 ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA CLUB ALPIN DU CANADA	Policy Name:	ACC MINORS POLICY	
	Policy Number:	ACC-SEC-004	Rev 0
	Created By:	Morgan Sturgess, Programs Manager	
	Approved By:	Board of Directors	
	Date Approved	February 5, 2026	

ACC Minors Policy

Purpose

The Alpine Club of Canada creates opportunities for members to feel connected to one another, to the collective and to their environment through shared experiences in the mountains and other environments. Minors benefit from engaging in mountain and related activities and becoming aware of safe, responsible practices.

The purpose of the ACC Minors Policy is to ensure that members and volunteers follow industry best practices when recreating with minors and protect themselves and the ACC from third party liability risk.

Scope


1. This policy covers three main scenarios:

Scenario	What must be done
Accompanied Minor (Parent/Legal Guardian present at event)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consent of trip leader(s) to add a minor to the trip - Higher duty of care, see appendix for guidance
Unaccompanied Minor - Day trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background checks for trip leaders - Consent of trip leader(s) - Higher duty of care, see appendix for guidance - See detailed instructions in policy
Unaccompanied Minor - Overnight trip	Not Permitted

A higher duty of care is required when minors take part in a trip, from the planning stage of the trip to being on the trail. See the appendix for best practices to help guide you in this process.

2. The policy also addresses legal considerations and their implications on whether the trip/activity can be insured. In particular, please note the “duty to report” in section 4.

Unaccompanied minors are not allowed on overnight trips because our CGL insurance policy has an **Abuse Exclusion** added with respect to **Unaccompanied Minors on overnight trips**: “Excluding sexual harassment, sexual assault, discrimination or humiliation for overnight trips where minors are not accompanied by their parent or legal guardian”.

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Application

This policy applies to all trips organized by incorporated sections, unincorporated sections and the office.

A “Minor” is defined as 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 in one or more jurisdictions, shall mean the age of majority in the jurisdiction having the oldest age of majority.

A “Legal Guardian” is defined as an individual who has the legal authority and responsibility to care for and make decisions on behalf of another person who is unable to do so themselves. This role is often granted by a court of law. It applies in situations involving minors (children under the age of majority) or adults who are incapacitated due to age, illness, or disability.

Outcomes

This policy aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Outline the terms and conditions under which Minors may participate in ACC trips and events.

Mandatory Requirements


Minor participation in any activity must be in compliance with any rules, regulation or law of any applicable government authority in the location of the trip/activity.

Volunteer screening

- Prior to hosting a trip with unaccompanied minors, volunteers, leaders and guides must provide a criminal records check, including vulnerable sector, to the Canmore office that was issued within 3 months. The vulnerable sector check shall be valid for 1 year.
 - Vulnerable sector checks can often be acquired for minimal cost or free with a letter from a nonprofit organization, see the appendix for guidance on how to do this.
- Volunteers hosting trips with Minors must have current first aid certification.

Waiver / Acknowledgement of Risk

- Minors cannot waive their rights nor can their legal guardian waive rights on their behalf. The waiver/acknowledgement of risk document therefore serves as an acknowledgement of risk only.
- Legal guardians MUST be informed of the full nature of the activities proposed and the associated risks.
 - If the Minor is 13 or older they must be informed of hazards and risks associated with the trip.

 ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA CLUB ALPIN DU CANADA	Policy Name:	ACC MINORS POLICY	
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- The document must be signed by:
 - Both the Minor and the Legal guardian if the Minor is age 13 or above.
 - The Legal guardian if the Minor is age 12 or under.

Minors Accompanied by their Legal Guardian

- The trip coordinator must be aware of and consent to having a minor on the trip (see Volunteer screening and Acknowledgement of risk above). Trip ratios may need to be adjusted.

Unaccompanied Minors

- Unaccompanied minors are only permitted on day trips.
- Unaccompanied minors must be at least 13 years of age.
- Trips with unaccompanied minors must have a minimum of two adult trip coordinators who are present and listed on the trip posting.

Travel in Avalanche Terrain (for day trips or accompanied minors)

- All ACC trips where minors are present, regardless of whether minors are accompanied by their legal guardian or whether they take place in our National Parks, must adhere to the Parks Canada Custodial policies:
 - Simple terrain is permitted if the avalanche danger is low, moderate or considerable.
 - Challenging terrain is permitted ONLY if the group is led by an ACMG or IFMGA guide who can work in that terrain, AND the hazard rating is low or moderate.
 - Complex and extreme terrain is off-limits.

See tables overleaf.

Duty to Report

Anyone who has reason to believe that a Minor has been or is likely to be abused or neglected and that the legal guardian is unwilling or unable to protect the Minor, must report the suspected abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities. See list of guidelines and procedures by province in the appendix.



 ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA CLUB ALPIN DU CANADA	Policy Name:	ACC MINORS POLICY	
	Policy Number:	ACC-SEC-004	Rev 0
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Table 1. ATEs for backcountry travel.

Terrain rating	Class	Description for backcountry travel
Non-Avalanche	0	No known exposure to avalanches. Very low-angle or densely forested slopes located well away from avalanche paths, or designated trails/routes with no exposure to avalanches.
Simple	1	Exposure to low-angle or primarily forested terrain. Some forest openings may involve the runout zones of infrequent avalanches and terrain traps may exist. Many options to reduce or eliminate exposure.
Challenging	2	Exposure to well-defined avalanche paths, starting zones, terrain traps or overhead hazard. With careful route finding, options exist to reduce or eliminate exposure.
Complex	3	Exposure to multiple overlapping avalanche paths or large expanses of steep, open terrain. Frequent exposure to overhead hazard. Many avalanche starting zones and terrain traps with minimal options to reduce exposure.
Extreme	4	Exposure to very steep faces with cliffs, spines, couloirs, crevasses or sustained overhead hazard. No options to reduce exposure; even small avalanches can be fatal.

