

Handbook of Operating Procedures

CHILDREN AT WORK

A. Purpose

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) has a responsibility for, and is committed to, promoting the well-being and safety of students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors of all ages. To ensure the safety of children and to maintain consistent high quality service to our constituents, this policy outlines the circumstances under which it may be appropriate for employees to bring children to campus during working hours when the children not participating in a UTRGV-sponsored child-care, educational, or research program.

B. Persons Affected

This policy applies to all UTRGV employees, including faculty members, appointed at UTRGV.

C. Policy

1. While UTRGV strives to be a family-friendly environment, the practice of bringing children into the workplace on a continuous or regular basis is prohibited. UTRGV recognizes, however, that an employee may have occasional need to bring children to the campus for brief periods of time while the employee is working, particularly after regular business hours or on weekends. In brief and exceptional circumstances, and with the understanding that UTRGV cannot be responsible for the safety of children not participating in university-related activities, an employee may bring a child/children to campus, provided the employee has obtained the supervisor's prior documented approval and all of the following requirements are met:
 - a. Children must be visibly supervised by an adult at all times. An employee who brings a child to campus is solely responsible for the care of the child and may not have any student or another employee supervise the child.
 - b. Children may be brought to work areas at times outside of regular work hours (i.e., on weekends, after 5 p.m. or before 8 a.m., or UTRGV holidays). Occasional visits of short duration during regular work hours are acceptable.
 - c. Children should not be allowed to disturb others or enter areas where other employees or students are working.
 - d. Any request that a child be removed from the work area by the employee's supervisor must be honored, even if prior approval was obtained.
 - e. Unaccompanied children may not enter or be allowed to visit areas that would endanger their safety or the safety of others. Children may not linger or stay in areas where hazardous equipment, animals, radiation sources, hazardous chemicals, or biological

agents are used or stored; in certain athletics facilities (e.g., training rooms, swimming pools); or areas where police work or facilities maintenance is being performed. Children are prohibited from laboratories, workshops, and other areas where significant potential safety hazards exist, where strict safety precautions are required, or where the presence of children may endanger their safety or the safety of others.

- f. Children may not visit clinical work areas or places where patients are seen, unless the child or supervising adult is being seen as a patient.
2. This policy is not intended to be an endorsement of children being in the workplace due to circumstances such as school vacations, illness, holidays, disrupted child-care arrangements, or similar situations. All employees are expected to make appropriate childcare arrangements and to request appropriate leave to address emergency childcare needs. Employees should use vacation leave, sick leave, or other appropriate leave accruals to cover caring for an ill child or for any other time taken from work for child-related reasons.
3. By bringing a child to campus, an employee is indicating an understanding that the child may be exposed to hazards or risks (including without limitation accidents or loss or destruction of property) which may result in illness, personal injury, or death, and also an acceptance of financial responsibility for damage to any personal property or UTRGV property resulting from the child's actions.
4. This policy does not apply to UTRGV programs that involve children, such as designated research with children serving as research subjects, or UTRGV-supported events at which attendance of children may be expected (e.g., musical performances, sporting events, art exhibitions, summer camps, etc.)

D. Procedures

1. Supervisors may permit an employee to bring a child to the workplace only under exceptional circumstances when the visit will not be unduly disruptive to UTRGV operations.
2. Employees must always initially seek to address an emergency childcare need by requesting permission from their supervisor to take leave prior to presenting a request for a child to visit the worksite during working hours.
3. A supervisor can approve a child to visit the worksite only when the employee's presence is necessary for UTRGV business that would otherwise be adversely impacted by the employee's absence, and the employee has exhausted all reasonable alternatives that would result in the child being supervised by another person elsewhere.
4. Children are not permitted at work under the following circumstances:
 - a. When a child has an illness that prevents, or would prevent, him or her from being accepted by a regular daycare provider or school.

- b. When the child is unduly disruptive to employees, students, or any other UTRGV constituent engaged in UTRGV business.
- c. When requests are made regularly, such as based on a weekly or monthly pattern, rather than infrequently, on an exception basis.

E. Definitions

- 1. Child or Children – for purposes of this policy, person(s) under the age of 18 neither employed by UTRGV nor an approved participant in a UTRGV-supported educational, research, or child-care program.

F. Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

Not applicable.

G. Dates Reviewed or Amended

Reviewed and amended (non-substantive: updated responsible executive) - May 9, 2022.