

Rocky Mountain Conference
United Church of Christ
Outdoor Ministry Safer Camp Guidelines

Guidelines Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination

As a regional gathering of congregations of the United Church of Christ, the Rocky Mountain Conference United Church of Christ (RMC-UCC) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and gatherings in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship, learn, work, and play together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation.

The RMC-UCC provides equal opportunity for volunteers and paid Outdoor Ministry staff without regard to race, cultural background, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

- Selection of volunteers and paid staff shall be made on the basis of such factors as ability, aptitude, experience, training, education, relationship to a local congregation, and character. However, those qualified shall be chosen without regard to race, cultural background, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities
- The final authority to accept or exclude a volunteer or paid staff shall rest with the Director of Transformational Programs (DoTP), in consultation with La Foret and the RMC. For a person with disabilities, the consultation will also include the applicant and site management of the facility hosting the event.
- Appeals may be made to the Faith Nurturing Ministry Team whose decision will be final.

RMC-UCC Outdoor Ministry events shall be conducted so that campers and participants are not discriminated against due to race, cultural background, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities

- While campers and participants with disabilities are assessed on an individual basis in order that participation in an event does not knowingly place the registrant in a threatening situation, any harassment or discrimination at camp by event staff or associate staff due to disabilities is strictly prohibited.
- Where feasible and practical, reasonable accommodations will be sought to be provided for campers and participants with disabilities.
- The final authority to accept or exclude a camper or participant shall rest with the Director of Transformational Programs (DoTP), in consultation with the event director(s) and the participant, or the camper's parents/guardians. The consultation may also involve site management of the facility hosting the event.
- Appeals may be made to the Faith Nurturing Ministry Team whose decision will be final.

Guidelines Prohibiting Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment

All persons associated with the RMC-UCC should be aware that the Conference is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by these guidelines. It is the intention and responsibility of the Conference to take whatever action it determines to be appropriate to prevent and correct behavior and circumstances that are contrary to this guideline, and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this guideline.

Staff Conduct

The event director(s), every counselor, each volunteer and paid person working with or in conjunction with an Outdoor Ministry event are all Staff of the Rocky Mountain Conference Outdoor Ministry. Also, every adult recruited by a local church to staff a retreat or other event less than 72 hours in duration is considered Associate Staff of the RMC-UCC Outdoor Ministry. As such, each is responsible for understanding the ways in which their words and actions may affect others.

Sexual Exploitation/Harassment, and general Harassment/Discrimination of campers or others, by anyone engaged in the Outdoor Ministry of the RMC-UCC, is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this Conference.

All staff and associate staff may sometimes deal with individuals who are emotionally or personally vulnerable in some way. Therefore, it is important that all staff and associate staff be adequately prepared and educated for the events in which they serve, and to understand the ways in which their actions can impact those who may be vulnerable to the use or misuse of power by staff or associate staff.

It is the design of the RMC-UCC to encourage its outdoor ministry events staff and associate staff to nurture safety within Staff-Participant Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

All those engaged in outdoor ministry events will submit application and disclosure documents as noted below.

Camper and Participant Protection Guidelines

The RMC-UCC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which campers of all ages can explore new ideas, have visions, dream, and take risks as they harmonize their lives with the vision of the Gospel.

In support of this goal the following guidelines have been established.

- All Outdoor Ministry events housed at La Foret will be conducted as to be in compliance with the accreditations held by the La Foret Conference and Retreat Center through the Colorado Department of Human Service, Division of Child Care, and through the American Camping Association, as well as RMC-UCC guidelines. Events held away from La Foret are expected to comply with all Conference, state, and other policies which may apply.
- It is expected that those who volunteer to work at an RMC-UCC Outdoor Ministry Event as staff or associate staff will have been members of a church for at least six months, or if not members, regularly and frequently associated with a church for at least a year.
- It is the policy of this Conference to provide qualified supervision and safeguards for all events and particularly those involving children and youth. The goal of camper supervision is for children and youth to be readily visible to event staff or associate staff. In those situations where campers are away from main activity locations there will be no fewer than two unrelated staff/associate staff, or a staff/associate staff and two campers.
- All staff who work with campers or participants will complete and submit a disclosure document, including information and permission for a background check.
- Colorado State *General Rules for Child Care Facilities* and *Minimum Rules and Regulations for Children's Camps* differentiate between an event of more than 72 hours in duration and an event 72 hours or less. Those staffing the shorter events do not fall under the same background disclosure regulations as do those staffing the longer events, and therefore are not required to fill out such documents. The RMC-UCC, however, makes no exception for those who plan and direct

shorter events and requires the same type of background checks for these individuals as is required for the staff of the longer events.

