

SWE Advocacy Code of Conduct

Standards For Interacting with Youth

In accordance with the Society of Women Engineers [Youth Protection Policy](#), it is our duty to safeguard the youth in our care. The following Code of Conduct describes the minimum expectations that SWE holds for personnel who interact with youth in a SWE-sponsored youth program.

“Youth” refers to any individual under the age of 18 years old. “Personnel” or “Staff” or “Authorized Personnel” includes both employees of SWE and volunteers who supervise, chaperone, or have custodial or caregiving responsibilities for, or who have unsupervised access to youth. “Parent” refers to both parents and legal guardians.

1. General Contact: In Person, Online, Verbal, Virtual, Physical

Expectations

- Observe the “Rule of Three” – have at least one other adult present during all interactions with youth.
- Limit physical contact to purposes that are consistent with **the program’s** mission and/or for a clear educational, developmental, or health related **purpose**, in the presence of another staff member/authorized person, and with the consent of the youth.
- Use program-sponsored e-mail, phone and social media accounts for communication when there is an essential educational or programmatic reason to do so.
- Disclose any pre-existing relationships with youth in the youth program immediately to the program lead. Abide by these standards while affiliated with the youth program, despite any pre-existing personal relationships.
- Virtual interactions may include the use of technology (e.g., e-mail, smart phones, text, learning management systems, online communications platforms, social media, etc.) to carry out program activities.

Discouraged or prohibited

Note: Discouraged behaviors are indicated by use of the word “avoid.” All other behaviors are prohibited.

- Avoid being alone with a single youth where you cannot be observed by program staff or other adults.
- Do not act in a manner that can be perceived as physical or verbal abuse.
- Do not discipline youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
- Do not engage in purposeful communication or contact including in-person meetings, phone or other electronic communication including social networking, with youth outside of sanctioned program activities.

- Avoid texting and other forms of electronic one-on-one communication between a single staff person and a youth. Instead, use technologies and platforms which are accessible by multiple members or HQ staff (e.g., a shared email inbox or a group chat functionality) and/or a youth's parent. Best practice would be to also copy the parents' email on your messages. Check your country's regulations for the age of consent.
- Do not record youth's images or interactions with youth, except if explicitly allowed by your program and with all requisite parental consents in place. This includes video recordings of online interactions, screen captures, screenshots, or creating other photo or video records of youth.

2. Equitable Treatment

Expectation

- Treat all youth equitably, i.e. fairly and consistently, regardless of their actions or behavior, sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, culture, place of birth, age, class, ability, health, citizenship, language, or other identities.

Prohibited

- Do not discriminate against a youth based on their sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, culture, place of birth, age, class, ability, health, citizenship, language, or other identities.
- Do not give personal gifts to youth or their parents, e.g., any item intended to give a youth and/or parent special attention that is not given to others.

3. Sexual Misconduct

Expectation

- Understand and respect the physical and personal boundaries set by youth.

Prohibited

- Do not engage in sexual contact of any kind (including any verbal or physical contact that can be perceived as sexual in nature).
- Do not date or become romantically involved with youth.
- Do not discuss your own or a youth's sex life or sexual activities.
- Do not share sexually explicit material with youth.

4. Safety

Expectations

- The safety of youth must be your primary concern above all others.

- Report any concerns for suspected abuse or neglect of a youth to authorities per SWE policy requirements.
- Notify SWE representatives per policy requirements of any violations of these standards for interacting with youth.
- Follow all transportation procedures for transporting youth.

Prohibited

- Do not possess, sell, use, or be under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco or illegal drugs while engaged in program activities or on site.
- Do not bring or carry a weapon into the program.
- Do not transport youth in a personal vehicle.

5. Consequences of Violating Youth Protection Standards

The Society of Women Engineers takes these matters seriously. In the case of suspected abuse or neglect of a youth or violations of the Standards for Interacting with Youth, the Society will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action. Actions taken will first and foremost consider the need to ensure the safety of youth participating in the program.