



POLICY FOR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES SERVING MINORS

I. Purpose of Policy

Mercer University is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all who participate in programs and activities on campus or otherwise affiliated with the University. There are a variety of opportunities available for Minor children, including academic camps, athletic camps, clinics, conducting or viewing research, after-school programs, work or activities under the supervision of an individual faculty member, enrichment classes, and other activities. These programs and activities are integral to the University's mission and provide a benefit to both the University and the larger community. This Policy recognizes the special duty of care and supervision when working with Minors and sets forth operational requirements to enhance the protection of Minors.

II. Definitions

Mandatory Reporter: Any person who is required by Georgia law (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5) to report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities. Mandatory Reporters include but are not limited to faculty/teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, psychologists, law enforcement personnel, and other persons who participate in providing care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to Minors.

Minor: Any person under 18 years of age (O.C.G.A. § 39-1-1).

Program/Activity: Any academic, admissions, athletic, educational, service, leadership, recreational or other program serving one or more Minors, including, but not limited to, camps, clinics, conferences, workshops, tutoring, mentoring, group lessons, seminars, competitions, internships or experiential learning, conducting or viewing research, pre-enrollment visits, after-school programs, or other enrichment opportunities.

Program/Activity Administrator: Any individual who has primary and direct operational responsibility for the overall content and execution of a Program/Activity and who serves as the primary point of contact.

Program/Activity Staff: Individuals, whether paid, volunteer, or for academic credit, who have care, custody, control, and/or direct contact or interaction with Minors involved in Programs/Activities. This includes, but is not limited to, University administrators, faculty, staff, students, volunteers, and third parties when involved in a Program/Activity.

Third Party: An individual, organization, or entity external to the University, to which the University allows use of its facilities to operate a Program/Activity.

Sponsoring Unit: Any department or unit of the University that offers a Program/Activity.

University Facility: A building, structure, classroom, research or teaching laboratory, outdoor area, grounds, or athletic venue owned, leased, or controlled by the University, or used in connection with any Program/Activity.

III. Scope of Policy

This Policy applies broadly to all Programs/Activities serving one or more Minors, including those:

1. Offered by departments or units of the University at a University Facility or sponsored by the University at other locations;
2. Offered by the University's student organizations at a University Facility or sponsored by University student organizations at other locations; or
3. Offered by Third Parties utilizing a University Facility.

This Policy **does not** apply to:

1. Programs/Activities for Minors enrolled in undergraduate or graduate academic coursework;
2. Events or visits to campus where Minors are supervised by their parent(s) or other guardian (e.g., school officials on field trips);
3. Events at the University that are open to the general public or invited guests where parents or other guardians are expected to provide supervision of Minors;
4. Mercer University employees or students hosting family members, friends, or other guests;
5. Minors who are employed at Mercer University.

This Policy shall supplement, not replace, any existing safety and security measures, policies, or codes of conduct currently in place or hereinafter enacted.

Irrespective of the scope of the Policy set forth above, the mandatory reporting requirements regarding child abuse apply to any and all Minors on campus, regardless of the Minor's status. Any time that a Mandatory Reporter suspects child abuse, it must be reported and investigated as set forth in Section V. below.

IV. Requirements for Hosting Programs/Activities for Minors

This Policy provides minimum operational requirements for Programs/Activities involving Minors. Recognizing that all Programs/Activities are unique as to subject matter and risk, each Program/Activity Administrator, Sponsoring Unit, or Third Party must evaluate the nature of the Program/Activity and take appropriate actions to ensure the safety and security of all individuals involved and to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

The following are key requirements for hosting Programs/Activities for Minors:

Review and Approval, Registration, Background Screenings, Supervision.

A. Review and Approval. Review and final approval of all Programs/Activities are contingent on multiple factors such as, information disclosed on the request form, contracts, fees, and appropriate liability insurance. All University Programs/Activities must be approved by the appropriate responsible party, as set forth in Section VIII. All Programs/Activities sponsored by third parties must certify compliance with this Policy to receive approval for facility use.

