



# YOUTH PROTECTION INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

**Version: Final Draft 1**

Last Updated: 8/7/19

Pending review by the Board of Trustees in late August 2019

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## Introduction

The commitment to safety is an important value at Destination Imagination and we strive to provide every team member with the safest possible experience. We cannot do this alone, but by working together with you and your community, we can help make your child's experience a safe one. This Youth Protection Information provides you with important information to help us do this.

## Get Involved

Parental involvement is important for team members' safety and Destination Imagination encourages every parent and guardian to become involved with their child's team within the Interference rules. There are many ways to become involved. You can serve as a Team Manager or co-Team Manager, or volunteer to help with the team's regular activities, like Instant Challenge coordination. You can drive team members to meetings and events, or contribute supplies or snacks to the team. These are just a few examples. Your Team Managers will guide you in ways you can best help the team. Often, this means being a supportive observer without interfering with or compromising the team's work and group dynamics.

Another very important way to become involved is simply to get acquainted with the Team Managers and other adults who work with the team, talk with other parents or guardians, and meet your child's teammates. Become familiar with the place where the team ordinarily meets, especially if the team meets in a private home, or other non-public space. Even if only occasional, your presence can help keep team members safe. In fact, you may see ways to improve team safety that others do not. The more involved adults are, the safer the team will be. Your involvement may provide team members with one more adult they can trust who has time to listen, and who is interested in any concerns they may have.

Parents must remember that one key learning aspect of Destination Imagination is letting the team members complete their project on their own. Parents are welcome to attend and observe the team

meetings, but they may not provide any assistance, ideas, or direct assistance about the team's solution. Your Team Manager can provide you with the Interference Agreement and Guidelines.

Time spent with the team may help the Team Managers and other parents or guardians understand that their efforts are appreciated. It may also help you understand how the team assigns various roles and how your child interacts with the group. It may give you a better sense of how team members' skills complement each other, and how the team is managed.

Your presence at team meetings and events can provide a powerful benefit in helping the team members and other adults working with the team stay calm and kind, especially during times of stress. When time pressure mounts, when a mistake is made, or when a tournament is lost, team members and adults may be tempted to resort to berating one another or behaving unkindly toward members of other teams. At such times, you may be able to help defuse a stressful situation, especially if another parent or guardian is involved. Everyone involved with a team deserves respect, even under difficult circumstances. You can help promote this value and may be able to show others healthy ways of dealing with anger and stress.

### **Understand What Destination Imagination Does To Keep Children Safe**

The Destination Imagination Youth Protect Policy and Procedures (DI-YPPP) covers a broad range of safety measures. Working in combination, the following program elements greatly increase the likelihood of each team member having a safe and rewarding experience:

- At least one adult Team Manager (preferably two) with a completed background check and trained in safety measures and who knows the provisions of the DI-YPPP to oversee a team's activities.
- Everyone on a team, or working with the team, should be comfortable talking about, and listening to, discussions on the Destination Imagination Youth Protection Policies and Procedures in age appropriate terms, and be committed to following it.
- Everyone working with a team understands acceptable boundaries and behaviors, and the actions that are necessary should these be broken.
- Parents and guardians are aware of, and to the extent possible, involved in, their child's team activities.

## **Understand the Risks of Child Abuse and How You Can Help Prevent It**

Destination Imagination recognizes that child abuse is a problem in every corner of society and the risks can be hard to see or anticipate, even for trained professionals. Child abuse can occur undetected in isolation and silence. If you talk to your child about healthy relationships that are appropriate for his or her age, and your own beliefs and expectations concerning relationship risks and appropriate boundaries, it will be easier for your child to tell you if anyone tests these boundaries. Consult [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) or your local child welfare agency if you need help talking with your child about these matters or to learn more about the risks.

The information below provides guidance for reducing and dealing with the risks of child abuse.

