



NRL Protection of Minors – Code of Conduct

Purpose

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide Teachers, Industry Advisors, Volunteers, Staff, Student Team Members, Parents, and Guardians of Team Members with information, guidelines, and procedures to create safe environments for everyone participating in the NRL program.

This guidebook sets minimum standards recommended for all NRL activities. Adults working in the NRL program must be knowledgeable of the standards set by the National Tooling & Machining Association (NTMA), as well as those set by the school or organizations involved in their program. The NTMA expects all NRL student teams to adhere to all provisions of this guidebook.

This guidebook addresses a wide spectrum of safety risks. While many safety risks can be readily identified and remedied, others may be hidden and not easily understood. NRL participants, whether they are children or adults, should not be expected to identify all safety risks, particularly potential child abusers. By providing NRL participants, parents, and guardians with information that raises their awareness of the risks of child abuse, and by setting standards of behavior that can prevent child abuse, the NTMA gives its participants the resources necessary to significantly reduce the chances of injury.

Working in combination, the following elements greatly increase the likelihood of team members having a safe and rewarding experience:

- The lead coach/teacher is trained in safety measures by his/her school or organization and knows the safety NRL protocols oversee a team's activities.
- Everyone on a team or working with a team is able to talk about and listen to discussions of the NRL safety protocols in age-appropriate terms, and is committed to complying with it.
- Everyone working with a team understands acceptable boundaries and behaviors, as well as the actions necessary if these are not honored.
- Parents and guardians are aware of, and to the extent possible, involved in their child's team's activities.

Adhering to this guidebook will significantly reduce safety risks of program participants.

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NRL CODE OF CONDUCT GUIDELINES

The National Robotics League and the National Tooling & Machining Association expects all adults and children participating in its programs to conduct themselves following standards of behavior that protect the safety and well-being of every team member. Adults working in NRL programs are expected to set a positive example to the students by consistently providing:

- Environments where team members can learn, have fun, and feel safe.
- Age-appropriate oversight by caring adults modeling integrity and respect.
- Knowledge, experience, and skills with a positive and flexible approach.
- Encouragement to learn by doing, fostering cooperative learning.
- Environments where team members can develop supportive relationships, while observing appropriate boundaries.
- Diligent efforts to protect team members from harm.

NRL Team activities outside of the classroom or school setting should be open to team members' parents and guardians whenever possible. The NRL recommends that at least 2 adults should be present with one (or more) children under 18, unless it is in a regular classroom setting and in conformity with school policy. Having at least two adults within sight at all times when a child is present ensures that help will be available in the event of an emergency and may provide clarity in assessing and reporting safety concerns or questionable incidents.

Code of Conduct Violations

Any adult working with an NRL team who is aware of a violation of these guidelines, or who is in doubt about whether or not a behavior is appropriate, is required to immediately consult a team lead teacher/coach (if a team lead teacher/coach is not the potential violator), or the hosting school or organization, and if satisfied with the guidance provided, to act in accordance with it. If the individual seeking guidance is not satisfied with the guidance or if a team lead teacher/coach is the potential violator, the individual is required to contact the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement.

The following behaviors ordinarily constitute NRL Code of Conduct violations:

- Engaging in any activity that endangers the safety, security, or integrity of a child; deliberately makes a child feel shame or humiliation; or demeans a child, such as making threatening remarks or behaving in a manner that deliberately intimidates or frightens a child.
- Engaging in personal exchanges such as phone calls, e-mail, texting, social networking, etc., with a child outside the context of team activities, educational matters, or career concerns. A copy of written communications with a child should ordinarily be provided to a parent, guardian, or second adult working with the team.

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- Engaging a child in activities that are not related to the NRL program, educational matters, or career concerns; or spending personal time with a child outside of NRL program activities (unless the adult is a family member or family friend).
- Keeping any activities with a child secret; encouraging a child to keep any activities secret; or deliberately concealing activities from parents, guardians, or other adults working with the team.
- Making sexually explicit remarks; showing or displaying sexually explicit material; inappropriate physical exposure or contact; or using offensive language or gestures.
- Failure to follow the Communication & Reporting Requirements.

The previous list is intended to set behavioral boundaries that will protect children and adults working with teams from engaging in activities that might place them at risk.

