



Dear New Mexico BPA Staff Member or Volunteer,

Welcome to New Mexico BPA!

At New Mexico BPA our priority in anything we do is the health and wellbeing of our members, volunteers and staff. We have developed the following manual as an educational tool to facilitate a healthy environment by protecting members, staff, advisors and volunteers and allow the mission of New Mexico BPA to carry on.

This handbook provides an outline of best practices for New Mexico BPA staff, advisors and volunteers designed to mitigate the opportunity for sexual or physical abuse and strengthen your understanding of prevention and reporting requirements. They have been adopted by New Mexico BPA governance and will be strictly enforced.

We ask you to carefully read this policy manual. Upon completion, please sign and return the acknowledgement located on the last page and keep a copy for your reference. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

***New Mexico BPA***

# **New Mexico BPA POLICIES: ABUSE PREVENTION & REPORTING**

## Table of Contents

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Safety Assurance Process .....      | 1 |
| Zero Tolerance Policy .....         | 2 |
| Reporting Procedures .....          | 3 |
| Guidelines for Interaction.....     | 6 |
| Communication Policy .....          | 7 |
| Safety Committee Contact Sheet..... | 8 |
| Acknowledgement & Agreement .....   | 9 |

## **SAFETY ASSURANCE PROCESS**

Screening is the careful gathering and review of specific information and is one of the best ways to prevent sexual or physical abuse. As part of our dedication to ensuring a safe environment, all potential staff, advisors and volunteers are required to complete the following before assuming responsibilities on behalf of New Mexico BPA. This applies to any adult working with minors on a regular basis or staff members responsible for hiring, firing or otherwise part of the reporting process or policy enforcement.

### **Documentation & Interview**

Staff members and volunteers working with members on a regular basis or who are in a decision-making role are required to complete the following steps:

- Complete an Employment Application (employees only)
- Complete the Personal Information Form, including a signed release (employees and volunteers)
- Complete a face-to-face, virtual or telephone interview (employees and volunteers)
- Provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)
- Provide proof of completion by current school, school district or other entity

### **Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check will be conducted on every person seeking to work on behalf of New Mexico BPA. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

### **Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

New Mexico BPA policies and procedures require that all staff members and volunteers participate in Abuse Prevention & Reporting Training. This may be directly through the New Mexico BPA or through another entity, if provided with proof of completion within three years. This training must provide a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers, signs a child has been or is being abused and what it means to be a mandatory reporter. This training must also include information on “grooming” behaviors. *Child grooming is the process abusers use to befriend and establish a social and emotional connection with a child, or the child’s family, to lower the child’s inhibitions and build trust with the objective of sexual abuse. This may take place online or in person and can be a stranger or someone the child already knows. Grooming happens in six stages: targeting, gaining trust, filling a need, isolation, sexual contact and maintaining the relationship.*

### **Review Policies & Procedures**

All staff, advisors and volunteers are required to read the policies and procedures contained in this manual and sign the Statement of Acknowledgement & Agreement found on the last page. This signature indicates that he or she has read and understands the material and agrees to comply with all policy requirements.

## **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**

It is the obligation and responsibility of every New Mexico BPA staff member, advisor and volunteer to act in the best interest of members and New Mexico BPA. In order to ensure this, New Mexico BPA has a ZERO TOLERANCE policy regarding any suspected, alleged or proven acts of sexual misconduct or other harm to the safety and well-being of all members and other New Mexico BPA stakeholders.

Any staff, advisor or volunteer are required to report any suspected “grooming” behaviors, policy violations or other suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, New Mexico BPA Administration, a member of the New Mexico BPA Safety Committee/Crisis Management Team or local authorities. Suspected abuse (physical, sexual or emotional) of a minor outside of the New Mexico BPA must also be reported immediately.

## **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

New Mexico BPA staff members and volunteers who supervise other employees or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all New Mexico BPA policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal or other disciplinary action, for all staff, advisors and volunteers.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act, or any act considered to be harmful to a child, will be immediately placed on leave and prohibited from participating with New Mexico BPA. This suspension will continue through investigation by law enforcement or other agencies.

