



Child Abuse Prevention Policies (For YMCA Staff and Volunteers)

Our child abuse prevention policies promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth, staff, and volunteers.

I. General Policies

1. To protect YMCA staff, volunteers and youth, staff/volunteers are not to be alone with a single child (unless approved) where he or she cannot be observed by others.
2. In situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, such as tutoring and private coaching sessions, staff and volunteers should observe the following policies to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:
 - When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others.
 - Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes.
 - If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
 - Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.
 - Supervisors must keep a schedule of private tutoring and coaching sessions, which should include times, youth involved, and location of sessions.
 - Staff/Volunteers must have supervisor approval for any tutoring or private coaching sessions.
 - Tutoring and coaching sessions with our organization's youth may not occur outside of the organization.
3. Staff/Volunteers will never leave a child unsupervised.
4. Restroom supervision: Staff/Volunteers will make sure the restroom is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff/volunteer will monitor the restroom area while it is being occupied by children. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff (not being alone with a child). If staff is assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open. The "rule of three" will be followed (i.e. two children and one staff; two staff and one child; or a staff, child, and volunteer) at all times.
5. Staff/Volunteers will conduct or supervise private activities in pairs: diapering, putting on bathing suits, taking showers, and so on. When this is not feasible, staff will be positioned so that they are visible to others. Staff should ensure that participants are not 1:1 with other participants in changing stalls or showers.
6. Staff/Volunteers will take note of any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, and all symptoms or issues that are visible on a child. Questions or comments will be addressed to the parent or child in a non-threatening way. If a child states that the parent caused an injury, staff/volunteer will contact program director immediately. Staff/Volunteers will document any questionable marks or responses.

7. Staff/Volunteers will respond to children in a respectful manner and consideration and treat all children equally, regardless of sex, race, religion, culture, economic level of the family, or disability.
8. Staff/Volunteers may not transport children in their own vehicles or allow youth participants old enough to drive to transport younger children in the program.
9. Staff/Volunteers may not be alone with children they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, driving or riding in cars, and inviting children to their homes. Any exceptions require written documentation and prior administrator approval.
10. The YMCA prohibits the access, display, production, possession, or distribution of pornography on the YMCA's property or equipment or during any YMCA associated activity
11. Staff/Volunteers will not give excessive gifts (e.g., TV, video games, jewelry) to youth.
12. Staff/Volunteers may not date program participants who are under the age of 18.
13. Under no circumstances will staff/volunteers release children in child programs (afterschool, camp, drop-in childcare, and preschool) to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian (written parent authorization on file with the YMCA).
14. Staff/Volunteers are to report to a supervisor any observation or suspicion of another staff or volunteer in violation of these policies.
15. Staff/Volunteers will not abuse children in any way, including:
 - Physical Abuse — striking, spanking, shaking, slapping
 - Verbal Abuse — humiliating, degrading, threatening
 - Sexual Abuse — touching or speaking inappropriately
 - Mental Abuse — shaming, withholding kindness, being cruel
 - Neglect — withholding food, water, or basic care
16. We do not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth.
17. There are occasions in which staff/volunteers will need to use official personal or YMCA issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of personal or YMCA-issued electronic communication devices include:
 - Field Trips
 - Off-site Programs
 - Emergencies
18. While assigned to work with youth, staff/volunteers are not permitted to use electronic communication devices except during approved breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with youth is strictly prohibited regardless of the type of device used and whether for business or personal reasons. Staff/Volunteers need to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy.
19. Staff/volunteers shall not withhold as punishment or require as punishment any physical activity, such as running laps and doing push-ups.
20. Staff/volunteers will immediately notify their appropriate Human Resource Manager or hrdept@ymcacharlotte.org if they are arrested or convicted of a crime involving children while they are employed by the organization.

II. Bullying

We do not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

1. **Physical bullying** – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
2. **Verbal bullying** – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
3. **Nonverbal or relational bullying** – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
4. **Cyberbullying** – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
 - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
 - Posting sensitive, private information about another person
 - Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
 - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group
5. **Hazing** – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
6. **Sexualized bullying** – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.
7. **Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying**– this policy applies to all youth, staff and volunteers. Staff/Volunteers must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism. Staff/Volunteers will have age-appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint is used only in predetermined situations (when necessary to protect the child or other children from harm), administered only in a prescribed manner, and must be documented in writing post incident.

III. Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate Physical Contact

The YMCA encourages appropriate physical contact with youth and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff towards youth in YMCA programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/volunteer experience.

1. Staff/Volunteers will respect children's rights not to be touched or looked at in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Other than diapering, children are not to be touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
2. Staff/Volunteers will refrain from intimate displays of affection in the presence of children, parents, and staff/volunteers.
3. The YMCA's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Verbal praise • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated area • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback/shoulder rides • Tickling • Allowing a youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg • Any type of massage given by or to a youth • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the staff or volunteer • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

IV. Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

1. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to youth in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, harassing or humiliating.
2. Staff and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youth, parents, staff or volunteers. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities, intimate details of one’s personal life in the presence of children, parents, volunteers or staff.
3. The YMCA’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Inappropriate jokes • Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers • Secrets • Cursing/profanity • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth • Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family

V. Governing Electronic Communication between Staff and Youth

1. For the protection of YMCA youth, staff, and volunteers, any private electronic communication between staff and youth, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. - is prohibited except when directed to do so by a supervisor to conduct official business on behalf of the YMCA of Greater Charlotte. Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact (via voice, text, or pictures/video) youth for personal and/or inappropriate reasons shall be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment/volunteer experience.
2. All communication between staff and youth must be transparent. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication.