The behavior of all adults working in NRL programs should be (and should appear to be) well within the bounds of appropriate conduct. This will not only protect the children, but may also protect adults working with teams from false accusations of misconduct.

All NRL programs are conducted in a manner that not only teaches technical skills, but also builds trust and camaraderie among team members as well as with the teachers, coaches, advisors and others working with the team. Mentoring is a vital aspect of the NRL experience and essential to inspiring team members, building their confidence, and preparing them for the post-secondary education/training and the manufacturing workplace. Although we hope that both children and adults working with a team will develop positive, supportive relationships and a sense of belonging to a community, the adult has primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining appropriate physical and emotional boundaries.

Individuals seeking to exploit children are known to use mentoring roles to create unhealthy relationships. Team members and adults working in NRL programs must be aware of this risk and if they have concerns about possible unhealthy relationships or efforts being made to form unhealthy relationships, they are required to report their concerns to a team lead teacher/coach (not involved in the matter) or contact their regional program manager or the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement.

Child Abuse Defined

For purposes of the NRL Safety Protocols, a "child" is defined as any person under 18. An "adult" is anyone 18 or older.

The majority of reported acts of child abuse are committed by someone the child is related to or knows and trusts. The fact that a parent, guardian, or relative of a team member is working with the team in no way precludes the possibility of him or her engaging in abusive behavior.

Child Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is behavior toward a child that is demeaning or disrespectful. Examples include verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, unreasonable demands, or the intentional damaging of a child's self-esteem.

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Child Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as the non-accidental use of physical force against a child in such a way that the child either sustains bodily injury or is at risk of bodily injury, however slight.

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is defined as any form of sexualized interaction involving a child and a more powerful individual (age, size, knowledge). Child sexual abuse may occur through inappropriate physical contact, as well as through behaviors that do not involve actual physical contact, for example, inviting a child to view pornography. Experts estimate that 30 to 50 percent of all acts of child sexual abuse are committed by children under 18 victimizing a younger, smaller, or less able child.

Individuals who seek to sexually abuse or exploit children frequently attempt to gain access to children through youth serving organizations. These individuals may spend months purposely building an emotional connection with a child or group of children and work to make inappropriate behavior seem normal. They are often socially skilled and adept at giving convincing excuses when confronted with inquiries about having overstepped normal boundaries.

Communication & Reporting Requirements

Protecting children on an NRL team from injury requires knowledge, judgment, and diligent oversight by adults who make it a priority to promptly report any concerns about potentially inappropriate behavior, and who listen carefully to indications or disclosures of behaviors or conditions that might lead to abuse or otherwise be unsafe.

Any adult working with an NRL team who believes that a child may be the victim of, or at risk of, child abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual) from any source is required to immediately report their concerns. The individual reporting the possibility of abuse should not attempt to conduct an investigation or confront the suspected offender, even if he or she knows the person well.

The report should be made to the state or local government child protection agency, or to the local police. If the hosting school or organization has established procedures for reporting child abuse, those reporting procedures should be followed. The NRL Regional Program Manager and the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement should be notified (to the extent the agencies involved and the hosting school or organization permit this).

Most states mandate that adults (including Volunteers) working in youth-serving organizations report suspected cases of child abuse to their state child protection agency. If you are unsure of your state's reporting requirements, check the state's child protection agency website. The National Child Advocacy Center provides contacts for individual state agencies. This Code requires any adult regularly working with an NRL team to comply with applicable laws and regulations on reporting child abuse. Anyone who believes a team member's safety may be compromised by risks other than child abuse (such as a team working in a space that houses faulty machine equipment or unsafe conditions) is required to take action to remove the team member(s) from the situation or act to eliminate the source of risk, if this can be done safely and will likely prevent injury. If the risk may have resulted from deliberate actions or negligence, it may be appropriate to report it to the local police, the school or organization hosting the team, and the NRL regional program manager or the NRL Director of Youth Engagement (to the extent the hosting school or organization permits this).

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The NTMA Director of Youth Engagement is available to advise any individual with concerns about the safety of children in NRL programs and may be contacted directly and anonymously if information or guidance is needed. All information regarding complaints or incidents of violations or non-compliance with the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement is treated as private information, including the identity of the individual making the report. Information will only be disclosed with the approval of a NTMA-WD Officer on a need to know basis, or as required by law.

