



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# 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.**

## Overview

The YMCA requires all YMCA employees and volunteers to act in accordance with the following Child Protection Procedures. The YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of children in its programs or in its employment. The YMCA abides by the definition of children as persons under 18 years of age. Any mistreatment or abuse of a child by a staff or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service.

The YMCA will also not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child by another child, including any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying. YMCA staff and volunteers shall take the necessary steps to eliminate and respond to such behavior and are expected to take action in accordance with the reporting instructions below.

The YMCA requires YMCA staff and volunteers to take prompt and immediate action in accordance with the below Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Procedures in the event of observation, suspicion or accusation of child abuse, even if it occurred off Y property.

The YMCA 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 branch/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/guardians, 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.

## Child Protection Procedures

- Staff and volunteers are expected to maintain sight and sound supervision of all children in their care at all times; staff shall never leave a child unsupervised. Besides children in YMCA programs that YMCA staff have a duty to supervise, YMCA staff and volunteers shall also ensure the safety of all YMCA children. If, at the conclusion of branch hours or of an event offsite, a YMCA child's parent/guardian does not appear, YMCA staff and volunteers shall remain with the child until the child's parent/guardian arrives. If another adult or child is not present, the YMCA staff or volunteer shall call another staff/volunteer/adult and engage them in conversation until the parent/guardian arrives.
- Staff and volunteers shall ensure that, at a minimum, two staff are present with one child or one staff is present with two children. Staff and volunteers may NEVER be alone with a child where others cannot observe him/her.
  - As staff supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other staff can see them.

- Even under the following situations, staff and volunteers 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.
- For adult staff working with staff that are children, adult staff may not also be alone with staff that are children where others cannot observe him/her. Sometimes this may be unavoidable, like in a restroom or locker room. The expectation is that the adult staff “take care of business” as quickly as possible and leave the room.
- If a staff or volunteer meets a child at the YMCA, that relationship needs to stay within the YMCA. Staff and volunteers may not have personal, one-on-one contact with a child they have met in the YMCA outside the YMCA. An example of this prohibition for member children is, if a member asks staff to come to their home to babysit, staff shall decline. An example of this prohibition for staff that are children is adult staff shall not go to lunch one-on-one with a staff that is a child. Any relationships that were in existence before staff and volunteers began working at the YMCA need to be communicated with and approved by a supervisor and documented.
- Staff and volunteers shall use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement. Staff and volunteers shall abide by the YMCA’s Appropriate Verbal Interaction Procedures.
- Staff and volunteers shall have age-appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Staff and volunteers shall not abuse or neglect children nor use negative discipline techniques, including competition, comparison, and criticism. Abuse and neglect include, but is not limited to:
  - Physical abuse: striking, spanking, shaking, slapping.
  - Verbal abuse: humiliation, degradation, threatening, yelling.
  - Sexual abuse: inappropriate touching or verbal interactions.
  - Emotional abuse: shaming, withholding love, cruelty.
  - Neglect: withholding food, water, basic care, etc.

Physical restraint is used by staff only 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. See your department manual for more information.

- Staff and volunteers shall respect children’s rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say “no.” Staff and volunteers shall abide by the YMCA’s Appropriate Physical Interaction Procedures. Other than diapering and limited aquatic activities, children are not to be touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
- During restroom supervision, staff and volunteers shall ensure that suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. If staff and volunteers are taking children of the opposite sex to the bathroom, have a 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 and volunteers (not being alone with a child). Doors to individual “stalls” should be closed during use to ensure children’s privacy. If the staff and volunteer 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 YMCA staff person or volunteer is present to observe the first staff person.
- Regarding media/images/video/social media, staff and volunteers shall refrain from taking, creating, distributing, or otherwise using images/photography or video of YMCA children, or engage in posting to social media unless they have the approval of administration.
- Staff shall observe the health of each child, each day, as they enter a YMCA program, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. Questions or comments shall be addressed to the parent/guardian or child in a non-threatening way. Any questionable marks or responses shall be documented and discussed with the program director.

- Staff and volunteers are only permitted to transport YMCA children in YMCA approved vehicles and buses. Staff and volunteers are not to transport children in their own personal vehicles except in the very rare case of an emergency and with the approval of administration. Although not preferred, it is permissible for staff that are children to be transported by other staff in personal vehicles, as long as the children that are staff are not alone with adult staff.
- The YMCA strongly encourages employees and volunteers to refrain from exchanging gifts with children. Nonetheless, if YMCA staff and volunteers desire to give gifts to children, staff and volunteers shall submit the request to a supervisor prior to making a purchase for their approval, the parents/guardians of the children must be notified about the gift item and why the children are receiving the gift, and the staff and volunteers shall communicate that the gift is given on behalf of the YMCA, not an individual staff or volunteer. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from giving gifts to an individual child except when the gift is authorized by a supervisor and given to all consumers (e.g., like for each child on their birthday).
- All YMCA staff and volunteers shall complete 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. The YMCA is committed to preventing child abuse at the YMCA and in our community!