Appropriate Electronic Communication	Inappropriate Electronic Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth’s parent • Communicating with youth through “organization group pages” on Facebook or other approved public forums • “Private” profiles for staff and volunteers which youth cannot access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments • Sexually oriented conversations • Private messages between staff and volunteers with youth • Posting pictures of organization participants on social media sites • Posting inappropriate comments on pictures • “Friending” participants on social networking sites • Taking pictures of participants • Use of video game communication between staff and participant

In addition, provide this information to your participants’ parents so that they know what is appropriate and inappropriate from your staff.

The YMCA of Greater Charlotte annually reviews all youth abuse prevention policies for relevance, utility and necessity, and modifies or rescinds as appropriate.

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures

Every staff member and volunteer has a legal and ethical duty to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse, molestation, neglect, or sexual misconduct to County Department of Social Services (DSS). Suspicion means that it is understandable for a person to entertain such suspicion, drawing when appropriate on his or her training and experience to suspect abuse. The child protective agency will determine the accuracy of the report.

Types of abuse:

- **Physical** - An injury or pattern of injuries that happens to a child that is not accidental. These may include burns, bruises, bites, welts, broken bones, strangulation or even death.
- **Neglect** - Neglect occurs when adults responsible for the well being of a child fail to provide for or protect the child. Neglect may include not giving food, clothing or shelter; failing to keep children clean; lack of supervision; and withholding medical care.
- **Emotional** - Any chronic and persistent act by an adult that endangers the mental health or emotional development of a child, including rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant criticism, making mean remarks, insulting and giving little or no love, guidance or support.
- **Sexual** - Sexual abuse is the sexual assault or sexual exploitation of children. Sexual abuse may consist of numerous acts over a long period or a single incident. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest, sodomy, fondling, exposing oneself, oral copulation, and penetration of genital or anal openings as well as forcing children to view or appear in pornography. The perpetrator keeps the child from disclosing through intimidation, threats or rewards.

In the event that there is a suspicion of abuse in any form (physical, neglect, emotional, or sexual) with a child at the YMCA or participant in one of our programs, the YMCA of Greater Charlotte will take immediate action as follows:

1. If a staff/volunteer member suspects or knows of abuse, they are to immediately report to their supervisor or directly to DSS. Suspected abuse can be observed, told or overheard. The staff member should be careful to only listen to the child and not make him/her feel questioned or interrogated. If you feel that the child is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
2. The supervisor and staff member will privately meet with the child. The entire conversation will be documented and signed off by all staff involved. Supervisor reinforces to the staff the importance of confidentiality for the safety of all involved.
3. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Our organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated.
4. The supervisor will contact Christy Priester*, Association Risk Manager, at 704-650-8647* to inform her of the concern. If necessary, Christy Priester will help guide staff in next steps of reporting to DSS** in the county which the child lives. For example, the YMCA the child is attending is in Mecklenburg County, however, the child lives in Iredell County then we must contact Iredell County.
5. Director will need to have the following information prepared prior to call to DSS:
 - Child's name and date of birth
 - Parent's name and date of birth (if accessible)
 - Does the child live with both parents?
 - Home address and telephone number
 - How many total children that live in the home (if accessible)?
 - Parent's employer (if accessible)
 - Do we feel the child is in immediate danger?

6. If any staff member or volunteer is named in a suspected case, YMCA leadership will suspend their employment and/or volunteer responsibilities immediately during the investigation process.
7. Supervisor will follow-up with staff involved. If you have not heard from your supervisor within 24 hours about the action that has been taken, contact DSS or Christy Priester directly. Christy can also work with staff to determine if the incident is reportable to DSS. If Christy Priester is not available, contact Kristen Shaver, Association Director of Program Safety, at 704-716-6264.
8. If a resource is needed for the family affected, contact the Mental Health First Aid (Behavioral Health Helpline), at 704-444-2400.
9. If any staff member, volunteer or youth needs a contact for a confidential consultation for abuse prevention questions or issues, contact the Praesidium YMCA Anonymous Helpline, at 855-347-0751.

****Contact numbers for DSS:**

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| • <i>Iredell County Department of Social Services</i> | <i>704-873-5631</i> |
| • <i>Lincoln County Department of Social Services</i> | <i>704-732-0738</i> |
| • <i>Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services</i> | <i>980-31-HELPS (43577)</i> |
| • <i>Union County Department of Social Services</i> | <i>704-296-4320</i> |
| • <i>Wilkes County Department of Social Services</i> | <i>336-651-7400</i> |
| • <i>York County Department of Social Services</i> | <i>800-922-2504</i> |

Allegations of Abuse and Cooperation with Authorities

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. The YMCA will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated.

Investigation Statement

The YMCA cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any staff or volunteer shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.



Child Abuse Prevention Policies & Reporting Guidelines

I have read and fully understand that I have a legal and ethical duty to report suspected mistreatment or abuse of youth. No type of abuse will be tolerated and may be cause for immediate termination. We are committed to providing all youth with a safe environment. I also fully understand and agree to comply with the YMCA of Greater Charlotte's **Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Reporting Procedures.**

Employee /Volunteer Signature Print Name Date

I understand that any violation of the **Child Abuse Prevention Policy** may result in immediate termination of my employment/volunteer experience.

Employee/Volunteer Signature Print Name Date

Employee/Volunteer Home Branch Employee/Volunteer Primary Position

I understand that this completes my In-person Child Abuse Prevention requirement. **I agree to complete my online Child Abuse Prevention from Praesidium/Armatus System prior to my first day of work and annually thereafter.**

Employee/Volunteer Signature

Employee's Supervisor/
BSS Instructor Signature Print Name Date

*Staff Only: This form must be signed and given to the Safety Training Coordinator within 10 business days of completion

**Employee/Volunteers may keep the Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Reporting Guidelines document