Individuals who fail to adhere to the code may be excluded from working in NRL programs and at NRL events.

Lead Teachers/Coaches (Age 21 or older)

Because effective youth protection depends upon knowledge, experience, and good judgment, the role of the lead teacher/coach is critical. Lead teachers/coaches are the individuals who exercise the most control over a team's activities, and are best able to help team members prevent, and if necessary deal with, risky situations.

Every NRL team is required to have a minimum of one adult that 21 years old or older, as its lead teacher/coaches. The NRL relies on the lead teacher/coach to support the safety protocol standards set by the organization. It is essential that all lead teachers/coaches are available and approachable if a team member, parent, guardian, or anyone else connected with the team needs guidance in understanding what behaviors are appropriate or needs to report unsafe conditions or any code violations.

The specific duties that lead teacher/coaches are required to carry out are listed below. All adults working with the team should also be responsible to carry them out responsibly.

- Being familiar with the NRL safety protocols; providing leadership in directing the team's activities according to its standards; and exercising judgment over the application and interpretation of its provisions.
- Conduct a Team Safety Meeting at the beginning of the season.
- Determining if a safety matter warrants reporting to a child protection agency, the police, the school or organization hosting the team, or the NRL regional program/NTMA Director of Youth Engagement. Although anyone involved with a NRL team may report safety incidents or concerns without the knowledge or approval of a lead teacher/coach, the judgment and advice of a lead teacher/coach should be sought.
- Determining at what point any adult working with the team is "regularly involved" and required to undergo youth protection screening; and closely directing adults who have not undergone any youth protection training.

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- Assessing the suitability of individuals, including team members, to participate in the team's activities. Excluding individuals from working with the team if they are unsuitable due to safety concerns, and notifying the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement of any adults whose application to volunteer, or who's continued volunteer service, has been denied. The NRL recommends that the lead teacher/coach consider having new advisors/mentors complete a child protection background check, before being allowed to work with a team on a regular basis.

Fundamental Safety Requirements & Recommendations

Safety for all Team Activities

Required

- Allow only appropriate interactions between individuals. Individuals who are not team members should not be allowed to participate in team activities without the permission of a team lead teacher/coach and only under adequate supervision. The NRL recommends that team lead teacher/coach establish age-appropriate rules for their team regarding the sharing of personal information, particularly at events or on-line.
- Do not allow violent, hostile, or potentially harmful behavior. Physical or verbal bullying, hazing, confrontational behavior, or corporal punishment must not be tolerated. If anyone involved in the team's activities behaves in a manner that might be harmful, that member should be separated from the group and his or her parent or guardian, a child protection agency, or the police should be called, as appropriate.
- Do not allow the use of controlled substances. Alcohol, tobacco, or other controlled substances must not be used during team activities or made available to team members. Exceptions may be made for alcohol served to adults of legal drinking age at receptions or gatherings related to team support, if controls are in place to prevent illegal use.
- Be prepared for emergencies. Procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost students or adults, and site security should be established, including a well-stocked first-aid kit, a list of special medical needs (e.g., inhalers, food allergies), and contact information for each team member's parent or guardian.
- Keep team members safe while working with tools, machinery, and Bot materials. Become familiar with safety manuals for the NRL program in which your team participates.

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Facilities

The NRL recommends that teams meet at schools, other facilities maintained for use by children or civic groups or manufacturing companies. Such facilities are regularly inspected for safety hazards, will ordinarily accommodate individuals needing special access, and have security measures and emergency procedures in place. The following should be standard procedure for adults working with the team:

- Familiarization with the safety procedures of the facility
- Regular survey of the space to eliminate any potential safety hazards
- Understanding and following the safety regulations set by the school or organization hosting your team

When a Team Travels

Travel to Team Activities Away from Home and/or Overnight

When transporting team members to and from places other than those where the team ordinarily meets, or staying overnight away from home, the NRL recommends following these additional safety guidelines:

- Obtain written permission for the child to take the trip from his or her parent or guardian (Form), and clearly communicate the destination, trip details, room sharing and sleeping arrangements, and contact information of the adults supervising the team and the place of lodging.
- In the event of a mishap, emergency contact information for each team member's parent or guardian should be readily accessible to the adults supervising the team.
- Team members should have appropriate ID depending on the destination. The adults and team members (depending on their ages) should each have a list of cell phone and room numbers for all individuals on the trip.
- Provisions for team members' special needs, including accessibility, medical conditions, and allergies should be made in advance of the trip.
- Every driver (transporting team members other than him or herself) should be 18 or older, with a valid driver's license, and drive a registered vehicle, with at least the minimum insurance required by the state in which the vehicle is registered. This also applies to hired drivers and hired vehicles.
- Every passenger should ride in a legal seat, wearing a seat belt at all times; however, the seat belt requirement may be waived if the vehicle is licensed to carry passengers without seat belts.
- In case of an emergency or delay, the driver should have directions and a designated contact person.

