning their behavior from those role models, as well as their parents.

Kids in middle childhood have ever-changing interests. Their thinking is becoming increasingly logical and they are beginning to use more generalizations. But they still need specific examples in order to grasp more complex ideas. Children in this age group have a wide range of individual academic abilities and reasoning skills. They are easily motivated by praise and recognition. But their confidence is easily eroded, when they are negatively compared to other youth. They often need one-on-one guidance to perform at their best capacity.

As a volunteer, you will do well to provide active, hands-on learning experiences for youth in this age group. When appropriate, use cooperative learning groups of the same gender. If possible enlist an older youth to help you work with them. Make sure that the tasks that you give a child are appropriate for his/her abilities. And compare results of a child's work to that same child's previous work –not to the results of other children. Lastly, remember that kids in the older range of this age group may look physically mature –but may still be emotionally immature at times. Just be patient and remember that they are still learning social skills. Provide constructive feedback on behavior and emphasize decision-making and problem solving.

Males in this age group become more physical and have a difficult time sitting still. If working on academics, it is helpful to have objects the youth can hold, touch and manipulate, that relate to the learning.

Girls in middle childhood begin to isolate one another and bully through words and isolation. When working with the girls, beware of name-calling (no matter how subtle) and plans of ending a friendship (“I won't be your friend anymore”). While we know it passes, these threats feel very real for the child being ostracized and it is helpful for them to feel supported.

Teens (Ages 12 to 18)

Teenagers go through rapid physical changes, especially in their early teens. Their sexuality is emerging. This is an awkward time for youth. They are often uncomfortable with their changing bodies. As well, hormonal changes can cause mood swings. This awkwardness tends to fade as they reach their later teen years. But body image often continues to be an important issue for them. Teens are often troubled by thoughts of inferiority and self-doubt –especially in their early teens. As a result of these changes, teens require more food and more sleep than in previous stages. Teens will often complain of feeling tired.

As they get older, teens become less dependent upon their parents for emotional support/acceptance and are increasingly concerned about their status among their peers. They want to be part of a group. But they also want to be recognized as unique individuals. They often seek adult leadership roles. They become more interested in co-educational activities and dating becomes an important part of their social life.

Teens are much better able to think of concepts in abstract terms. They are able to use deductive reasoning and to consider hypothetical situations. Teens are also increasingly able to see the world through someone else's eyes. They are beginning to realize that other people's thoughts may not be the same as their own and that neither view may reflect the true reality of a situation. They are beginning to develop a sense of community and concern for the well-being of others.

Obviously, working with teens has its own unique set of challenges. Early adolescents may be more dramatic and their feelings may seem more extreme. Be careful not to embarrass or criticize. Whenever possible, address problematic behavior privately, however not behind closed doors. Topics regarding sexuality and puberty may arise. These are sensitive matters to teens and adults alike. Be willing to offer honest information without judgment or trivialization. But don't feel like you must go outside of your comfort level. If, at any time, you feel uncomfortable providing information, do not hesitate to refer the issue or question to a BGC staff member. Teens will maintain respect for you if you are honest, even if not answering their original question. You may wish to respond by stating, "I prefer not to discuss/answer that."

Allow teens to plan activities and set their own goals, as much as possible. But always include some type of outcome evaluation. Allow them to explore their own personal philosophies about life through learning experiences related to self-discovery and interpersonal growth. Offer opportunities for them to practice their problem-solving skills. But provide supervision with little interference.

Try to recognize those competencies in which they excel and give them plenty of opportunities to achieve. Help them improve their sense of self-worth by placing an emphasis on personal development, rather than peer competition. Lastly, give teens responsibility and set expectations for follow-through. Allow them to explore their identities, values, and beliefs. And, if applicable, encourage community service projects that offer an opportunity to be of service to others.

