

**PURPOSE**

To establish guidelines that will govern the interactions between Fire Department staff and children they may come in contact with in the community.

**POLICY**

It is the policy of the Peoria Fire department that while employees interact with children in a positive and professional manner and avoid any circumstances that could be perceived negatively by others. In interacting with children, the following guidelines should be followed to limit possible liability and negative perceptions:

**Guidelines:**

- Do Not initiate physical contact with a child. If the child initiates the physical contact, refrain from hugging the child. As an alternative, a gentle tap on the shoulder or head. Use the side hug or high five method to let them know that you are happy to see them. Do Not wrap your arms around them.
- Do Not allow children to sit on your lap or in between your legs, have the child sit beside you.
- Do Not physically restrain, pick-up, or hold a child unless the child is a danger to themselves or others.
- Avoid being alone with a child. Stay in groups with your crew and other children.
- Do Not engage in a wrestling match with a child. This is not to say you cannot be interactive with children, however, you must avoid physical contact whenever possible.
- When speaking to a distressed child, kneel to their level and hold their hand for comfort versus picking them up.
- Do Not single out children for preferential treatment. Show no favorites. Children are very intuitive and will wonder why they're not a favorite, which could affect their self-esteem.
- If you give gifts to children, e.g., stickers, etc. provide enough for every child.
- Do not make negative comments that can lower a child's self-esteem or comments that may be taken out of context and be misinterpreted.
- Do Not discuss the topic of sex with children.
- If a child tells you he or she has been abused physically, emotionally, mentally, or sexually, you must immediately report it to your supervisor and CPS (Child Protective Services).

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_



Robert McKibben, Fire Chief

9/29/04

Date