

Society of Women Engineers

Youth Protection Policy



I. Purpose

The Society of Women Engineers (SWE) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all attendees at SWE-sponsored youth-focused events and programs including, but not limited to “Invent it. Build it.” (IIBI) held in conjunction with annual conference, or “STEMpowered Expo” held in conjunction with WE Local events in select cities throughout the world.

Ensuring the safety of youth participants at SWE-sponsored events is the most important responsibility of SWE staff and event volunteers. The following policy endeavors to protect event participants, staff, and volunteers during the preparation and execution of signature events engaging youth including IIBI and STEMpowered Expo, in addition to similar SWE-sponsored or funded outreach events or programs involving contact with youth globally.

All volunteers interacting with youth must review and act in accordance with this policy, complete all required training (including anti-bullying), and acknowledge agreement with the policy and the Code of Conduct (Standards for Interacting with Youth).

“Youth” are defined as event or program participants under the age of 18 years.

II. Event Procedures and Personnel Requirements

1. Events

- a. “Events” are one or more SWE-sponsored interactions with youth.
- b. More than one related event is a program and may be considered as a single event with respect to documenting staff and volunteer youth protection obligations during the program execution.
- c. Events include but are not limited to the following youth-facing activities where volunteer members may represent the Society at:
 - i. Speaker engagements
 - ii. Career Fairs
 - iii. Mentoring programs
 - iv. Virtual programs including use of technology to deliver key portions of the program.(e.g., e-mail, smart phones, text, learning management systems, online communication platforms)
 - v. Overnight camps or activities sponsored by SWE
 1. While attending a SWE event that requires an overnight stay in a hotel or camp/conference setting, adequate adult chaperoning is expected and must include at least one adult for each ten or part of ten youth.
 2. Any overnight SWE volunteer must be over 21 and have a clear criminal history background check. The check must be conducted

and verified by SWE. Approved background checks shall be valid for no more than three years.

3. Except for a parent sharing a sleeping room or other sleeping quarters (e.g., a tent) with their own child, no adult should share a hotel or dormitory sleeping room or other sleeping quarters with a youth.
4. In the event that sleeping quarters consist of multiple beds (such as in a bunkhouse or camp cabin), adults may share the sleeping quarters with youth members of the same gender, provided that two or more adults are present.

vi. Field trips

1. When transporting youth, the best practice is the “rule of threes,” with at least three people in the vehicle at all times, along with documented approval from a parent or guardian for the transportation arrangements. When both of these conditions cannot be met, one of them should be.
2. All transportation decisions should be made in accordance with local laws and school policies.

2. Event Participants

- a. All participants under the age of 18 (or other legal age of consent) require written parent/guardian permission to attend events.
 - i. Participants under the age of 16 must be signed in and out of the event by an adult parent or guardian. The guardian may be a participating organization leader.
 - ii. Participants over 16 may sign themselves In and out of the event with written parental permission. If they are not driving themselves, they must provide a name, relationship, and phone number for their pick up contact during registration or sign-in.

3. Event Leads

- a. “Event leads or leaders” are SWE members serving as part of the event leadership team.
- b. It is mandatory that event leads be aware of the requirements in their location (within or outside the US) for reporting reasonable suspicions of child abuse.**
 - i. Information about each US state requirement is available at the Child Welfare Information Gateway, www.childwelfare.gov. All states require that professionals who work with children report reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Some states require that anyone with suspicions report it.
 - ii. Information about non-US based youth protection requirements and regulations can be found in each country’s local child welfare laws. More resources and links are available [here](#) or [here](#) (UNICEF data).
- c. Event leads must complete any and all youth protection training required for event volunteers and may be required to complete supplemental training as needed by law or procedure.