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- Before leaving, the NRL recommends reviewing the following information with team members and adults who will be going on the trip:
 - What to do if a team member is separated from the group.
 - What behaviors you expect and what consequences exist for noncompliance.
 - Every team member's privacy should be respected at all times, including when using the bathroom and changing clothes.
 - Hotel/motel room doors should be locked when in the room, using the deadbolt and the chain or anchor.
 - Do not open the door for strangers; if hotel staff claims to be at the door, call the front desk to confirm, before you unlock the door.
 - Don't mention or display your room number in the presence of strangers.
 - Upon arrival at the overnight accommodations, locate emergency exits.
 - Keep a small flashlight on your bedside table, along with your room key, wallet, and cell phone; take these with you if you have to leave the room.
 - Ask hotel/motel management to contact a designated adult if any team members are seen out of their rooms after a specific time.

The NRL recommends that at least two adults be present with team members while traveling. This practice ensures that help is available in the event of an emergency. Should the conduct of a team member or an adult traveling with the team be questioned, having a second adult present will provide clarity in assessing and reporting safety concerns or incidents.

Hosting School or Organization

Schools and organizations participating in NRL programs and the states in which they operate may have guidelines and safety requirements governing youth-oriented programs such as those offered by the NRL. Adults working in NRL programs are required to comply with the child protection policies of the school or organization hosting the team and the requirements of the states or governments in which the team meets or travels. Contact the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement if you need assistance in obtaining this information.

Safety at Official NRL Competitions

Entities/Individuals Conducting Events

The organization or individual(s) conducting an NRL competition is/are responsible for child protection throughout the event and required to comply with the safety rules of the hosting organization and facility. The party conducting the event is also required to be fully familiar with the NRL's Safety Protocols and Code of Conduct. These guidelines will be most effective if it is reviewed and discussed in advance allowing those responsible for managing the event to resolve any concerns well before the event. Consideration should be given to including event security personnel in this review to ensure their understanding of NRL standards of conduct, as well as your expectations of them should any child protection concerns arise.

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Safety Services/Facilities

Care must be taken to provide adequate emergency and security personnel based on the size and nature of the event, including EMTs, security guards, and safety monitors/inspectors. Every event will have different circumstances. The party conducting the event, in consultation with the manager of the facility and various service providers, must judge "Adequacy". The number and ages of participants and spectators as well as the nature of the activities taking place will be primary considerations. Emergency and security service providers are required to:

- Be available throughout the entire event.
- Be fully trained and capable of effectively responding to medical and non-medical emergencies.
- Be aware of the special security and safety concerns at events with children participating on teams and as spectators.
- Be aware of the potential risk presented by on-site service providers, exhibitor and sponsor representatives, and spectators. It is not feasible to screen or train these individuals, and security personnel should bear this in mind.
- Remain on site until all teams and spectators have left the premises.

Facilities are required to be duly licensed to hold such events and the event activities must stay within the legally specified parameters for numbers of participants and event elements (e.g., machine shops). Those providing services for the event or performing at an event (e.g., food services, child care services, etc.) are required to be qualified to do so, and show that they are properly licensed. The NRL recommends that outside service providers have an insurance certificate, identifying the party conducting the event as an additional named insured.

Responding and Reporting Physical Injuries or Medical Problems

The NRL requires that all physical injuries and medical problems, however slight, be documented and reported to the party conducting the event or his or her designee and to NTMA national headquarters within 48 hours of the occurrence.

