

Balloon Federation of America

BFA Youth Program - To ensure the Future of Ballooning

YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

The Balloon Federation of America is committed to protecting youth that are involved in the BFA Youth Program. We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment in which youth can participate and learn about balloon flight and aviation.

The goal of the BFA Youth Protection Policy is to assure the safety of young participants in every BFA Youth Program Activity. We must earn and sustain the confidence of the families who have trusted their youth to us. We will provide the training to inspire good choices and appropriate care for all BFA Youth Program participants.

- The term “youth” when used within this Policy means any person under age 18.
- All references to “parent” in this policy include a legal guardian where appropriate.
- The term “Activity Director” means a BFA member approved to be responsible for a specific BFA Youth Program Activity.
- The term “Activity Staff” means volunteers identified by the Activity Director to be supervisors.

Volunteer Standards

The BFA Youth Protection Policy includes the following steps. All BFA Youth Program Activity Staff are required to complete both online training and a Criminal History Background Check, with acceptable results in the BFA’s judgment before they have contact with youth or access to their personal information, even if they have previously volunteered with youth in other organizations.

- Please note that parents and legal guardians of youth participants may also be identified as Activity Staff, and as such they are subject to the same BFA Youth Protection Volunteer Standards as other BFA Youth Program Activity Staff.
- If you are a minor and a volunteer, you also are subject to the same requirements within the BFA Youth Program Volunteer Standards; however, background checks are not available for minors. The Activity Director will screen you on a case by case basis, and you must be approved by the BFA Youth Program Chair.
- BFA staff who are involved with BFA Youth Program activities are subject to the same requirements as other BFA Youth Program Activity Staff.
- Adults who are providing ancillary support in the BFA Youth Program Activity, that are not required to complete the Training and Background Check as

described above, are still requested to complete at least the Online Training, in order that all adults will have consistent understanding of BFA's Youth Program Protection Policy.

Training

- Online Training. This is an online Youth Protection Course that takes approximately fifteen minutes to complete, with a final test at the end of the course. The board will need to support this.
- Site Training. You will also need to complete onsite training for each individual activity covering specific policies that have been developed for that unique activity location.

Criminal History Background Check

This is a confidential criminal history background check, and it requires acceptable results in BFA's judgment. Certain results – listed under Disqualifying Criteria below – will automatically disqualify you from working with youth. We may only proceed with a background check if you give us permission through a release. The background check will be conducted by our third- party background check provider, at our expense. Our policy is to update criminal history background checks for "Required" volunteers at least every three years. Your background check results will be evaluated by the BFA Youth Program Chair on a strictly confidential basis to determine whether you meet this requirement for volunteers in the BFA Youth Program. Any additional information discovered after the background check process will be evaluated and is subject to the same disqualifying criteria.

Disqualifying Criteria

- You will automatically be ineligible to volunteer in the BFA Youth Program if you:
- Fail to complete the screening process or provide information required to conduct a criminal history background check or provide that information in a timely fashion if we ask you to do so.
- Are or ever have been a Registered Sex Offender in any jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or date of the offense.
- Have been convicted of any felony involving force or threat of force against a person, regardless of the date of conviction.
- Have been convicted of any crime characterized as a "sex offense" including, but not limited to, child molestation, rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, prostitution, solicitation, indecent exposure, or possession or distribution of illegal pornography, regardless of the date of conviction.
- Have been convicted of any crime involving cruelty to animals, regardless of the date of conviction.

- Have been convicted of any crime involving contributing to the delinquency of a minor, regardless of the date of conviction.
- Have been convicted of any crime involving controlled substances, within the previous five (5) years.
- Were previously terminated from a paid or volunteer position because of misconduct with youth.
- Are under pending charges, incarceration, or allegations by law enforcement officials in any jurisdiction involving a sex offense as described above, force or threat of force against a person, cruelty to animals, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, controlled substances, or misconduct with a youth. The period of ineligibility will end if the relevant charges, incarceration, or allegations are dropped or otherwise terminated by said law enforcement officials without a conviction.

All other criminal convictions or other criminal history will be discretionary disqualifiers, to be evaluated confidentially by the BFA Youth Program Chair on a case-by-case basis with consideration of the nature and date of the offense.

Appeal Process

If you are informed that you do not meet our background screening criteria for volunteering in the BFA Youth Program, you may do any of the following: Withdraw your application; Dispute the accuracy of the background screening report, subject to verification; or Request a waiver of disqualification.

