



# **CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

**Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA**

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## I. Definitions

### A. Types of Abuse

- **Physical abuse** is an injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a youth.
- **Sexual abuse** is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth and an adult or between two youths. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other youth.
- **Emotional abuse** is a mental or emotional injury to a youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a youth from harm.

### B. Volunteer Classification

- **Low Access Volunteers** rarely interact with participants and only in line-of-sight of an employee. These volunteers are never alone with youth at the YMCA.
  - Examples of a Low Access volunteers would be:
    - One-time event volunteer.
    - Parents/guardians who assist at a program where their child is a participant.
    - A volunteer who helps with business activities and has zero interaction with participants.
    - Board members.
- **High Access Volunteers** typically interact often and/or over an extended period of time with participants. These volunteers may supervise participants with or without a YMCA employee present. These volunteers may have the opportunity to develop relationships with participants over time.
  - Examples of a High Access volunteers would be:
    - Volunteer program instructor
    - Regularly scheduled volunteer coach
    - Mentor or tutor for a participant
- **Screening process for High Access Volunteers:**
  - Application with Code of Conduct.
  - In-Person interview with behaviorally based interview questions.
  - References.
  - Criminal background check and national sex offender registry.
- **High-Access Volunteer Training:**
  - Abuse Prevention Training through Praesidium.
  - Proper monitoring and supervision of the areas they will be responsible.
  - Other specific program guidelines.

## II. Code of Conduct with Youth

The following policies are intended to assist staff and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with youth. Contact your supervisor for clarification of any guidelines or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here.

Our organization provides our youths with the highest-quality services available. We are committed to creating a safe, nurturing, empowering environment that promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from our organization. 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 require investigation.

The Conduct with Youth outlines specific expectations of the staff and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

## **A. Staff and Volunteer Behavior**

Staff and Volunteers will:

- Treat youth with respect at all times.
- Treat youth fairly regardless of race, sex, age, religion, or culture.
- Adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as our organization outlines.
- Avoid affection with youths that others cannot observe.
- Adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by our organization (See Pages 8 -10 –Physical Contact and Verbal Interactions).
- Staff will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them uncomfortable and their right to say no. Other than diapering, children are not to be touched in areas of their bodies that a bathing suit would cover.

Staff and Volunteers will not:

- Stare at or comment on youths' bodies.

Staff and Volunteers will not:

- Use profanity, tell inappropriate jokes, share intimate details of one's personal life, and any harassment in the presence of children or parents is prohibited.
- Show intimate affection towards others in the presence of children, parents, and staff.
- Have secrets with youths and will only give gifts with prior permission.
- Be alone with children they meet in Y programs outside of the Y. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting children to your home. Any exceptions require a written explanation before the fact and are subject to administrator approval.
- Transport children in their personal vehicle.
- Engage in electronic communication with youths.

## **B. Supervision**

- Staff and volunteers shall never leave a child unsupervised.
- To protect YMCA staff, volunteers, and program participants, staff or volunteers should not be alone with a single child during a program where others cannot observe them. As staff supervise children, they should space themselves so that other staff can see them. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with youths privately. Staff and volunteers will use common areas when working with individual youths.
- Restroom supervision (Best Practice when supervising youth in programs): Staff will ensure suspicious or unknown individuals do not occupy the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This provides 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. Regardless of age, no child should ever enter a bathroom alone on a field trip. Rule of 3 at all times - similar age range preferred.
- The Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA, only in toileting emergencies, will allow staff, after exhausting all other options, to conduct or supervise private activities in pairs, including but not limited to diapering or talking a young child through a toileting accident.
- Staff will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.

