



## Abuse Prevention Policy

At Rippleffect, safety is our number one priority. Rippleffect understands that child abuse and the inappropriate contact of youth is a pervasive problem that must be managed in a pro-active manner if we are to protect those in our care. Rippleffect has enacted the following plan to manage our programs and minimize the potential for an abuse incident to occur. If an allegation or incident does occur we will proactively work with the authorities and the family to respond in a prompt and empathetic manner.

Rippleffect believes the following policies are vital to the protection of youth in our care and will be shared with and applied to all staff, volunteers, partner organizations and guardians.

### 1) Hiring Practices and Screening

Available seasonal staff positions will be posted on the Rippleffect website and certain online job search sites (such as craigslist, jobsinme.com, and aee.com). The hiring process is broken down into four distinct stages, all of which must be complete before an official hire can be made:

- a. The applicant submits a current resume, cover letter and completed staff application, which includes photocopies of all pertinent licenses and certifications;
- b. The applicant has a formal interview with Program Directors and Managers;
- c. Applicants are required to furnish three references from previous jobs, internships or volunteer experiences. Rippleffect will make an effort to contact all available references prior to hiring;
- d. All applicants must pass a criminal background check before they are officially hired to work for Rippleffect.
  - i. Rippleffect is strongly committed to protecting its members and the children in their care from all harm. However, a conviction does not automatically generate a rejection of the application—all cases are individually evaluated. Rippleffect does maintain a barrier crimes list that includes items such as felonies, violence acts such as assault, domestic violence and child abuse.
- e. **File Documentation**  
All applications, reference checks, Criminal Record Checks and interview notes will be kept in the individual's personnel file that is maintained in the Rippleffect office and on our online databases.

### 2) Training and Education

- a. Upon hire, Rippleffect staff members must sign and return an employment agreement in which they agree to follow all of Rippleffect's policies and procedures listed in our Staff Field Manual and Employee Handbook, which is distributed to staff before or during training.

All departments will review the Code of Conduct during their training before the program season each year and will have all staff reconfirm that they understand their expectations as a Rippleffect staff member and agree to abide by those expectations. *See appendix 1 for a copy of the document.*

- b. **Child Abuse Prevention Training**  
All staff members will participate in the child abuse prevention training that includes training on sexual abusers before they are able to interface with youth in our programs. All staff members working directly with youth will review this training on a yearly basis.



c. **Recurring Training**

Rippleffect requires that all staff working with children participate in an annual review of the abuse prevention training. Rippleffect may perform additional training with staff on identification and prevention of child abuse throughout the year.

**3) Staff Expectations**

a. **Reporting of Red-Flag and Inappropriate Behavior and/or Violations of the Code of Conduct**

Rippleffect staff are mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse to Rippleffect management staff. Rippleffect staff will report to their supervisor any indication of or warning signs concerning abuse involving a child and any instances of staff violating the Code of Conduct. Rippleffect staff who identify suspicious behavior or a violation of policy by a fellow staff person should report the event to their supervisor immediately.

Rippleffect management staff will then make a direct report to Maine Child Protective Intake at 1-800-452-1999.

b. **Being Alone with Children**

In order to protect staff, volunteers, and program participants – at no time during an organizational program may a staff member or volunteer be alone with a single participant where they cannot be observed by others. As staff supervise participants, they should space themselves in a way that ensures they are clearly visible to others.

- 1 on 1 conversations should be in visual field or within earshot (if yelling) of other RE staff. Notify RE management staff as to where the conversation will be, how long and the nature of the conversation.

c. **Physical Contact with Children**

Staff and volunteers will not abuse participants. Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate dismissal, the filing of criminal charges, or other disciplinary action. The following actions and behaviors are prohibited:

- Physical inappropriate interaction (eg. touching breast or genital area, wrestling, twisting nipples, massages, caressing, sitting on lap, patting on bottom, piggy back rides, kissing)
- Appropriate physical contact may include one armed/side hugs only initiated by participants, high fives, fist bumps, and any other contact that may be required to conduct programming safely

d. **Babysitting and Outside Contact**

Staff and volunteers may not be alone with participants they meet in the organization's programs outside of the organization. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting participants to your home. Any exceptions require a written explanation before the fact and are subject to administrator approval. All pre-existing relationships with participants at the Camp must be disclosed on the Relationship Disclosure Form.

e. **Supervision Standards**

Staff and volunteers will provide appropriate supervision during all program activities, transitions, meal times and during sleeping hours and shall never leave participants unsupervised.