II. Effective Supervision & Discipline Techniques

Boys & Girls Clubs set high standards of behavior for our members. Misbehaviors always result in some kind of action. We don't expect you to be "babysitters" for our Club Members. But, as a volunteer, you can help to REMIND kids of how to follow a rule, as well as serve as a role model. A key thing to remember is that if you want young people to treat you with respect, you must treat them the same way. Try to say "please" and "thank you" when correcting a child's behavior. Moreover, remember to follow the rules yourself (e.g. don't chew gum or wear a hat in the Club.) If all else fails, get a staff member and he or she will take charge of the situation.

What Makes A Child Misbehave?

All children misbehave at some time or another. But there always seems to be one or two kids who are constantly getting into trouble. It helps to understand that most kids act up for a reason. One common reason that a child misbehaves is because he/she wants attention. As a volunteer, be aware if you are ignoring the less popular kids or the ones with whom you have the most difficult time, they may be the ones who need your attention the most.

Children may have difficulties following rules or directions if they are hungry or tired. Clubs do provide snacks and participate in the summer lunch program to augment other sources, but they are not designed to meet all the food needs of our youth.

A child may also act out if he or she is uncomfortable with a given situation. The child may not feel welcome or may not fully understand what is expected in a given situation. Try to create a warm and non-intimidating environment. And make certain that each child fully understands what is expected of him or her. Similarly, a child may be afraid of failing at a given task and may act out in an attempt to get out of performing the task. Making certain that the task that is presented is appropriate for the abilities of all the kids who are present will help –as will words of encouragement and praise. Finally the child may not be interested in the activity that is going on or may feel it is too easy or too difficult. Finding an alternative task for the child may remedy the situation.

What is the best way to determine the cause of a child's misbehavior? Just ask the child! If you can determine the reason, you can solve the problem. The best way is to privately talk to the child and determine what he or she is thinking and feeling. It is not your responsibility to meet all the needs of the child, but please partner with our Club staff. You may become aware of basic needs of the child that staff is not yet aware of.

Youth-Centered Discipline

Unfortunately, discipline is sometimes a necessary part of volunteering with youth. Some methods work better than others. Youth-centered discipline is a proven way of teaching self-control, rather than just a vehicle for punishment; however, it does not teach consequences to behavior. Some consequences are natural and not imposed by an adult, such as when a child trips over another child while running in the games room. But letting natural consequences serve as a learning tool is not always appropriate. Sometimes adults need to help kids understand that certain behaviors cause problems for others and will result in specific consequences –e.g. making a child pick up puzzle pieces that he/she has spread all over the floor and then abandoned.

When possible, youth-centered discipline also allows youth to be actively involved with determining rules and consequences. If employing this method, you should be certain that the rules are age-appropriate and that the youth involved fully understand what is expected. At the same time, limit the number of explicit rules. It is possible to overwhelm kids with so many rules that they forget them. Finally, you may find that some rules don't work and/or others may no longer be needed as time passes. Revisions can be made at any time, but the youth should be included in this process as well.

Remember the importance of consistency when using consequences to teach kids. If rules and consequences are only enforced some of the time or only with certain kids, then children will be less likely to take consequences into consideration. If, however, the kids learn that every time they act up they will have consequences, then the problems are less likely to surface. Too many warnings are ineffective. In order to be effective, you should always say what you mean and be willing to carry out any consequences that have been set. But if you realize that you are wrong, you should admit it.

It is also very important to remember that kids learn from positive consequences as well as negative ones. Too often, "bad" behavior is much easier for us to notice than "good" behavior. But kids are not only learning what not to do, but also what they should do. Acknowledging good behavior can go a long way in motivating kids. Remember to let a youth know that you have noticed when the young person made the right decisions and acted appropriately.

Finally, never ridicule or belittle a child. You are not to hit a Club Member for any reason. And you should only raise your voice when it is absolutely necessary. Treating youth with courtesy and respect is paramount to their development. When a child misbehaves, you should attack the action –not the child.

Kids, Conflict, & Aggression

Conflict is a natural part of life. It occurs when people have incompatible wants and needs or different interests. Kids are limited in how they deal with conflict. Therefore, they typically react to conflict in 3 ways: fight, flight, or tattling. When a child is angry or frustrated, he or she may resort to verbal or physical aggression. Such aggression can happen as the result of genuine conflict or play-fighting/teasing that has gotten out of hand. Younger kids, who lack the ability to express what they are feeling, are more likely to resort to physical aggression, while older kids will be more likely to use verbal aggression to express themselves.

