Appendix C: Safety Requirements for Team Activities

Safety Requirements for Team Activities

- All interactions within *FIRST*® programs must be appropriate, observable, and consistent with the ***FIRST*** Code of Conduct and *Gracious Professionalism*.® Adults are responsible for maintaining clear professional boundaries with youth participants at all times.
- Interactions must be observable and interruptible to reduce risk, consistent with youth-serving organization best practices.
- Individuals who are not team members may only participate in team activities with lead coach approval and appropriate supervision.
- Teams should establish clear expectations for communication, supervision, and personal information sharing, including digital interactions.
- *FIRST* expects that lead coaches establish age-appropriate rules for their team regarding the sharing of personal information, particularly at events or online and in accordance with Appendix D: Best Practices for Online Communication Platforms and Digital Interaction.
- Violent, hostile, or harmful behavior — including bullying, hazing, intimidation, coercion, or corporal punishment — is strictly prohibited. When behavior presents a safety concern, immediate action must be taken to separate the individual from the activity and involve appropriate adults, hosting organization, or authorities as needed.
- Prohibited substances must not be used or made available to youth participants. Controls must be in place for any permitted adult use. Alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, vaping, or controlled substances must not be used during team activities or made available to team members. Exceptions may be made for alcohol served to adults of legal drinking age at receptions or gatherings related to team support, if controls are in place to prevent illegal use.
- Be prepared for emergencies. Procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost students or adults, and site security should be established, including a well-stocked first-aid kit, a list of special medical needs (e.g., inhalers, food allergies), and contact information for each team member's parent or guardian.
- Adults should be prepared to respond to both physical and psychological safety concerns.
- Encourage parents and guardians to get involved in team activities. If possible, keep parents and guardians apprised of the team's progress; encourage them to get to know the individuals working with the team; and make them aware of the time and place of team activities. Transparency supports safety and trust.
- Keep students safe during team fundraising activities. Developing financial support for the team can be a valuable part of the *FIRST* experience. The extent of adult supervision necessary must be based on the ages of the team members and the circumstances. Team members should not be allowed to engage in fundraising or other *FIRST*-related activities without appropriate adult supervision, as judged by a team lead coach.
- Ensure all youth participants have a Consent and Release signed by a parent or guardian at the start of each season.
- Keep team members safe while working with tools, robots, machinery, and materials. Teams must follow applicable *FIRST* program safety manuals and ensure qualified adults oversee the use of tools, machinery, and materials.



FACILITIES

When possible, *FIRST* expects that teams meet at schools or other facilities maintained for use by children or civic groups (e.g., schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, etc.). Such facilities are regularly inspected for safety hazards, will ordinarily accommodate individuals needing special access, and have security measures and emergency procedures in place. The following should be standard procedure for adults working with the team:

- Familiarization with the safety procedures of the facility.
- Regular survey of the space to eliminate any potential safety hazards.
- Understanding and following the safety regulations set by the school or organization hosting your team.
- Adults must follow hosting organization safety policies and ensure compliance with accessibility, emergency procedures, and hazard mitigation.

ADULT SUPERVISION

Team activities should be supervised by a minimum of two Youth Protection cleared adults, particularly when interactions are not observable by others. If students are working in different spaces without sight lines, the number of supervising adults may need to increase. This is where additional team volunteers and mentors can increase safety.

FIRST Program activities taking place in a classroom, as part of the regular school session, should follow the school's policy regarding adult supervision. These teams may be able to operate with only one Youth Protection cleared adult supervising if in accordance with school policies.