Documentation

We will confidentially document any decision regarding disqualification of a BFA Youth Program volunteer. Documentation will also be kept on any volunteer whose behavior is contradictory to the BFA Youth Program Protection Policy. We will maintain a database, which will be accessible through the BFA Youth Program Chair, that will include volunteers who have qualified to work with youth in the BFA Youth Program. The database will not include applicants who have not qualified.

Barriers to Abuse

We believe that effective supervision is a key to maintaining the highest youth safety standards in all BFA Youth Program activities. Our supervision requirements are designed specifically to protect youth and Activity Staff. These guidelines expect you to use common sense to protect youth, Activity Staff and the BFA Youth Program.

Identification

To identify volunteers who have completed the Training and Background Check requirements, badges or some other means of identification must be used. All those participating in the activity need to be educated on the labeling requirement.

Two-Deep Leadership

This term means that at least two activity staff who have completed both the Training and Background Check described above will always be in attendance as supervisors during any BFA Youth Program activity.

“Being in attendance as supervisors” means that the activity staff is required to both be present and actively circulating through the area to monitor all activities for appropriate behavior.

Open Door Policy

There should never be one-on-one contact between youth and adults. Many claims of molestation or abuse arise from instances when adults are in isolated areas with youth. When using smaller rooms or enclosed areas for youth activity, ensure that the doors are always left open and you are in sight of another trained and background checked activity staff, for the protection of the youth and yourself.

Youth Program Flights and Chase Vehicle

For obvious practical reasons, there is no requirement that Two-Deep Leadership be required on BFA Youth Program flights or in the chase vehicle. Both the pilot and the chase driver must be trained, and background checked and there should be a minimum of two youth present.

Outings

When youth are outside of activity boundaries there is a higher chance of interaction with non-background checked individuals. There needs to be a higher level of supervision to monitor those interactions. Activity Directors need to have a plan for these situations that is shared with and monitored by all Activity Staff present.

Special Circumstances

The Activity Director is expected to determine, based on individual activity schedule, any areas where these policies need to be adjusted and communicate these situations to the BFA Youth Program Chair for approval. Any situations not discussed prior to camp should be shared with the BFA Youth Program Chair via the Incident Report Form.

Separate Accommodations

To the best of their ability, residential camps should strive to separate youth from adults and boys from girls in sleeping and shower facilities. Adults and youth, youth boys and girls may not ever share the same sleeping rooms. If adults and youth, boys and girls must share shower facilities, there must be a shower schedule made and posted to ensure adults and youth, boys and girls shower at separate times.

Digital Privacy

A key ingredient in a safe and healthy youth activity experience is the respect for privacy. Advances in technology are enabling new forms of social interaction that extend beyond the appropriate use of cameras and recording devices. Although most youth and volunteers use digital devices responsibly, educating them about the appropriate use of cell phones and cameras is required.

Contact with Youth

We expect that you, as BFA Youth Program Activity Staff, will have positive relationships with the youth you meet through BFA Youth Program activities. However, to maximize youth safety, we must require the following common-sense restrictions to ensure that both the youth and volunteers are protected outside of BFA Youth Program activities.

- Outside Activities - Do not initiate meetings or interactions outside BFA Youth Program activities with any youth or extend your relationship to other activities without communication with a parent at the same time.
- Communications - Do not communicate outside BFA Youth Program activities directly with any youth. Limit communication to the following:
 - Telephone calls or texts to the parent's telephone (not the youth's mobile phone).
 - E-mails addressed to both the youth and his or her parents; and
 - Written information sent to the parents' home.

Prohibited Activities:

Physical Force and Abuse. For obvious reasons, the following are strictly prohibited:

- Physical force or violence – Slapping, spanking, hitting, shoving, corporal punishment, and similar behaviors, by Activity Staff or volunteers or by other youth.
- Sexual communication or contact – Dating or other private contacts; discussing sexual subjects of any kind; and touching in an area typically covered by a bathing suit, by yourself or by other youth; any touching that might cause the youth to feel uncomfortable.

- Neglect Punishing a youth by withholding food, water, shelter, medical assistance, or other needs.
- Bullying Intentionally harmful behavior directed toward a specific youth or group of youths with the intent or effect of intimidating, causing emotional or psychological harm, or causing isolation or humiliation, by staff, volunteers, or other youth.

