



Youth Safety Policy

Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) is a community-based nonprofit organization. We strive to recover salmon by engaging our community in restoration, education and stewardship. Through this work we engage all community members including youth.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect youth from abuse while participating in NSEA events, projects and programs.
- To provide staff and volunteers with the principles that guide our approach to youth safety.

This policy applies to:

- All NSEA staff.
- All other individuals who have a leadership role as assigned by NSEA (hereafter referred to as “volunteers”).

NSEA believes that as a youth, defined as a person under 18 years of age, should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all youth and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects all youth, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity.

We will seek to keep youth safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Practicing open communication around youth safety. Our Youth Safety Policy will be published on our website and provided to community partners.
- Adopting youth protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers who will be working with youth. These include:
 - All staff and volunteers complete interview and/or reference checks. Interview questions include questions to screen for sexual youth abuse risk factors.
 - Ensuring that all staff and volunteers will receive initial and ongoing training on NSEA’s Youth Safety Policy as well as how to recognize signs of abuse.
 - Prior to working with youth, all staff and volunteers will complete background checks including sex offender and criminal records. Any result in the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) check and/or any Washington State felony convictions will disqualify participation with youth.
 - Background checks will be repeated annually.
 - Whenever possible, all staff and volunteers should avoid one-to-one situations where they are alone with youth. In the event that one-on-one contact cannot be avoided, another staff member will be notified when, where, and for how long the contact is occurring.

- NSEA staff will monitor youth events to observe interactions and to ensure that whomever is representing NSEA in a leadership role is acting appropriately. All observation dates will be documented.
- Youth related events will occur in open and visible spaces to prevent the likelihood of abuse.
- Ensure privacy by having staff and volunteers not accompany youth to the bathroom. Youth will be escorted by a guardian or caregiver.
- NSEA youth events will take place with partner supervision which may or may not be in open spaces.

In the case of an incident NSEA staff and/or volunteer in a leadership role will take the following steps:

- Take appropriate measures to ensure immediate safety for the youth involved.
- All staff and volunteers shall immediately report all concerns to the onsite leader. The onsite leader will then report to other relevant authority figures, including informing NSEA’s Executive Director as soon as possible.
- The onsite leader will determine appropriate measures and next steps. This may include informing law enforcement, agencies, authorities, teachers and parents as needed.
- The onsite leader will use the Incident Report Form to complete all necessary documentation of the events occurring.
- A task force will be formed, composed of NSEA Executive Director, appropriate staff, volunteer in a leadership role at the event, and two members of the Board of Directors appointed by the Board President. Each incident will be reviewed by the NSEA task force in a quick and timely manner. The task force review and conclusions will be reported to the Board of Directors in Executive Session at the next board meeting post incident occurrence.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned parties. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.
- NSEA staff or volunteer who is under suspicion of abuse will be immediately suspended from any contact with youth pending investigation.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand NSEA’s Youth Safety Policy and that you are aware of our commitment and the expectations of all staff and volunteer’s representing NSEA.

Signed: _____ Date: _____