



Minor Protection Framework (Last Updated: October 2023)

At Kinston Teens, we are steadfast in our commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment where the well-being and protection of minors are paramount. Our Minor Protection Framework reflects our unwavering dedication to safeguarding the futures of the young individuals who lead, work in, and are served by our organization, as well as our commitment to the core values that guide our community:

- **All Black Lives Matter:** We firmly believe that every Black life is invaluable and deserving of respect, dignity, and justice. Because we are a predominantly Black organization and serve a predominantly Black community, *all* of our work is guided by an inclusive and intersectional racial equity lens. *All Black Lives Matter* means that: Young Black lives matter. Black women's lives matter. Black queer lives matter. Black lesbian lives matter. Black transgender and transsexual lives matter. Our Minor Protection Framework aligns with this principle by striving to ensure that every Black child in our care is shielded from harm and has the opportunity to thrive.
 - **Youthfulness is an Asset:** We view youthfulness as an asset, not a hindrance. Young individuals possess unique perspectives, talents, and potential that should be nurtured in an environment of safety and support. Our framework empowers us to protect and uplift their voices.
- Collective Liberation:** We believe that “none of us are free until all of us are free.” We recognize that true freedom is collective, and dismantling systems and norms that perpetuate discrimination and inequity is our shared responsibility. Our Minor Protection Framework reinforces our commitment to dismantling oppressive structures and behaviors that harm young lives.

Our Minor Protection Framework serves a dual purpose:

- **Safety:** It is designed to establish and maintain a secure and protective space for minors within our organization. It outlines policies, procedures, and guidelines that govern interactions between adults and minors, ensuring their physical and emotional safety.
- **Alignment with Values:** Our framework is an embodiment of our core values. It emphasizes the importance of equity, inclusion, and justice in every aspect of our work, especially when it comes to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community—our youth.

In line with our commitment to "None of us are free until all of us are free," our Minor Protection Framework is an instrument for change. It helps us dismantle the harmful systems, norms, and behaviors that perpetuate racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, classism, and all other societal ills and inequities. By adhering to these principles, we not only protect our minors but also contribute to the broader movement toward a more just and equitable society.



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Background Checks

Kinston Teens reserves the right to perform a background check on board members, employees, temporary employees, interns, contractors, and volunteers prior to their appointment, hiring, or beginning any activities with the organization. These parties agree in advance to cooperate with and/or participate in such a process. The process includes but is not necessarily limited to the following:

- Criminal records check
- Motor Vehicle Records
- Verification of Residency History
- Credit check
- Verification of the last five years of employment
- Review of publicly available social media profiles and internet search results
- Character references
- Verification of education – school attendance/degree

In the event of any falsification of data in this process, Kinston Teens reserves to deny participation in organization activities and/or terminate any relationship with the individual.

Any individual who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect could be disqualified from participating in activities or holding a role as a board member, employee, temporary employee, intern, contractor, or volunteer with Kinston Teens. Conviction for any of the following could also disqualify an individual from activities or holding a role with Kinston Teens: drug-related behavior, pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy or abuse of a minor.

Additional guidelines and information related to Background Checks for employees can be found in the Kinston Teens Employee Handbook, individual Employment Agreements, and other applicable guidelines and documents provided to staff.

Orientation and Training

Adults working with minors must complete an initial orientation and training that covers child safety, behavior management, and emergency procedures. Ongoing training should be provided regularly and documented for board members, employees, temporary employees, interns, contractors, and volunteers to participate in. Adults must sign an Employment Agreement or Volunteer Agreement that references this Minor Protection Framework and acknowledges their adherence to these and all other applicable rules, policies, and guidelines.



