

Music for Life

Youth Protection Policy

The purpose of the Youth Protection Policy is to prepare our personnel (officers, board members, employees and volunteers) to conduct Music for Life (MFL) activities in a safe and prudent manner. The policies and guidelines have been established because of the need to protect our personnel and students from known hazards.

All personnel should be aware of state and local government regulations that supersede MFL policies and guidelines.

In situations not specifically covered in this guide, personnel should evaluate the risk or potential risk of harm, and respond with action plans based on common sense, community standards, and safety policies and practices commonly prescribed for the activity by experienced providers and practitioners.

Insurance

MFL provides Director's & Officer's, Liability and Improper Sexual Conduct insurance coverage for all personnel registered with the nonprofit.

- Director's & Officer's Insurance covers wrongful acts that result from errors or mistakes. This includes claims for discrimination and sexual harassment.
- Liability Insurance covers negligent acts that result in bodily injury, property damage, personal injury or advertising injury to a third party.
- Improper Sexual Conduct Insurance covers sexual abuse claims.

Questions pertaining to the specifics of your insurance coverage should be directed to the President of MFL.

Child Abuse

MFL has adopted a number of policies aimed at eliminating opportunities for abuse within our program. These policies focus on leadership selection and on placing barriers to abuse within the program.

Leadership

MFL takes great pride in the quality of our personnel. Being a part of MFL is a privilege, not a right. The quality of our program and the safety of our students necessitate people with the moral, educational, and emotional qualities that MFL deems necessary to afford positive leadership to youth.

All personnel must complete an application that includes personal references and questions pertaining to any criminal activity with which they have been or are involved. In the event questions arise as to the applicant's suitability to work with young people, MFL reserves the right to ask the applicant to submit to a criminal background investigation. Per insurance requirements, MFL will conduct a criminal background investigation on all personnel who work directly with the students on a regular basis.

Barriers to Abuse within MFL

MFL has adopted the following policies to provide additional security for our members. These policies provide for the protection of our students as well as serve to protect our adult personnel from false accusations of abuse.

- **Two-deep leadership** - Two registered adults or one registered adult and a parent of a student, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required at any MFL activity.
- **No one-on-one contact** - One-on-one contact between MFL personnel and students is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and students.
- **Respect of privacy** - Personnel must respect the privacy of students in situations such as bathroom breaks, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Personnel must protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- **No secret organizations** - All aspects of the MFL program are open to observation by parents, staff from our partnering organization and other MFL personnel. All students in a class are entitled to the same opportunities.
- **Appropriate attire** - Proper clothing for activities is required by both our MFL personnel and students.
- **Constructive discipline** - Discipline used during MFL activities should be constructive and reflect our values. Corporal punishment is never permitted.
- **Hazing prohibited** - Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any MFL activity.
- **Junior volunteer training and supervision** - Adult personnel (21 or older) must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by junior personnel and ensure that MFL policies are followed.

How can parents or guardians help protect their children?

Parents or guardians participate in the protection of their children in a variety of ways. MFL recognizes the need for open lines of communication so that children are encouraged to bring any troubles to their parents or guardian for advice and counsel. In addition, parents and guardians need to be involved in their child's activities. All parents and guardians receive important information concerning the MFL program as part of their child's' membership application. This information is provided so that they can detect any deviations from MFL's approved program. If any deviation is noted, they should bring it to the attention of the chapter, state or national MFL officers.

Why do most child victims of sexual abuse keep the abuse secret?

A victim of child sexual abuse is under a great deal of pressure to keep the abuse secret. In many cases of child molestation, the molester has threatened to harm the child or a member of the child's family. The molester might have told the child that he would not be believed even if the child did tell. Another common situation is that the molester will tell the child that if the child tells about the abuse, he will get into trouble. The clear message is given to the child that if another person finds out, something bad will happen to the child. This pressure to maintain silence can often be successfully overcome by establishing open communication between children and adults through a proper educational program for children.

What should I do if a child tells me that he has been sexually abused?

How an adult responds to a child when he/she tries to disclose abuse can influence the outcome of the child's victimization. By maintaining an apparent calm, the adult can help reassure the child that everything is going to be okay. By not criticizing the child, we counteract any statements the molester made to the victim about the child getting into trouble. Reassure the child that you are concerned about what happened to him/her and that you would like to get him some help. **Allegations by a student or junior volunteer concerning abuse in the program must be reported to a MFL Officer.** Since these reports are required, the child should be told that you have to tell the proper authorities but that you will not tell anyone else. It is important that you not tell anyone other than a MFL Officer or the child protective services agency about allegations of abuse—if the allegations cannot be substantiated, you could be sued for defamation of character.

