



**VIRGINIA DISTRICT  
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
EVENTS CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES:  
PREVENTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT**



# Virginia District Events Child Safety Guidelines: Preventing Abuse and Neglect

## Table of Contents

<b>WELCOME TO THE VIRGINIA DISTRICT CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>OVERVIEW &amp; DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>VANAZ EVENTS CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING SAFETY in the event of a Report or Suspicion of Abuse .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ENSURING SAFETY .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>REPORTING VIOLATION OF GUIDELINES.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GUIDELINES FOR EVENT CULTURE – Staff members &amp; Volunteers .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PHYSICAL APPEARANCE .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>MODESTY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>TATTOOS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>DATING.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>MODELING BEHAVIOR .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>APPROPRIATE &amp; INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL TOUCH .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>DISCIPLINE .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>VERBAL INTERACTIONS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISION OF PARTICIPANTS.....</b>	<b>11</b>

STAFF MEMBER/VOLUNTEER TO PARTICIPANT RATIO ..... 11

OFF-LIMIT AREAS ..... 11

MONITORING HIGH-RISK AREAS ..... 11

APPROPRIATE ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS ..... 12

***PARTICIPANT CONTACT GUIDELINE – Current & Former Staff..... 12***

    COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS OUTSIDE OF AN EVENT..... 12

***SAFETY GUIDELINES & EVENT CULTURE FOR Participants..... 13***

    BULLYING ..... 13

    RESPECTING PARTICIPANT PRIVACY..... 13

    PHYSICAL CONTACT ..... 13

    SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS..... 14

    SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS ..... 14

    SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS ..... 14

    NUDITY..... 14

    TOBACCO & VAPING ..... 14

    INTOXICANTS..... 15

    STAFF/VOLUNTEER LOUNGE ..... 15

    CAMP CURFEW ..... 15

    VISITORS DURING VANAZ EVENTS ..... 15

    POSSIBLE ACTION BY EVENT DIRECTOR..... 16

***POLICY & GUIDELINES ACKNOWLEDGMENT..... 16***

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## WELCOME TO THE VIRGINIA DISTRICT CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Dear Event Staff Director, Leader, and/or Volunteer,

The Virginia District takes seriously our responsibility to provide a safest possible environment at our events. VANAZ has created a Virginia District Events Child Safety Policy (hereafter Policy and this companion Virginia District Events Child Safety Guidelines (hereafter Guidelines) documents. The *Guidelines* document is intended to facilitate the safest possible Virginia District event experiences for participants and leaders. Both the *Policy* and the *Guidelines* have been adopted by the Virginia District Advisory Board and are to be followed.

Sincerely,

*Virginia District Advisory Board*

# OVERVIEW & DEFINITIONS

## Overview

This document is part two of two. The first is a policy document: **Virginia District Events Child Safety Policy** (hereafter *The Policy*). The *Policy* is for all events in which children participate in an age-specific ministry. The *Policy* was established to identify the intent of VANAZ to provide a safe ministry environment at each district event for minors.

This second document, **Virginia District Events Child Safety Guidelines**, includes guidelines for providing the safest possible environment. The Guidelines contains helpful training materials, management methods, and reporting strategies.

## Definitions

- **Age Verification & Date of Birth:** Date of birth information provided along with a parent signature (including electronic signatures) certifying all statements are true and correct.
- **Child:** Under the age of 18 (Code of Virginia).
- **Childcare:** During a VANAZ EVENT, it shall be the responsibility of the Event Director to identify childcare participation (what ages are included in the childcare) and the duration (specifically stating start and stop times each day and including all days in which childcare is made available during a VANAZ EVENT) shall be clearly stated in writing and communicated to all parent/guardians and VANAZ EVENT STAFF and volunteers. All minors, before or after these designated times and days shall be the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian.
- **DRC:** Virginia District Church of the Nazarene – District Resource Center.
- **Event & Event Duration:** A VANAZ sponsored event that includes participants under the age of 18. The Event Director will establish and clearly communicate the beginning and end date and time for the event for which they are responsible. All other times not included in the event day/time schedule will be the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian.
- **EVENT Guests:** All speakers, musical guests, guest support (including tech support and others).
- **EVENT STAFF/Volunteer:** Any persons who has a leadership role or a serving role in the Event, to include, but not limited to, directors, counselors, staff and any adult volunteers.
- **Housing:** Any sleeping areas, rooms, dorms, etc. provided by the event for the use of participants.
- **Parent or Guardian:** Parent or guardian means any parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person having immediate control or charge of a child. (Code of Virginia)
- **Participant:** A registered child in attendance at a VANAZ event.
- **Restricted Areas:** Areas of the VNRC TBD as areas where access is not allowed for participants.
- **Transportation:** When transportation is provided by event director and/or volunteers during an event. Event transportation does not include transportation from participant home/church.
- **VANAZ:** Virginia District Church of the Nazarene.
- **VANAZ ADMIN:** Virginia District Superintendent and/or Virginia District Staff.
- **VNRC:** Virginia Nazarene Retreat Center.
- **VNRC Staff:** VNRC employees (seasonal, part time, and fulltime staff – paid by the VNRC).

