



# NEW YORK - NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE

## YOUTH POLICY

Approved by the Board on July 29 , 2025

### 1 INTENT AND OVERVIEW OF THE POLICY

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference ('Trail Conference') seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for youth (persons under the age of 18 years) who participate in our programs. The goal of this policy is to protect the Participants in our programs from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our employees, volunteers, and the organization.

### 2 RELATED POLICIES

[Code of Conduct](#) - All Trail Conference employees and volunteers must follow the Trail Conference's Code of Conduct. Those working with youth must follow additional rules and procedures specified here.

[Outdoor Activity Safety Guidelines](#) - In addition to the general guidelines appropriate to the activity, additional restrictions for work done by youth may be appropriate. Safety policies of external youth groups such as the [Scouts](#) may be helpful.

### 3 DEFINITIONS

**Youth** - All persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

**Program** - Any event sponsored by the Trail Conference or program of another organization where the Trail Conference acts in an advisory or co-sponsor role, e.g. most Eagle Scout projects. The program includes all the meetings and conversations needed to set up the program.

**Participant** - Any youth taking part in any Trail Conference program.

**Registered Leader** - A Trail Conference staff member or volunteer qualified as per section 4.7 below to lead Trail Conference programs which include youth.

### 4 STATEMENT OF POLICY

#### 4.1 Requirements for youth to participate in Trail Conference Programs

- A parent or guardian must sign the consent form attached below before a youth may participate in Trail Conference programs.
- Youth participants, like all Trail Conference employees and volunteers, are subject to the Trail Conference Code of Conduct.
- If photographs or video with recognizable images of participants are to be published in any form including on social media, a parent or guardian must sign the Photo/Video Release Form.

#### 4.2 Programs for which Registered Leaders are required

Any program over which the Trail Conference has direct operational control must have a Registered Leader present, except in the following circumstances:

- Programs where Trail Conference personnel are not expected to have direct contact with youth. Examples include providing information to youth groups or serving as liaisons for youth group leaders without working directly with youth.
- Those addressing participants at Trail Conference events, projects, or programs where youth might be included.
- Working with external youth organizations where the external organization provides appropriate adult supervision for their participants during the program.
- Programs such as trail crews where any youth are accompanied by a parent or guardian who is present during the program.
- A supervisor with a youth trail maintainer, as long as the supervisor does not meet with the youth without a parent or guardian present.

### 4.3 Standards of conduct for adult/youth interactions

- No Registered Leader shall ever be alone with any Participant, excluding rescue situations. The second adult who must be present may be another Registered Leader, a parent or guardian of a Participant, or an adult leader in an external organization involved with the project. If the second adult might not be aware of his/her responsibilities, the Registered Leader should provide instruction.
- In situations requiring a personal conference, the meeting or discussion shall take place with two adults or Registered Leaders. Registered Leaders shall not engage in one-on-one communication with Participants online through games, social media, texts, or other forms. When it is necessary for a Registered Leader to speak privately with a Participant, they shall find a place out of earshot, but within sight of others.
- No Registered Leader may transport a Participant alone in his/her car.
- Registered Leaders shall not touch a Participant except when providing first aid or incidentally when performing trail work requiring cooperative action by more than one person. Physical contact between Registered Leaders and Participants must not create an emotionally or physically unsafe environment for any parties involved. Under no circumstances may Registered Leaders engage in contact that may be construed as sexual in nature, abusive, or otherwise inappropriate.
- Registered Leaders shall respect Participants' privacy in situations such as using the bathroom and changing clothes. Registered Leaders may intrude only to the extent that the health and safety of the youth require intrusion. Registered Leaders shall also preserve their own privacy in these situations. Absolutely no digital equipment or pictures are allowed in or around bathing/latrines facilities or during such activities.
- Registered Leaders shall not engage in sexual jokes, comments of a sexual nature, kissing, massages or sexual gestures. In addition, Registered Leaders shall not reveal personal information about their sex life to a Participant.
- Under no circumstances may Registered Leaders engage in corporal punishment, including spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of Participants.
- If a Participant attempts to involve a Registered Leader in inappropriate behavior, the Registered Leader must reject the overture.
- Overnight programs involving youth are generally not permitted due to additional concerns, especially for mixed-sex groups. Detailed senior staff review is required if such a program is proposed.

