

PFLAG Sandy Springs Youth Group: Required Documentation for PFLAG National

Adopted June 6, 2020

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PFLAG chapters sponsoring youth groups shall:

1. Complete a community assessment to determine whether a PFLAG-sponsored youth group is the best approach. What, if any, programs or organizations already exist in the local LGBTQ community and serve youth?

--North Fulton Transgender Support Group for Youth

Thursdays, 6:30pm-8:00pm, Roswell

Therapeutic group, facilitated by members of the community, for ages 13-23, parents not invited to attend, <http://www.wellspringlife.com/groups--workshops.html>, significant distance from Sandy Springs

--Trans and Friends

1st and 3rd Monday evenings, Charis Books

Non-therapeutic support group, facilitated by an educator and therapist who are members of the community, "Youth Focused" group, young teen through older adult, parents can attend to get to know the group, but are not centered.

https://www.facebook.com/pg/TransAndFriends/about/?ref=page_internal, significant distance from Sandy Springs

--TransDecatur

4th Saturday of each month, Decatur First United Methodist Church

Non-therapeutic support group for transgender people and their loved ones, facilitated by trained volunteers who are allies or members of the community, 13 through adults of all ages, some portion of the time together, some portion of the time separate groups for SOFA (Significant Others, Family and Allies) and community members

https://www.facebook.com/pg/TransDecatur/about/?ref=page_internal, significant distance from Sandy Springs

--PFLAG Johns Creek

3rd Tuesday of each month, Johns Creek United Methodist Church

Non-therapeutic support group for LGBTQIA+ teens, facilitated by trained volunteers who are members of the community. For ages 13 - 18 (rising 8th graders through seniors in HS), with separate groups for parents/guardians who must remain on the

premises at all times. We are currently working in partnership with PFLAG Johns Creek. Driveable from Sandy Springs.

--Other PFLAG chapters

Monthly, various locations

Non-therapeutic support group for families and LGBTQIA adults, facilitated by trained volunteers, receptive to older teens who attend with their parents, but not geared toward them. At varying distances from Sandy Springs.

--GSAs

Often weekly, when school is in session, at some area high schools. Even when GSA is available at their school, it can be difficult for students to attend if they are choosing not to disclose their LGBTQ identity at school or if they have extracurricular activities that conflict.

2. Consult with an attorney to ensure that the program is in compliance with the relevant federal, state and local laws.

PFLAG Sandy Springs has made the choice not to serve teens without parents or responsible adults present on the premises at all times. In virtual spaces, this translates to communicating with a parent about their teen's attendance at Zoom meetings and encouraging parents to attend meetings as well. Additionally, PFLAG Sandy Springs has developed a Policy on Teen Safety with expected practices and definitions of abuse. All teen facilitators must receive training about the Policy and undergo a background check. Policy violations must be reported to the board, who must also have undergone a background check. Allegations or suspicion of abuse must be reported to Child Protective Services/Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)..

3. Create a written strategic plan for the youth group involving diverse community leaders and youth.

LGBTQIA+ youth want a safe place to build friendships and come to better understand themselves in a more inclusive environment. Their parents want to know they will be safe.

We believe that the Johns Creek model (see #1 above), which we follow, is an important supplement to other support teens may find through therapeutic groups, school groups, or multi-age groups. In our model, teens find support at their age, experience, and maturity level in a safe environment with mature members of the community facilitating their conversations and interactions. Meanwhile, this direct

support is supplemented through the education and support their parents are receiving in their respective facilitated groups. Parents are on location at all times, always able to check in with their students if they need to.

This is a safe and effective way to support LGBTQ youth who live in households that are open to being part of their support network. Although we understand that this does not meet the needs of the most at risk students--students in households that are not interested in learning and supporting their teens--we believe it is a sustainable and safe level of support, given our limitations as volunteers in a non-profit environment. When we encounter teens who need support we cannot offer, we will direct them to crisis services and other organizations.

4. Perform a background check by a third party on all prospective youth group leaders. Required for every youth group facilitator and every board member.

5. Train prospective leaders in youth group facilitation.
This is our practice.

6. Develop clear, written guidelines for the facilitators and youth group members.

Policy on Teen Safety

These policies set forth statements of general expectations and guidelines of behavior for PFLAG Sandy Spring volunteers ("volunteers") when engaged in interactions with minors. Volunteers should consult with the PFLAG Sandy Springs Board ("the board") should unanticipated situations arise.

Definitions

Abuse (Types):

1. *Physical Abuse* is physical injury or death caused by other than accidental means. Injuries may include severe beatings, burns, bites or other physical problems. Corporal punishment (e.g., spanking) is still legal in Georgia but leaving a mark or physically harming a child is reportable.

2. *Sexual Abuse* perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.

