

General Safety

You are responsible for the safety of all participants in your program. In order to carry out this responsibility, you need to know what to do before something happens, and take appropriate steps to reduce dangers whenever possible. Here are some best practices:

- **Get formal first aid and CPR training:** There are a number of locations where you can get this training, including the NMSU Fire Department and the American Red Cross. This will prepare you to help someone while emergency responders are on their way.
- **Identify and Communicate risks:** If the program will involve physical exertion, working with chemicals, use of power tools, or other activities that could lead to injury, make sure these are identified, steps are taken to minimize risks, and both parents and participants are fully informed.
- **Safety Checks:** Before each session, do a safety check of the area to look for potential hazards. This includes trip and fall hazards (like extension cords across a walking path), potentially dangerous items or conditions (such as chemicals that are within easy reach or sharp objects that could cause injury), and weather hazards if there will be outdoor activities. For example, if you are going to be outdoors and lightening can be seen, it is time to go inside. If thunder can be heard, you are already late and need to get everyone inside a sturdy building immediately.
- **Know your participants:** You should know if any participants have allergies to things they might be exposed to during the program. This may include food allergies, as well as allergies to insect stings if they might be outside.
- **Know how to get help:** Should an emergency occur, *call 911 immediately*. It doesn't matter if you are on a cell phone or landline. When the dispatcher answers, state, "This is an emergency" and give your location. If there is time after this, give a brief description of what has happened and the type of help you need (e.g., police, fire, ambulance), if possible. If there is a serious injury, designate someone to call 911, another person to meet emergency responders, and people to assist/provide first aid until help arrives.
- **Assign participants into groups or "safety teams":** When an emergency happens, it may be difficult for you to keep track of everyone. The members of each safety group or safety team should keep track of each other, and stay together. If someone gets lost or is injured, they should know to tell you immediately. If something happens to you, they should know to call 911 immediately.
- **Have a Safety Plan for each activity:** Let the participants know what you will be doing at the beginning of each activity, what hazards might exist, what they should do to prevent problems, and what to do if there is a problem. This can be as simple or complex as you feel it needs to be for the activity. For example, it might be a simple statement like, "For this next activity, we will be using a scalpel to cut into the widget. These are very sharp, so you need to make sure you only hold it by the handle, like this (demonstrate), and that you have a clear path around you so that nobody accidentally gets bumped. Don't be "horsing around" with each other as we do this. If something happens and you get hurt, immediately stop and yell our safe word, "Bananas". If you hear the safe word, immediately stop and put down your scalpel and wait for further instructions while I help the person who is hurt."

