



Minors in Research Environments

Policy #P&P-02

Version #4

Environmental Health and Safety

Division of
Administrative Affairs

Effective: 05/14/2026

Revised: 05/14/2026

1. PURPOSE

This policy establishes the requirements, restrictions, and safety protocols governing the participation of minors (individuals under 18 years of age) in university-affiliated research environments. It applies to all biological, chemical, and radioactive laboratories, animal research areas, scientific boating and diving operations, and other field-based studies. The intent is to ensure the safety of minors, compliance with legal and institutional standards, and the responsible conduct of research activities across all university facilities and research programs.

This policy applies to minors with the status of employee, student, volunteer, and those unaffiliated with the university.

This policy excludes minors present in research environments as part of an approved educational tour, provided the lab is cleared of accessible hazards and has no hands-on activities.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Minors present in research environments who are not in compliance with this policy are strictly prohibited.

- 2.1 Written informed consent from a parent or legal guardian is required for all minors prior to participation.
- 2.2 Minors are strictly prohibited from being alone in research environments, hazardous locations, or fieldwork at any time.
- 2.3 Minors must be under the continuous, direct supervision of a qualified supervisor while working in laboratory or field research areas. Supervisors must be familiar with all relevant hazards in the work area and be designated by the department head or Principal Investigator.
- 2.4 The required ratio of supervisors to minors is 1:2 (or no more than two minors to any one supervisor). During diving operations, a 1:1 ratio is strongly recommended.
- 2.5 Minors under 15 are prohibited from entering research environments except for approved educational tours, with the lab cleared of accessible hazards, and with no hands-on activities.
- 2.6 Minors aged 15–17 may participate in certain research activities under strict supervision and with prior approvals as outlined herein.
 - 2.6.1 Generally Permitted Activities
 - 2.6.1.1 Observation of research activities from a safe distance.

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- 2.6.1.2 Simple, low-risk tasks under direct supervision (e.g., weighing samples, preparing solutions, data entry, labeling, cleaning non-hazardous equipment, fieldwork).
- 2.6.1.3 Work with low-hazard biological (BSL-1, BSL-2) and chemical agents under direct supervision.
- 2.6.1.4 Scientific snorkeling activities, with proper training as per the FAU Diving Safety Manual.
- 2.6.1.5 Scientific diving activities, if medically cleared and with proper training as per the FAU Diving Safety Manual.
- 2.6.1.6 Scientific boating activities as a passenger only with strict adherence to the FAU Boating Safety Manual.
- 2.6.2 Prohibited Activities
 - 2.6.2.1 Unsupervised work of any kind.
 - 2.6.2.2 Working in any laboratory or facility designated BSL-3 or higher.
 - 2.6.2.3 Working with any select agents, radioactive materials, controlled substances, acute toxins, or explosives.
 - 2.6.2.4 Entry into high-risk areas (e.g., BSL-3 labs, areas with open sources of radiation, high-voltage equipment rooms).
 - 2.6.2.5 Operation of power tools, motor vehicles, and watercraft.
 - 2.6.2.6 Work on scaffolds, ladders, and other unguarded, elevated work surfaces above 6 feet.
 - 2.6.2.7 Work on roofs

3. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Research Environments:** Rooms, buildings, and field locations where hazardous materials and conditions are present. Research environments include, but are not limited to:
 - 3.1.1 Biological Laboratory: A facility where organisms, tissues, or biohazardous materials are handled.
 - 3.1.2 Chemical Laboratory: A facility where chemicals are stored, handled, or experiments are conducted.
 - 3.1.3 Radioactive Laboratory: A facility where radioactive materials or radiation-producing equipment are used.
 - 3.1.4 Animal Research Area: A facility for housing or working with live vertebrate animals.
 - 3.1.5 Boating and Diving Activities: Research fieldwork involving watercraft or underwater operations.

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3.1.6 **Field Research:** Research activities involving work conducted outside of buildings (on campus or off campus).

3.2 **Minor:** Any person under the age of 18.

3.3 **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Specialized clothing or gear worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries, illnesses, or infections. It acts as a barrier between a person and chemical, physical, radiological, or biological risks, often serving as the last line of defense.

3.4 **Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** The person who is responsible for the research project or activity, as well as the oversight of the participants in the research or activity, including any minors.

3.5 **Supervision:** Management of the performance or operation of the person or group at all times in the research environment.

3.6 **Volunteer:** Any person who provides services to FAU with no monetary or material compensation.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Environmental Health and Safety is responsible for enforcing this policy.