Any person found to have committed an illicit act or convicted of any crime will be prohibited from any future participation in all New Mexico BPA activities, events, administration or subsidiaries. Such conduct of any paid staff member, employee or independent contractor will result in the immediate termination of employment from New Mexico BPA.

Failure to report a prohibited act to one of the individuals identified above is also in violation of this policy and will be considered grounds for termination of a staff member or dismissal of a volunteer.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURES**

In order to best protect members and maintain the safest environment for New Mexico BPA, always report all suspicions or allegations of abuse, regardless of state law.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS TO New Mexico BPA**

When the necessity of reporting occurs, the protection of members must take priority. All incidents should be reported immediately to New Mexico BPA management, and an incident report will be filed and retained for reference. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should also be directed to New Mexico BPA staff or a member of the New Mexico BPA Safety Committee/Crisis Management Team.

Any report of suspicious behaviors or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by management and will be reported in adherence with state law to the New Mexico BPA Safety Committee/Crisis Management Team, the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO New Mexico BPA ADMINISTRATION**

Staff members, advisors and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to a supervisory staff member as soon as possible after the alleged incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer, the supervisor/administrator will notify a New Mexico BPA Administrator as soon as reasonably possible.

If appropriate, New Mexico BPA Administrator or a member of the New Mexico BPA Safety Committee/Crisis Management Team will inform the local or New Mexico authorities in one of the following manners:

#### **Option 1.**

A staff member or volunteer *may* report to a New Mexico BPA Administrator or supervisor and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

#### **Option 2.**

A staff member, advisor or volunteer must report to the appropriate local or New Mexico authorities. After filing a report, the staff member or volunteer must notify New Mexico BPA Administrator or supervisor.

#### **Option 3.**

A staff member or volunteer will immediately notify New Mexico BPA Administrator or supervisor. Together with the New Mexico BPA Administrator or supervisor, the staff member or volunteer will make a report to the appropriate local or New Mexico authorities.

*In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate local or New Mexico authorities.*

## **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

New Mexico law requires that any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

## **STATE SPECIFIC MANDATORY REPORTING LAW**

State laws vary concerning mandatory reporters and mandatory reporting requirements. Please read the following New Mexico State Law for specific requirements.

### **Professionals Required to Report Citation: Ann. Stat. § 32A-4-3**

Professionals required to report include the following:

Licensed physicians

Residents or interns

Law enforcement officers or judges

Registered nurses or visiting nurses

Teachers or school officials

Social workers acting in their official capacity

Members of the clergy

### **Reporting by Other Persons Citation: Ann. Stat. § 32A-4-3**

Every person who knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a child is an abused or a neglected child shall report the matter immediately.

### **Institutional Responsibility to Report**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

### **Standards for Making a Report Citation: Ann. Stat. § 32A-4-3**

A report is required when a person knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a child is abused or neglected.

### **Privileged Communications Citation: Ann. Stat. §§ 32A-4-3; 32A-4-5**

A clergy member need not report any information that is privileged.

The report or its contents or any other facts related thereto or to the condition of the child who is the subject of the report shall not be excluded on the ground that the matter is or may be the subject of a physician-patient privilege or similar privilege or rule against disclosure.

**Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report Citation: Ann. Stat. § 32A-4-5**

The identity of the mandated reporter will be verified before any investigation is initiated.

**Disclosure of Reporter Identity Citation: Ann. Stat. § 32A-4-33**

Any release of information to a parent, guardian, or legal custodian shall not include identifying information about the reporter.

*Administrators should periodically check state reporting requirements for modification of reporting requirements.*

## **PROTOCOL FOR VICTIM RESPONSE**

The protection of members is always the priority of New Mexico BPA. This is especially true if their safety and well-being may have been compromised. After an incident has been reported, New Mexico BPA will cooperate with any investigations and facilitate the assistance of any alleged victims, in partnership with local and state authorities, school districts, etc. All efforts will be made to provide appropriate counseling or other wellness tools.

