

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Child Protection Guidelines
Public Document

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts welcomes visitors of all ages and abilities.

VMFA aims to provide a healthy and safe environment for all visitors, especially children. The well-being of children is a critical part of our health and safety management process, and it is our responsibility to ensure the protection of children on our premises and engaged in activities under our direct control.

As an educational institution and agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, VMFA is obligated to perform emergency planning concerning the safety of persons and facilities for which we are responsible. The statutory requirement for this planning is set forth in **§ 44-146.18 of the Code of Virginia**. VMFA has procedures in place to respond to a wide range of situations and each level of alert. We employ a full-time security force to patrol the buildings and grounds of the museum. In addition, the museum utilizes various security systems and equipment to protect our visitors and collection.

We are pleased to respond that the museum has performed all emergency planning required by the *Code* and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. In that VMFA is a secure facility entrusted with responsibility for the safekeeping of the Commonwealth's extensive collection of

fine art, we carefully control distribution of any agency plan which may, if such materials were to fall into the wrong hands, jeopardize the security of persons and our facilities. The **Code of Virginia at § 2.2-3705.2** provides us the authority to restrict disclosure of these materials. We appreciate your understanding of and cooperation with our security measures.

Please know that we take the safety of our visitors very seriously and make every effort to ensure their wellbeing while in our facility. If there is a reported emergency at VMFA, you may call **804.340.1563** to check for updates on the situation. Staff may not be able to answer questions about particular schools groups and individual students.

We define children as persons under 18 years of age. Children less than 13 years of age are regarded as needing a higher degree of protection than those ages 14 and above.

The primary responsibility for a child's welfare at VMFA rests with the supervising adult when the child is NOT under the supervision of a VMFA staff member

VMFA Employees, Adjunct Faculty, Contract Staff, Volunteers, and Interns Code of Conduct

- VMFA staff, contract instructors, volunteers, and interns who are recruited to work directly with children are selected with care and caution and are required to submit to a legal background check through *USA Background, Inc.* All employees will be subject to a satisfactory background check, which will include a search of all available sexual offender databases,

employer/personal reference, and a standard probationary period.

- Staff members are required to be good role models and maintain a professional demeanor at all times.
- Staff members will treat children entrusted to their care with respect at all times.
- All staff, volunteers, and interns will wear a photo identification badge or an approved name tag at all times.
- Staff members will report lapses in acceptable standards to their VMFA supervisor.
- Failure to maintain appropriate standards will be dealt with using VMFA disciplinary procedures.

Staff Training

- VMFA Education Managers and/or Coordinators for each program or department will train their assigned staff, contract teachers, volunteers, and interns on this policy and monitor procedures and behaviors to assure all adhere to good practices in respect to VMFA child visitors.
- All employees who will work directly with children will be issued a Child Safety and Protection guidelines packet.
- With the assistance of the Protective Services Department, staff and interns will walk through a fire drill and be able to locate first aid boxes, emergency exits, and fire extinguishers.

Student Drop-Off/Pick Up

- The day before the start of a class, the coordinator or teacher will receive a class roster. Any child not preregistered will be asked to register with the VMFA Ticket Desk.
- For youth classes, a parent, guardian, or caregiver is required to sign in each child ages 5-12 at the start of his/her class. They must also leave an emergency contact number for that day.
- For youth classes, a parent, guardian, or caregiver is required to sign out each child ages 5-12 at the end of his/her class. The drop-off adult must leave the name of the person picking up the child if other than him/herself. A photo ID is required for an adult to pick up a child.
- Students ages 13-17 in the teen programs are permitted to sign themselves in and out of each class with signed permission from parent, guardian, or caregiver. Students must give an emergency contact number upon arrival and sign in.
- VMFA is responsible for students' safety during a scheduled program time. We do not release students to explore the museum without an accompanying teacher or parent/chaperone.
- Parents/guardians are required to pick up their child at the conclusion of the class. VMFA does not offer extended care for any child unless it is part of a scheduled program in conjunction with a class, or series of classes for which the child is registered. This option may not always be available.
- VMFA staff, or the contact teacher, is required to wait with student(s) until each are satisfactorily

picked up. If the student drives a car to class, they leave on their own or in prearranged carpools.

Student Behavior

- In order to make our art programs a positive experience for all students (ages 5-12 in Youth Classes) and staff, we reserve the right to remove students from class who do not adhere to student behavior policy. The behavior policy will be reviewed by the teacher on the first day of class.
- The VMFA Teen Studio Code of Conduct guidelines are to be read by the teen student upon sign-in. The student must agree to the guidelines and sign an acknowledgement that they will abide by the guidelines. The Teen Studio Code of Conduct Guidelines is only provided for studio classes that exceed one day workshops.

Supervising Students

- All students' ages 5-12 who are enrolled in Youth Classes are supervised at all times while participating in studio classes and guided gallery experiences. This includes escorting students to the restrooms.
- All students' ages 12-17 who are enrolled in Teen Programs are supervised at all times while participating in studio classes and correlating gallery experiences.