4.2 Minors working in research environments are responsible for full participation with the requirements of this policy.

4.3 Parents/Legal Guardians are responsible for reviewing the Minors in Research Environments Proposal/Parental Consent form and signing to affirm consent.

4.4 Principal Investigators/Supervisors are responsible for:

4.4.1 Ensuring full compliance with this policy.

4.4.2 Notifying EH&S when minors join their labs.

4.4.3 Completing the first part of the Minors in Research Environments Proposal/Parental Consent form with the minor.

5. PROCEDURES

5.1 General Requirements

5.1.1 The Principal Investigator/Supervisor and the minor must complete the Minors in Research Environments Proposal Form, detailing the specific tasks the minor will perform. The form must be signed by the Principal Investigator/Supervisor before it is provided to the minor to obtain parental/legal guardian consent.

5.1.2 Minors must present the Minors in Research Environments Proposal/Consent Form to their parents or guardians for review. Parents/Guardians must read through the proposal and sign the Consent Form, which should then be returned to EH&S at ehs@fau.edu.

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- 5.1.3 Any changes in tasks require resubmission of the Minors in Research Environments Proposal Form, with signatures (Principal Investigator/Supervisor and Parent/Guardian) to EH&S.
- 5.1.4 Minors working as volunteers must also comply fully with the [FAU University Policy on Volunteers](#).
- 5.1.5 Minors who participated in a previously approved official FAU program are not permitted to access FAU research facilities for any reason unless they have current approval. Approvals are based on specific projects and their timeframes.

5.2 Required Training and Medical Surveillance Participation

- 5.2.1 Required training and medical surveillance participation will be completed by the minor prior to beginning work.
- 5.2.2 Minors must complete all relevant safety training for the proposed work activities (biological, chemical, animal, field safety, snorkeling, diving). The supervisor will provide additional relevant instruction to the minor on all hazards and emergency procedures specific to their assigned tasks and environment.
- 5.2.3 Participation in one or more of the FAU medical surveillance programs may be required, depending on the specific hazards associated with the laboratory or work. Medical surveillance evaluations that may be required include, but are not limited to:
 - 5.2.3.1 Bloodborne pathogens (medical clearance and offering hepatitis B vaccine)
 - 5.2.3.2 Respiratory protection (medical clearance and fit testing)
 - 5.2.3.3 Animal contact (medical clearance and offering appropriate vaccines)

If medical surveillance is required for the work, the PI will contact EH&S for proper instructions and forms to provide to the minor to attend medical screening with their parent/guardian and the pediatrician of their choosing.

5.3 Emergency Procedures

- 5.3.1 Supervisors must ensure all emergency preparedness measures are completed.
- 5.3.2 Minors and their parent/guardians must be informed of emergency procedures prior to participation.
- 5.3.3 In an emergency, the supervisor will ensure the safety of minors.
- 5.3.4 Emergency contact information for the minor and their parent/guardian must always be immediately accessible.
- 5.3.5 All incidents, injuries, or near-misses involving minors must be reported immediately to EH&S and the department head, and the appropriate university reporting forms must be completed without delay.
- 5.3.6 Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the minor receives prompt medical evaluation, if necessary.

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6. ENFORCEMENT

The presence of minors in research environments noncompliant with this policy will be reported to unit leadership and Human Resources for further action.

The lab owner must immediately remove the minor from the applicable work area until corrective actions are complete.

Failure to comply with this policy can lead to consequences including immediate removal of the minor from the research environment; restrictions on future research (loss of laboratory privileges or denial of future requests to host minors); investigations by law enforcement; and administrative action up to and including termination.

Minor students involved in non-compliant actions may face permanent removal from work in FAU research environments and/or academic disciplinary action.

7. RELATED INFORMATION:

- Minors Research Proposal and Consent Form

Approved and issued by order of:

Wendy Ash Graves, MBA, CSP
Director, Environmental Health and Safety

DATE: 05/14/2026

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| Last Revision Date | 05/14/2026 |
| Last Revision By | W. Ash Graves |
| New Revision Due | 05/14/2031 |
| Review Frequency | 5 years |
| Version | 4 |

8. RECORD OF CHANGES/STATUS CONTROL

| Version | Date | Summary of Changes | Reviewed By |
|----------------|-------------|---|---|
| 4 | Draft | Updated to include Diving and Boating research activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• W. Ash Graves• F. Novembre |