# VANAZ EVENTS CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES

## ABUSE ZERO TOLERANCE

VANAZ has a **zero tolerance for abuse**. It is the responsibility of every VANAZ staff member and volunteer to act in the best interests and safety of participants in VANAZ events.

## GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING SAFETY IN THE EVENT OF A REPORT OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE

### ENSURING SAFETY

The Event Director will take steps necessary to ensure that a participant believed to be in harm's way is directed to and provided a safe place in a safe environment. Such action constitutes a first step upon learning of a report of or a suspicion of abuse.

Steps may involve:

- (1) Assuring the participant is out of harm's way and in a safe environment.
- (2) Assuring that, if necessary, the person suspected of inappropriate behavior is administratively and physically sequestered (removed) from being in a position of responsibility/authority.
- (3) Contact the VANAZ ADMIN.

## GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

### REPORTING VIOLATION OF GUIDELINES

To maintain a safe environment for participants, VANAZ staff members and volunteers accept a responsibility to report questionable circumstances, inappropriate acts, or situations that are a violation of the *Guidelines*. Questions/concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior is to be reported immediately to the Event Director who in turn reports to the VANAZ ADMIN.

### REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Staff members and volunteers at a VANAZ event are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the Event Director, who in turn reports to VANAZ ADMIN as soon as possible.

Commonwealth of Virginia Code of Mandatory Reporters:

*VA Mandatory Reporting Statute 63.2-1509. Physicians, nurses, teachers, etc., to report certain injuries to children; penalty for failure to report.*

- A. *The following persons who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately to the local*

*department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline, including:*

*[1-10 Omitted]*

11. Any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to the Event Director as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer, the Event Director will speak with staff member or volunteer gain as much detailed information as possible. VANAZ ADMIN will be notified as soon as possible (within 24 hours). Together with the Event Director and/or VANAZ ADMIN, the staff member or volunteer will make a report to the appropriate Commonwealth of Virginia authority.

In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate state authorities.

A written incident report is to be completed at the time of the report by the immediate supervisor for the event and a copy provided to VANAZ ADMIN within 24 hours of the reported incident. The original written report is to be retained by the Event Director with a copy maintained by the VANAZ ADMIN. These reports are to be maintained as Confidential Files and will be stored through the DRC.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act will be suspended from participation at the VANAZ event. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protection agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will be removed from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involve participants at any VANAZ event. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from VANAZ.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the Event Director is a violation of these *Guidelines* and grounds for termination of a staff member or dismissal of a volunteer. Failure to report a prohibited act to the VANAZ ADMIN and appropriate authorities by the Event Director is a violation of these *Guidelines* and grounds for termination or dismissal of the Event Director.

# GUIDELINES FOR EVENT CULTURE – STAFF MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

## **PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The physical appearance of staff and volunteers makes a statement to participants, and others. While serving at a VANAZ event, we ask staff members and volunteers to limit freedom regarding certain preferred styles (e.g., hairstyles, clothing, tattoos, outward physical accessories, and fashions). Questions about appropriateness of these personal choices is at the discretion of the Event Director.

## **MODESTY**

Your choice of clothing makes a statement and VANAZ expects all staff members and volunteers dress with modesty. What determines what is modest is at the discretion of the Event Director.

## **TATTOOS**

All tattoos that portray explicit or vulgar (at the discretion of the event director) pictures/words must always be covered.

## **DATING**

Dating and inappropriate public displays of affection between dating couples are not permitted under any circumstances. The determination of what is appropriate is left to the Event Director.

