



Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District

Boundary Policy

Boundaries Defined

This policy is intended as a guide to Park and Recreation Staff in conducting themselves in a way that reflects the high standards of behavior and professionalism required of employees and volunteers and to specify boundaries between minors and staff. The term “Boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior by employees and volunteers while interacting with minors. Trespassing beyond the Boundaries of a minor and employee/volunteer relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff members, volunteers, contractors, and anyone else working directly with minors.

General Principles

This policy should clearly define the boundaries, so everyone understands the expectations and the consequences of not obeying them.

Staff shall respect the individual rights of minors and act in their best interest.

Minors shall not be discriminated against regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, or disability.

The District shall have zero tolerance for harassment or abuse.

Unacceptable and Acceptable Behavior

Some activities may seem innocent from an employee’s perspective, but some of these can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from a minor or parental point of view. The purpose of the following lists of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors is not to restrain innocent, positive relationships between employees and minors but to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as, misconduct.

Unacceptable Behavior

The following is an illustrative list of unacceptable behavior, which includes but is not limited to:

- Remarks about the physical attributes or physiological development of anyone.
- Excessive attention toward a particular minor.

- Sending e-mails, text messages, instant messages, social media messages, or letters to minors if the content is not about park and recreation activities and not in accordance with applicable District policies or in violation of the District's Social Media and/or Technology Policy.
- Communicating with minors or parents/guardians in violation of the District's Social Media Policy.
- Engaging in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communications.
- Using profanity with or to a minor.
- Involving minors in non-District related issues, including, but not limited to, the employee's employment issues.
- Working while unfit for service, including the inability to appropriately instruct or associate with minors.
- Being alone with a minor.

Acceptable Behavior

The following is an illustrative list of acceptable and recommended behavior, which includes, but is not limited to:

- E-mails, text messages, phone conversations, and other communications to and with minors must be professional and pertain to District activities.
- Keeping reasonable space between the employee and the minor.
- Stopping and correcting minors if minors cross the employee's own personal boundaries.
- Keeping parents and District supervisors informed when a significant issue develops regarding a minor.
- Seeking advice from senior staff (such as administrators, managers, or Human Resources) if an employee finds themselves in a difficult situation related to Boundaries.
- Involving an employee's supervisor if conflict arises with a minor.
- Informing Human Resources or the Superintendent/District Manager about situations that have the potential to become more severe.
- Making detailed notes about an incident that could evolve into a more serious situation later.
- Recognizing the responsibility to stop unacceptable behavior of minors and/or coworkers.
- Asking another staff member to be present if an employee will be alone with any minor.
- Giving minors praise and recognition without touching them in questionable areas; giving appropriate pats on the back, high fives, and handshakes.
- Keeping professional conduct a high priority during all moments of minor contact.
- Discuss only program-related issues and keep communications within program hours.

Transportation

Staff shall not transport minors in private vehicles.

Staff shall not be alone in a District vehicle with a minor.

Staff should inform a supervisor and/or another responsible adult of the details of any trip involving minors, including the time, location, and purpose.

Reporting Violations

When any employee reasonably suspects or believes that another staff member may have violated the items specified in this policy, they must immediately report the matter to Human Resources or District Manager. All reports shall be kept as confidential as possible. Prompt reporting is essential to protect minors, the suspected employee, any witnesses, and the District as a whole. Employees must also report to the administration any awareness of, or concern about, minor behavior that crosses boundaries or any situation in which a minor appears to be at risk for sexual abuse.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

California Penal Code section 11166 requires any mandated reporter who has knowledge of, or observes, a child in their professional capacity or within the scope of their employment whom knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse to report the known or suspected instance of child abuse to a child protective agency immediately, or as soon as practically possible, by telephone and to prepare and send a written report thereof within thirty-six (36) hours of receiving the information concerning the incident. Employees are required to report such incidents to an administrator and Human Resources. Reporting such incidents to an administrator and Human Resources does not relieve the employee of responsibility to also immediately report such incidents to the appropriate child protective agency by telephone and to send a written report thereof within thirty-six (36) hours. However, employees may work cooperatively to report the incidents and to file one written report. Employees who have any questions about these reporting requirements should contact Human Resources.

The District will provide training every two years on the mandated reporting requirements, using the online training module provided by the State Department of Social Services, to employees who are mandated reporters. This training will include information that failure to report an incident of known or reasonably suspected child abuse or neglect, as required by Penal Code section 11166, is a misdemeanor punishable by up to six (6) months confinement in a county jail, or by a fine of one-thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by both that imprisonment and fine.

Investigating

The District Manager will promptly investigate any allegations.

Violations

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. When appropriate, violations of this policy may also be reported to authorities for potential legal action.

Effective Date: June 17, 2026