

Safety With Students

As a FoodCorps service member, an important part of your service is ensuring students are safe—in the classroom, garden, kitchen, or wherever you are with students. Please review these safety guidelines in the “Cooking with Students” and “Gardening With Students” sections below, and be in touch with your supervisor if you have questions or need additional information.

To protect you and your students in case of an accident, injury, or other emergency, you should always follow the protocols of the school that you are serving. Schools have their own safety protocols, and it’s important that you know these and can follow them closely in case of an emergency. Additionally, your role as a service member may require you to be a mandatory reporter if you have reason to suspect child abuse or neglect. If so, learn the protocols regarding mandatory reporting at your school and site, and ensure you have the information and training you need to perform them.

Tips for Keeping Students Safe

- **Proper adult supervision is key to running a safe program.** Always keep students in sight and in areas that have been designated as safe spaces for students. Be consistent with your expectations, and openly communicate the importance of the group sticking together. Bathroom breaks and pick-up times are especially important times when you should be extra vigilant about knowing where your students are. Always have a watchful eye on where and when students leave your side, especially before moving to a new location.
- **Follow school protocols regarding allergies and other important issues.** Keep this information in a place that is easy to reference, like a chart or spreadsheet. Ensure that other adults who will be

working and volunteering with you are aware of allergies as well. Common food allergens include the following: tree nuts, seafood, dairy, wheat, and soy. These ingredients are limited in FoodCorps lesson recipes to prevent exposure. Be sure to identify and understand potential health issues before making substitutions and before preparing or serving any food with students. Consider having an additional adult present when cooking with students who have severe allergies. The safest approach is to exclude using ingredients to which any student might be allergic.

- **Expectations and parameters should be clear to all participants.** To ensure everyone’s safety, it’s important that you set clear rules and guidelines from the beginning of the program. Students should understand not only what the safety parameters are but also why they are important. See the “Developing Group Agreements” section on p. 89 to learn how to set expectations and parameters for student behavior.
- **Be prepared for anything!** Any seasoned educator knows that when teaching, anything can happen. Come prepared for any and all scenarios, and always have a backup plan. It’s important that you have a well-stocked first-aid kit or know where this is kept in the school/classroom. Remember to follow school protocols for treating injuries.
- **Foster space for emotional and mental well-being.** It is your responsibility as a FoodCorps service member to create and support a culture of trust. Bullying, clique behavior, and discrimination should never be allowed. By making team agreements as a group about expected behavior toward one another, teamwork and collaboration will be stronger among the group.