## **MODELING BEHAVIOR**

What we do in moderation, participants will do in excess. Participants will look to staff members and volunteers to set the boundaries which participants will likely test these boundaries. The way staff members and volunteers dress, say, and even how they respond to the smallest circumstance – participants are watching. Please read and understand the guidelines below follow closely:

- No Verbal Abuse
- Never touch a child in an aggressive manner
- Absolutely No Profanity
- No Displays of Public Nudity at Any Time
- No Mooning, De-Pants-ing, Wedgies or Swirlies
- No Descriptive Stories Regarding Drinking, Drug Use or Sexual Behaviors
- No Urinating in public at Any Time by Anyone
- No Sleeping, No Napping and No Bed-Sharing with Any Participant at any time for any reason
- No Body Shaming
- No Bullying
- No Racial Put-Downs or Racial Jokes
- No Active Ear or Body Piercing of Any Participant
- No Tattooing of Any Participant
- No Tickling Participants
- No Wrestling



## APPROPRIATE & INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL TOUCH

All staff members and volunteers should exercise good judgment when expressing physical touch.

Appropriate physical touch may include the following:

1. An arm around the shoulder (side hug)
2. Short, congratulatory, or greeting hugs
3. A brief, assuring pat on the head or shoulder, but NOT to those kids who feel that such touch is offensive to have their heads patted or hair fluffed.
4. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the participant, never based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
5. A few NEVERS:
  - a. We don't touch kids in anger or disgust.
  - b. We don't touch kids in any sexually connotative manner.
  - c. No staff member will ever (day or night) be on or in a child's bed.
  - d. Never touch a child's private parts (for any reason).
  - e. Never tickle a child; this can be misconstrued as sexual contact.
  - f. Never ignore a participant's request not to be touched.
  - g. Never express or require physical affection or touching in any form from a child who shows or expresses discomfort with physical touch.
6. Altar calls:
  - A. VANAZ events often include opportunities for participants to respond to God's prompting in their lives during special times of prayer that we refer to as "altar calls." These are special, important, and formative spiritual moments in most every VANAZ Event.
  - B. Altar calls are public events. If a person responding to an altar call requires more privacy, then other guidelines about appropriate one-on-one conversations are to be followed.
  - C. During times of worship and devotional at a VANAZ event, there may be a time of prayer around an altar. During these altar times persons are often in proximity one with another. While we will maintain our heritage of altar calls including prayer with and for others at the altar, all touching during these times of prayer must remain appropriate.
  - D. Appropriate behavior includes female staff praying with female participants and male staff praying with male participants. A male or female staff member may pray with a person of the opposite sex when others are nearby and participating.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting participants under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by other adults and participants.

Each Event Director will give guidance in this area for the staff and volunteers of their specific event. If a question ever arises as to what constitutes an appropriate or inappropriate touch, consult an Event Director or VANAZ ADMIN.

## TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide (as driver or passenger) transportation (personal vehicle, rental, VANAZ vehicles, loaned or local church vehicle) for participants during an event. The following guidelines should be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of participants:

1. Participants should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops in a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one participant in transport. The presence of two or more staff members or volunteers is suggested and ideal. Exceptions from this guideline may only be made with the approval of the Event Director.
2. Staff members and volunteers are to avoid physical contact with participants while in vehicles.
3. The use of cell phones while driving VANAZ vehicles (owned or rented) is prohibited, unless in an emergency. In other non-emergency circumstances, staff members and volunteers are to stop the vehicle before using a cell phone.
4. Absolutely NO TEXTING is allowed by the driver of a moving VANAZ vehicle.
5. No drivers under age 21 may drive VANAZ owned or rented vehicles.
6. In no case will a staff member or volunteer be in a vehicle with only one participant.

## DISCIPLINE

It is the expectation of VANAZ that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in for behavior management of participants. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by participants. If a participant is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from a staff member/volunteer, the Event Director will contact the participant's parent/guardian. If the behavior persists, the participant's parent will be contacted to pick up the participant. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, a staff member or volunteer will verbally redirect participants involved, trying to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to an Event Director and/or VANAZ ADMIN.

## VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and participants should be positive and uplifting. VANAZ employees, staff members and volunteers strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging and constructive.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to participants in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, employees, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing or using profanity and especially so in the presence of participants.

Avoid the attempt of humor at the expense of a participant.

