

Safe Driver Policy and Guidelines
Safe Passage Youth Foundation
Effective Date: May 27, 2025

Purpose

The Safe Passage Youth Foundation is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all teen participants, staff, and volunteers during transportation activities.

This Safe Driver Policy and Guidelines establishes clear expectations, responsibilities, and training requirements for volunteers who operate ten-passenger vans to transport youth in our community programs. This policy aligns with our mission to provide safe, reliable, and nurturing environments for youth.

Scope

This policy applies to all Safe Passage Youth Foundation volunteers who drive vans or other vehicles to transport teen participants in connection with Foundation activities. It covers driver qualifications, vehicle safety, operational procedures, training requirements, and youth protection protocols.

1. Driver Eligibility and Qualifications

To ensure the safety of our teen passengers, all volunteer drivers must meet the following criteria:

A. Valid Driver's License

- Must possess a valid unrestricted Class C or greater driver's license issued by the state of California.
- For ten-passenger vans, a standard Class C license is sufficient unless the vehicle requires a commercial driver's license (CDL) due to weight or passenger capacity.
- Drivers must provide a copy of their license for verification.

2. Minimum Age and Experience

- Drivers must be at least 21 years old.
- Must have at least three (3) years of licensed driving experience with no lapse in licensure.

3. Driving Record

- A clean driving record is required, defined as:
 - No more than one (1) moving violation in the past three years.
 - No at-fault accidents in the past three years.
 - No convictions for driving under the influence (DUI), reckless driving, or other serious traffic violations in the past seven years.
- The Foundation may conduct a Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) check annually for all volunteer drivers.

4. Background Check

- All drivers must pass a background check as allowed by California Law., including a review for any offenses involving minors, violence, or substance abuse, in alignment with our youth safety protocols.

5. Insurance Requirements

- Drivers may be covered under the Foundation's commercial auto insurance policy while driving a SZafe Passage Youth Foundation vehicle or if using another personal vehicle or rental, must have valid personal auto insurance with minimum liability limits as required by California law.

- The Foundation's insurance policy will be the primary coverage for all authorized trips in Safe Passage Youth Foundation Vehicles.

6. Physical and Mental Fitness

- Drivers must be physically and mentally capable of operating a vehicle safely.

- Any medical conditions (e.g., vision/hearing impairments, seizures) that could affect driving must be disclosed and evaluated by a authorized medical professional.

7. Vehicle Safety and Maintenance

All vehicles used for transporting youth must meet strict safety and maintenance standards:

8. Vehicle Inspections

- Inspections should occur at least every 12 months or every 10,000 miles, whichever comes first.
- Pre-trip inspections by drivers are required (see Section 4: Driver Responsibilities).

9. Vehicle Features

- Vans must be equipped with:
 - Functioning seat belts for every passenger.
 - First aid kits, fire extinguishers, and emergency reflective triangles.
 - Clearly marked emergency exits.
 - GPS navigation and tracking systems and/or maps for route planning. Driver/volunteer acknowledges by signing receipt of this policy that they agree to Safe Passage Youth Foundation always using electronic tracking of the vehicle location and operational data.

10. Maintenance Records

- The Foundation will maintain records of vehicle maintenance, repairs, and inspections.
- Any reported vehicle issues (e.g., brakes, tires, lights) must be addressed immediately, and the vehicle must not be used until repaired.

11. Passenger Capacity

- No van may carry more than ten passengers, including the driver.

- Overloading vehicles is strictly prohibited.

12. Driver Training Program

To prepare volunteers for the responsibility of transporting teens, the Safe Passage Youth Foundation requires all drivers to complete a Safe Driver Training Program. This program draws on best practices from youth-serving organizations.

Training Components

The training program includes the following mandatory elements:

A. Defensive Driving Course

- Administered by a certified instructor in person or through an online platform (e.g., National Safety Council's Defensive Driving Course and others).
- Covers techniques for avoiding collisions, managing road hazards, and keeping control in adverse conditions (e.g., rain, wind, fog).
- Includes training on handling vehicles like ten-passenger vans, which should include blind spots, stopping distances, and safe backing procedures.

B. Youth Passenger Safety

- Focuses on managing teen behavior in the vehicle to prevent distractions.