Student Group Tours

- Groups of children, ages 5-17, which have preregistered for a gallery tour, should arrive with adults such as a teachers, relatives, or youth group leaders. VMFA requires one adult chaperone per 10 students ages 5-17 and requires one adult chaperone per 5 students for pre-school students. Special-needs students often have a much higher ratio of adults to students. Group leaders are informed of required pupil-teacher ratios, expected behavior, and rules at the time of booking and in their written tour confirmation letter sent out by the Tour Services Office.
- If the behavior of any child or adult in the group adversely affects the safety or enjoyment of other visitors to the museum, a VMFA docent, class instructor, VMFA staff member, or VMFA security may ask them to leave the museum, accompanied by their teacher/group leader and/or VMFA security.
- All group leaders are asked to deliver a count of total students and chaperones upon arrival to the Tour Services volunteer greeter/docent/Tour Services staff/Information Desk volunteer.
- All group leaders are encouraged to supply a name tag for each student less than 13 years of age.
- A pre-visit check sheet is sent to each scheduled group and given to unscheduled drop-in groups upon their arrival in the museum lobby (see *Self-Directed Checklist* and *Guided Tour Checklist*).

Intrusion

- Security cameras monitor part of the facility seven days per week, 24 hours a day.
- Staff and instructors are briefed and trained on how to handle individuals who could pose a threat.
- Staff, if possible, will never allow an agitated individual to enter an area where children are located.
- VMFA staff and instructors are trained to understand and execute procedures for sheltering-in-place should any staff working with children determine that there is imminent danger to the safety of students, staff, or instructors. The group will remain sheltered-in-place until VMFA security gives the "all clear" to bring the children out of the space place.

Access

- All buildings, studios, and rooms have controllable access through designated, supervised, or locked entry points. A VMFA security officer is stationed at the public entry.

Restrooms

- Single-stall restrooms are bright, well lit, and easy to supervise.
- Multiple-stall restrooms require an adult to make a visual check of the entire restroom before permitting children to enter.
- An adult will stand outside the door of the restroom and monitor it acoustically.

General Safety

- All visitors to the VMFA Pauley Center must register with the Security Officer.
- All visitors desiring entry to the main museum or the Pauley Center prior to public hours must register with the Security Officer.
- The museum is protected from fire by a smoke and heat sensor system linked to the fire alarm. Well-rehearsed evacuation procedures ensure all visitors can safely leave the premises. All staff, teachers, and volunteers will be familiar with the emergency exits, the evacuation path from the building, and the refuge location.
- Emergency exits are clearly indicated.
- Lighting is sufficient in and around entrances and in classroom spaces.
- Telephones are located in an easily accessible location within each room or studio where teachers and children may be working.
- Emergency contact telephone numbers are visible near each telephone.
- Student contact information emails and/or emergency numbers are not shared directly or indirectly.
- An incident report will be completed and submitted to VMFA Security for any accident, mishap, disciplinary, or unusual circumstance deemed notable.
- Backpacks and packages are not permitted in the galleries. They must be checked in the VMFA coat room.

Classroom Safety

- Paper cutters are secured.
- Sharp cutting tools are secured.
- Electrical outlets within six feet of the sinks or other water sources are protected by ground fault circuit interrupters.
- Hazardous materials are secured out of reach of younger guests.
- No child can handle, mix, or work with materials not meeting the AP (Approved Product) Seal, without prior approval from a parent, guardian, or the child's caregiver.

First Aid

- All medical emergencies will be reported immediately to VMFA Security at 340-1563.
- 911 will be called by VMFA Security for all medical emergencies.
- VMFA has staff members who are trained to provide first aid.
- First aid treatment is carried out with more than one adult present except in the rare occasion where delay in providing urgent first aid pending the arrival of medical aid would be harmful to the child.
- No oral or injected medicines will be administered to any child in the care of a VMFA staff member, volunteer, intern, or contract teacher.
- Cursory or minor first aid will be administered by gloved VMFA staff at their discretion. This could include, but is not limited to the distribution of band-aids or ice packs.

- An "Ouch" *I Got Hurt Today in Class* form will be completed for any minor incident requiring first aid. The report will be given to the parent to read and sign verifying that the parent was notified of the sickness or accident.

Emergency Action

- Staff and contract teachers will follow the VMFA Emergency Procedures Policy.

Weather Related Sheltering-In-Place

- On the occasion of a significant weather event (tornado, severe thunderstorm, high winds, or any warning or advisory of such) it may be more prudent to shelter children in-place instead of evacuating them from the building. If this decision is made, all children and staff will be removed to an interior room, and away from all windows and glass doors. This procedure will continue until the Security staff advises that the weather event no longer poses a threat.

Missing Child

- The group leader, staff, or contract teacher should account for all members of their group. If they are missing any person, VMFA Security will be alerted immediately.
- VMFA will immediately activate the Code Adam Alert, and notify the local police department.

Found Child

- If staff, security, or a VMFA guest finds a lost child they should take that child immediately to the nearest VMFA Security officer.
- The VMFA Security officer will alert the Security Console via radio of the found child.

Abuse

- VMFA minimizes the opportunity for abuse by working in open environments, avoiding unobserved, secluded locations or situations.
- Any staff, intern, or volunteer working with minor children will be instructed as to appropriate and safe behaviors.
- The welfare of children is paramount and any suspicion or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously. All our staff, volunteers, and trustees have a responsibility to report any concerns or suspicions that may arise with an appropriate supervisor.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse, injury, or inappropriate behavior will be properly investigated, and dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

Handling of Personal Records

- VMFA will follow GS-108 Schedule - Fire, Safety and Security Records, Series 012273 - Buildings: Access Control Records.

Photography

- Prior to taking photographs or videotaping of children in the museum, or during an event or class staff will obtain the caregiver, parent, or guardian's consent in writing.
- Student names are not published with accompanying published photos.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually in July by the Office of Protective Services in conjunction with the Education Division. Changes will be made as deemed appropriate and in the light of current circumstances. Specific procedures may be added as needed and will become part of these guidelines.

11/15/2011