LEHIGH VALLEY AMATEUR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, INC.
YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

PURPOSE
This policy is intended:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for youth (persons under the age of 18) who are interested in astronomy to pursue that interest.
- To protect Lehigh Valley Amateur Astronomical Society, Inc. (the Society) and its members from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.
- To provide a mechanism to deal with reported concerns and subsequent actions.

APPLICABILITY
This policy applies to all members of the Society. This policy does not supersede the Youth Protection Policies of outside youth groups and other organizations when they are interacting with members of the Society. This policy is meant to augment other organization’s policies.

SCOPE
This policy covers all functions held by the Society at its permanent facilities, as well as all field trips formally organized and/or promoted by the Society.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND SPECIFIC POLICIES
Society members will not verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse children who are members and guests of the Society.

Society members will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care while on Society property.

Members who are responsible for youth guests will provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.

Society members will, to the extent permitted by the circumstances of astronomical activities, avoid situations while on Society property where they would be alone with a single unrelated child and cannot be observed or monitored by others in a reasonable manner.

While on Society property, members with responsibilities for youth are expected to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, any situation in which they could be alone or out of sight of others, with a single unrelated child. This is to protect:
• children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur.
• members and the Society against false accusations of child abuse.

Members will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children from touching others in an inappropriate manner.

Profanity, inappropriate language, or jokes, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children or parents are prohibited.

Members will not share inappropriate details of their personal life or ask children to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal, or electronic.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Society members are required to report any suspicious situation that intimates that child abuse may have occurred on Society property and/or during a Society event. Such report shall be made to the Director or designee immediately and in no case more than 24 hours after such occurrence.

Any report of child abuse made by a child about their care on Society property and/or during a Society event by a parent, guardian, youth, adult, or Society member, despite how unlikely such report may seem, must be relayed to the Director or designee immediately and in no case more than 24 hours after such occurrence.

The Director or designee shall, as required by law, report the situation to the local authorities for investigation.

OUTSIDE GROUPS USING SOCIETY FACILITIES

All leaders, both adults and leaders under the age of 18, of non-Society children and youth groups using Society facilities are expected to adhere to this policy in addition to their own. All leaders of Outside Groups must review this policy and sign the Outside Group Leaders Release Form to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy.

Given the nature of the outside groups that use Society facilities, the Society will not perform background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records for such groups. Outside groups are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.