- All staff and associate staff who work with children and youth will receive orientation to this overall policy. Staff or associate staff working with adults will receive a copy of this policy.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for the minor to serve as a junior counselor.
- In addition to the above, event directors may be asked to become familiar with other material per the discretion of the DoTP.

Requirements for Staff and Associate Staff

All individuals seeking to serve on or in conjunction with an Outdoor Ministry Event more than 72 hours in duration or are in leadership of an event 72 hours or less, are asked to submit appropriate information for a background check that will include criminal and sex offender records.

All staff will complete an application and disclosure form.

RMC/La Foret will conduct a review of sex offender registries for each staff individual.

Authorized staff and associate staff will attend all required boundary orientations each year they are active in the Outdoor Ministry of the RMC-UCC.

All staff and associate staff members are responsible to their event director(s), and to the Director of Transformational Programs (DoTP).

All event directors are responsible to the DoTP.

Definitions

Staff: a person engaged by the Conference to carry out the planning, conducting, or some other need in conjunction of an Outdoor Ministry Event. Staff includes appointed leaders, employees of the RMC-UCC, and volunteers who serve as event director(s), counselors, volunteer in some other capacity, nurse, and other paid positions. For the purpose of clarity with Colorado State regulations, a staff person is one who is involved either with an event that is longer than 72 hours, or with the leadership of an event that is less than 72 hours (such as most of RMC-UCC retreats)

Associate Staff: a person recruited by a local church or the RMC-UCC to chaperone a retreat or other event 72 hours or less in duration.

Please note that non-paid staffs, i.e. volunteers, are not employees of the RMC-UCC.

Camper: a registered participant in any Outdoor Ministry Event designed for youth still attending high school or younger aged children.

Participant: a registered adult participating in those Outdoor Ministry Events designed for young adults out of high school or older.

Staff-Participant Relationships: the relationship between a staff/associate staff and a camper or participant in any of the Outdoor Ministry events sponsored by the RMC-UCC.

Discrimination: treating a person differently in a negative way or with negative results because of race, cultural background, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

Harassment: any attempt by an employee, volunteers, or camper/participant to subject a person to unwanted attention, or to obtain special treatment based on stereotypes associated with race, cultural background, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities. Harassment may involve a wide range of behaviors from verbal innuendo and subtle suggestions to non-verbal acts and behaviors.

Sexual Misconduct: any sexual contact or activity engaged in with a person other than one's spouse, life partner, or person with whom a generally recognized dating relationship is being or has been established. Such activity may include but is not limited to touching or fondling erogenous zones, suggestive hugging, kissing and body rubbing, sexual intercourse, making implicit suggestions of sexual activity, or responding affirmatively to such invitations.

Any contact with a participant of an Outdoor Ministry Event (child, youth, or adult) for the purpose of the sexual excitement of the self or another person by any means physical or non-physical, and verbal or non-verbal actions, are acts of sexual misconduct.

It shall be considered sexual misconduct to respond affirmatively to implicit or explicit suggestions from minors. Any sexual activity with/or by a person under 18 years of age or a camper (even if older than 18) registered in an event designed for youth or younger children is sexual misconduct.

Sexual Harassment: any attempt by an employee, volunteers, or camper/participant to coerce a person into a sexual relationship, or to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention, or to punish a person for refusing to submit to a sexual invitation. Sexual harassment may involve a wide range of behaviors from verbal innuendo and subtle suggestions to overt demands and physical abuse.

RMC-UCC: The Rocky Mountain Conference United Church of Christ.

DoTP: The Director of Transformational Programs responsible for Outdoor Ministry Events.

DISCLAIMER

While it is the goal of the Rocky Mountain Conference, United Church of Christ to conduct Outdoor Ministry in as safe an environment as possible, **at no time should it be assumed that La Foret or any RMC-UCC Outdoor Ministry Event is risk free or that there is any guarantee of absolute safety in any Outdoor Ministry Event.** The RMC-UCC understands that numerous risks are associated with any camping/retreat activities. Some of these risks are inherent to an outdoor setting and contribute to the unique character and desirability of the activities involved, but nevertheless, may pose the possibility of severe injury, illness, or death. Absent gross negligence or willful misconduct, the Rocky Mountain Conference, United Church of Christ and its employees and agents shall have no liability with respect to any injury, illness, or death at any and all camp/retreats programs and activities.