

MINNESOTA FURS YOUTH PROGRAM POLICIES

General Policies

Minnesota Furs (MNFurs) is an all-ages organization. We encourage everyone to participate in our events and programs appropriate to their age. As such, events will be marked as Youth, General, or Adult based on their content. These shall be defined as:

Youth: Under 18 years old

General: All ages with a PG 13 expectation

Adult: 18+ or 21+ as appropriate and in accordance with applicable laws.

Members under the age of 13 should be supervised in a manner appropriate to their age and ability by an actively responsible parent, guardian, or designated adult* while at MNFurs events and programming.

**A designated adult is defined as someone that is not the legal guardian or parent of a minor, but is over the age of eighteen, a registered MNFurs member (registration to occur prior to or at the event), and identified in the minor's membership record as an adult responsible for them at the event in attendance.*

Any member under the age of 16 must provide contact information for a designated adult when registering for membership. In addition, they must have a parent, legal guardian, or designated adult with a valid membership provide legal identification when the minor picks up their membership badge at MNFurs paid events. Other events (i.e.: Oval meets, Romps, West Metro Perkins Meets, etc.) require a parent, legal guardian, or designated guardian to remain at or around the event.

Members who are ages 16 & 17 must provide contact information for a designated adult when registering for membership. Members, 16-17 years of age may collect their membership badges using their own form of authorized identification at paid events.

Curfew

MNFurs will observe Hennepin County juvenile curfew laws for all events as the following:

- **Under 12:** Sunday -Thursday Home by 9 pm: Friday - Saturday, Home by 10 pm
- **Ages 12 - 14** Sunday -Thursday Home by 10 pm: Friday - Saturday, Home by 11 pm
- **Ages 15 - 17** Sunday -Thursday Home by 11 pm: Friday - Saturday, Home by midnight

**Home here is defined as a youth is not publicly attending at any of our events after their corresponding curfew time without direct supervision of a parent, guardian, or designated adult.*

Miscellaneous

- Members under the age of 18 should be aware of MNFurs support structures, such as the Mental Health Resources webpage, Safe Spaces at Furry Migration, FM Operations, event staff, Youth Program staff, and MNFurs Board members.
- Adults who are not youth program staff or not a parent, guardian, or designated adult of youth attending the event or program, are barred from youth-only events.
- There should be an active means of communication between a parent, guardian, or designated adult and their associated minor(s).
- Parents, guardians, or designated adults should be in areas that their associated minors can access. (i.e.: not in a full panel or show, 18+ panel, 21+ party room, etc.)
- Time of day should be taken into consideration when assessing age and ability. For example, areas and events that may be appropriate for young members in the afternoon may not be in the evening.

Policies, Staff

These policies clearly identify the duties and responsibilities of your staff and provide direction to staff and volunteers. And define the internal mechanisms you'll follow when confronted with inappropriate conduct with minors.

Screening

- All staff members working with youth are required to complete the following screening:
 - Written Application
 - Reference Check
 - Shall include a mix of three personal and professional references, with at least one being a personal reference.
 - Personal Interview
 - A criminal background check will be conducted on the applicant after passing the interview process.
 - A criminal background check is required for:
 - All staff working with minors
 - All board members.
- Upon passing screening, all individuals must accept in writing the Minnesota Furs' Code of Conduct, Youth Program policies, and other policies as applicable.

Supervision

Supervision of youth, programs, facilities, and staff is designated to protect youth and staff at all times. Practices to ensure a safe and caring environment will include:

- No adult is left alone with a minor
 - Ideally, two adults of opposite genders should be present around minors when possible
 - Avoid being alone with minors where you cannot be observed by staff or other adults.
- Staff will not transport minors.

- All-ages events must have background-checked staff present.
- Doors will never be locked while adults and youth are inside a space and cannot be monitored by other staff.
- Staff will avoid changing clothes in front of any youth.
- The wearing of fursuits is not considered consent by anyone. Please see below for appropriate interactions.
- Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of minors is unlawful and prohibited by state law. Any such actions will be reported to the police.

Contact with Youth

We understand that caring, quality staff will develop positive relationships with youth while involved in MNFurs events and programs. The following practices are Minnesota Furs' policies to ensure the protection of both youth and staff outside of MNFurs events and programs.

- Staff will not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for youth outside of programs and activities, including babysitting or private instructions. Staff with prior or family relationships with youth may be relieved of this restriction with previous documentation.
- Staff will not communicate with youth outside of MNFurs events, programs, or platforms via written, electronic, or other means about unrelated MNFurs business. Direct messages not relating to MNFurs are not acceptable.
- Staff will appear and behave in a manner consistent with the mission and core values of Minnesota Furs at all times.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Interactions with Minors

- Appropriate and positive interactions
 - Brief hugs initiated by children or youth (side hugs are preferred).
 - Handshakes.
 - "High-fives," fist bumps, and hand slapping.
 - Verbal praise.

- Holding hands while walking with small children.
 - Sitting beside small children.
 - Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
 - Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.
- Inappropriate interactions with youth include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
 - Kisses.
 - Holding children on the lap.
 - Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas, or private rooms.
 - Occupying a bed with a child or youth if the child *is not an immediate family member*.
 - *Touching the knees or legs of children or youth.*
 - Wrestling with children or youth.
 - Tickling children or youth. Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
 - Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
 - Any form of unwanted affection.
 - Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing” or “You look really hot in those jeans.” Or even you are really pretty/handsome – these types of comments are often the prelude to sliding into more inappropriate comments/behavior.
 - Snapping bras or giving “wedgies” or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
 - The giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
 - Private meals (*e.g., at the home, room, hotel room of a staff member, volunteer, etc.*) with individual children or youth.

Youth Roles and Responsibilities in Minnesota Furs

- Can volunteer with their parent, guardian, or designated adult with them.
- Can earn volunteer hours.
- Can vote for the Youth Advisory Panel members when meeting voting requirements.
- Can organize events with the oversight of a staff member or appropriate adult.
- Can attend board meetings and make recommendations.
- Cannot serve on the board of directors.
- Cannot draft or agree to contracts on behalf of Minnesota Furs.
- Cannot volunteer without adult supervision.

Phases

Phase One

- Have base policies in place 30 days before FM
- Perform background checks on staff working directly with the youth
- Have said staff sign-off in writing accepting CoC, bylaws, and youth policies.
- Post youth policies on the website with a link from the Furry Migration website.

Phase Two

- Identify training needed for the program, and that will become required going forward.
- Youth Advisory Panel (can be renamed)
 - Work with the minors to set up the program, and make them invested in the program.
 - Elections should be offset from the board of directors elections
- Reach out to partner organizations to collaborate and share resources.

Phase Three

- Move forward with elections to the Youth Advisory Panel.