### Appropriate Physical Interaction Procedures

The YMCA’s physical interaction procedures promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children and staff. The YMCA encourages appropriate physical interactions with children and prohibits inappropriate physical interactions. Any inappropriate physical interaction by staff or volunteers towards children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/volunteering.

- Appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions at the YMCA are:

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

- Staff and volunteers shall also refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children, parents/guardians, and other staff and volunteers.
- In YMCA programs in which YMCA staff provide supervision and leadership, children are also expected to engage in Appropriate Physical Interactions with other children. See your department manual for more information.

### Appropriate Verbal Interaction Procedures

The YMCA’s verbal interaction procedures also promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children and staff. The YMCA encourages appropriate verbal interactions with children and prohibits inappropriate verbal

interactions. Any inappropriate verbal interaction by staff or volunteers towards children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/volunteering.

- Appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions at the YMCA are:

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

- In summary, 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. In addition, staff and volunteers shall not initiate sexually oriented conversations nor discuss their own sexual activities with children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment.

### **Appropriate Electronic Communication Procedures**

The YMCA’s electronic communication procedures align with the YMCA’s Appropriate Verbal Interaction Procedures as well as abide by the YMCA’s Child Protection Procedure to NEVER be alone with a child. Any inappropriate electronic communication by staff or volunteers towards children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/volunteering.

- Staff and volunteers shall utilize YMCA e-mails only with children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment. When communicating with children, group e-mails are preferred. Staff are not permitted to share nor utilize any personal e-mail address with children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment; however, it is permissible for a YMCA adult staff not equipped with a YMCA e-mail to e-mail a child in the YMCA’s employment, but only when it is about YMCA-specific subject matter. Again, group e-mails are preferred. Personal e-mail communication **from** children (e.g., sharing emotional issues, seeking more than a client relationship with YMCA staff, etc.) shall be forwarded to the employee’s department supervisor and the children’s parents/guardians shall be notified.
- Staff and volunteers shall ensure phone calls and texts with children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment involve YMCA subject matter only. Group texts are preferred. Staff are prohibited from initiating or receiving personal phone calls or texts with children who are in or whom they have met through the YMCA. A call/text is considered personal if it does not involve YMCA-specific subject matter. Staff members are required to report incoming, personal calls to their supervisor immediately. See your department manual for more information about permitted uses of phone and text. Staff that are children are not permitted to utilize their personal phone number to communicate with YMCA members and participants, adults and children.
- Staff and volunteers shall utilize YMCA-sponsored or YMCA-approved social media sites for communications with children in the YMCA’s programs and children in the YMCA’s employment. No personal blog or social networking website may be used for any YMCA communications. Any staff profile or blog must be private and inaccessible to children if inappropriate posts exist. If staff social media profiles are in keeping with the YMCA’s values and focus on a positive social media presence, YMCA children are permitted to follow the

personal social media account. Staff are permitted to follow the social media accounts of children in the YMCA's programs and children in the YMCA's employment. Staff and volunteers are NOT permitted to direct message or otherwise communicate on personal social media with children in the YMCA's programs and membership, and adult staff are not permitted to communicate on personal social media with children in the YMCA's employment.

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

## **Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Procedures**

If staff or volunteers witness child on child abuse, staff and volunteers 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 the staff/volunteer may need to also report this to CPS or the police.

If staff or volunteers witness staff/volunteer on child abuse, staff and volunteers shall:

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

### **Reporting Requirements**

- At first report or probable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred, even outside the YMCA by a child's caregiver or others, staff and volunteers 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 and volunteers are also expected to report this to 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/guardian.
- These reporting requirements apply to all children at the YMCA, including children in the YMCA's employment.
- If the suspected or reported child abuse allegation involves a staff or volunteer, the YMCA may take action even when the alleged incident takes place away from the YMCA. Reinstatement of the employed staff or volunteer will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of YMCA's Human Resource Department.
- All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with children or allegations of abuse shall be taken seriously. The YMCA 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 YMCA or persons given investigative authority by the YMCA. All YMCA staff and volunteers shall be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in handling of this information. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination/loss of volunteer privileges.