4. Event Volunteers

- a. "Event volunteers" are SWE members and non-SWE personnel serving as volunteers for a particular SWE-sponsored youth-serving event.
- b. All event volunteers (including event leaders) must review [SWE's Bullying Prevention Guide](#) prior to volunteering.
- c. All event volunteers must also agree to a basic [Code of Conduct](#) to be confirmed and updated via the [Advanced Learning Center](#). Supplemental documentation requirements may be needed depending on local laws and regulations and will be updated annually as needed.
- d. Volunteers must comply with local health regulations when interacting at SWE-sponsored youth events.

5. SWE Staff

- a. "SWE Staff" are employees of SWE HQ.
- b. All SWE Staff serving at the event must be aware of the YPP.
- c. **It is mandatory that SWE Staff serving at the event be aware of the requirements in their location (within or outside the U.S.) for reporting reasonable suspicions of child abuse and communicate the same in any required youth protection procedures for volunteers.**

III. Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors, Policy Violations or Abuse of Event Participants

When event volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors, abuse of participants, or other behaviors which may violate any provision of these policies for protection of event participants, they must immediately report their observations to the event leads or SWE staff, and, where appropriate or required by law, to local law enforcement.

1. There are many types of child abuse, but the following are some of the most common: (From the U.S. Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families)
 - a. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child.
 - b. Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child.
 - c. Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and another child when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child has power over the other child. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any children attending the event.
 - d. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development or psychological functioning.
 - e. Neglect is the failure to provide for the basic needs of a child or the failure to protect a child from harm.
 - f. Economic exploitation is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of belongings or money of a child.
 - g. Bullying is seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce (someone perceived as vulnerable).
2. Such inappropriate behaviors, possible policy violations or abuse should be reported in one of the following ways:

- a. A telephone call or meeting with the event leads.
 - b. A telephone call or meeting with SWE staff.
 - c. A written letter, signed or unsigned, to the event leader or SWE staff. If no email has been provided in event documents, send to HQ@SWE.org.
3. All reports of inappropriate behavior, policy violations, or abuse will be taken seriously.
 4. Where appropriate or required by law, the event leader or SWE staff will notify local law enforcement. Event leads and volunteers will cooperate with any investigation by local law enforcement to the fullest extent.

IV. Privacy

Photographs or videos may be taken during SWE events. This may be done as a group or individual photo during the event or as part of an educational or media story, event promotion or event recap (*including but not limited to SWE website, SWE Facebook page, SWE Social Media, news stories or reports on the event*). No participant will be identified by full name unless approved by parent/guardian.

Event leaders and volunteers should take every precaution to protect participants from inappropriate or unpermitted use of their name, personal information, or photographic image in social media. Photo releases signed by parent/guardian are used and participants may opt out of any photo. Participants who opt out of media and data releases must be clearly and discreetly identified to ensure exclusion during data collection/analysis and media production.

1. For any social networking site that involves requesting a connection (such as inviting someone to be a friend on Facebook), adults should never initiate such connections with youth. If a youth requests such a connection from a SWE volunteer, the volunteer should use their best judgment in responding.
2. Adults should treat their interaction with youth on social networking sites as though the interaction were occurring in public, in front of other adults and young people. In other words, if it would not be appropriate to say something to a young person in public, it should not be said as a comment on a social networking site either.
3. SWE volunteers should refrain from social media interactions that can be seen as excessive (such as constantly “liking” or commenting on a person’s posts on Facebook).
4. Prior to posting any media online, such as photographs, secure written permission from any and all individuals (or parents, for minors) who appear in that media.

V. Conflicts with Other Rules

Whenever these guidelines conflict with local school policies or rules, or local state/provincial, or national laws or regulations, the highest applicable standards for conduct shall prevail.

VI. Policy Compliance

The Code of Conduct: Standards for Interacting with Youth is intended to assist in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with youth to identify and stop those that may be inherently harmful or that may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily.

1. The Code of Conduct is the documentary evidence that volunteers are in compliance with this Policy.
2. A digital repository will be established and maintained to measure adherence.

- 3.** All volunteers who will interact in any way with youth at SWE-sponsored events must review and agree to the Code of Conduct, and acknowledge the consequences for violation, prior to volunteering.