Activities Requiring Special Consideration

Physical Contact

We very strongly discourage demonstrations of affection and physical contact. These should only be given on rare occasions when clearly required to meet a youth's specific needs, never to meet your needs or desires. Limit any touching to handshakes and brief cross-shoulder hugs, and never touch a youth in areas that are typically covered by a bathing suit. In some situations, you may need to assist the camper in ways that require touching. These situations should only happen in view of other trained and background checked Activity Staff.

Photography

Copies of all photographs of youth must be made available to parents upon request, and the right of parents to withhold consent for the use of their children's photographs must always be respected. Do not give the last names of youth in connection with their photographs.

Social Media Guidelines

BFA Youth Program Activity Staff may post appropriate pictures of youth and activities on social media. Individual youth cannot be tagged in these postings. Youth may not tag other youth as well. The use of live streaming must be carefully considered and should never be used during flight operations.

Discipline

To maximize the safety and well-being of participants in the BFA Youth Program activities, all youth must exhibit proper behavior and self-control toward the environment, equipment and other BFA Youth Program participants. Misbehavior includes such conduct as fighting, yelling, verbal abuse, physical violence, disrespectful behavior to include digital media, foul language, unsportsmanlike conduct, lying, endangering oneself or another, stealing, and disobeying Activity Staff, or volunteers. In situations where a youth has acted inappropriately, depending on severity, the following actions may be taken and should be documented on the BFA Youth Program Incident Report:

First Offense

Youth will have a conversation with the Activity Director. At the director's discretion, the youth's parents will be notified of the behavior. Depending on the severity of the misbehavior, the youth may be removed from the activity immediately, in the sole judgment of the Activity Director.

Second Offense

Youth's parents will be notified of the behavior verbally and in writing. Depending on the severity of the misbehavior, the youth may be removed from the activity immediately, in the sole judgment of the Activity Director.

Third Offense

Youth will be removed from the activity location and disqualified from future participation for one year. Parents will be responsible for making immediate arrangements for pick up from the activity location.

Suspected Criminal Conduct

Any suspected criminal conduct during the BFA Youth Program activity will be reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation and disposition.

Never use physical force on a youth except to temporarily restrain for his or her safety or the safety of surrounding people. In such a case, give prompt notice to the Activity Director, BFA Youth Program Chair and BFA President, and to the parents of the youth involved. An incident report must be filled out and filed immediately.

We reserve the right to remove a youth from the activity if the offense is serious or causes disruption to the activity or the enjoyment of other BFA Youth Program participants.

Reporting

You must promptly report all suspected or known child abuse and accidental injury, as described below. No person may abdicate this responsibility to any other person:

Definitions.

"Child abuse" means any intentional action, inaction, or event that endangers or injures the physical, psychological, or emotional well-being of a youth.

"Accidental injury" means a physical, psychological, or emotional injury to a youth that does not arise directly or indirectly from the intentional act or inaction of another person.

Steps to reporting Accidental Injury or Suspected or Known Child Abuse

You must report every suspected or known child abuse and accidental injury as follows:
Ensure that the child is in a safe environment.

1. Call 911 immediately, for any child abuse or accidental injury to a youth that requires any attention beyond simple first aid that is fully within the skill of a responsible person on the scene.
2. Contact the youth's parent immediately, for any known or suspected child abuse, or any injury that required a call to 911.
3. If the suspected abuser is in the youth's home or family, you are required to contact the local child abuse hotline.
4. Next, contact appropriate law enforcement officials immediately, in the event of known or suspected child abuse.
5. Within 24 hours, Complete the BFA Youth Program Incident Report and submit to the Activity Leader, BFA Youth Program Chair and BFA President

Violations of Safety Rules

If you know of any serious safety rules violations in a BFA Youth Program activity, report the matter to the BFA Youth Program Chair and the BFA President.

Further Steps

Any alleged perpetrator of child abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from the BFA Youth Program pending completion of an internal investigation. If outside authorities undertake an investigation, we will cooperate fully with any investigation.

We will review all reported suspicions, incidents, or suspected rule infractions, even if deemed to be minor, to determine whether further action is needed, and whether we must revise current policies and procedures to prevent similar future occurrences.

All parents will be provided this policy and have access to this Policy through the BFA' website and understand and accept that, by signing a waiver/release, they confirm their agreement to its terms.

Thank you for your support of the BFA Youth Program! Without your participation it would not be possible. We sincerely appreciate your taking the time to read and understand this policy.