CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

I understand that any violation of the Child Protection Code of Conduct may result in discipline, up to and including termination. I also understand that this document is not exhaustive and other forms of misconduct may result in discipline. In fact, my relationship with the Y is at will and can be terminated by either party at any time for any or no reason.

The Y will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of children in its programs.  Any mistreatment or abuse by a staff member or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service.

In addition, the Y will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child by another child, including 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. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This prohibition applies to all children, staff, and volunteers.

The Y empowers parents. We desire that, if a parent/guardian observes violations of these procedures or any other red flags, that the parent/guardian bring their concerns to the site leadership. If they feel their concerns are not addressed appropriately, we ask them to bring their concern to the attention of the branch Executive Director. Staff shall respond to parents, children and each other with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, disability, color, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

Appropriate Physical Interactions, Verbal Interactions and Communication

The Y’s physical contact procedures promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children and staff.   The Y encourages appropriate physical contact with children, including between children, and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact.  Any inappropriate physical contact by staff towards children in the YMCA’s programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.  Appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions at the Y are:

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| ***Appropriate Physical Interactions*** | ***Inappropriate Physical Interactions*** |
| * Side hugs * Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” 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) | * Full-frontal hugs * Kisses * Showing affection in isolated area * Lap sitting * Wrestling * Piggyback rides * Tickling * Allowing a child to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg * Any type of massage given by or to a child * Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or the staff or volunteer * Compliments relating to physique or body development * Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas, i.e. any area covered by a bathing suit |

Staff shall also refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children, parents, and staff.

Child-to-child sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions. All of these activities are prohibited at the Y.

Furthermore, staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to a child in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.  Staff and volunteers shall not initiate sexually oriented conversations with children.  Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with children.  Appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions at the Y are:

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| ***Appropriate Verbal Interactions*** | ***Inappropriate Verbal Interactions*** |
| * Positive reinforcement * Appropriate jokes * Encouragement * Praise | * Name-calling * Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving child in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers * Secrets * Cursing * Off-color or sexual jokes * Shaming * Belittling * Derogatory remarks * Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate child * Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family |

Regarding employee e-mail communication with children, e-mails with YMCA children shall be from Y e-mail accounts.

* Staff are not permitted to share any personal e-mail address or instant message name or nickname with children. Employees may neither initiate nor respond to e-mail or instant message communication from child while using any non-Y (*i.e.*, personal) connection to the Internet.
* Personal e-mail communication **from** children (e.g., sharing emotional issues, seeking more than a client relationship with Y staff, etc.) shall be forwarded to the employee’s department director/supervisor and the children’s parents or guardians shall be notified.

Staff are prohibited from initiating or receiving personal phone calls or texts with children who are in or whom they have met through Y programming. A call/text is considered personal if it does not involve Y-specific subject matter. (See above.) Staff members are required to report incoming, personal calls to their supervisor immediately.

Any communication with children involved in any Y-affiliated activity using social media shall use Y-sponsored or Y-approved sites.  No personal blog or social networking website may be used. Any staff profile or blog shall be private and inaccessible to children; the site cannot have pictures or make references to specific children. Employees with profiles on social networking sites may neither request to be friends with nor accept as a friend a child.

Refer to the YMCA’s Technology Standard Operating Procedures for information about permissible e-mail, phone, and social media communications.

Additional Procedures and Prohibitions that Protect Children

If an employee meets a child through a Y program, that relationship needs to stay within the Y. Employees are not to have personal contact with a child they have met in the Y outside the Y. An example of this prohibition is, if a member asks an employee to come to their home to babysit, the employee shall decline. Any relationships that were in existence before the employee began working at the Y need to be communicated with and approved by a supervisor and documented.

In addition to the above, the Y requires the following staff conduct and prohibitions:

* Staff members shall never leave a child unsupervised. Staff are expected to maintain sight and sound supervision of all children in their care at all times.
* At no time during a Y program may a staff member be alone with a single child where others cannot observe him/her. As staff members supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other staff can see them. Even under the following situations, you still may not be alone with a child: counseling and disciplining a child, restroom use/changing clothes, comforting a sick or injured child, or administering First Aid.
* Staff members shall not abuse or neglect children. Staff shall use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism. Staff shall have age-appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint is used on in pre-determined situations (necessary to protect the child or other children from harm) and is only administered in the prescribed manner and shall be documented in writing. The following may be examples of abuse and neglect:
  + Physical abuse: strike, spank, shake, slap.
  + Verbal abuse: humiliate, degrade, threaten, yell.
  + Sexual abuse: inappropriate touch or verbal exchange.
  + Mental abuse: shaming, withholding love, cruelty.
  + Neglect: withholding food, water, basic care, etc.
* Staff members shall respect children’s rights to not be touched 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.
* During restroom supervision, staff shall ensure that suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. If you are taking a child of the opposite sex to the bathroom, have the child go in and check to see if others are in the restroom. Stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff (not being alone with a child). Doors to individual “stalls” should be closed during use to ensure children’ privacy. If the staff member cannot see the stall doors due to the design of the facility, children shall be sent into the restroom one at a time. If a younger child requires assistance, doors to the facility shall remain open and a second Y staff person is present.
* Staff shall observe the health of each child, each day, as they enter the program, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. Questions or comments shall be addressed with the parent or child in a non-threatening way. Any questionable marks or responses shall be documented and given to the program director.
* Smoking or using tobacco in the presence of children or parents during work hours is prohibited.
* Staff are not to transport children in their own personal vehicles except in cases of emergency and with the approval of administration.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

In the event that there is an accusation of child abuse, even if it occurred off Y property, the Y will take prompt and immediate action.

If staff witness child on child abuse, staff shall:

* Immediately separate them and calmly explain that the behavior is not allowed.
* Notify their supervisor immediately. In some cases, depending on the severity or frequency of this behavior, discipline shall follow. And, depending on the situation, the supervisor and their staff may need to also report this to CPS or the police.

If staff witness staff on child abuse, staff shall:

* Interrupt the wrong behavior.
* Redirect those involved, showing the staff and child the right behavior or recommending a new, appropriate activity.
* Report the incident to your supervisor. Staff also have the option of reporting misconduct on the Y’s confidential site Ethics Point.

At first report or probable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred, even outside the YMCA by a child’s caregiver or others, the staff shall report the incident to the program director. Staff shall complete an online incident report **in detail** within 24 hours of first report or suspicion of abuse. In addition to an internal report, staff are also expected to report this to the appropriate authorities at Child Protective Services, also within 24 hours, and cooperate to the extent of the law with any legal authority involved.

The parents or guardian of the child(ren) involved in the alleged incident shall be promptly notified by program leadership unless the allegation is directed at the parent or guardian.

If the suspected or reported child abuse allegation involves a staff, the Y may take action even when the alleged incident takes place away from the Y. Reinstatement of the employed staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the person(s) named in #1 above.

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with children or allegations of abuse shall be taken seriously. The Y will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated. The Y cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any staff or volunteer is expected to cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the Y or persons given investigative authority by the Y. All Y staff shall be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in handling of this information. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.

Staff Training on Child Abuse Prevention

The YMCA is committed to preventing child abuse at the YMCA!

All YMCA staff and volunteers are assigned training on child abuse prevention upon hire and again annually. In addition, programs that serve children regularly receive more frequent re-training on child abuse prevention.