## **Help Your Child Learn Preventive Behavior**

Adults working with teams are required to follow the Destination Imagination Youth Protection Policies and Procedures. We encourage you to read the DI-YPPP and discuss it with your child in age-appropriate terms. Emphasize his or her responsibility to tell you about things anyone does or says that do not seem right, even if he or she is not involved, so that all team members are kept safe. At a minimum, discuss with your child the following ways of dealing with potential overstepping of normal boundaries or inappropriate behavior:

- Encourage your child to tell you (or another trusted adult) if anyone asks them to keep things they have said or done a secret, or if anyone offers them special favors, invitations, gifts, or money. (Remember that team members should not discuss their solution or the Instant Challenges they complete at tournament with anyone except their Team Manager.)
- Encourage your child to trust his or her instincts and feelings. If an activity doesn't feel right they should not participate; discuss possible scenarios with your child and ways to firmly say "no thank-you" and move to a safer setting; discuss what your child will be comfortable saying if this situation arises.
- Tell your child to make sure his or her privacy is respected.
- Tell your child to say "no" to unwanted touching or affection.
- Tell your child that, if any of these things happen, to call you (or another trusted adult) and ask to be brought to a safe place.

If you discuss these options with your child, he or she will be aware of situations that could lead to abuse; be better able to recognize inappropriate behavior; and be better prepared to get away from the situation. Make your child aware that even seemingly nice adults and children bigger or older than they are, and who

they know well, trust, and admire, can do inappropriate things such as showing pictures of people not fully dressed, or trying to touch them in a way that doesn't feel right.

Talking with your child lets him or her know there are trustworthy adults who will take the time to listen, and who will believe them. This can significantly reduce the chances that your child will feel powerless or confused by a risky situation.

## **Guidelines for Your Child's Online Activities**

When children are online, they are in a public place, among thousands of people who are online at the same time. Adults seeking to abuse or exploit children may initiate contact over the Internet by representing themselves as a child or a Team Manager or other DI volunteer. In the process, they may obtain enough personal information about your child to enable them to contact him or her by phone or in person, and represent themselves as being in some way related to, or interested in, your child or the team. It is very important that parents and guardians closely monitor their child's online activities, to prevent them from getting into an inappropriate or unsafe situation.

Team members, Team Managers, teachers, team parents, and team volunteers communicate extensively with each other by phone, text, and online concerning the Destination Imagination solution, their careers, and their educational aspirations. Personal exchanges such as phone calls, e-mail, texting, social networking, etc. with a team member outside the context of team activities, educational matters, or career concerns are violations of the DI-YPPP.

Instruct your child to tell you if an adult working with his or her team sends messages unrelated to team activities, career, or educational matters. Ask the Team Manager to copy you on all electronic messages sent to your child.

## Responding to Indications, Disclosures, and Other Signs of Abuse

The strongest indication that a child has been abused is the child's own statement that it occurred, but children who have been abused often do not report it, so parents or guardians should be alert for other signs, such as refusing to participate in an activity they once enjoyed, emotional withdrawal, unexplained cuts or bruises, acting out adult sexual behavior, or using language a child that age is unlikely to know. For more specific signs, consult [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov) or your local child welfare agency.

If your child tells you they have experienced or observed what may be abusive behavior, your first reaction can be very important in helping the child through the ordeal. The following guidelines may help you:

- DO assume that your child is telling you the truth, respect your child's privacy, and take him or her to a place where the two of you can talk without interruptions or distractions.
- DO reassure your child that he or she is not to blame for what happened and that you appreciate being told about the incident and will help to make sure it won't happen again.
- DO consult your family doctor or other child abuse authority about the need for medical care or counseling.
- DO tell a child protection agency or the police what happened and follow their direction regarding confidentiality and notification of the school or organization hosting your child's team and your Affiliate Director.
- DON'T panic or overreact to your child's disclosure, or show alarm or anger.
- DON'T criticize your child or tell your child he or she misunderstood what happened.
- DON'T express remorse that the child wasn't more careful, put him or herself at risk, or is in any way at fault.
- DON'T attempt to conduct an investigation or confront the suspected offender, even if you know the person well.

The Destination Imagination Director of Affiliate Relations (contact information is available [here](#)) is available to any individual with concerns about the safety of team members and can be contacted directly if additional information or guidance is needed. Destination Imagination headquarters office will become involved, if necessary, to ensure safety threats or violations of the DI-YPPP are promptly and effectively resolved. With your help, we can provide your child with a safe, enjoyable, and inspiring experience.

## Resources for Parents

Stop It Now! (<http://www.stopitnow.org>), excellent resource for prevention education, training programs, technical assistance and prevention advocacy.

Together Against Bullying (<http://www.togetheragainstbullying.org/cyberbullying>)

Jacob Wetterling Resource Center program of Zero Abuse Project. [www.jwrc.org](http://www.jwrc.org)

Child Welfare Information Gateway provides state-specific information ([www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/search/index.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/search/index.cfm))