**Restroom/Changing Stall supervision:**

Staff and volunteers should conduct or supervise private activities in pairs - putting on bathing suits, changing, etc. When this is not feasible, staff should be positioned so that they are clearly visible to others ideally in the designated changing stalls or bathrooms.

- Either 'line of sight' or 'line of sound' supervision must be maintained while participants are using the facilities.
- If staff or volunteers are assisting younger participants, doors to the facility must remain open.
- When off-site or using public restrooms: staff and volunteers will inspect the restroom prior to use. Staff and volunteers will ensure that no participant, regardless of age, enters a bathroom alone on a field trip.

**Sleeping Supervision**

Rippleffect will provide separate sleeping areas designated by gender (exceptions apply based on a participant's gender identity, and partnering agencies protocols). In some circumstances, Rippleffect will offer a third sleeping arrangement for a student.

- If an additional sleeping arrangement is required after reviewing Rippleffect's sleeping policies with participants, staff will contact program management to alert them and receive additional support.

Guides are not permitted to sleep in tents with participants, with exception of when groups are camping in a group shelter.

A guide must be present within visual and hearing range of each sleeping area. Participants must know who the closest guide is, where their tent is located, and that the guide is there for participants any time of the night.

Guides must monitor the tent until participants are settled and quiet. Bedtime can be a vulnerable time for many participants, and can often present situations where emotional and psychological safety is compromised.

Participants know that they must bring a buddy with them if they need to use the bathroom at night or venture away from their tent for any reason.

Guides are responsible for their participants 24 hours a day.

## **4) Program Operation**

**a. Ratio Expectations**

Rippleffect has enacted the following general group ratios for programs: 1:7 for technical activities, 1:14 for ground games, initiatives, and non-technical activities. Rippleffect has established these ratios as minimums, not goals to achieve. Certain programs and activities require more stringent ratios, e.g. wilderness treks, programs with younger children. Ratios alone do not equate to effective supervision, but if established ratios cannot be maintained the activity will be changed or additional staff members added.

**b. Transportation**

Rippleffect ratios and supervision standards apply during transportation. Staff will spread themselves out in the vehicle and maintain their focus on the children while transportation is occurring. If the youth being transported are of multiple age groups, they should be separated by gender when possible. Youth with known relational and behavioral challenges should also not be placed together.



c. **Special Needs Participants**

Special needs program participants are, indeed, more at risk than others and need to be more closely supervised to prevent peer-to-peer abuse and the staff supervising them needs to be more closely supervised to prevent a predator from taking advantage of their impairment to abuse them. All youth with special needs will be evaluated against our organization's eligibility requirement to determine if a youth and family can be safely served at Rippleffect.

d. **Risk Management Committee**

Rippleffect has established a safety committee that is responsible for a wide range of topics including child abuse prevention. This committee consists of staff as well as board volunteers.

e. **Participant Pick-Up**

Before dismissing a participant from a program, staff must ensure the following:

- Verify the identification of the person picking up the participant. Ensure they are a person documented on the program pick-up sheet. Persons picking up who are not on the sign-out sheet must be confirmed by the office or program management before dismissing the participant.
- Participants may only be dismissed after verbally checking in with the person picking up the participant and after they initial the pick-up sheet.
- Staff must remain with participants until they are picked up by the appropriate person.
- Participants are permitted to walk home if their parent/guardian has signed the walk-home waiver for the program.
- If a guardian is late, or does not show up, the staff will call the contacts listed on the participant's health form and notify program management. Rippleffect will remain the primary locus of care until the transfer of responsibility is made to the parent/guardian, authorized pick-up person, or, as a last resort, to authorities.

