**Health and Safety Policy - Exploring Nature**

**1. Introduction**  
At Exploring Nature, the health, safety, and well-being of all participants, staff, and volunteers are our top priorities. We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all individuals attending our outdoor learning programs. This policy outlines our approach to managing health and safety risks, promoting safe practices, and ensuring that everyone can enjoy the benefits of our sessions with confidence.

**2. General Health and Safety Principles**

* The safety of participants is paramount at all times.
* We will take all reasonable steps to assess, reduce, and manage risks to health and safety.
* All staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining a safe environment and ensuring the safety of participants.
* We will ensure that all equipment and activities used in our programs are suitable and safe for the age, ability, and needs of participants.
* Health and safety measures will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are effective and up to date.

**3. Risk Assessment**  
We conduct thorough risk assessments for all of our sessions, activities, and locations. These assessments are designed to identify potential hazards and determine the necessary precautions to mitigate risk. The risk assessments cover:

* Outdoor activities (e.g., climbing, tool use, fire safety).
* Environmental hazards (e.g., terrain, weather conditions, wildlife).
* Health risks (e.g., allergies, medical conditions, and first aid requirements).
* Equipment used (e.g., tools, ropes, fire equipment).
* Emergency procedures and evacuation plans.

Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect current conditions and best practices.

**4. Staff Training and Competence**  
All staff members and volunteers at Exploring Nature are trained in health and safety procedures, including:

* First Aid, including CPR.
* Safe use of tools and equipment.
* Managing challenging behavior and ensuring safe group dynamics.
* Recognizing and responding to health and safety risks in the outdoor environment.
* Emergency response protocols, including fire safety and evacuation procedures.

We ensure that all staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to implement our health and safety procedures effectively.

**5. Participant Safety**  
We take a proactive approach to ensuring the safety of all participants by:

* Maintaining appropriate ratios of staff to participants to ensure adequate supervision.
* Ensuring that all participants are briefed on safety rules and expectations at the beginning of each session.
* Providing clear instructions and guidelines for any activities that may involve risk (e.g., climbing, tool work, or fire lighting).
* Monitoring participants closely to ensure their safety during activities.
* Ensuring that any participant with known medical conditions or specific needs is supported appropriately, and reasonable adjustments are made.
* Asking parents and guardians to disclose any health or medical conditions, allergies, or special requirements that may affect the participant's ability to safely take part in the activities.

**6. Emergency Procedures**  
In the event of an emergency, Exploring Nature follows clear and well-rehearsed procedures to ensure the swift and effective management of any situation. Our emergency procedures include:

* Clearly marked emergency exits and evacuation routes at all locations.
* A designated first aid kit accessible at all times during sessions.
* Access to mobile phone service to call emergency services when needed.
* Staff trained in basic first aid and CPR, with additional first aid support if necessary.
* Immediate response and action in the event of an incident, including contacting parents/guardians where necessary.
* Regularly practicing emergency evacuation drills with all participants.

**7. Equipment and Facilities**  
We take every step to ensure that all equipment and materials used in our sessions are safe and suitable for their purpose. This includes:

* Regular inspection and maintenance of tools, outdoor gear, and safety equipment (e.g., ropes, climbing gear, fire safety equipment).
* Using equipment that is age-appropriate and designed to minimize risk.
* Keeping equipment clean, in good working order, and properly stored to prevent accidents.
* Ensuring that all outdoor areas are safe, with any potential hazards (e.g., uneven terrain, sharp objects, etc.) being clearly identified and mitigated.

**8. Weather Conditions and Outdoor Environment**  
The outdoor environment can present unique challenges, especially in changing weather conditions. To ensure safety, we:

* Monitor weather forecasts before each session and make adjustments to activities as necessary to ensure the safety of participants.
* Cancel or reschedule sessions if weather conditions are deemed unsafe (e.g., storms, extreme cold, or high winds).
* Ensure that participants are dressed appropriately for the weather, and we encourage them to wear layers and bring waterproofs as needed.
* Have contingency plans in place for adverse weather, including the use of sheltered areas if required.
* Educate participants on how to recognize and respond to environmental risks, such as dangerous wildlife or extreme weather conditions.

**9. Health and Medical Considerations**  
We ask all participants to disclose any relevant medical conditions, allergies, or special requirements prior to attending our sessions. This allows us to:

* Make appropriate adjustments to ensure the participant’s safety and well-being during the session.
* Ensure we are equipped with necessary medications, such as an EpiPen for severe allergies.
* Keep accurate and confidential records of medical information, which can be referred to in an emergency.

All staff are trained to recognize signs of medical distress and respond appropriately in case of illness, injury, or other emergencies.

**10. Reporting Accidents and Incidents**  
We maintain a system for reporting, recording, and reviewing any accidents or incidents that occur during our sessions. This includes:

* Recording all accidents or injuries, no matter how minor, in an incident report.
* Notifying parents/guardians promptly in case of an accident or medical issue.
* Reviewing the incident to determine if any changes need to be made to our risk assessments, safety procedures, or practices to prevent future occurrences.

**11. Participant Behaviour**  
We expect all participants to behave in a safe, respectful, and responsible manner during our sessions. We reserve the right to remove a participant from an activity or session if their behaviour compromises the safety or well-being of themselves or others. Parents or guardians will be contacted immediately if this occurs.

**12. Conclusion**  
Exploring Nature is committed to ensuring the highest standards of health and safety for all participants, staff, and volunteers. We believe that by maintaining a rigorous health and safety framework, we can provide a safe and enjoyable environment for outdoor learning, allowing everyone to explore, discover, and connect with nature.

For any concerns or questions regarding health and safety, please contact us directly:

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Thank you for your cooperation and commitment to maintaining a safe and enjoyable experience at Exploring Nature.