

ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA
Policy for persons under the age of majority.

WHEREAS the Alpine Club of Canada (the “ACC”) is Canada’s national mountaineering organization;

AND WHEREAS the Objects of the ACC require: ”the encouragement and practise of mountaineering and mountain crafts and the promotion of these skills through participation in the activities of the Club”.

AND WHEREAS the ACC believes that children benefit from participating in climbing and skiing and benefit by learning and becoming aware of good and safe climbing and skiing practices;

AND WHEREAS the ACC therefore believes that participation of Children in its activities is desirable and a requirement of attempting to meet its objects;

NOW, AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED THAT:

1. For the purposes of this policy:
 - (a) “age of majority” means the age of majority in the jurisdiction in which an activity is to take place and, in cases where an activity may occur or one or more jurisdictions, shall mean the age of majority in the jurisdiction having the oldest age of majority;
 - (b) “children” or “child”, as the context requires, means a person under the age of majority in the jurisdiction in which an activity is to take place and, in cases where an activity may occur or one or more jurisdictions, shall mean the age of majority in the jurisdiction having the oldest age of majority;
 - (c) “Governing level of the activity of the ACC”, means:
 - I. the executive of the section of the ACC in case of a section activity
;
 - II. the ACC vice-president of Activities (or his or her delegate) and the mountain guide hired to run a national camp; and
 - III. the GMC Committee in the case of the General Mountaineering Camp; and
 - (d) “parent” shall include a legal guardian of a child.

2. Children shall be allowed to participate in the activities of the ACC under the terms and conditions of this policy.
3. Children may participate in the activities of the ACC if:
 - (a) When a child is 12 years of age or under, one or more of the child's parents execute the waiver for and on behalf of the child; or
 - (b) When a child is 13 years of age or older the child executes the waiver for and on his or her own behalf **and** a parent of the child executes the waiver for and on behalf of the child; and
 - (c) The child and the parents of the child are provided with the written risk information package, if any, required by the Club's insurer from time to time.
4. Notwithstanding the foregoing;
 - (a) this policy does not permit travel by children in avalanche terrain in national parks except in compliance with Parks Canada guidelines in place from time to time;
 - (b) this policy does not permit participation except in compliance with any rules, regulation or law of any applicable government authority from time to time;
 - (c) this policy does not affect any rule or regulation of the *Compétition Escalade Canada* (CEC) part of the ACC concerning the execution of waivers by a parent of a member of the CEC, whether or not the member of the CEC is of the age of majority in the jurisdiction or jurisdictions in which the activity of the CEC is to take place; and
 - (d) a child's participation in an activity is;
 - I. based upon the foregoing and such other factors as the Governing level of the activity of the ACC considers relevant including (but not limited to) the gravity of aims and the risks of the activity and
 - II. a matter of exclusive approval by the Governing level of the activity of the ACC in its sole and complete discretion subject to its compliance with the Club's insurance policies and policies dictated or resolutions

from time to time of the ACC National Board of Directors.

5. All levels of the ACC are encouraged to adopt, where reasonable and to the extent possible, the attached suggested practises for dealing with children participating in activities attached hereto as schedule "A"

**Schedule A to the Policy for Minors' (persons under the age of majority)
attendance on National and Section Activities**

**Minors on Section & National ACC Activities
Suggested Practices**

When minors are involved in Section or National Activities, some special thought should be given to the unique nature of these participants. Although not exhaustive, the following list should give trip leaders and organizers some ideas to consider. Note that there are a number of other organizations that involve minors in outdoor activities and have done so for many years. If you feel the need for further information, start by consulting some of the references noted at the end of this Appendix.

- As a general principle, your group should strongly encourage the parents of minors to participate in the proposed activity if at all possible or practical.
- Also, if minors under the age of 12 years will be participating, it would be appropriate to insist their parent or guardian accompany them for the duration of the activity.

Introduction

- Proper parent/guardian permission forms **MUST** be completed along with the required waiver forms. Parents **MUST** be informed of the full nature of the activities proposed and the associated risks.
- The ACC's liability insurer requires Activities Organizers to give parents/guardians a written outline of the activities planned and the possible dangers of the activity in advance. These are covered in the waiver, but we may have to provide additional disclosure to the parents/guardians. At this time, we have no specific format for this.
- Relevant medical information should be acquired which could include information about allergies and sensitivities, medication (eg: asthmatics), significant physical conditions, etc.
- As with adult participants, trip leaders must be able to assess how suitable any minor will be for a given trip. Remember that under the Policy, each "governing body" has the right to determine anyone's participation in activities. Consider whether the minor concerned has the experience and physical ability to handle the activities planned. Where possible, it would be helpful if minors

could be assessed on easier, shorter Club outings before taking part in major activities.

- Have an emergency plan and reliable communication to get an injured party to medical help as quickly as possible. In certain circumstances, this could mean having access to satellite phones, VHF radios, etc.
- Make sure that someone at home knows where you and your group will be and when you are expected to return and what to do if you are overdue.
- Trip leaders should consider making sure that at least one adult taking part in the activity has suitable training such as Wilderness First Aid.
- Appropriate site and route selection, as with any trip, is critical and must take into account the nature of the minor participants in your group.
- Perform an environmental briefing with the participants before each outing and explain what the expectations are.
- Explain the safety expectations to all participants in advance and insist that all participants meet these expectations.

Supervision Considerations

When leading groups that include minors, adequate supervision is even more essential than with adults. Although it is not practical, nor necessary, to supervise **everything** any minors on your trips are doing, monitoring their activity must be reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances.