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Supervision Policy

To create a secure environment and uphold our commitment to transparency and accountability, we have established the following Supervision Policy:

1. Two-Adult Rule: To ensure the safety of our youth, we require that all children's and youth activities be supervised by at least two unrelated adult leaders. Our employees and volunteers should not find themselves alone with a single youth where they cannot be observed by others. This policy is in place to protect both our youth participants and our adult leaders, guarding against situations where abuse might occur and preventing false allegations of misconduct.
2. Open Spaces: We maintain a commitment to open and observable spaces at all Kinston Teens sites and facilities, including rented or temporary locations. All areas where youth activities take place should allow for visual observation without prior notice. No windows or barriers should obstruct the view into these spaces.
3. Room Accessibility: In the rare circumstance where two leaders cannot be present in a room, and one leader must be alone with one or more youth, a door or some form of access must be left open. The leader should position themselves in a way that ensures visibility from the hallway, ensuring that other adults passing by can observe the interaction.
4. Digital Communication: In situations requiring digital communication, such as text messages, social media messages, or digital conferencing with a youth or group of youths, we require at least one other unrelated adult to be included in the messaging group. This practice enhances accountability and ensures responsible digital interactions. Additional procedures are outlined in the Social Media/Digital Policy.

Parental/Guardian Consent

To ensure a secure and supportive environment, we require parental or guardian consent and authorization for minors to participate in our activities. Consent and authorization provide a clear channel of communication between our organization and parents/guardians, enabling us to share important information about program details, schedules, and emergency contact procedures. It allows parents/guardians to make informed decisions regarding their child's involvement in specific activities, ensuring that they are aware of the nature and scope of the program. In the event of an emergency, having accurate and up-to-date contact information for parents/guardians is crucial for immediate notification and coordination.

Our organization provides clear and accessible consent forms that outline the purpose, risks, and expectations of the program. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to review and sign



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these forms, granting their approval for their child's participation. We will maintain a secure record of all consent forms for reference and compliance purposes.

Minor Protection Code of Conduct

1. Respectful Physical Contact: Common expressions of affection (such as hugs) and affirmation (like pats on the back or high fives) are appropriate within our organization. However, these physical expressions should never be excessive or forced. Adults must always respect a minor's autonomy and right to reject physical touch that makes them uncomfortable. A minor's right to say no must never be disregarded.
2. Physical Restraint: Physical restraint may only be employed by trained adults when it is necessary to protect a minor, other minors, or staff/volunteers from harm.
3. Restroom Supervision: When minors need to use restroom facilities, staff/volunteers should ensure that there are no suspicious or unknown individuals occupying the area before granting access to the minors. Staff/volunteers should stand at the doorway while minors use the restroom, providing privacy for minors and protection for themselves (avoiding one-on-one situations).
4. Encouraging Parental Supervision: Staff and volunteers should strongly encourage parents to accompany their children to the restroom whenever possible.
5. Continuous Supervision: While overseeing children and youth participating in Kinston Teens programs, staff and volunteers should maintain awareness of the youths' whereabouts at all times.
6. Reporting Child Welfare Concerns: Staff and volunteers must be vigilant regarding the physical and emotional well-being of minors. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported promptly in accordance with the Kinston Teens Minor Protection Framework and applicable local, state, and federal laws.
7. Prohibited Substances: The consumption, use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with minors is strictly prohibited.
8. Weapons Policy: Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with minors is prohibited unless it is in accordance with Kinston Teens safety plans and procedures.
9. Tobacco and Smoking: Smoking, vaping, or using tobacco in the presence of children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited.
10. Appropriate Conduct: Profanity, inappropriate jokes and media, sharing intimate details of personal life, and any form of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents are strictly prohibited.
11. Authorized Release: Staff and volunteers shall not release minors to any unauthorized individuals, including grandparents, older siblings, or other organization volunteers, unless prior permission has been obtained from the parent or legal guardian.



