

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
POLICY TO PROTECT MINORS AND PREVENT ABUSE

Overview

Bridgewater State University is committed to the safety and well-being of all members of its community, including minors. The University offers programs and activities that minors attend and in which they participate. The University also allows third parties to use University facilities for programs and activities involving minors.

This policy addresses the protection and safety of minors in such programs and/or on property owned or leased by the University and establishes procedures for reporting known or suspected abuse or neglect of, or injury to, minors.

All employees of Bridgewater State University must adhere to this policy and the procedures set forth in the companion Operation Guide to Protect Children and Prevent Abuse. In addition, all third party organizations or groups that are hosting minors on any University owned or leased property must adhere to this policy.

Definitions

Minor

A minor is any person under the age of 18. A Bridgewater State University student is a minor if under 18 years of age.

Mandatory Reporter

For the purposes of this policy, a mandatory reporter is any employee who, in the course of his/her employment, works or interacts with any minor.

Employee

For the purpose of this policy, employees include all full, part-time, and temporary employees. Student employees who (a) work or interact with minors, other than BSU students and applicants for admission, or (b) are in certain safety sensitive positions are also included.

Operation Guide

The Operation Guide to Protect Children and Prevent Abuse is a companion to this policy and sets forth the procedures for implementation.

Responsibilities

What Must Be Reported

A mandatory reporter is obligated to make an **immediate** report to the Bridgewater State University Police if he/she has reasonable cause to believe or actual knowledge that a minor is suffering from abuse or neglect resulting from any of the following instances: physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse, including sexual abuse; neglect, including malnutrition; or physical dependence upon an addictive drug at birth.

Possession of actual evidence is not a prerequisite for a mandatory reporter's obligation to report. Moreover, mandatory reporters are not required to solicit information from the minor and/or from the person suspected of abuse.

You are also required to report any injury to a minor to the Bridgewater State University Police.

To Whom Must Reports Be Made

Reports must be made to the Bridgewater State University Police Department. Bridgewater State University Police will assist with the notification to Department of Children and Families in conformance to MGL c. 51A, if applicable.

Background Checks

The following background checks shall be required by the University:

Employees

As a condition of hire, all newly hired employees (including all full-time, part-time, and temporary employees) must undergo a criminal and sexual offender background check. All offers of employment will be contingent on a satisfactory check. The University may rescind the individual's offer of employment if the background check is not completed or is not satisfactory. No individual may commence employment, if working directly with minors, until the background check process is complete.

All student employees who (a) will work or interact directly with minors, other than BSU students and applicants for admission, or (b) are in sensitive safety positions, must undergo a criminal and sexual offender background check.

Current employees must undergo a criminal and sexual offender background check to participate in programs, events and activities in which they will work directly with minors, other than BSU students or applicants for admission.

Volunteers

All volunteers, if they will interact directly with minors, must undergo a criminal background and sexual offender registry check.

For discrete, occasional events or programs for which a large number of volunteers are essential, departments may adopt safeguards instead of checks for the one-time volunteers with prior approval as set forth in the Operation Guide.

Outside Groups

All outside groups (including, but not limited to, camps and athletic groups) using University facilities must conduct criminal background and sexual offender registry checks on all employees or volunteers who will work or interact with minors on any University owned or leased property, at a minimum in conformance with MGL c. 6 §172G and §172H, and MGL c. 71, §38R. The results of the checks must be satisfactory to the University.

Vendors

Written agreements with contractors and vendors whose employees will work on University property or interact with minors in connection with any University program or activity shall require such vendors and contractors to perform criminal records and sex offender registry checks on those employees as set forth in the Operation Guide. The results of the checks must be satisfactory to the University.

All information obtained through the criminal background and sex offender check process will be handled confidentially and used in accordance with all applicable laws and in compliance with the Operation Guide. The University will not discriminate unlawfully against applicants with convictions.

The University may also conduct other background checks for the purpose of making qualified and informed hiring decisions for other purposes, including, but not limited to, reducing risk, protecting University funds, property and other assets, and providing a safe and secure working environment. Those background checks are in addition to this policy.

Disqualification from Employment or Volunteering

If an individual's criminal background and/or sex offender registry checks include a record of offenses, then the individual's employment, or ability to volunteer, will be determined after a review of the record as set forth in the Operation Guide.

Level 2 and Level 3 sex offenders and individuals are disqualified from working at the University.

The University reserves the right to discipline or terminate any current employee, or to refuse to rehire any former employee, in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements, as applicable, who is found to have abused a minor, or to have been convicted of a crime against a minor or another crime that is determined to pose an unreasonable risk.

Behavioral Standards

Employees working or interacting with minors in the context of their employment or as a volunteer must observe the Behavioral Standards set forth in the Operation Guide.

Education and Training

All employees of Bridgewater State University who are mandatory reporters must undergo training on recognizing abuse in children and best practices in keeping children safe. Training will also be offered to all other employees.

Rules for Outside Groups Using University Facilities

All outside groups seeking to bring or host minors on any University owned or leased property must be approved in advance and sign an acceptable contract with the University agreeing to adhere to safeguards around working with minors, in each case as set forth in the Operation Guide.

Agreements with Parents and Guardians of Minors

All minors accessing University property for more than one day (other than BSU students and minors coming onto campus for admission recruitment or student orientation purposes) will provide appropriate documentation from their parents or guardians. Any minor who is not a University student will be asked to leave the program, activity or property if he/she fails to comply with any University policy, rule, or procedure.

Minor Guests of Students in the Residence Halls

Any student who desires to have a minor guest, other than a BSU student, stay overnight in the residence hall must receive prior approval for the guest and provide appropriate documentation as set forth in the Operation Guide.

University Sponsored Programs and Activities Involving Minors

All University operated or affiliated programs, camps, and other activities for or involving participation by minors, other than BSU students and minors coming onto campus for admission recruitment or student orientation purposes, shall be submitted to for review in advance and require approval prior to commencing the program.

Breadth of Policy

This policy supplements state law and does not supersede any other legal requirements, such as child care, teacher licensure or other mandatory reporting laws. This policy is a fluid document and may change as the law and/or circumstances at the University change.