## 5) Guardian Education

a) **Organization Child Protection Policy**

Rippleffect makes this policy available to parents/guardians on our website under the family resources page. The abuse prevention policy provides guardians with the babysitting policy, outside contact policy, and information on child abuse. Staff contact information will be on the document in case a guardian has questions, concerns or observes a violation.

b) **Contact Information for Violation of Policies**

Rippleffect provides both male and female staff contacts that guardians can call in case of concern. Staff receive training on responding to an allegation, child abuse warning signs, and Rippleffect's policies so they can effectively respond to concerns and questions.

- Contact information for guardians to report suspected child child abuse and concerns:
  1. Adam Shepherd, Executive Director: 207-800-5669
  2. Casey Ross, Open Enrollment Program Director: 661-549-0160

## 6) Responding to an Allegation

a) **Reporting Suspicious Behavior to a Supervisor**

All staff members have received specific training concerning the requirement to report violations of Rippleffect policies immediately to their supervisor. If the supervisor does not effectively respond, Rippleffect staff members are trained to notify the next level supervisor. Rippleffect staff are expected to observe other staff members' behaviors, including that of supervisors, and to report any suspicions to that a supervisor.

b) **Mandated Reporter**

Rippleffect staff members are mandated reporters with regard to child abuse. Any evidence of potential child abuse or observation of inappropriate contact by a parent, staff member or other child will be reported to Maine Child Protective Intake at 1-800-452-1999.

c) **Suspension of Staff or Youthful Offender**

All complaints or concerns of abuse will be handled respectfully, in a timely manner, and with utmost regard for confidentiality to the extent reasonably possible and necessary to investigate the concern/complaint.

Any reported allegations of abuse will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge.

Corrective action will be taken by the Organization, appropriate to the results of the investigation. It is not necessary to first file a written complaint. All contacts will be considered confidential to the extent reasonably possible. All complaints of harassment will be investigated and appropriate action taken in accordance with applicable federal and state law.

If the allegation is against a program participant, they will be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation. Depending on the severity of the incident, the participant may be terminated from the program.

d) **Incident Investigation**

Rippleffect will perform an investigation following any allegation of child abuse by a staff member, participant or member. Rippleffect may utilize its insurance company, The Redwoods Group, or other agencies to interview staff, witnesses and/or children.

e) **Insurance Company Contact**

Immediately after an allegation of abuse the Rippleffect will notify its insurance company, The Redwoods Group. Redwoods will be asked to render assistance with the investigation and other items. The following individuals are approved to contact The Redwoods Group: [insert positions]. Only in the absence of all of the above identified staff members should initial contact be made by any other Rippleffect staff member.

The phone number for The Redwoods Group is 800-463-8546. Redwoods' after hour crisis hotline number is 877-590-4678.

f) **Record Retention**

Following an allegation against a staff member, their personnel file will be sealed and locked in the Rippleffect office. The file will have no items removed or added. It will only be moved from the locked location at the direction of the Executive Director.

## Appendix

## 1) Appendix 1

### Rippleffect Code of Conduct

We take the safety of children, participants and vulnerable adults seriously. Rippleffect is about youth development: kids and young adults must be safe to grow, thrive and reach their potential in a nurturing environment. Mistreatment or neglect of our participants will not be tolerated.