### 4.4 Potentially dangerous actions

Participants and Registered Leaders shall not have or use weapons, tobacco, alcohol products, or illegal drugs during Trail Conference programs. This includes the use of electronic cigarettes, personal vaporizers, and nicotine delivery systems that simulate tobacco smoking. Prohibited weapons include, but are not limited to, guns,

explosives of any kind, or flare pistols. The Trail Conference program managers will determine what type of knives, if any, are appropriate for a particular program.

The following incidents require immediate action by the Registered Leader and notification of the parent/guardian:

- Any threat or use of a weapon.
- Any use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or cannabis.
- Any negative behavior associated with race, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.
- Any mention of threats of suicide. If someone is at risk of harm, call 911.
- Repeated disregard for safe working practices, even after instruction.

#### **4.5 Responsibilities when a Participant requires medical attention**

While the Trail Conference makes every reasonable effort to ensure a safe environment, outdoor activities have the inherent possibility of accidents or injuries. If a Participant is injured or becomes ill while participating in a Trail Conference program, the following steps shall be followed:

- A [Personal Incident Report](#) will be completed regardless of whether medical attention was sought or the type of injury (including minor injuries and illnesses), and the Trail Conference is to be notified within 24 hours.
- For minor injuries or illnesses such as scrapes or bruises, the Registered Leader shall provide simple first aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and notify the Participant's parent or guardian when the youth is picked up from the program.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the Registered Leader shall contact emergency services and the parent and/or guardian. In an emergency, the Registered Leader should use his/her best judgement for how to proceed. The Registered Leader should defer to another person with greater medical expertise if available.
- A [Refusal of Care](#) form can be completed by the parent or guardian if the youth meets the criteria outlined in the form.
- If a Participant discloses personal information or a medical condition to a Registered Leader that might compromise the health and safety of the individual and/or the group, the Registered Leader shall consult with the program manager immediately to decide on a course of action for the care of the Participant. This consultation may result in referring the Participant to an appropriate health center or other relevant agency.
- It is the policy of the Trail Conference not to administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to Participants.

#### **4.6 Allegations of abuse or neglect at Trail Conference programs**

If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Trail Conference programs, the Trail Conference will take the following steps:

- The parent or guardian of the youth will be notified.
- Any Registered Leader alleged to have perpetrated abuse or misconduct will immediately be prohibited from working with youth, pending an investigation. If staff conducting the investigation determine that the alleged abuse or misconduct has occurred, the Registered Leader will be removed from their position.
- If the Trail Conference is partnering with an external youth group or agency, that group must be notified.
- The Trail Conference will comply with requirements of appropriate local, state, and federal authorities regarding reporting of abuse.
- The Trail Conference insurance company will be notified.

- The Trail Conference will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by local, state or federal authorities. In the event there is no such investigation of the incident, the Trail Conference will form a team to investigate the circumstances of the incident, acting only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.

## 4.7 Registered Leader selection and application process

The Trail Conference shall screen any potential Registered Leader:

- Prospective Registered Leaders will be asked to sign the Youth Policy Authorization and Release form allowing the official Trail Conference background check vendor to run a background check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he/she will not be considered for the position. Background checks for Registered Leaders will be repeated every 5 years or as needed.
- Disqualifying offenses, which will prevent an individual from working with youth in a Trail Conference program, will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Generally, disqualifying offenses include convictions for an offense involving children, offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, or any conduct contrary to the Trail Conference mission. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form also constitutes a disqualifying offense.
- The records of all Registered Leaders, including applications and documentation of reference checks (for staff), will be kept in confidence by the Trail Conference HR team and Volunteer Engagement Manager. The background check information is kept in confidence by the Trail Conference background check vendor.
- The Trail Conference will provide a copy of the youth policy to all Registered Leaders and encourage review of this policy annually as training.

## 4.8 Working with external youth groups

When a Registered Leader is working with an organized youth group, the Registered Leader shall plan and coordinate the project with the other youth group leader(s). As part of the planning process, the Registered Leader shall ensure that the external youth group can comply with the Trail Conference's youth policies as well as any other applicable policies. If the group has policies more restrictive than those of the Trail Conference, the more restrictive policies will apply. **The external youth group leaders are solely responsible for supervising the members of their group.**

## 5 EFFECTIVE DATE AND PRIOR POLICIES REPLACED

This policy is effective upon Board approval.