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12. Dress Code: All adult staff and volunteers must adhere to appropriate dress standards when working with children and/or youth. Clothing should not display inappropriate pictures or language, such as profanity or racial slurs.
13. Romantic Involvement: Adult staff and volunteers are prohibited from dating or engaging in romantic relationships with program participants, staff, or other volunteers who are younger than 18 years of age.
14. Reporting Concerns: If a staff member or volunteer has concerns about the way another adult is interacting with or behaving around children or youth, that concern should be reported immediately to appropriate staff leadership.
15. One-on-One Scenarios: In the event that a one-on-one child/youth to adult scenario arises unexpectedly, parent permission should be obtained in writing or by phone when possible.
16. Compliance with Other Policies: Adult board members, employees, temporary employees, interns, contractors, and volunteers should follow all other rules, guidelines, and policies adopted by Kinston Teens.

Reporting and Response Policy for Kinston Teens

1. Reporting Incidents: Any individual who observes or becomes aware of any alleged or potential incident involving minors' safety or well-being must, without delay, report the matter to the designated staff member responsible for the program, or the Executive Director.
2. Investigation: Upon receiving a report or allegation involving minors' safety or well-being, the program director and/or the Executive Director shall initiate an appropriate investigation and ensure compliance with all relevant North Carolina laws and regulations. The investigation process will include comprehensive documentation of all steps taken, and a formal report with the Lenoir County Department of Social Services will be completed as necessary.
3. Confidentiality: All investigations shall be conducted with the utmost confidentiality, while still ensuring a thorough and diligent inquiry into the reported or alleged incident.
4. Parental Notification: In the event that an incident occurs on Kinston Teens' premises or during a Kinston Teens-sponsored event, the parents or legal guardians of any minor involved in the incident shall be promptly and directly notified.
5. Potential Responses: If any report or allegation of potential or alleged child abuse involves an employee or volunteer of Kinston Teens, the individual accused of such conduct may be temporarily relieved of any duties related to youth or children, pending a comprehensive and appropriate investigation.



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Off-site Trips Policy

Permission Forms: Prior to all off-site trips, Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be fully completed. The two-adult rule shall be observed throughout the trip, with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted based on the requirements of planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone accompany minors on an off-site outing.

Ratios: For all off-site activities involving minors, the required adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones shall be 1:6. A balanced representation of male and female chaperones is preferred. For overnight trips, a preferred adult to child/youth ratio of 1:4 is recommended, although 1:6 is permissible. A balanced representation of male and female chaperones is required.

Rooming Arrangements:

- Rooming arrangements should ensure that children and youth of the same sex room together, and adults of the same sex room together.
- Whenever possible, adults' rooms shall be adjacent to youth rooms, and periodic checks on youth may be conducted during the night.
- Adults shall not share rooms with children except in cases where an individual minor shares a room with an individual adult due to a parent/child relationship.
- In situations where one large sleeping area is provided, two adults of the same sex shall accompany children or youth of the same sex.

Medical:

- Every child, youth, adult volunteer, and staff member must submit a fully completed medical/insurance form. Each minor's forms must include a parent or guardian's signature. Group leaders should possess copies of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. These forms will be maintained at the event site for the duration of the event.
- Whenever possible, all activities involving children and youth shall have a staff or volunteer adult leader with current certification in first aid/CPR training and Mental Health First Aid.
- First Aid supplies will be made available at the event site and while traveling. All personnel will be informed of the location of First Aid supplies/equipment and will have access to information regarding specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.
- A written report shall be completed in the event of any accident, medical emergency, or injury.



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Driving Rules/Travel:

- All drivers of minors must be over 21 and under 65 years of age. In situations where this is not feasible, parental permission must be obtained before the trip, and vehicles shall travel together.
- Even when one vehicle is used for an event, the two-leader rule remains applicable unless parental permission is secured prior to the trip. When multiple vehicles are used for an event, and two leaders are unavailable for every vehicle, maintaining visual contact between vehicles at regular intervals is an acceptable alternative to the two-leader rule.
- Travel arrangements for off-site events will be coordinated through Kinston Teens. Whenever possible, transportation should be provided in a vehicle owned or leased by Kinston Teens.
- All adult drivers of children and youth will undergo screening through a driving history search, and a valid driver's license will be mandatory.
- Seat belts shall be provided and required for all passengers, regardless of age or seating arrangement in the vehicle.