1. In order to protect staff, volunteers, and program participants – at no time during an organizational program may a staff member or volunteer be alone with a single participant where they cannot be observed by others. As staff supervise participants, they should space themselves in a way that ensures they are clearly visible to other staff.
  - a. 1 on 1 conversations should be in visual field or within earshot (if yelling) of other RE staff. Notify RE management staff as to where the conversation will be, how long and the nature of the conversation.
2. Staff and volunteers will provide appropriate supervision during all program activities, transitions, meal times and during sleeping hours and shall never leave participants unsupervised.
3. Restroom supervision:
  - a. Either 'line of sight' or 'line of sound' supervision must be maintained while participants are using the facilities.
  - b. If staff or volunteers are assisting younger participants, doors to the facility must remain open.
  - c. When off-site or using public restrooms: staff and volunteers will inspect the restroom prior to use. Staff and volunteers will ensure that no participant, regardless of age, enters a bathroom alone on a field trip.
4. Staff and volunteers should conduct or supervise private activities in pairs - putting on bathing suits, changing, etc. When this is not feasible, staff should be positioned so that they are clearly visible to others ideally in the Battery Bayard changing stalls.
5. Staff and volunteers will not abuse participants. Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate dismissal, the filing of criminal charges, or other disciplinary action. The following actions and behaviors are prohibited:
  - a. Sexual abuse, molestation- including inappropriate touch
  - b. Physical abuse, punishment, discipline (eg. use of physical force, striking, whether used for behavior management or not)
  - c. Physical inappropriate interaction (eg. touching breast or genital area, wrestling, twisting nipples, massages, caressing, sitting on lap, patting on bottom, piggy back rides, kissing)
  - d. Bigotry (eg. making derogatory comments, including making fun of the individual/individual's family, national origin, religion, sexuality, ethnicity, disabilities, sexual orientation, gender-identity, gender expression, appearance; threatening bodily harm to the individual or individual's family/friends.
  - e. Bullying, taunting; intimidation of physical force
  - f. Using inappropriate consequences for behavior (eg. closing child in closet, cabinet; restraining child inappropriately such as tying their hands with string; taping or covering their mouth)
  - g. Neglect – withholding food, water, basic care, etc.
  - h. Telling or asking a child not to tell an adult or parent of words or actions of staff, volunteers.
  - i. Sexual exploitation (eg. sharing or taking nude pictures).
  - j. Accessing, displaying or possessing pornography on Rippleffect property or equipment
  - k. Being nude in front of participants under your care or direction.
  - l. Using, selling or providing alcohol, marijuana or illegal drugs to campers.
  - m. Sex buying on work time and sex trafficking.
6. Staff and volunteers must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism. Staff will



have age appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint of participants is prohibited.

7. Staff and volunteers are considerate, respond to participants with respect and treat all participants and other staff equally regardless of sex, race, religion, culture, or gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. This includes using identity affirming language, such as using participants' and staff's correct pronouns.
8. Staff and volunteers will refrain from intimate displays of affection towards each other at Rippleffect for any reason.
9. Staff and volunteers must appear clean, neat, and in accordance with dress code standards. Dress code as follows:
  - a. Clothing should be conservative and professional for an outdoor setting
  - b. Shirts are required at all times for all genders.
  - c. Shorts must be long enough to fully cover backside if bending over
  - d. Chest/side should remain covered at all times (no low-cut necklines or arm holes)
  - e. No showing of belly/midriff
10. Staff and volunteers will represent Rippleffect in a professional manner when wearing organizational apparel outside of working hours.
11. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during working hours is prohibited and/or while on property is prohibited. This is in accordance with our Drug Free Workplace Policy.
12. Use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, or vaping at Rippleffect is prohibited.
13. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of participants or parents is prohibited.
14. Staff and volunteers must serve as positive role models for participants by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
15. Staff and volunteers may not be alone with participants they meet in the organization's programs outside of the organization. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting participants to your home. Any exceptions require a written explanation before the fact and are subject to administrator approval. All pre-existing relationships with participants at the Camp must be disclosed on the Relationship Disclosure Form.
16. Staff and volunteers are not to transport participants in their own vehicles except in cases of emergency or with express written approval from the Camp director.
17. Staff and volunteers may not date, have romantic, or sexual relationships with program participants.
18. Under no circumstance should staff or volunteers release participants to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian. When in doubt staff will ask to see ID when picking up participants.
19. Staff and volunteers are required to read and sign all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting participants' abuse and attend trainings on the subject, as instructed by a supervisor.

**Abuse situations can occur:**

- at home or away from our program and signs are observed at camp, or a child makes a disclosure to one of our staff;
- at camp:
  - staff (employee or volunteer) can break rules or cross boundaries of appropriate interaction with children, youth or young adults; or
  - children & youth can sexually act out by themselves or with other children, including bullying or intimidation (peer to peer abuse)

**Educating participants:** Participants may be informed in a manner that is age appropriate of their right to set their own "touching" limits for personal safety, and they will be encouraged to tell an adult if someone is abusing them or making them feel uncomfortable at camp.