



A global volunteer organization that improves the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS, INC.®

SIA Standards for Working with Youth

Soroptimist International of the Americas is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for youth participating in our project activities at all levels of the organization – club, region and federation. When we work with youth, their care and welfare are entrusted to us.

As a community service organization with integrity and the highest standards of conduct, we have zero tolerance for any inappropriate behavior or abuse when working with children or any vulnerable population. We also seek to minimize any vulnerability to unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our members may experience as they carry out their project work. To fulfill these commitments, SIA has adopted the following standards to be used, without exception, when clubs/members/volunteers participate in projects or any activities involving youth. These standards are applicable to new and existing projects and incorporate the CDC published components of child abuse prevention.

Clubs and members desiring to work with youth are bound by these standards. If, for any reason, members feel they are unable to follow these standards, they should discontinue any work with youth.

General Rules for Interaction with Youth

1. Club members must maintain at least two adults present during interactions with youth.
2. One member working with the youth must be designated as the supervisor or chaperone. This person must be over 21 and take responsibility for ensuring all guidelines are followed.
3. When working with youth, the space utilized must be highly visible. No activities should take place behind closed doors.
4. Transportation should not be provided. However, if this is unavoidable, written permission from the parent/guardian is required.
5. Work with youth cannot occur in a member's home.
6. Members cannot work in youth's home.
7. No overnight programs are permitted.
8. All documents containing personal information about youth participating in Soroptimist projects should be treated as confidential.
9. Individual members should never initiate connections directly with youth via social media or other channels. If there is a need to use social media tools such as Facebook and electronic communication such as e-mail you cannot use them one-on-one, only in a group manner.

10. Any public sharing or posting of youth photos or information must first have written permission from the youth and parents/guardians.
11. Clubs must have parental consent forms from parents/guardians before participation in the project.
12. Clubs must have a procedure to monitor the admission and release of youth who are participating in the project.
13. Members must refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages and/or tobacco products while working with youth.
14. Parents/guardians should be encouraged to make unannounced visits to the project.

Appropriate/Inappropriate Behaviors

Sometimes it is unclear if a behavior is appropriate, inappropriate or harmful. Volunteers have a duty of care to act in a way that a reasonably prudent person would act in a similar situation. This is true in all behaviors when working with youth. Behaviors such as sexually provocative or degrading comments, adult jokes, intimate hugging or patting on the buttocks are always inappropriate and are expressly prohibited behaviors by this policy.

Background Checks/Clearances

SIA requires clean background checks for all adults working with youth. Background checks should conform to applicable local, state and national requirements. SIA recommends Info Cubic <https://infocubic.com/soroptimist> for background checks. They have information about SIA clubs and may save time and effort in providing proof of 501(c) 3 status.

1. Prior to beginning any projects involving youth, all club members must have the appropriate background checks completed. Types of background checks are determined based on the tasks involving the youth and your state and local requirements. We strongly suggest that your club create a policy about the necessary background checks needed for your members to work with youth.
2. Members with existing background checks must provide documentation to the club president.
3. Volunteers who do not have clean background checks are prohibited from participating in projects involving youth. If any questions arise about the results of a background check, the club must contact the Chief Operating/Financial Officer at SIA headquarters.
4. Club presidents/treasurers must ensure up to date clearances are maintained for all members participating in youth projects.
5. Approved background checks are valid for no more than ten years.

Training on Standards for Abuse Prevention When Working with Youth

1. Prior to beginning a project working with youth, all participating club members must participate in any training programs and read any training manuals that SIA has provided.

2. For clubs outside the United States, clubs must obtain materials from local sources to educate members on laws governing volunteers working with youth in their countries.
3. Education on SIA Standards for Working with Youth must be conducted by the club annually.
4. Education on SIA Standards for Working with Youth must be provided to all new members.

Reporting Suspected Abuse/Allegations of Abuse

1. Anyone who witnesses or has reasonable suspicion of inappropriate behavior, suspected injury, abuse or molestation connected with any club activity must immediately inform the club president or treasurer who will follow applicable legal requirements for reporting to appropriate agencies or law enforcement (check with your state laws – some require immediate reporting to the state by a mandated reporter).
2. At the same time, an information report must be submitted to the SIA Chief Operating and Financial Officer and Executive Director, who will contact legal counsel and the insurance carrier.
3. Under no circumstances should a club officer or member undertake any inquiry or investigation of such situations.

Enforcement of Procedures

1. Prior to working with youth, all participating club members must sign the Youth Programs - Compliance and Release Agreement which covers verification that all materials regarding youth have been read and are understood and you are authorizing your club to conduct a background check. The club must maintain copies of the signed agreements each year. Any training programs or training manuals SIA has enforced must also be completed prior to working with youth.
2. The club president or treasurer will store all screening documents in a locked cabinet or other secure location where club financial records are stored. The club president and treasurer will maintain confidentiality at all times.

Revision of Standards

SIA, with the assistance of legal counsel, will regularly review these standards. If necessary, the standards will be modified in accordance with current laws and insurance requirements. When changes are made, SIA will communicate the changes to all clubs.