Safety Concerns & Non-Medical Incidents

All persons on-site who are responsible for operating the event should be able to recognize threats to safety and be prepared to take prompt remedial action. Safety concerns and non-medical incidents should be dealt with as quickly as possible in whatever manner is most appropriate to ensure the safety of everyone at the event. This may involve contacting event security, the police, parents, local child protection authorities, and/or management of the hosting entity. Safety concerns may even require shutting down an event (e.g., power outage). The NRL requires that all safety concerns and non-medical incidents be reported to the party conducting the event and to NTMA headquarters within 48 hours – a Report of Safety Concern or Non-Medical Incident form is provided. If there is uncertainty about filing a report, the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement should be contacted for guidance. The reporter may choose to remain anonymous; however, the more facts the NTMA Director of Youth Engagement has, the better it will be able to support an appropriate solution.

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Reporting is important for risk management purposes and to help keep the number and severity of future event injuries as low as possible. It may also help to protect those responsible for the event, or involved in the incident, should questions arise later regarding the manner in which the incident was handled.

Event Volunteers

The behavior of adults working at an event should be, and should appear to be, well within the bounds of appropriate conduct. The NRL recommends for all Event Volunteers who are 18 years of age or older, be required to obtain Child Abuse History and Criminal History Clearances. For the purposes of this requirement, "Event Volunteers" are defined as the individuals who are assigned specific roles by the event's coordinator and will be interacting routinely with youth participants. These roles are listed on the NRL website and vary from program to program. Examples of these roles are: Judges, Referees, Safety Inspectors, Pit Monitors, Interviewers, etc.

Individuals who are providing event services, working with food vendors, or attending an event as a spectator are not required to obtain clearances. The NRL recommends for exhibitors to register with the event and sign affidavits that he/she has never been convicted of child abuse or endangerment. All NRL event coordinators are required to decline the services of any individuals in any capacity if he/she has a history of child abuse or endangerment. The NRL requires that the identity of these persons be kept confidential.

The training and screening of teachers, coaches, mentors, and other adults who accompany individual NRL teams to an event are the responsibility of that team's lead teacher/coach. The party conducting the event and the event's coordinator are not responsible for confirming that lead teacher/coach and other adults accompanying teams to an event have obtained clearances, unless these individuals are fulfilling more than incidental event duties apart from oversight of their own team. Regardless of whether or not an adult has obtained clearances, the NRL recommends that adults volunteering at an event be instructed not to place themselves in a situation where they will be alone with one or more children under 18 (other than their own children) and out of sight of other adults. Having two adults within sight at all times when a child is present will ensure safety in the event of an emergency, and provide clarity in assessing and reporting safety concerns or questionable incidents.

Fundamental Safety Guidelines for NRL Events

The following fundamental safety guidelines are recommended for all NRL Events:

- Follow all safety rules set by the school/ organization/facility hosting the event. Before teams arrive, survey the facility and remedy any safety hazards. Safety measures related to the competition that are mandated by the NRL must be adhered to.
- Allow only appropriate interactions between individuals and always adhere to the NRL Code of Conduct. The use of offensive language, gestures, or behavior that is inappropriate for the ages of team members or spectators should not be tolerated. All participants should be able to effectively manage the inevitable stress of competing in an event and not resort to angry outbursts or intimidating behavior.

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- Do not allow violent, hostile, or potentially harmful behavior. Do not tolerate physical or verbal abuse, bullying, hazing, or confrontational behavior by anyone, including lead teachers/coaches and parents. If anyone at the event behaves in a manner that might be harmful, security personnel should guide the individual to a separate space, if possible, and his/her parent or guardian, a child protection agency, or the police, should be called, as appropriate.
- Do not allow the use of controlled substances. Do not allow the use or presence of alcohol, tobacco, or other controlled substances. Exceptions may be made for alcohol served to adults of legal drinking age at receptions and celebratory meals when controls are in place to prevent illegal use.
- Be prepared for emergencies. Establish procedures in advance for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost children/adults, and security.
- Ensure safety when traveling to and from events. Oversight of team members' transportation to and from events is the responsibility of the team's lead teacher/coach. Team members under 18 should only be allowed to leave an event with the approval of their lead teacher/coach or their parent or guardian, and under appropriate supervision.
- Keep team members safe while working with tools, robots, machinery, and materials. In advance of the event, confirm that Safety Inspectors, Pit Monitors or other qualified persons are assigned to oversee the use of tools, machinery, and materials by the teams. Make sure that the Safety Inspectors and Pit Monitors are authorized to stop any activities judged to be a safety threat.

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