Any infraction of the above *Guidelines* can result in immediate dismissal from the event.

# GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISION OF PARTICIPANTS

## STAFF MEMBER/VOLUNTEER TO PARTICIPANT RATIO

VANAZ is committed to providing adequate employer member and volunteer supervision in all camp activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will generally be observed, as a minimum, for event activities and programs:

For all groups of participants, the ideal ratio is two staff/volunteers per every ten participants (10:2), and the ideal ration in larger groups should be 10:1.5.

The Event Director will make effort to bring staff member/volunteer to participant ratios into compliance with this *Guidelines* document.

## OFF-LIMIT AREAS

All VANAZ event staff members and volunteers will be responsible for ensuring that their participants are not in areas deemed off-limits.

Areas Designated as Off-Limits on VNRC:

Non-improved areas

Storage areas

Cabins, unless designated as housing by the Event Director

Event directors may designate additional limitations on areas as appropriate.

For all VANAZ events occurring away from the VNRC, off limits areas will be designated by the Event Director and/or VANAZ ADMIN.

## MONITORING HIGH-RISK AREAS

**Staff members and volunteers need to be aware of *high-risk* areas at any event, along with methods to effectively lower risks in these areas.** Any areas on camp property where participants are not directly supervised is a high-risk area. In these areas, participants can more easily bully and abuse one another (verbally, physically, or sexually). It is the responsibility of all staff members and volunteers to be aware of the potential for bullying and abuse, and to monitor camp locations where participants can be alone.

For activities involving large numbers of participants, staff members and volunteers will be assigned to monitor high risk areas for the duration of the activity. Monitoring of high-risk areas will be built into the programming and planning for these events.

High-Risk Areas include:

- all bathrooms at the event location
- night activities locations
- locations with low visibility
- water activities
- clothes changing areas (during day and night)

## **APPROPRIATE ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS**

VANAZ recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of participants may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to meet with them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with participants.

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual participant at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed, unless prior approval is obtained from VANAZ ADMIN.

In the event a one-on-one closed-door meeting must occur with a participant, after obtaining the approval from VANAZ ADMIN, the staff member must inform another staff member and ensure the door remains unlocked. The door must have a window. This is an exception to the standard guidelines for extreme cases only.

No participant will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during camp ministry programming or activities. VANAZ staff members and volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual participant in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single participant, that staff member or volunteer will take the participant to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a participant desires conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer, the staff member or volunteer to relocate the discussion to a place where other staff members are present, or which is easily observed.)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving to ensure that there is no participant left unsupervised.

Any two participants together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

## **PARTICIPANT CONTACT GUIDELINE – CURRENT & FORMER STAFF**

### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS OUTSIDE OF AN EVENT**

The VANAZ safety standards established to protect participants and ensure healthy relationships during each event should be respected outside of camp as well. In addition to camp safety standards, the following guidelines should be respected in all interactions with participants occurring outside of event.

Interactions between participants and/or event staff and volunteers beyond the event are always at the discretion of the participant's parent/guardian.

# SAFETY GUIDELINES & EVENT CULTURE FOR PARTICIPANTS

By “Event Culture” we mean the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, practices, and atmosphere that characterizes any VANAZ event.

## **BULLYING**

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying will not be tolerated.

Staff members and volunteers are to maintain vigilance for bullying behavior.

Verbal, physical or emotional harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. At the first sign of verbal or other attacks, leaders will act decisively. There is no “harmless putdown” when dealing with kids.

1. First instance comes with a warning to the participant and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is inappropriate. Make sure not to embarrass or chastise them.
2. Second instance requires that you pull the offending participant(s) from the group and discuss the inappropriateness of bullying behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals for them to achieve. However, let them know that the next step is a visit to the Event Director.
3. Make sure that any participant who is the brunt of bullying attacks is handling the situation well. Have a private dialogue with him or her to assess the situation. **DO NOT SINGLE PARTICIPANTS OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP!** Be discreet and protect participant’s dignity.
4. Third instance results in a trip to the Event Director and a phone call to the parent(s) and/or guardian(s).