As a volunteer, you can serve as a valuable role model by showing our Club Members the proper way to handle conflict is through non-aggressive actions. Obviously, on those rare occasions that a physical fight occurs, you should get a staff member immediately and let him or her take control of the situation. But on other occasions, you may have the opportunity to use a conflict as a learning experience. When the opportunity presents itself, you can teach them the following strategies for handling conflict. And they may come in handy for you at a more personal level, when trying to resolve a conflict that you may be having with a specific child.

- Negotiation is when the conflicting parties sit down, discuss the differing points of view and come to an agreement as to which viewpoint is the best.
- Compromise is used when the parties both agree to sacrifice something in order to end the conflict.
- Taking turns is a good strategy to employ when kids are fighting over a game or some other piece of equipment. Just make sure that the time is divided evenly and that all kids get an equal turn.
- Active listening occurs when each participant shows that he/she understands what the other party is trying to communicate.
- Threat-free explanation allows each person to express his/her opinion without attacking the other person. Emotions are kept under control.
- Apologizing goes a long way, when used in combination with another strategy. It does not always have to be an admission of wrong-doing. Instead, it can serve as an expression of concern about the other person involved. (Ex: "I'm sorry you were hurt as a result of ...")
- Soliciting intervention occurs when you ask someone who isn't involved in the conflict to help find a solution.
- Postponing the discussion is often a good strategy for letting emotions settle down before addressing the conflict.
- Distractions is a good way to deal with insignificant conflicts among younger kids with short attention spans. You simply turn their attention to some other interesting activity.
- Humor is often a good way to diffuse an emotional situation, before attempting to find resolution.
- Chance. Make the final decision by flipping a coin or drawing straws.

These strategies are all simple in nature. Perhaps the most difficult part is knowing when to employ each strategy in any given moment. And, of course, you may find that you can't come up with a solution on your own. No worries. Never hesitate to take a problem to a staff member.

But What Do I Do When...?"

Kids aren't the only people who can benefit from concrete examples! So below are some common scenarios and solutions to keep in mind.

"Jane said I could..."

Ask the adult to whom the child is referring, to make sure. Alternatively, tell the child that he/she can't do it until you hear from the adult yourself.

Child is acting out, is hostile, or treats you disrespectfully.

Take the child aside and speak to him/her out of earshot of other youth. Make it clear that the behavior is unacceptable. If the child is angry, let him/her express the anger, in an appropriate way. If he/she is hostile towards you, express displeasure about the manner in which he/she is speaking. Finally, offer solutions to the problem. If the child remains a problem, get a staff member immediately.

The child just does not like me!

As is the case with adults, some people just don't gravitate to other people. Don't take it personally. Their dislike for you is most likely more of an indication of their needs than the nature of your personality. And remember, kids sometimes must challenge authority, in order to grow as individuals. Unfortunately, from time to time, you may be that authority figure!

Child swears or uses inappropriate language.

Evaluate the situation. How old is the child? For a teen, it might be appropriate just to address with a quick word, like “watch your language please,” or “not in the Club please,” or “remember, there are little kids here.” For younger kids, it is appropriate to speak to them sternly, explain the disrespect involved in saying bad words. You may also take privileges away or give child a time out. If you don’t feel comfortable with this, defer to staff.

Youth is bullying or picking on other kids.

Talk to the youth. Tell a story about being picked on when you were a kid, to teach empathy. It is important to listen to this child because bullies often have no other way to express themselves. Ask them why they are doing this; spend a little extra time with this person if you can. Another option is to give this child a task, like sweeping the games room or helping sweep the kitchen. Offer to do it with them.

Youth is “bored.”

This is where volunteers are especially helpful. A “bored” kid is someone who usually needs a little one-on-one attention. This is a chance to really ask questions like “what school do you go to?” “How many brothers and sisters do you have?” Time will pass quickly for a child when he or she feels cared for.