3. *Sexual Abuse* perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.

4. *Emotional Abuse* is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.

5. *Neglect* is the failure of a parent or caretaker to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.

6. *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* involves the treatment of a child as a sexual and commercial object such as in prostitution, pornography and other forms of transactional sex.

7. *Child Endangerment* is where a child is allowed to witness or hear the commission of a forcible felony, battery or family violence. Examples are driving under the influence with children in the car or engaging in family violence with children present.

Child Protective Services/Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS): The state agency charged with protecting children and families. Each county has its own DFCS office which provides services, including a Child Protective Services (CPS) unit which receives and investigates allegations of abuse.

Mandated Reporter: A person who is required by Georgia state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, child endangerment and/or exploitation of children or youth to a Georgia DFCS office. PFLAG Sandy Springs considers anyone who volunteers regularly with youth to be mandated reporters.

Screening

PFLAG Sandy Springs shall require a criminal public records check for any potential volunteer who engages in interactions with minors. Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries. Public records checks must be updated at least every five years. The board shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons, with their contact information, approved to volunteer with minors.

Expected Practices

Two Adults Required

There shall be at least two, unrelated adults (at least two years older than the eldest youth participant) present at in-person and digital events for youth. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to a member of the board.

One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and an unrelated child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation. In digital contexts, this means that volunteers should not have one-on-one text conversations with youth who attend PFLAG. Email conversations must be carried on through the official PFLAG Sandy Springs email account, to which all board members have access (social@pflagsandysprings.org).

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws and the need to enforce these policies.

Behavioral Standards for Volunteers in Interactions with Youth

Adults are encouraged to:

Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:

- high fives and fist bumps;
- brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms; or
- brief hugs and arms around shoulders.

Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- Provide youth with alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse legal drugs at any PFLAG youth event (in person or digitally);
- Consume alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any PFLAG youth event (in person or digitally);
- Permit any youth to sit in the lap of an unrelated adult; or
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any youth; or discuss their own sexual activity, history, or fantasies with youth (in person or digitally).

Digital Behavioral Expectations

Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see. Private messaging with a youth is inappropriate, given the potential for privacy and abuse. Volunteers must not give out their private phone number to students. Any anonymous questions students submit during virtual meetings must be through the social@pflagsandysprings.org email rather than through personal accounts of volunteers.

When it is necessary for a representative of PFLAG Sandy Springs to send an email to an individual youth (for instance, with a Zoom link for the meeting), a copy must be sent to the parents or [guardians](#) as well.

Volunteers must not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or “Add Me” on Snapchat) from personal accounts to youth for interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. If a youth follows or friends a volunteer, interactions with them must remain public (posts, rather than [DMs](#)). Youth facilitators are not allowed to watch, interact, or follow on TikTok any youth attending support sessions.

Commented [CH1]:

Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

Responding to Concerns and Reporting Abuse

Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Youth

If a youth discloses allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation or endangerment to an adult volunteer or if an adult volunteer has reason to suspect that abuse of a youth has taken place, that person should report the abuse to the appropriate authorities. All PFLAG youth facilitators are considered mandated reporters and are required by these policies to report known or suspected abuse of youth to DFCS within 24 hours. Once allegations of abuse have been received, a report should be made regardless where the abuse took place

1. An oral report shall be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time unless there is a reasonable cause.

2. Reports are taken 24 hours a day by calling 1-855-GA CHILD (1-855-422-4453). If unable to reach DFCS, or if the youth is in immediate danger, report to local law enforcement (911) in the county where the youth lives.

3. Failure to report suspected abuse of youth is unacceptable. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice.

4. A Confidential Notice of Concern must be made to the PFLAG Sandy Springs board regarding any report to DFCS.

Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

Anyone who suspects a (non-abusive) violation of these policies shall immediately interrupt the violation, restate the policy to their fellow volunteer, and report the violation to a board member. Appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action may be taken up to and including termination of volunteer position. Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a member of the board shall immediately report the violation to at least two other board members.

This Policy on Teen Safety shall be posted on PFLAG Sandy Springs' website and be available for review by students and/or their parents/responsible adults at every physical support meeting.

7. Research and obtain the necessary liability insurance. (PFLAG National's liability insurance does not cover chapters.)

Based on our research, we do not believe liability insurance is necessary for the model of youth work (parents/responsible adults always present) we are following.

8. Develop a written plan for regularly monitoring and evaluating the program and facilitators.

The board will request regular, informal feedback from families and volunteers. Once a year we will offer the opportunity for families and volunteers to complete a survey about their experiences and suggestions for improvement. The board will review the completed surveys and assess what changes might need to be made to improve the program.

See above for policies and reporting of policy violations and suspected abuse.

9. Forward the required documentation to your PFLAG National Staff field manager.