Social Media/Digital Policy

Kinston Teens' Minor Protection Framework extends to digital communications, encompassing social media accounts, texting, digital conferencing platforms (such as Zoom), and email, in the same manner as in-person interactions. Therefore:

- Any and all digital private communication between a minor and an adult staff or volunteer must include two unrelated adults.
- In social media posts (including but not limited to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), minors should NOT be tagged or identified by name unless explicit permission is granted by the parent or guardian. Even with permission, only a first name should be shared.
- Parental consent must be obtained in writing, or a Kinston Teens Media & Liability Release must be signed by an adult parent or guardian before images of minors are posted on Kinston Teens' social media accounts.
- Kinston Teens staff and program directors should actively monitor organization-sponsored text and social media pages and groups for inappropriate content. Any inappropriate content will be promptly removed, and individuals responsible for such content may be removed from groups at the discretion of the group administrator.
- When using a digital device in the presence of minors, adults should be mindful of the content on the device, ensuring that minors nearby are not exposed to inappropriate images, language, or other inappropriate content.



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- Pictures of minors taken during Kinston Teens' sponsored events should NOT be posted on personal social media accounts, as the photo consent form grants consent for Kinston Teens' social media accounts ONLY.
- Any adults, whether staff or volunteers, who become aware of information through social media or texting that suggests a minor has been subjected to abuse, neglect, or exploitation, must immediately report that information to the appropriate staff, such as the program director or Kinston Teens Executive Director.

Kinston Teens Policy for Outside Groups & Organizations

Outside groups or organizations utilizing Kinston Teens facilities and overseeing children and youth are expected to be informed about and comply with our Minor Protection Framework. Adults representing these groups must sign our Volunteer Agreement, which explicitly references this framework and affirms their commitment to adhere to this and all other relevant rules, guidelines, and policies. This policy encompasses various groups, including but not limited to Boy/Girl Scouts, sports organizations, outreach groups, renters of Kinston Teens spaces or facilities, visiting youth groups, or educational and government entities. Due to the nature of these external groups and organizations, Kinston Teens will not perform background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records for all such groups. Leaders of outside groups are responsible for conducting their own due diligence in this regard, ensuring the safety and well-being of the children and youth they serve.

Kinston Teens Safety and Emergency Protocols

To maintain the safety and security of our programs, facilities, and events, each Kinston Teens facility is equipped with Emergency Information Cards placed near the front and back exits. These cards are specific to each location and provide guidance on responding to various emergency scenarios, including but not limited to fires, severe weather, missing individuals, security threats, and injuries/accidents. When supervising children or youth, adult leaders should acquaint themselves with the cards and location-specific emergency procedures to be prepared for swift and composed action in case of an emergency. Fire extinguishers are appropriately situated at the Kinston Teens Office (in the Kinston Enterprise Center) and Neighborhood Hub as mandated by fire safety regulations. Rooms designated as "Safe Spaces" are identified, allowing for secure locking from the inside if needed for sheltering in place. Additional safety plans should be created for each organization event or program, and approved by the Executive Director. Any concerns related to Kinston Teens' facilities and safety plans should be promptly communicated to the Executive Director.



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Sources, Credits, and Additional Resources

This Minor Protection Framework was developed utilizing templates, guides, and existing policies sourced from First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro, Pitt County Schools and Pitt County Community Schools & Recreation Department, and Boy Scouts of America.

Additional information and resources can be found:

- Lenoir County Department of Social Services - lenoircountync.gov/social-services/
 - Phone: (252) 559-6400
- North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services
 - Phone: 1 (800) 662-7030
 - [Click Here for Child Protective Services Website](#)
- Prevent Child Abuse America - www.preventchildabuse.org
- Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina - www.preventchildabusenc.org
- Kinston Teens Policies - www.kinstonteens.org/policies