



RED FLAG BEHAVIORS

WHAT IS A 'RED FLAG' BEHAVIOR?

A red flag behavior is an undesirable behavior that needs attention and correction. Red flag behaviors are not necessarily abusive in singular or infrequent occasions, nor are they in and of themselves against the law. However, these behaviors can be precursors to abuse, especially when a person or group exhibits them frequently or repeatedly. In many cases, these behaviors can be corrected through enforcing conduct guidelines and providing constructive feedback.

EXAMPLES OF RED FLAG BEHAVIORS: (NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

- Missing or ignoring social cues about the personal boundaries of others.
- Minimizing behaviors or becoming defensive when confronted about them.
- Paying noticeably more attention to one particular youth (talking about, spending time with - or you hear accounts from youth indicating this).
- Disregarding rules, e.g., saying things like, "we're not supposed to do this, but..."
- Encouraging secrets.
- Isolating themselves and another person from the group - encouraging 1:1, private interactions, closed doors.
- Using emotional tactics to coerce a person, such as guilt, teasing, intimidation, or threats, to get them to do something they don't want to do.
- Making comments about physical appearance or other personal traits of a youth; either made directly to a youth, or about a youth among peers or other adults.
- Talking about sex, sexual activity, or using sexualized phrases.
- Insisting on frequent physical touching.
- Giving gifts to certain youth, rather than to all participants.
- Volunteering to spend time outside acceptable hours (especially when alone) with a youth.
- Relating closely to youth but appearing distant or defensive among peer-aged adults.

Someone who intentionally uses the above behaviors for the purpose of eventually abusing another person is said to be "grooming" their victim. Grooming is a series of acts that de-sensitizes or disables a victim from maintaining healthy boundaries, opening the door to sexual abuse and other exploitation.

HOW TO SET A TONE OF APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS FOR SAFE CONDUCT IN A YOUTH PROGRAM SETTING

- Implement and reinforce the UW Standards for Interacting with Youth with your staff.
- Use a conduct code with participants that includes both rights and responsibilities regarding personal boundaries.
- Model healthy boundaries for others.
- Send a clear message to participants about what they can expect from adults, and clearly communicate options for addressing concerns or problems.
- Send a clear message to your staff about requirements to report any violations of the Standards to SafeCampus.

WHAT A SUPERVISOR CAN DO IF THEY OBSERVE RED FLAG BEHAVIORS

- Confront the behavior and provide constructive feedback, include examples of more desirable alternative behaviors.
- Explain why the behavior doesn't fit the situation, e.g., as volunteers we keep a boundary that is guided by the shared program goals we have for program participants.
- Report behaviors of concern that violate the UW Standards for Interacting with Youth to SafeCampus.
- Remember: *There are always choices and alternative ways to behave and interact with others. Staff should be able to adjust their behaviors as directed.*