The Tattletale: “He’s bugging me!” “She said the b-word!” (Etc., etc.)

This is hard because we encourage kids to tell staff about their problems with each other before they get out of hand. But we also want them to learn how to resolve the little things themselves. Some kids DO get out of hand with “telling.” Always acknowledge what the kid has told you. Assess the situation. Is it something like an imminent fight that needs intervention? Or is it something smaller? If it’s a small thing, engage the child in a conversation that causes him/her to think about the situation critically. (e.g. “That’s terrible! Why did he do that? Can you tell me how that made you feel? Have you tried talking to him about it?”) This makes your job easier and lets the young person learn a bit about how to solve his or her own problems. Use your own judgment. But, as always, if you’re not sure, ask a staff member.

Boundaries for Volunteers

Boundary violations are often a result of good intentions; however, they may foster situations that are not in the best interest of our members. While you may be very confident with some of these, you may not have considered all the possibilities with other situations. Our general guideline involves asking: **Does this action or inaction pose a risk to the youth, the organization or myself?** While not all of the tips below pose a risk to safety, they are best practices.

Tips to remember:

1. **Do not loan/give money to youth** – There are often compelling reasons to want to break this boundary (“I’m hungry,” “I need to call my mom,” or “I need bus fare”), but the Clubs are equipped to handle true situations of need. Youth sometimes look for opportunities or are having limits imposed and are trying to bypass their agreements or responsibilities. If you do become aware of financial or basic needs, please notify Club staff.
2. **Do not give extra food to youth** – All of the Club members receive a snack in the afternoon, and the majority of them get plenty of food at home, yet they often beg for food when they see it. Unless you brought something for everyone and have gotten it approved by the program staff, please refrain from bringing any food or gum to the Club.

3. Maintain proper physical contact – High fives, fist bumps, and side hugs are all appropriate forms of contact. Please do not engage in long, front-facing hugs, or let a child sit in your lap. This can be extremely challenging, but it places you at risk. Youth or observers may misinterpret your actions/intent. An option would be to say, “How about if you sit beside me instead?” A helpful rule to remember is the “ten-second rule of touch.” You should refrain from touching any Club Member for more than ten seconds.

4. Refrain from bringing valuables to the Club – Unfortunately, phones, iPods, purses and wallets are not always safe in the Club. While most of our members act responsibly, it is best not to place a child in a position where their developing ability to make sound moral judgments is tested. Please ask the Volunteer Coordinator to place your most valuable items in a locked office.

5. Be cautious about questions that start with “have you ever used…” or “if I tell you something you have to promise not to tell…” - We don’t always know the context of the statements coming from youth and if you find yourself receiving information from Club members that would possibly jeopardize their safety, we encourage you to ask open ended questions. If you feel comfortable engaging in such a discussion you can ask questions such as, “Is there something you want to tell me about that?” or “How do you feel about that?” We also encourage volunteers not to make any promises that you cannot keep. If the information a Club member discloses is harmful to them or someone else, then you are required to inform staff.

6. Do not feel that you must answer all questions that may come from our Club Members (“How old were you the first time you had sex?”) – We do not encourage personal disclosure from volunteers and suggest responding by saying, “I don’t care to answer that question,” or, “I don’t feel comfortable with your question,” or, “That is very personal information.” You can refer youth to resources or to staff if you feel comfortable doing so, but we ask that you maintain your relationship boundaries.

7. Club Members may ask you, “Can you give me a ride home?” – The answer to this question is *always* “no.” The Club has strict policies against volunteers transporting youth in personal vehicles. As stated previously, our Club is equipped to handle situations of need so please advise staff if a Club Member has asked you for a ride and they will tend to them.

Lastly, please remember that Club staff is there for you. You may approach them if you would like advice on boundaries or if you need other support.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and agree to abide by the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Leech Lake Area's policies listed in this Volunteer Handbook.

Volunteer (Print) Name: _____

Date: _____

Volunteer Signature: _____