- Recall the four tests of adequate supervision and potential negligence for leaders/teachers in Canadian law, and plan your activities accordingly:
 - Are participants being properly supervised?
 - Is the equipment and environment safe and appropriate?
 - Is the activity suitable to the participant's mental and physical abilities?
 - Have participants been properly instructed?
- Exercise extra vigilance when it comes to sun protection, hydration, food, and poisonous insects, plants and animals.

- Remember that minors will be less likely to have experience in selecting proper footwear, clothing, and other equipment. As a trip leader, you should pre-screen this with your participants.
- Teachers and leaders of youngsters are obliged by law to report suspected child abuse.
- Adult leaders should avoid being alone with minors to avoid any hint of impropriety. (Use caution when exchanging personal contact information.)
- Consider what would be an appropriate supervision ratio. This will depend on the activity selected and the experience of the participants. This might be as low as 1:1 or 2:1, or could be higher. Consider what minors on the activity will be doing and how critical their actions may be. Do they need to be monitored while belaying, for instance? Having at least 2 adult leaders on a trip provides a safety margin should there be an accident or in the event a leader is injured.
- Head-count frequently. Consider adopting a buddy system among members of your group.
- If your activity involves camp-overs and multi-day trips with boys and girls, you must chaperone with both female and male leaders.
- No alcohol or other illegal substances can be permitted. Inform parents/guardians and minors that their belongings may be checked, if you feel it's necessary. Such advance notification will give you the legal right to conduct this check if necessary.
- All rescue and medical interventions should be witnessed, verified and documented by another leader wherever possible.
- With special needs minors (youth at risk, emotionally and physically challenged youngsters), trained/qualified individuals should be present to intervene if necessary. The ratio should be better than you might otherwise use. In such cases, organizers might wish to insist that a parent/guardian accompany minors with special needs.
- Don't overload vehicles and make sure seat belts are used by all.

Use the mnemonic "SEAT" to remember:

S = Supervision
 E = Environment/Equipment
 A = Activity Appropriateness
 T = Training/Teaching

Cover your SEAT!

Hiking

- When hiking, keep your group together. Trip leaders should (must?) have another designated adult at the end of the group to assist in this. This is a good practice even with adult groups.
- Consider the pacing and location of your rest stops, keeping in mind that minors may almost certainly have different energy levels than adults on the trip.
- Turnaround times, places and reasons must be more conservative when minors are involved.
- Don't allow individuals or small groups to wander off on their own.
- Avoid river crossings unless they are within the abilities of members of the group or unless one of the objectives is to learn how to cross streams safely.

Rock Climbing, Scrambling & Rappelling

- Avoid class 3 and 4 descents unroped. Find an alternate route, provide belays, use short-rope techniques or use a safety backup by having an adult control the rappel rope by pulling on it from below (aka: "fireman's belay"). Minors should also not be ascending class 4 terrain (or greater) without a rope.
- Helmets must be worn at all times (by everyone) during such activities where it is deemed necessary and/or appropriate by the leader.
- Use boundary lines and adequate clip-in points when managing groups at the top of cliffs.
- Where possible or appropriate, all activities -- climbing, rappelling, ascending, etc. -- should be belayed by top-rope for safety and rescue purposes or protected by using the "fireman's belay" where appropriate (see above).

Skiing, Mountaineering & Snowshoeing

- Winter activities present additional hazards: temperature extremes, avalanche danger, dangerous weather changes, etc. Plan and prepare for these. Make use of the many up-to-date sources of information about these conditions.
- National Parks of Canada has guidelines for travelling with custodial groups in potential avalanche terrain. Trip leaders must be familiar with these guidelines. These are mandatory in National Parks and

each Section Executive should consider whether it would be appropriate for these guidelines to be followed outside National Parks as well.

- Trip leaders should be familiar with ATES (Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale). Parks Canada describes this system – see references below.

Equipment

- Use appropriate gear: helmets, ropes and harnesses, for example, according to the age group you are leading and the type of terrain you are travelling in.
- Trip leaders must ensure that any equipment used is appropriate for the activity, is in good condition and is being used properly. Do not assume that minors (or any participants on any trip, for that matter) will necessarily know how to use the equipment the right way. Check knots, harnesses, helmet straps, etc.
- Trip leaders should carry adequate emergency gear, which in winter includes extra clothing and food, a stove, pot, shelter and sleeping pad.

Training

- Minors (and indeed any participant) should have certain prerequisite skills before participating in certain activities. For example, it would be appropriate to train in ice axe self-arrest before going on a trip where such skills might be needed, or to practice crampon use prior to the actual trip.
- Remember that it is possible to address legal/safety concerns by making use of appropriate teaching opportunities for developing the leadership skills of minors. Making use of such opportunities can positively reward minors on the trip, encouraging them to put their energy into making safe decisions.

References:

- Boy Scouts of Canada – Standard Operating Procedures – Camping & Outdoor Activities.
<http://sunshine.scouts.ca/bpp/Section%2010000%2005.pdf>
- Boy Scouts of America – Guide to Safe Scouting - Sports & Activities

- <http://www.scouting.org/pubs/gss/gss09.html>
- Parks Canada – Avalanche Terrain Classification:
http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/banff/visit/visit7a7_E.asp
- National or Provincial Parks – Trail Reports
- Environment Canada weather forecasts:
http://www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/canada_e.html
- Canadian Avalanche Association: <http://www.avalanche.ca/>
- An excellent wilderness first aid manual is: **Misadventure: Rise to the Challenge**. Anna Christensen, 2003, Wilderness Alert, P.O. Box 95050, Vancouver, BC, V6P 6V5. <http://www.WildernessAlert.com>
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Acknowledgements:

These recommended practices have been compiled using input from other outdoor-oriented organizations and ACC members across the country.