How do I know what my reporting responsibilities are?

Every state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have different reporting requirements. You will receive reporting instructions for your area. People are often concerned about being sued for reporting child abuse. You are not required to know for certain that a child has been abused. All that the law requires is that you have a reasonable suspicion and are reporting in "good faith." When these requirements are met, all states provide immunity from liability for child abuse reporters.

In Virginia Child Protective Services (CPS) is established by the Code of Virginia (63.1-284.6) to receive and respond to concerns of abuse or neglect of children. If you suspect an occurrence you are required to immediately contact CPS at the State Hotline number (800) 552-7096 or at one of the following local jurisdiction numbers:

- Alexandria (703) 838-0800
- Arlington County (703) 228-1500
- Fairfax County (703) 324-7400

Student Behavior Guidelines

MFL is a values-based youth development organization that helps young people learn the positive attributes of character and citizenship. MFL has the expectation that all participants in our program will relate to each other consistent with these values.

One of the developmental tasks of childhood is to learn appropriate behavior. Children are not born with an innate sense of propriety and they need guidance and direction. The example set by positive adult role models is a powerful tool for shaping behavior and a tool that is stressed in MFL. As a MFL representative you are not "one of them"; you are a teacher and a mentor to them.

Misbehavior by a single student at a MFL activity may constitute a threat to the safety of the individual who misbehaves as well as to the safety of others present. It also distracts from the activities success. Such misbehavior constitutes an unreasonable burden and cannot be ignored.

Personnel Responsibilities

All personnel and students are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate and respectful manner. Physical violence, hazing, bullying, theft, verbal insults, and drugs, alcohol and tobacco have no place in the MFL Program and may result in the person's dismissal from the MFL Program.

If confronted by threats of violence or other forms of bullying from other youth members, students should seek help from their activity leader, parent or guardian.

Responsibilities

Adult personnel are responsible for monitoring the behavior of students and interceding when necessary. Parents or guardians of students who misbehave should be informed and asked for assistance in dealing with it.

MFL does not permit the use of corporal punishment when disciplining youth members.

MFL Officers should review repetitive or serious incidents of misbehavior in consultation with the child's parent or guardian to determine a course of corrective action including possible revocation of the youth's participation in the MFL program.

Personnel should inform MFL Officers about all incidents that result in a physical injury or involve allegations of sexual misconduct by a youth member with another youth member.

MFL prohibits the use of alcoholic beverages, controlled substances and tobacco products by any MFL volunteer or student at all MFL activities.

Chapter Officers must ensure that all class locations within their jurisdiction are safe and inspected for health and safety hazards.

Motor vehicles transporting volunteers or carrying equipment should meet state inspection standards, if applicable, and insurance requirements. Personnel should not transport students unless it is essential to mitigate an immediate threat to the student's health or safety. If this situation occurs the person transporting the student must notify a chapter or state officer as well as the child's parent or guardian as soon as possible.

It is essential that adequate, safe, and responsible transportation be used for all MFL activities. Because most accidents occur within a short distance from home, safety precautions are necessary, even on short trips. General guidelines are as follows:

- Seat belts are required for all occupants.
- All drivers must have a valid driver's license that has not been suspended or revoked for any reason. If the vehicle to be used is designed to carry more than 15 persons, including the driver (more than 10 persons, including the driver, in California), the driver must have a commercial driver's license (CDL).
- An adult leader (at least 21 years of age) must be in charge and accompany the group.
- Passenger cars or station wagons may be used for transporting passengers, but passengers should not ride on the rear deck of station wagons.

- Trucks may not be used for transporting passengers except in the cab.
- All driving, except short trips, should be done in daylight.
- All vehicles must be covered by automobile liability insurance with limits that meet or exceed requirements of the state in which the vehicle is licensed. It is recommended that coverage limits are at least \$50,000/\$100,000/\$50,000. Any vehicle designed to carry 10 or more passengers is required to have limits of \$100,000/\$500,000/\$100,000.
- Do not exceed the speed limit.
- Do not travel in convoy.
- Driving time is limited to a maximum of 10 hours and must be interrupted by frequent rest, food, and recreation stops. If there is only one driver, the driving time should be reduced and stops should be made more frequently.

Don't drive drowsy. Stop for rest and stretch breaks as needed. Fatigue is a major cause of highway accident fatalities.