



Abuse Avoidance Policy – Adopted August 11, 2009

1. Statement of Conduct for Working with Children

Raising A Reader Aspen to Parachute (RAR) is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in its activities. It is the duty of all employees and volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of youth and to prevent physical abuse, sexual abuse and harassment, sexual misconduct and indecent exposure, and emotional abuse.

2. Definitions

Volunteer: Any adult involved in an RAR activity or task - either supervised or unsupervised – on a nonpaid basis. This includes but is not limited to board members, committee members, readers, event helpers, interns, community service workers and office assistants.

Children/Child: Youth under the age of 18 involved with RAR.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse refers to engaging in implicit or explicit sexual acts with a child, or forcing or encouraging a child to engage in implicit or explicit sexual acts, alone or with another person of any age.

Sexual Misconduct: Sexual misconduct means an illegal sexual offense.

Indecent exposure: Exposing a child to sexual or pornographic material.

Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment refers to sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In some cases, sexual harassment precedes sexual abuse and is a technique used by sexual predators to desensitize or “groom” their victims.

Examples of sexual harassment could include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual advances
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one’s sex life, and comments about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or drawings
- Sexual leering or whistling, any inappropriate physical contact, such as brushing or touching, obscene language or gestures, and suggestive or insulting comments

Physical Abuse: Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person’s physical or mental health. Physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the physical health of a child or adult with developmental disabilities.

3. Staff Screening

- Prior to employment, all staff members must complete a background check authorization form to allow RAR to conduct a criminal background check.
- Staff members will receive a copy and agree to abide by the Raising A Reader Aspen to Parachute Abuse Policy.

4. Volunteer Screening

Volunteers interested in participating in an RAR program shall receive a copy and agree to abide by the Raising A Reader Aspen to Parachute Abuse Policy. Additionally, volunteers shall complete a written application and a personal interview.

5. Unsupervised interaction with children

As of this writing, there have been no sanctioned activities in RAR's five-year history in which a child is engaged one-on-one with an unsupervised RAR employee or volunteer. All contact with children occurs in a supervised classroom setting or in an environment that includes at least one teacher or parent responsible for the child but not directly affiliated with RAR. This practice is expected to continue and RAR does not expect any situation to arise where there will be unsupervised volunteer or staff member engaged in a one-to-one interaction with a child.

6. Implementation:

All employees and volunteers shall be provided a copy of this policy and must agree to comply with this policy.

7. Allegation Reporting Guidelines

RAR is committed to protecting the safety and well being of children and will not tolerate their abuse or harassment. Persons who have knowledge of possible violations of this policy must report immediately to a supervisor. All allegations of abuse or harassment will be taken seriously. RAR will take appropriate action to seek justice including reporting to appropriate authorities, investigation and due process. RAR will cooperate with all law enforcement, child protective services, and legal investigations, and will only conduct its own independent investigations such that it does not interfere with other investigations.

RAR requires that any volunteer or potential staff member who has admitted to, been convicted of, or otherwise found to have engaged in sexual abuse or harassment be prohibited from working in any RAR context. If an individual is accused of sexual abuse or harassment, and the investigation into the claim is inconclusive, then, for the safety of children participants and the protection of the accused, additional safeguards must be put in place to assure the protection of any child with whom the individual may have future conduct. A person later cleared of charges may apply to be reinstated to participate in RAR programs. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his or her former position.