

Best Practices for Photographing Minors at Events

Guidance for Ethical and Legal Considerations

Our dedicated Extension employees and volunteers are out in their communities every day, hosting incredible events that connect people with nature, agriculture, science, and community health initiatives. These experiences bring joy and learning to audiences of all ages. Our employees and volunteers are eager to share those moments with their local partners to promote and share the educational impact of these interactive experiences. To do that, AgriLife Extension employees and volunteers need a safe, respectful way to capture and share photos and videos of the youth they engage with, ensuring we highlight the impact of their work while protecting the privacy of the young individuals involved.

Photographing minors at events for interpretation and promotional purposes requires careful consideration of ethical and legal implications. As an employee or volunteer with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, it is essential to understand the best practices for obtaining and using photographs of minors for interpretation and promotion. This document provides guidance on obtaining consent, addressing privacy concerns, and appropriate usage of photographs.

Obtaining Consent

Obtaining consent is a fundamental aspect of photographing minors. Consent ensures that guardians are aware of and agree to the photographing of their children. Some best practices include:

Written Consent

Obtain written consent from parents or guardians before or during the event. The consent form should outline the purpose of the photographs and how they will be used.

The Texas 4-H Youth Development Program has a Media/Photograph Release form that can be used.

Verbal Consent

In situations where written consent may not be feasible, obtain verbal consent from parents or guardians and verbal assent from the minor. It is recommended to document the verbal consent process, noting the date, time, and the person who provided consent.

Event Registration

Include photograph/media consent forms into the event registration process when possible. This ensures that all participants are aware of the photography policies and can provide consent in advance.

Public Consent Signs

Post signs at the entrance to the event stating that photographs and videos will be taken and may be used for promotional or educational purposes. Example wording: “Photographs and video may be taken at this event for educational and promotional purposes. If you prefer not to be included in media, please notify event staff.”

Privacy Considerations

Limit Identifiable Information

Avoid associating images of minors with personal identifiers such as names, addresses, or contact details to protect their privacy. Be aware of name tags being photographed.

Blur Faces or Crop Images

In cases where consent is not obtainable, consider blurring faces or cropping the photo to remove the face.

Photograph Groups or Utilize Wide Shots

Focus on photographing groups, rather than individuals. Capturing wide shots and group photographs that do not focus on specific individuals reduces the likelihood of identifying specific individuals.

You may also ask for verbal agreement before taking the photo such as saying, “We’d like to include a group photo for our program’s newsletter. If anyone prefers not to be included, please step aside.”

Photograph from Behind

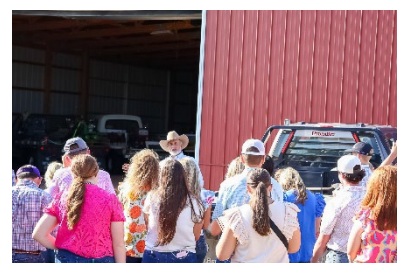
Taking photos from behind the group can be an effective way to capture the event where faces are naturally obscured.

Taking photos as a silhouette or over-the-shoulder where the participant has their back to the camera also naturally obscure the individuals’ faces.

Use Props and Backdrops

If possible, utilize props or backdrops that obscure or block the individuals’ faces.

Example of photos of minors using best practices



Example of photos of minors using best practices, continued



Photograph Hands-On Activities

Show youth engaged in an activity by focusing on their hands working on a project rather than including their face in the photo.

Use Creative Framing

Capture photos that emphasize the action, such as a close-up of a project, a group working together, or an award being handed over.

Appropriate Usage

Limit Usage

Use photographs and videos only for the purposes stated in the consent form.

Cultural Sensitivity

Be mindful of cultural norms and values when selecting and displaying images to ensure they are respectful and appropriate.

Secure Storage

Store photographs and videos securely, restricting access to authorized individuals only to prevent unauthorized use or distribution. Ensure that consent documents are stored with the photos for future reference.

If Consent is Not Provided or Denied

If consent for photos has not been obtained or has been denied, this does not preclude a minor from participating in the event. All efforts should be made not to include those individuals in any photographs or videos. If a photograph or video includes any individual without consent, the image or video should not be saved, or it can be edited to remove identifiable information or blur or crop faces.

Other practices as mentioned above (such as photographing from behind, focusing on their hands, or large group shots from a distance) are methods that can be used to ensure privacy of minors.

Conclusion

Photographing minors at events requires a careful balance of ethical and legal considerations. By obtaining consent, prioritizing privacy, and ensuring appropriate usage, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service can responsibly photograph minors.