The following considerations should be addressed by the Program/Activity Administrator in advance of the Program/Activity:

1. Alignment of the Program/Activity with the University's mission;
2. Appropriate subject matter and fully planned activity itinerary;
3. Appropriate staffing and supervision ratios, with special regard to avoiding one-on-one contact between Minors and Program/Activity Staff;
4. Program/Activity Staff Code of Conduct and guidelines;
5. Appropriate training for Program/Activity Staff;
6. Minors conduct guidelines, applicable forms, waivers, and any supplemental Program/Activity guidelines;
7. Program/Activity orientation and information for Minors and parents;
8. Transportation arrangements;
9. Housing arrangements with special consideration for overnight Programs/Activities;
10. Contracts for Auxiliary Services and Food Services;
11. Safety and security planning including, but not limited to:
 - a. Basic first aid;
 - b. Emergency response and notification plans;
 - c. Reporting protocols for injury and/or illness; and
 - d. Inclement weather plans;
12. Response protocols for accusations of misconduct;
13. Insurance;
14. Any licensing or exemption required by a government agency; and
15. Record retention policies.

Programs/Activities must be registered within sufficient time to meet the requirements of this Policy, which is normally not less than 30 days before the Program/Activity's start date. Programs/Activities must be registered annually.

B. Program/Activities Registration. Every Program/Activity that produces an event or serves as a host to a third party must first seek approval through the Summer Camps office for summer events, as well as, its specific unit at other times during the academic year. The Program/Activity then must complete the Reservation Request Form, which is housed on the Campus Reservations website (reservations.mercer.edu). Summer camps and conferences should contact the Office of Student Affairs. The form, at a minimum, will consist of the following:

1. Event Name
2. Event Date
3. Department Responsible
4. Mercer University Event/Third-Party Event
5. Event Description
6. Number of Expected Attendees

Program registration must be complete at a minimum of 30 days prior to the date of the event to ensure a complete background check has occurred.

Parents/guardians must submit forms required by the Programs/Activities before Minors will be allowed to participate in Programs/Activities. These forms may include a participation agreement form, authorization to administer medication, pick-up authorization, medical information and authorization, release of claims/waiver of liability, media/photo/video release, and Minor participant conduct guidelines.

C. Background Screening. A criminal background check (including sex offender registry check) shall be required of all Program/Activity Staff who have direct contact with Minors. Background checks are the financial responsibility of the Program/Activity hosting the event. This includes but is not limited to third party or non-Mercer University personnel who work with, instruct, or otherwise interact with Minors on Mercer University’s campus, as well as Mercer University administrators, faculty, staff, students, and volunteers who work with, instruct, or otherwise interact with Minors. Mercer University Human Resources will conduct the background checks and maintain a database of individuals who have been cleared to participate. Personnel who do not meet this requirement will not be permitted to work, volunteer, or engage in any Program or Activity serving Minors on campus.

Background checks that are defined by and acceptable to the University must be conducted and the results evaluated prior to the Program/Activity Staff beginning to work with, instruct, or otherwise interact with Minors. Background checks must be completed at least every three years. Individual Programs or Activities may require more frequent updates. Following the completion of an initial background check, there is an affirmative duty for all administrators, faculty, staff, students, and volunteers who work with, instruct, or otherwise interact with Minors to notify Mercer University of new arrests and the disposition of any outstanding charges within three business days of such occurrences, and to cooperate in providing information necessary to evaluate the circumstances of the arrest and charges. There is also an affirmative duty for administrators, faculty, staff, students, and volunteers who work with, instruct, or otherwise interact with Minors to report within three business days any adverse information resulting from subsequent background checks and to cooperate in providing information necessary for evaluating the circumstances of the adverse information.

D. Supervision Ratios. All programs are required to ensure that each Program/Activity has a minimum of two adult supervisors at all times and to maintain the following Adult-to-Minor ratios for all Programs/Activities:

Required Supervision (Adult to Minor ratios)

Participant Age	Number of Adult Staff Supervisors	Number of Overnight Participants	Number of Day-only Participants
6 - 8 years	1	6	8
9 -13 years	1	8	10
14 -17 years	1	10	12

a. Transportation Supervision. Under no circumstances shall an authorized Mercer University employee be permitted to be alone with a Minor in a car or other vehicle. Any program providing transportation of participants by authorized Mercer University employees after drop-off by a parent or legal guardian to the campus, must have advance

parental/legal guardian approval and documentation kept on file by the Program/Activity Administrator.

b. Housing Supervision. All overnight Programs/Activities held on Mercer University's campus must have their own chaperones in compliance with the above ratios. In addition, all programs that house participants overnight in residential housing shall enter into a written agreement with Housing and Residence Life for use of the facilities.

