

# Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association (TAAA) Policy on Working with Minors

TAAA encourages members to share the wonders of the night sky and science knowledge with children and youth (hereafter, referred to as minors). In such interactions with minors, TAAA members foster a culture of mutual respect; of due concern for and adherence to safety; and of personal behaviors and procedures that reduce risks of misunderstandings and of abuse.

To assist TAAA members in working with minors, TAAA has developed a program and requirements for Members Interacting with Minors on Behalf of TAAA. The levels of the program are situationally based, varying with types of activities and environments in which educational experiences occur. The intent of this policy is to provide training and awareness while working with minors.

TAAA General Policy on Compliance: TAAA members representing TAAA working with minors will have fulfilled each of the requirements for the level of activity in which they wish to be involved prior to the activity. TAAA Members who fail to comply with all the requirements for the level of activity within 36 months preceding the activity, will not be allowed to participate in representing TAAA in working with minors. The information below focuses on activities TAAA members are involved with when interacting with minors and lists TAAA requirements for these various types of activities with minors. Unless otherwise indicated, requirements must be recertified every 36 months.

TAAA levels and requirements are listed below.

## **Level 1: Joining or renewing TAAA Member, no specified work with minors**

Description: While this person may not work with minors, the person may attend events and have the opportunity to observe member behavior with minors.

### Requirements for Level 1:

- a. As part of initially joining TAAA or annually renewing membership, the member candidate yearly must check that (1) he/she has read the following statement and (2) will convey a copy of the statement to any adult family members sharing the TAAA membership (this statement also appears in Appendix A of the current document):



*I am aware that TAAA has guidelines for members interacting with minors. I realize I represent TAAA when engaged in TAAA events interacting with minors and agree to follow these guidelines.*

*Specific TAAA requirements for specific activities with minors (“Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association (TAAA) Policy on Working with Minors”) as well as the “Requirements for Members Interacting with Minors on Behalf of TAAA”(See Appendix B.) may be found on the TAAA website and is available to all members. I take responsibility for sharing these requirements with any adult family member who is part of my TAAA membership. I and my adult family/joint TAAA member will follow the requirements for working with minors on behalf of TAAA.”*

- b. Members of TAAA who previously served as President are not required to renew membership annually. However, they do have responsibility to keep up with TAAA requirements and to follow the same member requirements as all other TAAA members, including all policies and requirements related to working with minors.

**Level 2: Starry Messenger Special Interest Group (SMSIG) volunteers for events such as Tucson Festival of Books (TFOB), Southern Arizona Regional Science and Engineering Fair (SARSEF), Astronomy Festival, and Night Sky Network Toolkits or other professionally developed activities for TAAA involved activities or general activities when multiple TAAA Volunteers are visibly present and observing/interacting for the entire time. In general, these are volunteers who provide short-term service, usually for one event, and only in public areas. This may also include volunteers for TAAA events that serve few minors.**

Description: All activities are in total view of other TAAA volunteers; daytime or night time; usually visible to and/or separated from audience entire time; The TAAA volunteer does not meet with minors outside of TAAA event prescribed area. All interactions with minors occur in total view of at least one astronomy volunteer and/or several adults. Maintains defined location/path within specified public area, avoiding areas like individual, closed-off tents or storage areas; and does not interact with minors in remote or private areas (camping area, bath or shower). Interactions may occur after dark.

Requirements for Level 2:

- a. Read and sign the commitment to follow “Requirements for Members Interacting with Minors on Behalf of TAAA”, found in Appendix B.



- b. Note: If the volunteer is not a TAAA Member, See Appendix B2 in which the title of the document in Appendix B has been changed to read, “Requirements for Volunteers Interacting with Minors on Behalf of TAAA.”
- c. Volunteers are provided opportunities to ask questions about the policies and procedures and to discuss them with a TAAA Supervisor.
- d. These volunteers may but are not required to attend TAAA training on working with minors.
- e. Level 2 volunteers receive a copy of a TAAA log (Appendix C) to complete and submit to their TAAA Supervisor immediately after the activity. Note: logs include people-served information and must also include names of TAAA participants present at the activity.

### **Level 3: School/Nonprofit Star Party Volunteers**

Description: These volunteers may be working with minors after dark and/or in areas of high density with reduced visibility and/or situations of confusion. TAAA volunteers normally operate in pairs and do not work with a minor outside of the vision of another volunteer. TAAA members stay in public areas with minors. They do not accompany minors to private rooms, remote areas, restrooms, isolated vehicles, empty classrooms, or any private areas on the premises such as, trailers or tents unless a safety issue requires it and another adult accompanies them.

#### Requirements for Level 3:

- a. Read and sign the commitment to follow “Requirements for Members Interacting with Minors on Behalf of TAAA”, found in Appendix B.
- b. Volunteers have opportunities to ask questions about the policies and procedures and to discuss them with a TAAA Supervisor.
- c. Triennial (36 months) completion of TAAA beginning course in “Fundamentals of Working with Minors” (This course is approximately 45 minutes.). Training is conducted at a TAAA monthly meeting on an annual basis but is readily available periodically during the year.\* (Shorter refresher courses may also be available for members who have completed the initial course.)
- d. Level 3 volunteers receive a copy of a TAAA log (Appendix C) to complete and submit to their TAAA Supervisor immediately after the activity. Note: logs include people-served information and must also include names of TAAA participants present during the activity.



