



Trout Unlimited Guidelines for Working with Youth

Trout Unlimited's (TU's) mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. For our mission to succeed beyond our current generation, we must reach out now to children and youth to teach them to fish, to teach them about conservation, and to encourage them to become future leaders in our organization. Today's children and youth are the ones who must take over from us in caring deeply for the fish that we love and the places where they live.

TU, on both the national and local levels, has many programs that reach out to children and youth, including overnight trout camps, Trout-in-the-Classroom programs, fly-tying and fly-casting classes, and on-stream monitoring and habitat-improvement events.

Keeping Children and Youth Safe from Sexual Abuse

It is vitally important that all of our children and youth programs have as their highest priority the safety and well being of the children and youth who participate in them. The programs should be carefully structured and carefully supervised to minimize the risks of physical danger and other harm.

Whenever adults work with children and youth, there is the risk of sexual abuse.

Organizers of TU events involving children must structure those events to minimize the risk of sexual abuse. Events must be structured to avoid having one adult working with one child or one youth in an isolated setting. When working with or instructing children or youth on streams and rivers, volunteers and TU staff must work at least in pairs. Whenever possible, volunteer leaders and staff should limit events involving children and youth to one central area of a stream, pond, lake, recreation area or community center, so activities can be easily monitored.

TU requires that TU volunteers, TU employees, and other TU-retained staff pass a background check before they may participate in any TU-sponsored overnight camp involving children or youth. If your chapter or council is planning an overnight youth camp, [please contact Franklin Tate](#), TU's Youth Education Director, at 828-545-0747 or ftate@tu.org, for a copy of the background check procedure.

In addition, Pennsylvania requires that volunteers working with children or youth (even if the work is not in a camp setting) pass background checks in some circumstances, and other states may have similar requirements. If you are uncertain what the requirements of your state are for programs in which adults, as volunteers or paid staff, work with children and youth, [please contact Franklin](#).

TU has adopted [a Sexual Abuse Policy](#). Every volunteer, TU employee, or other TU-retained staff who will be involved with children or youth in a TU-sponsored event must read and understand the policy. Those volunteering or working at an overnight youth event must read, sign and return the policy to their camp director or to [Franklin Tate](#), TU's Youth Education Director before participating in the event. It's the responsibility of the person in charge of your council's or chapter's children or youth program to assure that every volunteer, TU employee, or other TU-retained staff has reviewed and when required signed [the Sexual Abuse Policy](#).

Releases

Organizers of TU events involving children and youth need to keep in mind that children and youth cannot legally consent to participate in the event, cannot agree to waive any right they may have to pursue claims against the organizers of the event, and cannot consent to the use of photographs containing their image. Therefore, TU strongly recommends that TU national staff and each chapter and council sponsoring a project involving children or youth obtain [written liability waivers](#) from the parent or legal guardian of each child or youth who will be involved in the event. The requirements for a successful liability waiver differ from state to state, and TU urges the organizers of TU events involving children and youth to have a local lawyer review [the waiver forms](#) found in the Tacklebox and amend them as necessary to bring them into compliance with the particular state's law.

Children and youth, like adults, have a right to their privacy, and no one must use photographs, videos, or other depictions of a child's or youth's likeness without the express written permission of the child's or youth's parent or legal guardian. [A model release form](#) giving permission for TU, its chapters and its councils to use a photograph or video of an adult, a child, or a youth is found in the Tacklebox on tu.org. No child or youth should be prohibited from participating in a TU-sponsored event if his or her parent or guardian declines to sign [the model release form](#). If a parent or guardian of a child or youth declines to sign [the model release form](#), no pictures, videos or other likenesses of the child or youth may be used by anyone associated with the TU-sponsored event.

Please remember that a child's or youth's contact information is to be used solely for chapter-related or council-related business and must be held in compliance with [Trout Unlimited's Privacy Policy](#). Youth member contact information should never be used for external purposes without the written consent of the child's or youth's parent or guardian. For more information, please see our [document on youth member communications best practices](#).

Insurance

TU's liability policy covers events involving children and youth, subject to the limitations and exclusions of the policy. Councils and chapters have [the option of purchasing supplemental accident insurance](#), which covers physical injury to a participant in a TU event without regard to whether the injury was caused by anyone's fault. For more information on TU's insurance, please contact Jeff Yates, Director of Volunteer Operations at jyates@tu.org or (203) 216-7078. For more information, please see TU's [Risk Management FAQs](#) or [the Liability and Risk Management chapter of the TU Leadership Manual](#).