V. Mandatory Reporting and Safety Protocols

Any Program/Activity Administrator or Program/Activity Staff or other Mandatory Reporter under Georgia law who has reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred shall immediately report the suspected abuse to the Mercer University Police and the appropriate supervisor or Program/Activity Administrator who is able to take immediate action. The University must ensure that the Division of Family and Children Services is notified of the suspected abuse as soon as possible and in no case later than 24 hours after the Program/Activity Administrator or Program/Activity Staff (or other reporter) first had reasonable cause to suspect the abuse.

Mandatory Reporter: Any person who is required by Georgia law (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5) to report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities. Mandatory Reporters include but are not limited to faculty/teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, psychologists, law enforcement personnel, and other persons who participate in providing care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to Minors.

All Program/Activity Administrators and Staff are required by law to report known or suspected instances of the abuse, neglect, or endangerment of Minors. It is important to understand that every member is required to report any type of suspected abuse, neglect or inadequate care and not just child sexual abuse. **This includes suspicion of abuse that may have occurred outside of the Program/Activity hours.**

An oral report must be made as soon as possible by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, no later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. For more information on who is a mandated reporter, please refer to <https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx>.

All Program/Activity Administrators and Staff must complete the free mandatory child abuse reporter training created by the Department of Family and Children's Services, which is available at: https://www.prosolutionstraining.com/store/product/?tProductVersion_id=1093. Training for all Program/Activity Staff must be completed and documented prior to the start of the Program/Activity or the Program/Activity Staff will not be permitted to participate in the Program/Activity for Minors. All Program/Activity Administrators will be required to send a copy of their Program/Activity Staff's completed training certificates to the responsible party listed below in Section VIII, and a copy shall be kept on file by the Program/Activity Administrator.

Reports of suspected child abuse shall be reported to the following as soon as possible:

- A.** Mercer Police at 478-301-4357; and
- B.** Department of Family and Children Services at 1-855-422-4453

VI. Conduct Guidelines

Mercer University is committed to the safety and protection of Minors on its campus. The University requires the highest standards of conduct when interacting with Minors. Program/Activity Administrators and Program/Activity Staff are required to comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including, the Student Code of Conduct, Employee Code of Conduct, University Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, and University Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Violence Policy. The following guidelines are not all-inclusive, but serve as examples of the conduct that should be observed by Program/Activity Administrators and Staff:

- A.** Do not engage in any sexual activity, make sexual comments, tell sexual jokes or share sexually explicit material (or assist in any way to provide access to such material) with Minors.
- B.** To the extent possible, avoid being alone with a single Minor (e.g. bathrooms, locker rooms). If one-on-one interaction is required (e.g. individual music lessons, research), meet in open, well illuminated spaces or rooms with windows observable by other adults from the program, unless the one-on-one interaction is expressly authorized by the Program Administrator, dean, department chair person or is being undertaken by a health care provider.
- C.** Do not meet with Minors outside of established times for Program activities. Any exceptions require written parental authorization and must include more than one adult from the Program. Any one-on-one interaction should be in open, well-illuminated spaces or that are observable to other adults.
- D.** Do not invite Minors to your home. Any exceptions require authorization by the Program Administrator and written authorization by a parent/guardian.
- E.** Do not engage or allow Minors to engage others in romantic or sexual conversations, including telling sexual jokes, sharing sexually explicit material, etc.
- F.** Do not engage or communicate with Minors through email, text messages, social networking websites, internet chat rooms, or other forms of social media at any time except and unless there is an educational or programmatic purpose and the content of the communication is consistent with the Program/Activity and the University.
- G.** Do not engage in any abusive conduct of any kind toward, or in the presence of, a Minor, including but not limited to coercion, verbal abuse, striking, hitting, punching, poking, spanking, or restraining. If restraint is necessary to protect a Minor from harm, all incidents must be documented and disclosed to the Program/Activity Administrator and the Minor's parent/guardian.
- H.** Do not use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on duty or when responsible for a Minor's welfare.
- I.** When transporting Minors in a program, more than one adult from the program must be present in the vehicle, except when multiple Minors will be in the vehicle at all times through the transportation. Avoid using personal vehicles if possible.
- J.** Do not possess or use any type of weapon or explosive device while on duty or when responsible for a Minor's welfare.
- K.** Corporal punishment is not allowed by Program/Activity Administrators and Staff.