## **Level 4: Tucson Stargazing Adventures**

Description: These volunteers represent TAAA in conducting paid star parties to for-profit agencies or private individuals. These events may involve single telescopes and other adults and may involve minors who are or are not accompanied with adult supervision. TAAA may advertise the fact that volunteers in this level have been vetted for and cleared from prior histories of abuse of minors via background checks.

### Requirements for Level 4:

- a. Read and sign the commitment to follow “Requirements for Members Interacting with Minors on Behalf of TAAA”, found in Appendix B.
- b. Members have opportunities to ask questions about the policies and procedures and to discuss them with a TAAA Supervisor.
- c. Triennial (36 months) completion of TAAA beginning course in “Fundamentals of Working with Minors” (This course is approximately 45 minutes.). Training may be conducted on an annual basis, depending upon need, but is also available periodically during the year or online.\*
- d. Level 4 persons will successfully complete a basic background check every five years as required by TAAA.
- e. Level 4 volunteers receive a copy of a TAAA log (Appendix C) to complete. They submit a completed log to their TAAA Supervisor immediately after the activity. Note: logs include people-served information and must also include names of adult participants present during the activity and any other TAAA members who were present.
- f. Tucson Stargazing Adventure (TSA) volunteers wear approved TAAA attire (in good condition) throughout the event and follow the TAAA requirements for acceptable dress for such events.
- g. Tucson Stargazing Adventure (TSA) volunteers present and conduct themselves with an ongoing professional appearance, attitude, and behavior at the event and at any point of contact with event planners.



**Level 5: TAAA members involved in educational science programs or telescope viewing programs with minors in remote locations, such as CAC and TIMPA. These activities may involve overnight stays of both youth and adults.**

Description: These volunteers may be working with minors after dark and/or in areas of reduced visibility. TAAA volunteers operate in pairs and never work with a minor outside of the vision of another volunteer. TAAA members stay in public areas with minors. They do not accompany minors to private rooms, remote areas, restrooms, vehicles away from people, empty classrooms, or any private areas on the premises such as, trailers or tents unless a safety issue requires it and another adult accompanies them. These TAAA volunteers may be conducting day or night activities with minors in a remote location and sometimes with a limited amount of adult presence. However, in these situations every TAAA volunteer must operate under the direct view of another TAAA adult volunteer. No TAAA adult serves as a volunteer at these locations with a minor without the continual presence of another TAAA adult. Provisions are made for management of all private areas, baths, showers, sleeping areas that allow for separation and privacy of minors and adults and males and females.

Requirements for Level 5:

- a. Read and sign the commitment to follow “Requirements for Members Interacting with Minors on Behalf of TAAA”, found in Appendix B.
- b. Members have opportunities to ask questions about the policies and procedures and to discuss them with a TAAA Supervisor.
- c. Triennial (36 months) completion of TAAA beginning course in “Fundamentals of Working with Minors ” (This course is at least 45 minutes.). Training is conducted at a TAAA monthly meeting or a special meeting on an annual basis but is also readily available during the year either in person or online.\*
- d. Triennial (36 months) completion of TAAA second course, “Advanced Training in Working with Minors” (This course is at least 45 minutes.). Training will be available in person on a periodic basis and will be regularly available online. \*
- e. Level 5 persons conducting training or observing programs with minors in extremely remote areas such as CAC/TIMPA successfully complete a basic background check and an advanced (FBI) background check every five years as required by TAAA.
- f. Prior to program/event starting, TAAA members develop and follow specific TAAA guidelines and develop specific situational requirements for protection of privacy of minors, and, in event of overnight stays, allocation of and admission to sleeping areas.
- g. Training for CAC includes very basic procedures for obtaining emergency assistance at CAC. However, it is highly recommended that these persons also pursue their own personal training in such areas as CPR, first aid or wilderness first aid.



- h. Level 5 volunteers receive a copy of a TAAA log (Appendix C) to complete. They submit a completed log to the TAAA Supervisor immediately after the activity. Note: logs include people-served information and must also include names of TAAA participants present during the activity.
- i. All persons working with, visiting or attending CAC/TIMPA in association with programs related to minors are provided and initial a statement that they understand potential hazards in this remote environment.
- j. When TAAA programs/events are planned at Level 5 (that is specific overnight programs are planned for youth at CAC/TIMPA), a youth protection plan is submitted by the leaders to and approved by the TAAA BOD prior to the program being implemented. This plan addresses issues such as two deep leadership; management of privacy issues such as bathrooms, showers, sleeping, tents; and three scenarios of youth protection issues that may occur as well as plans for avoiding them and for management, if they were to occur. Such a plan is submitted in time for BOD review and feedback to be given prior to the beginning of the activity.

### **Special Circumstance: Grand Canyon Star Party**

All Grand Canyon Star Party (GCSP) volunteers, including lecturers/presenters, volunteers for solar viewing, constellation tours, presentation of NSN Toolkits or other specific educational programs, or telescope operators, are required to complete volunteer applications to serve as official volunteers for the National Park Service (NPS). Persons serving in those roles at the GCSP are under the direct supervision of NPS and follow NPS regulations. Those persons are not required to be TAAA members and are not responsible for meeting TAAA Minor Policy requirements when under the supervision of NPS.

