

MINOR PROTECTION POLICY

January 2022

Purpose Statement

The Carpenter's Hope seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for any minor who participate in our recovery projects as well as any minor we may come into contact in the field of work. By implementing this policy, our goals are to protect the minors listed above from any harm and provide a clear path of response for staff and volunteers in the event of suspected abuse or neglect.

Provide a Safe Environment and Adequate Supervision of Minors

The Carpenter's Hope seeks to provide a safe environment and adequate supervision of minors by implementing the following:

Minors participating as a volunteer

Adequate supervision

- Minors under this policy refers to any individual younger than 18 years of age
- Any minor who participates as a volunteer must be accompanied by a parent or an adult who has been designated as caretaker for the event
- Youth work groups are required to obtain a completed and signed parent authorization form and adequate adult supervision. (TCH will not provide adult supervision for children)
- A minimum of two approved staff or volunteers (age 18 or older) must be present with minors during work projects and any related activities. Never have a one on one contact or situation. (unless parents are the supervising adult)

Discipline

- No physical discipline (striking) may be used. When a minor misbehaves, an adult may use redirection and/or verbal means to guide a minor's behavior

Physical Touch

- Be sensitive to the way minors interpret physical touch. All physical contact should be gentle and appropriate. Remember minors have the right to refuse physical contact.

Snacks and Allergies

- Due to severe food allergies, a medical release form must be included for each minor with all allergies specified.

- Any prepared snack or meal for an individual with allergies shall avoid contact with or inclusion of allergy causing substances

Accidents, First Aid, and Incident Reporting

- All adult staff and volunteers can administer minor first aid to injuries such as small cuts, bumps, and bruises.
- Always use gloves when dealing with blood
- In case of a more serious injury, deal with the immediate need (i.e. apply pressure to stop bleeding) and then contact 911, your team leader and The Carpenter's Hope project leader to assist
- Any time a minor is injured, an accident/injury report must be completed. Ask your team leader or The Carpenter's Hope project leader for this form (for this reporting requirement an injury will be defined as damage to your body. It is a general term that refers to harm caused by accidents, falls, cuts or hits. Minor issues such as minor scrapes and scratches shall be recorded but no report of injury necessary). Pictures of the injury shall be taken, sent to the TCH representative for record of the event.
- **The appropriate leader must contact the parent as soon as possible to inform them of this accident/injury and actions taken**

Minors that we may encounter on a restoration trip

- Be cordial to all minors encountered
- Understand that you know nothing of the minor's home situation so be sensitive to the environment
- **Never be alone with any minor**
- Get to know the parents or adult responsible for their care
- All guidelines pertaining to minors participating in the project shall be adhered to with those we may encounter

Restrooms and Dorm Use

It is the policy and expectation of The Carpenter's Hope that all participants will be restricted to use restrooms and dorm space according to the gender of birth.

Recognize Suspected Minor Abuse

The State of Texas lays out the following categories of abuse. Staff and volunteers are required by law to report suspected minor abuse.

Categories of Child Abuse

- Bodily injury
- Serious Mental Injury
- Sexual Abuse or Exploitation
- Serious physical neglect
- Likelihood of bodily injury or sexual abuse

- Medical minor abuse
 - Per se definitions Physical violence that endangers a minor
 - Restraining or confining the minor
 - Shaking a child under one year old
 - Striking a child under one year old
 - Interfering with the breathing of a minor
 - Having a minor present at a meth lab
 - Leaving a minor in the care of a sexual offender
- Engaging a minor in a severe form of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking

Report Suspected Minor Abuse

Texas has both civil and criminal laws to protect minors from abuse and neglect. If you suspect that a minor is being abused or neglected, the law requires that you report it. [Texas Family Code Section 261.101 (a)]

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is the agency to call if the suspected abuse or neglect involves a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the minor or someone who lives in the home with the minor.

Failure to report suspected minor abuse and neglect is a criminal offense (Texas Family Code, Section 261.109).

To report to DFPS, call the 24-hour, toll-free abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400 from anywhere in the United States to report abuse or neglect that happened in Texas. (If work site is outside the State of Texas correct reporting information will be provided)

Background Checks

All person's age 18 and above, desiring to participate in any The Carpenter's Hope activity will be required to have a national criminal background check completed. These background checks may be completed by the partnering organization or by The Carpenter's Hope. If a partnering organization completes the background check, they must furnish The Carpenter's Hope a certificate of completion and verification that team members has no record of sexual harassment of any age or child abuse/molestation or provide a copy of each document.

Any individual who is under investigation for suspected minor abuse or is a convicted sex offender will not be permitted to serve on a project with The Carpenter's Hope.

Partner Individuals or Organizations

The Carpenter's Hope plan of work is to recruit individuals, church groups or other organizations. A copy of this policy will be provided to them and an affirmation of compliance must be completed and signed by an authorized party.