VII. Violations and Sanctions

Violators of this Policy will be held accountable for their actions under the Program/Activity's Code of Conduct, University Policy, and applicable law. Sanctions for violations may include, but are not limited to, suspension of University funding, non-renewal or termination of the Program/Activity, suspension, dismissal, or termination of University employment or Program/Activity status, or removal or barring from University Facilities.

VIII. Policy Responsibility

Summer Camps and Conferences:

A. Non-Athletic Summer Camps and Conferences: All non-athletic summer camps and conferences serving Minors on campus shall report to the following responsible parties as applicable for each campus:

1. In Macon, the contact person for any inquiries regarding Non-Athletic Summer Camps and Conferences is the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

Phone Number: (478) 301-2685

Email: Murfree_sw@mercer.edu

2. In Atlanta, the contact person for any inquiries regarding Non-Athletic Summer Camps and Conferences is the Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives.

Phone Number: (678) 547-6397

Email: Appel_k@mercer.edu

B. Athletic Summer Camps and Conferences: The Athletics Department is responsible for all athletics summer camps and conferences serving Minors on campus. The contact person within Athletics for any inquiries regarding Programs/Activities serving Minors on campus is the Deputy Director of Athletics for Academic Affairs and Senior Woman Administrator.

Phone Number: (478) 301-2301

Email: Blalock_sa@mercer.edu

Student Organizational Events:

The Office of Student Affairs is responsible for all student organizational Programs/Activities serving Minors on campus. The contact person within Student Affairs for any inquiries regarding Programs/Activities serving Minors on campus shall be as follows for each campus:

A. In Macon, the contact person for any inquiries regarding Programs/Activities serving Minors on campus is the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

Phone Number: (478) 301-2685

Email: Murfree_sw@mercer.edu

B. In Atlanta, the contact person for any inquiries regarding Programs/Activities serving Minors on campus is the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs.

Phone Number: (678) 547-6823

Email: Strowbridge_cl@mercer.edu

All Other Events:

The Sponsoring Unit's Dean, Director, Vice President, or Department Head, as applicable, shall be the responsible party for all other Programs/Activities serving Minors on campus. All inquiries regarding Programs/Activities other than Summer Camps/Conferences and Student Organizational

Events shall be directed to the Sponsoring Unit's Dean, Director, Vice President, or Department Head.

Mercer University reserves the right to amend and revise this Policy throughout the year as deemed necessary and without prior notification. Any amendments and revisions will be posted to the University web site promptly.

RESOURCES:

Access and Accommodations: www.access.mercer.edu

Auxiliary Services: www.auxiliary.mercer.edu

Campus Reservations: www.reservations.mercer.edu/

Title IX – Sexual Misconduct & Discrimination: www.titleix.mercer.edu

Housing: www.residencelife.mercer.edu

Food Services: www.mercer.campusdish.com

Mercer Police: www.police.mercer.edu

Office of the General Counsel: <https://www.mercer.edu/about-mercero/office-of-the-president/presidents-cabinet/hall/>

Department of Family and Children's Services: <https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx>

Office of Student Affairs: www.studentaffairs.mercer.edu

Office of the Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives: <https://www.mercer.edu/about-mercero/office-of-the-president/presidents-cabinet/appel/>

Office of the Deputy Director of Athletics for Academic Affairs and Senior Woman Administrator: <https://mercerbears.com/staff-directory/sybil-blalock/95>