## **RESPECTING PARTICIPANT PRIVACY**

Make sure participants understand the importance of respecting each other’s privacy. A participant’s bed is his/her home and the participant’s personal items are off-limits to anyone but the participant. In addition, shower time is a very private time. During showers, only those who are taking showers should be in the shower area or shower stall.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

VANAZ is committed to protecting participants in its care. To this end, VANAZ has implemented a ‘physical contact guideline’ which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our camp programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working or volunteering at a VANAZ event:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and participants are important for participant’s development and are generally suitable in the camp setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Event Director and VANAZ ADMIN.

3. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other participants or staff members or volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or interpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
4. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by any staff member, volunteer or participant must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Event Director and VANAZ ADMIN.

## **SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

By design of the event and with stipulated dates and times for each event, the following sleeping arrangements apply. Staff members and volunteers and participants will observe the following guidelines:

1. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn to bed.
2. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a participant.
3. Participants will not share a bed, bunk or sleeping bag with another participant or staff member/volunteer. Each staff member, volunteer, and participant will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members, volunteers, and participants are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations and are not to discuss any inappropriate or sexually explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with others. If it is necessary to address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality, such discussions are to be cleared with the Event Director.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members, volunteers and participants at a VANAZ event are prohibited from possessing sexually oriented materials or images (magazines, cards, phone pics, videos, etc.). At no time should a participant be exposed to sexually oriented material at a VANAZ event.

## **NUDITY**

Staff members and volunteers at a VANAZ event should never be nude in the presence of participants in their care.

## **TOBACCO & VAPING**

Staff members, volunteers and participants are asked to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco and vaping products while on VANAZ property. VNRC is a tobacco-free facility.

## **INTOXICANTS**

Staff members, volunteers and participants are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug or intoxicating/recreational drug while in any a VANAZ event or facility, while traveling to or from an event.

The Event Director will be notified by the event staff member/volunteer if the staff/volunteer are taking drugs (medical or other) that impairs or inhibits the judgment and actions of an event staff/volunteer,

## **PRESCRIPTIONS**

Event Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from sharing with a participant any prescription medications they have for personal use. These prescription drugs should be maintained in an area which is non-accessible to a participant.

Participants who must, due to a documented medical condition, carry prescriptions to a VANAZ event, must notify the Event Director of the medication and need. All participant prescriptions are to be maintained by the Event medical staff.

## **PERSONAL WEAPONS**

No personal weapons are allowed at a VANAZ event by any participant. The only exception is for adults with a valid Virginia State issued (or Virginia State recognized) concealed weapons permit. Those individuals are accountable and responsible for the safety of their weapon.

## **STAFF/VOLUNTEER LOUNGE**

The Staff/Volunteer Lounge is open from 7am until 12am each night. The Counselor Lounge is open and available **ONLY** for summer staff members and volunteers. At no time should a participant be invited into or be allowed inside the Counselor Lounge. The use of the Counselor Lounge is a privilege, not a right. The Event Director has the discretion to designate the Staff/Volunteer Lounge.

## **CAMP CURFEW**

For safety and rest purposes, the VNRC curfew is MIDNIGHT unless otherwise specified by the Event Director. At VNRC, we take camp safety very seriously. All staff members and volunteers are expected to cooperate in the safety process. At least one staff member or volunteer is to remain in each dorm after lights-out to maintain the highest level of safety. When off duty, staff members and volunteers should feel free to stay out past lights-out. However, at curfew, the VNRC will shut down, and the only authorized persons outside their cabin will be safety staff. Repeated disregard of curfew will be considered a safety risk and may result in termination.

For VANAZ events held at a venue other than the VNRC, the Event Director will set the curfew.

## **VISITORS DURING VANAZ EVENTS**

Friends and family are a great source of encouragement. However, staff members and volunteers will not be permitted visitors at an Event unless such visit is approved by the Event Director.

During a VANAZ EVENT occurring on the VNRC, no unauthorized persons, including, but not limited to: cabin owners, cabin visitors, and/or cabin renters, and any local community members, shall not be allowed on the VNRC property throughout the duration of the VANAZ EVENT unless they receive permission from the Event Director or VNRC Executive Director/Manager.

#### **POSSIBLE ACTION BY EVENT DIRECTOR**

Failure to abide by the Safety Guidelines and Event Culture section places the participant at risk for being expelled from the event at their own expense.

### **POLICY & GUIDELINES ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

When a volunteer signs the acknowledgement of having read and agreed to the *VANAZ Events Child Safety Policy* such acknowledgement also constitutes agreement to the VANAZ Events Child Safety Guidelines for preventing abuse and neglect.