

Youth deserve the best that an Optimist Club has to offer. This includes the relationship and interaction between the youth impacted by Optimist Programs and those adults who so generously give of themselves to assure the success of Optimist International. All adults working with Optimist programs for youth under the age of 18 are expected to read/understand, agree to, and abide by these guidelines. **This policy is not mandated but is suggested for all Clubs.**

**Chaperone:** A chaperone shall be defined as an Optimist member, faculty member, parent, legal guardian, or person who is serving in the place of a parent, over the age of twenty-one (21), approved by the school, and registered with and accompanying the youth members at an Optimist Club event.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** While attending any project, meeting, social event, or other gathering that is produced primarily by or for the benefit of youth, adults are expected to refrain from consumption of alcoholic beverages during any portion of the event.

**Use of Tobacco:** While attending any project, meeting, social event, or other gathering that is produced primarily by or for the benefit of youth, adults are expected to refrain from the use of tobacco products in the presence of youth.

**Overnight stays:** While attending an event that requires overnight stay in a hotel or camp/conference setting, adequate adult chaperoning is expected and should include no fewer than one adult male for each ten or part of ten youth males, and one adult female for each ten or part of ten youth females. Except for a parent sharing a sleeping room with a child of the parent, no adult should share a hotel or dormitory sleeping room with a youth. In the event that sleeping quarters consist of multiple beds, such as a bunkhouse or camp cabin, adults may share the sleeping quarter with youth members of the same gender, provided that two or more adults are present.

**Transportation:** Adults transporting youth in a motor vehicle should do so with a second adult in the vehicle, or in hardship cases, the "rule of threes" being at least three people in the car at all times, is recommended.

**Medications:** The possession of prescription and non-prescription medications by youth at an event should be permitted only by permission of the parent/guardian.

**Background checks:** Background checks for adults working with youth may be required and should conform to applicable local and state/provincial laws and requirements. In the absence of local or state/provincial regulations, Optimist Clubs are advised to undertake confidential background checks for all adults who will be working directly with youth who may not have undergone a background check.

**Conflicts with other rules:** Whenever these guidelines may conflict with local state/provincial, or national laws or regulations, the highest applicable standards for conduct are expected to prevail.

**Personal Information:** All documents bearing personal information, including registration forms, medical information forms, permission to treat forms, etc. should be treated as being confidential. Processes that protect this information should be created, including minimizing the number of people who have access to any such documents. The documents should be maintained a minimum of three years or longer as may be required by applicable state/provincial laws and regulations. After the maintenance period has expired, the documents should be destroyed in a way that maintains confidentiality, such as shredding. It is also expected that the disposal and destruction of all confidential information will conform to applicable state/provincial laws and regulations.

**Two-deep leadership:** Two registered adult leaders or one registered adult leader and a parent of a participant, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required on all trips and outings.

**No one-on-one contact:** One on one contact between adults and youth is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and youths.

**Respect of privacy:** Adult leadership needs to respect the privacy of youth in situations such as changing into swimming suits or taking showers and intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires. They also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

**Separate accommodations:** There should be separate shower and restroom facilities for males and females; when separate facilities are not available, times for males and females use should be scheduled and posted for showers.

**No secret organizations:** There are no “secret” organizations recognized by Optimist International. All aspects of our programs are open to observation by parents and leaders.

**Appropriate attire:** Proper clothing for activities is required- for example, skinny-dipping is not appropriate.

**Constructive discipline:** Discipline should be constructive and reflect our values. Corporal punishment is never permitted.

**Hazing prohibited:** Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any activity.

**Investigation of abuse:** Remember that you are not an investigator and that the investigation of allegations of abuse is best left to a trained investigator. Action on reports of suspected child abuse may be facilitated by working through child protective services and law enforcement agencies in your area. Each state has an agency designated to be the central reporting authority for child abuse within that state. The staff of these agencies may be available to provide additional information and training to leaders. Additional sources of assistance can be provided from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN); P.O. Box 1182, Washington DC 20013. Optimists will not tolerate any form of child abuse in their programs and will take all necessary steps to remove any offenders from leadership positions.

**Education:** Every Optimist Club is expected to inform and educate its members on these guidelines and best practices annually.

### **Criminal History Background Checks**

To ensure that adults working with youth in Optimist Club sponsored programs are of the utmost moral fiber, a clear criminal history background check should be required for all adults (Optimist members and non-members) registered for, participating in, or staying overnight at any event an Optimist Club organizes that involves interaction between adults and youth under age 18.

Successful completion of the background check (a "clear check") is based on verification that none of the convictions stated above or similar thereto have been determined for that person. For adults working at the youth events stated above, a clear check is necessary prior to arrival at the event.

Anyone subject to action as a result of a background check should have the right to appeal such action. The Optimist Club's Board of Directors shall have final authority on the matter.

An individual should receive a copy of his/her background check by requesting it in writing.

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