- Training on de-escalation techniques for conflicts among youth passengers.
- Training for ensuring all passengers are accounted for during loading/unloading and at destinations.
- Education on recognizing signs of distress or medical emergencies in teens.

C. Emergency Procedures

- Training on responding to accidents, breakdowns, or medical emergencies.
- Includes hands-on practice knowledge with emergency equipment (e.g., fire extinguishers, first aid kits) and location.
- Procedures for contacting emergency services and notifying Foundation staff.
- Evacuation understanding for safely exiting the van in case of fire or other hazards.

13. Child Protection and Safe Interactions

- Reinforces the Foundation's child protection policies, emphasizing appropriate boundaries with teen passengers, including the prohibition on being alone with a minor at all times.
- Training on recognizing and reporting suspected abuse or neglect, in compliance with mandatory reporting laws.

14. Vehicle Familiarization

- Hands-on training with the specific ten-passenger vans used by the Foundation.
- Covers vehicle controls, safety features, pre-trip inspection procedures, and safe backing techniques.
- Includes a supervised test drive to ensure comfort and competence.

15. Policy Review and Acknowledgment

- Detailed review of this Safe Driver Policy and Guidelines, including prohibitions on drug/alcohol use, texting, being alone with a minor, and the requirement to obey all traffic laws.
- Volunteers must sign an acknowledgment form confirming understanding and agreement to comply with all policies.

Training Frequency

- Initial Training: All volunteer drivers must complete the full training program before transporting youth.
- Refresher Training: Refresher courses are required as needed to maintain driver status, covering updates to policies, new safety techniques, and any changes in state regulations.
- Additional Training: Additional training may be required if a driver is involved in an incident or if new safety concerns arise.

Certification

- Upon successful completion of the training program, volunteers will receive acknowledgement by Safe Passage Youth Foundation.
- Certification may be revoked if a driver fails to comply with this policy or exhibits unsafe behavior.

16. Driver Responsibilities

Volunteer drivers are expected to uphold the highest standards of safety and professionalism.

Responsibilities include:

A. Pre-Trip Preparation

- Conduct a pre-trip vehicle inspection using the Foundation's checklist (e.g., tires, brakes, lights, seat belts, fuel).
- Plan routes in advance, using and account for traffic, construction, or weather conditions.
- Ensure all passengers have signed parental consent forms for transportation, if applicable.
- Confirm that all safety belts are fastened for every passenger before starting vehicle movement.

B. Safe Driving Practices

- Obey All Traffic Laws: Drivers must strictly comply with all federal, state, and local traffic laws, including speed limits, stop signs, traffic signals, and lane usage.

- Avoid distractions, including no texting while driving under any circumstances. Hands-free devices are permitted only for navigation or emergency calls.
- Maintain a safe following distance (at least 4 seconds behind the vehicle ahead for vans).
- Adjust driving to weather and road conditions.
- Backing Procedures: Sound the horn twice before backing the vehicle to alert nearby pedestrians or vehicles.
- Avoid backing whenever possible by parking in a manner that allows forward exit (e.g., pull-through parking).
- When backing is unavoidable, use an additional person (e.g., a staff member or trained volunteer) as a outside spotter to visually guide the driver. If no spotter is available, the driver must exit the vehicle and perform a 360-degree walk-around to check for obstacles prior to backing.

17. Passenger Safety

- Confirm Safety Belts: Never start movement of the vehicle until all passengers and the driver have their safety belts securely fastened. Drivers must visually or verbally confirm this with each passenger.
- Ensure all passengers wear seat belts at all times during transit.

- Verify the correct number of passengers before departing and upon arrival. Not to exceed 10 with the driver included.
- Prohibit horseplay, loud music, or other distractions that could affect safe driving.
- Never leave passengers unattended in the vehicle.

18. Incident Reporting

- Report any accidents, injuries, or vehicle issues to the Foundation immediately, regardless of severity.
- Complete an incident report form within 24 hours of any incident.
- Notify law enforcement and emergency services as required by law or circumstances.

19. Prohibited Behaviors

- No Drugs or Alcohol: Drivers are strictly prohibited from operating a vehicle if under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any prescription/over-the-counter medications that impair driving ability. This includes any consumption within 8 hours prior to driving.
- No Texting While Driving: Texting or using handheld devices for non-navigation purposes is strictly prohibited while the vehicle is in motion.
- No smoking, vaping, or use of any substances while driving.

