**Programs**

All Texas A&M Forest Service programs involving minors must meet the requirements contained in Rule [24.01.06.F1](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/rules/240106F1%20Programs%20for%20Minors.docx). In addition, the agency has identified the following best practices for working with minors:

**Best Practices**

* Be a positive role model by acting in a caring, respectful, honest, responsible and professional manner.
* Physical contact with a minor should be appropriate for the particular activity, program or circumstance and should have a clear educational purpose. Careful boundaries must be observed at all times. With the exception of a handshake, or a pat of praise on the back/shoulder, physical contact should not be initiated by the adult. Caution should be used when the physical contact is initiated by the minor.
* Another adult should be present in every situation involving a minor.
* Always have a minimum of two approved adults present when working with minors. The two adults can be any combination of employees or volunteers, cooperator employees or volunteers, third-party organization employees or volunteers.
* Avoid situations that would have only one adult with a minor. An employee cannot control when a minor may approach him or her for assistance, but the employee can control their actions thereafter. If another adult is nearby, call or motion for them to assist. The employee should answer the minor’s questions or direct them where they can find what they are looking for, but they should not go with or take the minor anywhere unless accompanied by another adult.
* When transporting minors in a vehicle, the following safeguards must be followed:
* If the activity is an agency-sponsored event, and transportation is the responsibility of agency staff, volunteers or cooperators, two adults must be present in each vehicle.
* If responsibility for transportation to/from an agency-sponsored event is left to the school, third-party organization or the parents/guardians of the minor, the school, third-party organization or the parents/guardians assume responsibility for the safety of the minors.
* Respect boundaries
* Do not meet or communicate with minors outside of the program or activity, including via social media.
* Any communication with minors outside of the program or activity should be done through the teacher or parent/guardian.
* Discipline and health/wellness issues should be handled by the parent/guardian, teacher or other representative of the organization responsible for the minor.
* Respect your role as a role model
* Wear appropriate clothing/uniform for the activity or program.
* Do not use profanity or discuss topics which could not comfortably be used in the presence of parents or another adult.
* Do not use tobacco products or e-cigarettes in the presence of minors.

**Training**

Employees that are serving as a lead facilitator for any program that involves working with minors are responsible for providing all employees and volunteers assisting with the program, an in-person overview of best practices for working with minors, prior to the beginning of the event. Lead facilitators can utilize information from this document as well as information from TrainTraq course 2111652 (Child Protection Training) and any other pertinent material for this overview.

**Photo Permissions**

Make sure that you have permission to use a photo of someone, especially students under 18. Obtain proper photo/video/audio [Media Release Form](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/procedures/Media%20Release%20Form%20Adults%20and%20Minor%20Children.docx) signed by a parent/guardian prior to taking pictures, video or recordings of minors. In regard to minors on a field trip with a school, they already have signed an agreed photo permissions in the school’s files and you may obtain these forms from the teacher.

If you take a photo of a large group where individuals aren’t specifically identifiable, you don’t need photo permissions. But if you want to err on the side of caution, have copies of your photo release form on hand.

If you use these photos, videos or recordings, never identify the minor by name.

**Annual Review of Programs for Minors**

In September of each year the Environmental Health & Safety Officer will review the existing programs that meet the definition of Programs for Minors. As part of this review, the program directors will be contacted to ensure that the programs are still occurring and that the requirements in Sec. 4.1 and 5.1 of Rule 24.01.06.F1 *Programs for Minors* have been met.

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