This document replaces the Youth Policy approved by the Board of Directors on March 29, 2011.

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## APPENDICES

The following forms are included here for convenience. They are not part of the Youth Policy and may be updated from time to time without Board approval.

- Parent or Guardian Consent Form
- Photo/Video Release Form
- Youth Policy Authorization and Release



## PARENT OR GUARDIAN CONSENT

Return completed form to:  
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference  
600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430  
Ph: 201.512.9348 email: [volunteer@nynjtc.org](mailto:volunteer@nynjtc.org)

*This form is confidential*

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Full Name of Minor (print):

Full Name of Parent/Guardian (print):

Street:

City:

State:

Zip:

Primary Phone:

Email:

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND CONSENT

We appreciate your child's interest in volunteering with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. While we take every precaution to ensure a safe, enjoyable work experience for our volunteers, volunteer work on trails can present certain dangers. Accordingly, it is our policy to require the execution of this Guardian Consent Form by a parent or guardian of volunteers under the age of 18. Please acknowledge your consent and agreement to the following by signing below:

I am the parent and/or legal guardian of, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print), who is \_\_\_\_\_ years old, and they have my permission to participate in volunteer activities sponsored by the Trail Conference. I understand that my child may be limited from certain activities, such as operating power tools.

On behalf of said minor, I expressly waive any claim for compensation for work done and hereby release the Trail Conference from any liability for illness, injury or medical expenses sustained by said minor while volunteering with the Trail Conference—beyond what may be offered freely by the Trail Conference. If injury does occur I give consent for emergency or other medical treatment to be administered to said minor. I further agree to personally indemnify the Trail Conference and hold the organization harmless from any loss sustained by reason of any illness or injury to said minor while volunteering for the Trail Conference.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Parent/Guardian*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*



## Photo/Video Release Form

I hereby grant the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference the right and permission to use my likeness in photographs and/or videos of me or in which I may appear with other persons in any and all print, electronic, and/or other media for the purpose of promoting the Trail Conference.

I hereby release and discharge the Trail Conference and its employees and volunteers from any and all monetary or other claims arising out of such use. I am 18 years of age or over. I have read the information above and fully understand its contents.

<i>Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Print name:</i>	
<i>Address:</i>	

### **Parent or Guardian Approval for Minors (participants under the age of 18):**

I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor named below, I am 18 years of age or older, and am able to contract for the named minor in the above regard. I have read the information above and fully understand its content.

<i>Name of minor:</i>	
<i>Name of parent or guardian (printed):</i>	
<i>Address:</i>	
<i>Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>



## Youth Policy Authorization and Release

New York- New Jersey Trail Conference  
600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430  
Ph: 201.512.9348 email: [volunteers@nynjtc.org](mailto:volunteers@nynjtc.org)

### AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last Name First Name Middle Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Email Address (may be used for official correspondence)*

Primary work/volunteer location:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*City State Zip Code*

hereby authorize the obtaining of “consumer reports” and/or “investigative consumer reports” by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference at any time after receipt of this authorization and throughout my employment, if applicable. To this end, I hereby authorize, without reservation, any law enforcement agency, administrator, state or federal agency, institution, school or university (public or private), information service bureau, employer, or insurance company to furnish any and all background information requested by **IntelliCorp, 3000 Auburn Drive, Suite 410, Beachwood, Ohio 44122; Tel. No. 1.888.946.8355; [www.intellicorp.net](http://www.intellicorp.net)**.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed Name Applicant Signature Date*

**You will receive an email invitation from IntelliCorp directing you to their *Candidate Direct Portal* to complete the authorization and release of a criminal background check.**

CALIFORNIA, OKLAHOMA, and MINNESOTA RESIDENTS ONLY: Please check here \_\_\_ if you are a current California, Oklahoma, or Minnesota resident and would like to request a copy of your Consumer Report or Investigative Consumer Report. This report may include character and reputation information obtained through personal interviews.

MASSACHUSETTS APPLICANTS ONLY: Under Massachusetts law, an employer is prohibited from making written, pre-employment inquiries of an applicant about his or her criminal history. Massachusetts applicants should not respond to any of the questions seeking criminal record information.