- No unauthorized passengers (e.g., non-program participants) may be transported.
- No personal errands or detours during Foundation trips.

20. Emergency Procedures in Case of an Accident

In the event of a vehicle accident, drivers must follow these steps to ensure the safety of all passengers and comply with legal and Foundation requirements:

A. Ensure Immediate Safety

- Stop the vehicle immediately in a safe location, if possible, and turn on hazard lights.
- Assess the situation for immediate dangers (e.g., fire, leaking fuel, oncoming traffic).
- If safe, move the vehicle to the side of the road to avoid further collisions.

B. Check for Injuries**

- Check all passengers for injuries, starting with those who appear most affected.
- Administer first aid if trained and if safe to do so, using the vehicle's first aid kit.
- Do not move injured passengers unless there is an immediate threat (e.g., fire).
- In dangerous traffic conditions such as major highways, freeways, blind curves etc consider having all passengers exit and rally in a safe area

away from the roadway protected from impact by another distracted driver.

21. Contact Emergency Services

- Always Call 911 or local law enforcement at once if there are injuries, vehicle damage to any vehicle , or other vehicles involved.
- Provide the dispatcher with:
 - The exact location of the accident (use GPS coordinates or landmarks if needed).
 - The number of passengers and any visible injuries.
 - A description of the situation (e.g., vehicle condition, road hazards).
- Follow the dispatcher's instructions.

22. Notify the Foundation

- Contact the Safe Passage Youth Foundation's designated emergency contact (Program Director or assigned staff) as soon as possible, but only after ensuring passenger safety and contacting 911 if needed.
- Provide details of the accident, including location, passenger status, and any emergency services involved.

23. Secure the Scene

- If safe, place reflective triangles or flares behind the vehicle to warn other drivers. Avoid flares if in fire zone or fuel nearby. Activate emergency flashers.
- Keep passengers in a safe location, away from traffic, and ensure they remain calm and supervised.
- If evacuation is necessary (e.g., fire risk), guide passengers to a safe area using the vehicle's emergency exits, as practiced in training.

24. Document the Incident

- Collect information from other involved parties, if applicable, including:
 - Names, contact information, and insurance details of other drivers.
 - License plate numbers and vehicle descriptions.
 - Names and contact information of any witnesses.
- Take photos of the accident scene, all vehicles , vehicle damage, pictures of passengers in both vehicles and any relevant pictures of signs and road conditions, if safe to do so. The more pictures and video the better.
- Complete an incident report form within 24 hours, detailing the accident and any actions taken.

25. Cooperate with Authorities

- Provide accurate and truthful information to law enforcement and emergency responders.

- Do not admit fault or liability at the scene; allow insurance and legal processes to determine responsibility.

26. Post-Accident Follow-Up

- Ensure all passengers are safely transported to their destination or a medical facility, as needed, via alternative transportation arranged by the Foundation.
- Attend a mandatory debriefing with Foundation staff to review the incident and determine if additional training or disciplinary action is required.
- Refrain from driving until cleared by the Foundation and, if applicable, law enforcement.

27. Youth Protection

To ensure the safety and well-being of all minor youth (under 18 years of age) and to maintain appropriate boundaries, the Safe Passage Youth Foundation enforces strict youth protection protocols for all drivers:

A. Prohibition on Being Alone with a Minor

- Drivers must never be alone in a vehicle with a single minor youth under the age of 18.
- At least one additional adult (staff or trained volunteer) or a second minor must be present in the vehicle at all times during transportation.

- If a situation arises where a driver risks being alone with a single minor (e.g., emergency or due to a last-minute drop-off dictated as urgent), the driver must immediately contact the Program Director at Safe Passage to arrange for an additional adult to accompany them or to make alternative transportation arrangements.

28. Supervision and Accountability

- For all trips, a second adult (staff or trained volunteer) must be present when transporting more than one minor to ensure proper supervision and adherence to youth protection policies.

- Drivers must maintain a professional demeanor and follow the Foundation's code of conduct for interactions with youth, avoiding any language or behavior that could be misinterpreted or deemed inappropriate by the youth or other occupants. This includes any audio from electronic devices.

29. Reporting Concerns

- Drivers must immediately report any situation that compromises youth protection (e.g., being inadvertently alone with a minor) to the Program Director or designated staff.