Table 2. ATEs for waterfall ice climbing.

Terrain rating	Class	Description for waterfall ice climbing
Non-Avalanche	0	Routes with no exposure to avalanches except small sluffs and spindrift.
Simple	1	Routes with brief exposure to very low frequency avalanches starting from above or crossing occasional short slopes.
Challenging	2	Routes with long exposure to low frequency avalanches or brief exposure to high frequency avalanches starting from above or crossing a few short slopes. Options exist to reduce exposure.
Complex	3	Routes with long exposure to high frequency avalanches starting from above or crossing steep slopes with terrain traps below. Minimal options to reduce exposure.
Extreme	4	Routes with long and sustained exposure to very high frequency avalanches starting from above and crossing multiple steep slopes with terrain traps below. No options to reduce exposure.

 ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA CLUB ALPIN DU CANADA	Policy Name:	ACC MINORS POLICY	
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Appendix 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

All guidance herein applies to day trips and/or overnight trips when a legal guardian or parent is present. Overnight trips with unaccompanied minors are not allowed under ACC policy.


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.

Introduction

- Parents/ Guardians MUST be informed of the full nature of the activities proposed and the associated risks. They must be aware of the hazards on the trip posting.
- As a general principle, your group should strongly encourage the parents/guardian of minors to participate in the proposed activity if at all possible or practical.
- As with adult participants, trip leaders must be able to assess how suitable any minor will be for a given trip. Each Section 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.
 - It is highly recommended that minors’ abilities be assessed on easier, shorter club outings before taking part in major activities.
- 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.

End and start of activity


An unaccompanied minor is considered to be in your care from the moment their parent/guardian leaves them with you until the moment they are returned to the custody of the parent/guardian.

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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.

- There are four tests of adequate supervision and potential negligence for leaders/teachers in Canadian law. You should 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?
- Understand and cater to the fact that minors may need additional support and group leader vigilance when it comes to sun protection, hydration, pacing, energy management, food, insects, plants, animals, etc.
- 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.
- In many jurisdictions of Canada everyone is a mandatory reporter, see the table below for jurisdiction specific guidance
- Adult leaders should avoid being alone with minors to minimize the opportunities for potential abuse or impropriety (use caution when exchanging personal contact information.)
 - When possible the [rule of two](#) should be followed
 - 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.
 - When possible the trip leaders/coordinators on the trip should be of different genders.
- 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?
- Head-count frequently. Consider adopting a buddy system among members of your group.
- 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 at-risk populations (youth at risk, minors with cognitive, physical or other disabilities), trained/qualified individuals should be present to support or intervene if necessary. This may include additional supervision or supporting adults. In such cases, organizers might wish to insist that a parent/guardian accompany minors with disability considerations.

 ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA CLUB ALPIN DU CANADA	Policy Name:	ACC MINORS POLICY	
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General backcountry trip guidance

This applies to all trips.

- When travelling, keep your group together. When reasonable, trip leaders must have another designated adult at the end of the group to assist in this. This is a good practice even with adult groups.
- Turnaround times, places and reasons may be more conservative when minors are involved.
- Do not allow individuals to leave the group setting without discussion and approval from a leader.
- When planning a trip with minors, choose your route to minimize water (river) crossings.
- Particularly with smaller minors, be aware that they are much more susceptible to cold weather.

Rock Climbing, Scrambling & Rappelling

- Avoid class 3 and 4 descents without protection. Find an alternate route, or ways to add protection into the system.
- 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 appropriate techniques to the terrain.


Skiing, Mountaineering & Snowshoeing

- Winter activities present additional hazards. Plan and prepare for these. Make use of the many up-to-date sources of information about these conditions.
 - Temperature extremes & weather changes: consider reassessment of weather cancellation limits as well as closer attention to participant readiness in terms of proper attire.
- Trip leaders must be aware and follow the guidance on avalanche terrain in section 4 of the policy.
- Trip leaders must be familiar with ATES (Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale). Parks Canada describes this system – see references below.

Equipment

- Equipment including technical gear must be sized appropriately and in approved good working order by the trip coordinator.
- 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.

Training

 ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA CLUB ALPIN DU CANADA	Policy Name:	ACC MINORS POLICY	
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- Minors (and indeed any participant) must 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.

List of mandatory reporting by province

- BC Guidelines - [Link](#)
- AB Guidelines - [Link](#)
- SK Guidelines - [Link](#)
- MB Guidelines- [Link](#)
- ON Guidelines- [Link](#)
- QC Guidelines- [Link](#)
- NB Guidelines - [Link](#)
- NL Guidelines - [Link](#)
- NS Guidelines - [Link](#)
- PE Guidelines - [Link](#)
- YT Guidelines - [Link](#)

How to get a vulnerable sector check (depending on your jurisdiction):

- Contact member services to get a letter from the club requesting a background check (this make it cheaper).
- Contact your local police/RCMP station and request a vulnerable sector background check.

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References:

- Coaching Association of Canada- Responsible coaching guidelines (for minors): https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=responsible-coaching&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=1444276055&gbraid=0AAAAADDCbN-7Wk6fanVcSNluS7pOSsx7u&gclid=Cj0KCQiAgP_JBhD-ARIsANpEMxx2yIPC1llLRbkz26osZxutCE8gxCuhtmNuwf7WdWOqG-uuqUP3ApcAirxEALw_wcB
- 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>

Acknowledgements:

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

Date	Description
January 20, 2026	Rev 0: Initial Draft for discussion.
January 22, 2026	Rev 0: Reviewed by Executive Director
February 5, 2026	Rev 0: Approved by the Board of Directors