

AIS Youth Protection Policy Guidelines

General

These AIS Youth Protection Policy Guidelines are designed to help protect our youth in a proactive manner against verbal and sexual abuse (hereinafter "abuse"). These guidelines are primarily for the protection of youth members. However, they also protect our volunteer Youth Advisors from false accusations of abuse.

AIS Youth Advisors must be able to identify abuse when they see it, know their responsibilities to report suspected abuse, and provide a quality of leadership that will ensure that no youth becomes the victim of abuse through willful act while participating in the AIS Youth Program.

Applicability

These guidelines apply to youth activities carried on within the context of the AIS Youth Program at the National level. Regions and the affiliates are encouraged to adopt same or similar guidelines tailored to apply to youth activities carried on at Regional and Affiliate (Club) levels.

Implementation

The National Youth Chair is responsible for implementing these policies at National events and for coordinating with the Regional Youth Chairs and affiliate Youth Advisors for the adoption and implementation of same-or-similar guidelines at the Regional and Affiliate levels.

Definition of Abuse

Abuse is defined as verbal and sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual verbalization. Youth is defined by the AIS is any person under the age of 19 years.

Preventive Actions to Protect Youth

The AIS Youth Program requires adult volunteers and Youth Advisors to provide good supervision, maintain safe surroundings, and observe time-tested precautions to ensure a safe and secure environment that eliminates and prevents opportunities for abuse.

Touching Youth.

Adults and youth leaders need to be mindful that an affectionate ("harmless") gesture toward a youth could be construed as inappropriate by the youth or by the youth's parent.

Complimenting Youth.

A supportive comment or words of encouragement serve as positive reinforcement from an adult or youth leader for a youth's accomplishments, appearance, or good behavior. The words should not be too personal in nature. Compliments about the youth's accomplishments and good behavior are safer than those comments related to appearance.

Gifting Youth.

Should an adult member or Youth Advisor wish to give a reward or token gift to a youth, it should be something that is given to other youth in the same circumstances. Otherwise, the youth or their parent could misconstrue the gesture.

Photos of Youth Members

AIS policy prohibits the posting on the Internet of photos of youth identified in any way, such as by name, region, or club affiliation. The publication of photos of youth, identified or not, is permitted in AIS and related publications whose distribution is limited primarily to AIS members.

E-Mail Iris Exchanges

AIS policy requires the control of access to AIS-sponsored iris information exchanges on the Internet among youth by the issuance of passwords.

Leadership: A Minimum of Two Adults

Two adult volunteers are recommended for all programs, events, and activities. The adult in charge of the event shall be a Youth Advisor as established by the AIS National Youth Chair or Regional Youth Chair.

In general, one-on-one interactions should occur in full public view. This includes between youth and adults or among youth. If personal discussions are needed, the discussions should be conducted in an area that is in unobstructed view of other adults and youth.

When transporting youth, if two adults cannot be present in the vehicle, the alternative minimum suggested is one adult and two or more youth members. An adult should not be alone with a youth without advance written parental consent.

Supervision of Youth

The AIS youth member is the responsibility of the AIS volunteer Youth Advisor or delegate in charge of the meeting or event until a parent/guardian or responsible adult designated by the parent/guardian arrives.

Sleeping Facilities

There shall be separate sleeping facilities for each gender. Only adults of the same gender as the youth may supervise youth in the sleeping and restroom areas of an event.

No single youth is permitted to sleep in the room of an adult other than his/her own parent or guardian.

Restrooms

Separate shower and bathroom facilities shall be provided for mixed-gender groups. When separate facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use shall be scheduled and posted.

Respect for an Individual's Privacy

Adult leaders shall respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults shall protect their own privacy in similar situations.

Youth Leader Training and Supervision

Youth Advisors will be instructed by the Regional Youth Chair as to what constitutes appropriate interaction during AIS events and activities. Adults should monitor adherence to these guidelines by teen leaders.

Reporting Suspected Sexual Abuse

The primary reason for reporting sexual abuse is to protect the youth from further abuse. In addition to protecting the youth, reporting abuse can also provide help for the suspected abuser.

Who Must Report

AIS Youth Advisors or delegates shall assume the primary responsibility for reporting abuse as may arise within the Youth Program.

When to Report

A Youth Advisor or delegate is required to report abuse if s/he has knowledge of, or observes a youth who s/he knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of abuse. Therefore, as soon as an adult Youth Advisor has knowledge of, or observes a child who s/he knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of sexual abuse, that person must make a report to local child protective services or cognizant law enforcement authorities.

No person may impede or inhibit the reporting duties. In addition, no person making such a report shall be subject to any sanction for making the report. Any person who violates the rights of an individual to report may be guilty of an infraction punishable by fine.