## **GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTION**

Interaction and engagement with members is a key element of New Mexico BPA's mission. Appropriate and welcome interactions are necessary for the development and maintenance of a safe environment.

### **GUIDELINES FOR PHYSICAL TOUCH**

All staff members and volunteers should exercise good judgment when using physical touch as a means of communication.

1. Short, congratulatory or greeting hugs.
2. Arm around the shoulder, "side hug".
3. A brief, assuring pat on or shoulder.
4. High fives, fist bumps or handshakes.
5. A few NEVERS:
  - a. Never touch kids in anger or disgust.
  - b. Never touch kids in any sexually connotative manner.
  - c. No staff member will ever (day or night) be on or in a child's bed.
  - d. Never touch a child's private parts.
  - e. Never tickle a child.
  - f. Never ignore a request not to be touched.
  - g. Never express or require physical affection or touching in any form.

*If a question ever arises, consult a member of the Safety Committee/Crisis Management Team or the New Mexico BPA Administrator.*

### **MEMBER SUPERVISION GUIDELINES**

Whenever possible, a team approach should be used for interacting with and supervising members. New Mexico BPA staff members, advisors and volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual member, unless unavoidable. If one-on-one situations arise or are necessary, they should be conducted in an easily observable space with knowledge of another adult. If any two members are together in a hidden or obscured area, they should be redirected to an easily observable space whenever possible. All doors must remain unlocked during one-on-one interactions.

New Mexico BPA is committed to providing adequate supervision for all activities, events and programs. Accordingly, a ratio of one staff member, advisor or volunteer for every ten members is required for all New Mexico BPA activities. A staff member, advisor, volunteer or chaperone of the same gender must be available for students. If a male adult is traveling with or otherwise supervising female members, it is recommended that he partner with a female adult. Likewise, if a female adult is traveling with or otherwise supervising male students should partner with a male adult. If at any time a supervised group is out of compliance it is the responsibility of the staff member, advisor, volunteer or chaperone to immediately notify the appropriate staff or New Mexico BPA Administrator, who will make diligent efforts to immediately bring adult to member ratios into compliance with this policy.

*These ratios and guidelines will be implemented whenever possible and may change according to the activity.*

## **COMMUNICATION POLICY**

The New Mexico BPA safety standards established to protect and insure healthy relationships during New Mexico BPA should be followed at all times when interacting with a current or former member, including activities, communication and contact occurring outside of New Mexico BPA. These policies apply to all current and former staff, advisors or volunteers and their interactions with current or former members.

### **GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION**

1. Parents of all members must approve or have access to all interactions with students, including but not limited to: email, social network interactions, phone calls and personal visits.
2. Any online communications, friend-requests, or other contact through social networking sites, should be done in public or group settings. Private or one-on-one chats, friend groups, etc. are prohibited.
3. Dating relationships of any kind between staff members, advisors or volunteers and a current or former member are strictly prohibited.
4. Current or former staff, volunteers or advisors should never allow a member to spend the night at their homes for any reason.
5. Current or former staff, volunteers or advisors should never spend the night at a MEMBER'S home for any reason.
6. If a member shares information that puts themselves or anyone else in danger, or they disclose abuse of any kind New Mexico BPA Administrator, Safety Committee/Crisis Management Team or local or New Mexico state authorities must be notified immediately.

## New Mexico BPA SAFETY COMMITTEE CONTACT SHEET

| Name             | Title          | Phone        | Email                                                                    |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brenda Tapia     | State Advisor  | 575-777-5905 | <a href="mailto:Brenda.tapia@enmu.edu">Brenda.tapia@enmu.edu</a>         |
| Christine Phipps | Director, CTLP | 575-562-4729 | <a href="mailto:Christine.phipps@enmu.edu">Christine.phipps@enmu.edu</a> |
|                  |                |              |                                                                          |
|                  |                |              |                                                                          |
|                  |                |              |                                                                          |
|                  |                |              |                                                                          |
|                  |                |              |                                                                          |
|                  |                |              |                                                                          |

Please click [HERE](#) to sign and submit