

Child Protection Policy

Purpose: PEEC is strongly committed to protecting the children in its care from harm.

Applicability: This policy applies to all people (herein referred to as personnel) acting in an official capacity for the Pajarito Environmental Education Center, whether as a paid employee, contract labor, volunteer, board member, or in any other capacity, and at any location where official PEEC activities are taking place. Employees of outside licensed and insured entities are exempt from this policy.

Organizational Responsibilities and Tasks

Hiring Practices and Screening

1. **Background Checks.** PEEC will conduct a search for criminal activity by any prospective personnel (except for those who will be doing limited-time work while in the presence of a cleared PEEC personnel at all times--this might include someone who gives a talk for PEEC or on-site exhibit fabricators). This search may be through law enforcement agencies or through entities that provide such services and may include: examining local, county, state records throughout the entire country; and searching various registered sex offender lists. However, a conviction does not automatically generate a rejection of the application — all cases are individually evaluated.
2. **Reference Checks.** PEEC will contact at least three references for all prospective employees. Past employers will be asked if the person is eligible for rehire. Written and electronic references will be accepted.

Training and Education

1. **Code of Conduct.** Personnel will sign and date a copy of the Code of Conduct prior to performing any work duties. The signed Code of Conduct will be maintained in the personnel file for employees. All personnel will review and sign the code of conduct yearly.
2. **Child Abuse Prevention Training and Policy Review.** All employees and all contractors who work with children will take child abuse prevention training within 60 days of hire. All PEEC personnel will undergo a review of this child protection policy on an annual basis.

Program Design

1. **Child to Personnel Ratios.** Our programs will be designed with a child to personnel ratio based on the following recommendations from the American Camp Association, the New Mexico Department of Education, and the Los Alamos Public Schools.

	American Camp Association	New Mexico Department of Education	LAPS day trips	LAPS overnight trips
Age early pre-K		1:8	1:15 for all ages	1:10 for all ages
Pre-K		1:10		
Kinder		1:14		
Grades 1-3 or Ages 6-8	1:8	1:20		
Grades 4-6 or ages 9-14	1:10	1:24		
Grades 7-12 or ages 15-18	1:12	1:27		

2. Caring for Children with Special Needs. On all registration forms for drop-off programs, we will ask the question, “Is there anything you want PEEC educators to know about your child that will improve their camp experience?” Personnel will work with parents to provide for children’s individual needs whenever possible.

3. Diapering, Bathroom Use, and Clothing Changes. PEEC does not allow children who are not toilet-trained in drop-off programs. Young children in PEEC drop-off programs should be supervised when using the restroom using the rule of three (see below). If feasible, the adult or teen counselor may stand in the hall and prop the main restroom door open while children use individual stalls. In a public place, personnel must observe who enters and exits the restroom while children under their care are using it. If young children are unable to perform clothing changes without assistance, personnel can, while using the rule of three, assist them. Parents should be encouraged to dress children in clothing they can manage on their own.

4. After-program Pick Up. Children will be released from events according to the pick-up plan specified by their parent or guardian. This may include being picked up by a parent or other relative, friend or friend’s family, or leaving on their own to walk, bike, ride a bus, etc., to their next destination. If the pick-up plan changes, parents must notify PEEC in writing (email or text is fine).

Individual Personnel Responsibilities and Tasks

1. **Rule of Three.** PEEC personnel must never be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others during any official PEEC activity. This is referred to as the “Rule of Three.”

2. **Personnel Treatment of Children in their Care.** Personnel shall not abuse children including:
 physical abuse – strike, spank, shake, slap;
 verbal abuse – humiliate, degrade, threaten;
 sexual abuse – inappropriate touch or verbal exchange;
 mental abuse – shaming, withholding love, cruelty;
 neglect – withholding food, water, basic care, etc.

Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate dismissal.

3. **Touching Children.** Personnel will respect children’s rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Before touching a child, personnel will ask for permission from the child. Personnel should not assume children are comfortable with touch. Assume they are not comfortable with it and ask permission first. Children are not to be touched in areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
4. **Use of Substances.** Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while supervising children as a PEEC representative is prohibited. Smoking or vaping or the use of tobacco in the presence of children or parents during working hours is prohibited.
5. **Interactions with Minors not in Person.** PEEC personnel will only communicate with minor participants, volunteers, and contractors about official PEEC business. Whenever possible, PEEC personnel will include others in communications with minors, for example, copy their supervisor on emails, include another person in phone and Zoom interactions, and CC Katie’s Google Voice number (505-500-4373) when texting a minor. An exception can be made if the PEEC personnel has a relationship with the minor outside of the PEEC program.
6. **Reporting Inappropriate Behavior and/or Violations of the Code of Conduct.** All persons in New Mexico are mandatory reporters. If you witness or suspect abuse of a child, you must report this to child protective services or law enforcement at 1-855-333-SAFE [7233] or #SAFE from a cell phone. There is more information about mandatory reporting from CYFD (<https://cyfd.org/child-abuse-neglect/reporting-abuse-or-neglect>) Reporters may remain anonymous. Unless safety reasons prevent them from doing so, personnel should also inform their supervisor or their supervisor’s supervisor that they have made a report, and fill out a PEEC Incident Report form.

If there is an incident or alleged incident of abuse or violation of this PEEC Child Protection Policy or PEEC Code of Conduct by a PEEC personnel, that person will be immediately suspended (with or without pay, depending on the circumstances of the incident and the final determination of the executive director and the executive committee of the board) pending the outcome. If there is an incident or alleged incident of abuse by a program participant, program personnel and their supervisors will make a determination as to whether the participant can remain in the program in a manner that is safe for them and other participants.

By signing and dating below, I agree to abide by this policy.

Printed Name: _____

Signature

Date