- Any suspected violations of youth protection policies, including inappropriate behavior by other staff,

volunteers, or passengers, must be reported as per the Foundation's mandatory reporting protocols.

30. Training Reinforcement

- Youth protection protocols, including the prohibition on being alone with a minor, are covered in the mandatory Child Protection and Safe Interactions policy available on our website.
- Annual refresher training will reinforce these protocols to ensure ongoing compliance.

31. Prohibited Use of Drugs or Alcohol

The Safe Passage Youth Foundation maintains a zero-tolerance policy for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol:

- Prohibition: Drivers must not operate a vehicle if they have consumed alcohol, illegal drugs, or any prescription/over-the-counter medications that impair their ability to drive safely within 8 hours prior to driving.
- Testing: The Foundation reserves the right to remove the volunteer from driving immediately and make a voluntary request of drug or alcohol testing if there is reasonable suspicion of observed impairment (e.g., erratic driving, slurred speech, odor of alcohol).
- Consequences: Any driver found to be under the influence will have their driving privileges revoked immediately, may face termination of volunteer status,

and will be reported to law enforcement as required by law.

32. Obeying All Traffic Laws

- Drivers must strictly adhere to all federal, state, and local traffic laws always, including but not limited to:
 - Speed limits, traffic signals, and stop signs.
 - Right-of-way rules and pedestrian crossings.
 - Prohibitions on reckless driving, tailgating, or other unsafe behaviors.
- Failure to obey traffic laws may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or revocation of driving privileges.

33. Operational Guidelines

To ensure safe and efficient transportation of teens, the following operational guidelines apply:

A. Trip Authorization

- All trips must be pre-approved by the Foundation's Program Director or designated staff.
- Drivers must plan a trip itinerary, including pick-up/drop-off times, locations, and passengers.

34. Supervision Ratios

- At least one additional adult (staff or trained volunteer) must accompany the driver for trips with

more than one teen passenger to assist with supervision and comply with youth protection policies.

35. Emergency Protocols

- Drivers must carry a fully charged cell phone and a list of emergency contacts (Foundation staff, parents/guardians, local authorities) and Emergency procedures.

- In case of an emergency, drivers must prioritize passenger safety, secure the scene, and follow the emergency procedures.

36. Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures

- Teens may only be released to authorized individuals.

- Drivers must verify the identity of any person picking up a teen.

- If a teen is not picked up at the designated time, drivers must contact the Program Director and remain with the teen until arrangements are made, ensuring compliance with youth protection protocols (e.g., avoiding being alone with a single minor).

37. Disciplinary Actions

Failure to comply with this policy may result in the following consequences:

- First Violation: Verbal warning and mandatory retraining.

- Second Violation: Suspension of driving privileges for up to 90 days. Potential suspension of volunteer status
- Third or Serious Violation: Permanent revocation of driving privileges and potential termination of volunteer status.
- Serious violations (e.g., driving under the influence, texting while driving, failure to obey traffic laws, neglecting safety belt checks, or violating youth protection protocols) will result in immediate revocation and reporting to authorities as required by law.

38. Policy Acknowledgment

All volunteer drivers must sign a Driver Agreement Form, acknowledging they have read, understood, and will comply with this Safe Driver Policy and Guidelines, including youth protection protocols. The form will be kept on file with the Foundation. The form will include the entire body of this policy.

39. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed as needed to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, best practices from youth-serving organizations, and the Foundation's mission. Feedback from volunteers, staff, and parents/guardians will be considered during the review process.

Appendix: Pre-Trip Vehicle Procedures

Volunteers must complete these tasks before every trip:

- ☐ Tires: Visual tire pressure and tread for wear.
- ☐ Brakes: Test for responsiveness.
- ☐ Lights: Verify headlights, brake lights, turn signals, and hazard lights.
- ☐ Seat Belts: Ensure all are functional and accessible.
- ☐ Mirrors: Adjust side and rearview mirrors.
- ☐ Fuel: Confirm adequate fuel for the trip.
- ☐ Emergency Equipment: Verify presence of first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and reflective triangles.
- ☐ Cleanliness: Ensure the interior is free of hazards or clutter.
- ☐ Backing Check: Confirm ability to park without backing or identify a spotter if backing is required.
- ☐ Youth Protection: Verify the presence of an additional adult or second minor to avoid being alone with a single minor.