- Staff and volunteers will not abuse youths in any way, including (but not limited to) the following:
  - **PHYSICAL ABUSE** = Any intentional injury to a child. Warning Signs: The location of the Injury and/or Number and Frequency of Injuries and/or Size and Shape of Injuries and/or the Child's explanation are inconsistent with normal accidents and Avoidance of a particular adult.
  - **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** = Emotional or psychological damage that causes a substantial change in the behavior or emotions of a child. Warning Signs: Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong; shows extremes in behavior; Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver; Acts either inappropriately adult or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, throwing tantrums).
  - **SEXUAL ABUSE** = Engaging in sexual activity with or sexual exploitation of children. Warning Signs: Inappropriate Knowledge of Sexual Behavior, Sexually Explicit Drawings, Sexualized Play, Noticeable Fear, Deterioration of Academic Performance, Chronic Runaway, Behavioral Changes, Avoidance of a Certain Adult or Child.
  - **NEGLECT** = Depriving the child of access to basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, or adult supervision. Warning Signs: Consistent Hunger, Poor Hygiene, Lack of Supervision, Unattended Healthcare Needs.
- Staff must use positive guidance techniques, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement, rather than competition, comparison, and criticism. Staff will have age-appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline.
- Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. We will also not tolerate any behavior that is classified as bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior.

### C. Bullying and Conflict Resolution

Bullying is an unwanted behavior that involves a power imbalance. Here at the Y, our goal is to stop bullying, and we encourage our participants, parents, and staff to be Upstanders. An Upstander recognizes when something is wrong and acts to make it right. If there is a disclosure, discovery, or suspicion of bullying, we will handle each instance case by case and with care. At the Y, we are building a caring, respectful, honest, and responsible community for all; the safety of our program participants is our main concern.

Conversely, we define conflict as a disagreement or argument in which both sides express their views and have an equal power balance. We believe conflict with resolution is a natural and important part of Youth Development. Conflict can be constructive if managed in the right way. We will identify and resolve conflicts healthily and proactively. The conflict resolution skills we learn and practice will make a positive impact in our Y programs and every child's future.

The YMCA does not allow the following behaviors, including, but not limited to:

- Inappropriate jokes, insults, slurs, threats, name-calling or intimidation.
- Destructive behaviors.
- Behavior that violates personal boundaries or is habitual and negatively impacts the program and/or the safety and enjoyment of others.
- Behavior that is of a sexual nature.
- Habitual behaviors: disrespect, arguing, swearing, and refusing to listen or follow directions.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying and who then encourages it is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all youths, staff, and volunteers.

## **D. Mandated Reporter Requirements**

All staff must follow mandatory reporting requirements. Staff should be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse.

### **Staff will:**

- Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
- Know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect youths against abuse.
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to your immediate supervisor and/or VP of Risk & Safety.
- Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

As YMCA staff, we are all Mandated Reporters. If you are aware of or suspect any type of youth abuse, it is your obligation to call and report to your supervisor and/or authorities immediately. Supervisors report to the VP of Risk & Safety, who will contact Child Protective Services/Department of Social Services. Staff and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other staff, volunteers, adults, or youths to their supervisor, Executive Director, or Human Resources Director. Praesidium's Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751 may be called to discuss a potential child abuse issue. If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

Our organization 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.

## **III. Policies and Best Practices**

Policies define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior in an organization. Because offenders often violate policies to gain access to youths, staff can identify, interrupt, and report policy violations when they know and understand policies. Simply interrupting a policy violation can prevent a false allegation of abuse or inform an offender that no one works in private, the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected.

The Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA requires all employees and high-access volunteers to sign a statement of acknowledgment and compliance with all organizational policies upon hire/start and repeated annually.

### **Acknowledgment of Policies, Code of Conduct, or Standards**

All employees and volunteers with access to youth participants/members shall confirm that they have read and agree to comply with the organization's abuse prevention policies, Code of Conduct, and consumer protection standards by signing a written acknowledgment upon hire/start and annually thereafter.

## **A. Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate Interactions**

Our organization's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth participants, members, employees, and volunteers. We encourage appropriate physical contact and prohibit inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by employees or volunteers towards participants/members in the YMCA's programs will result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment/volunteerism.

## 1. Physical Interactions

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions	
<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 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> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full-frontal hugs</li> <li>Kisses</li> <li>Showing affection in isolated areas</li> <li>Lap sitting</li> <li>Wrestling</li> <li>Piggyback rides</li> <li>Tickling</li> <li>Exposing oneself</li> <li>Hitting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spanking</li> <li>Shaking</li> <li>Slapping</li> <li>Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>Touching the bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> <li>Any type of massage given by or to a participant</li> <li>Any form of affection that is unwanted by the participant/member or the staff or volunteer</li> <li>Unnecessary restraints</li> <li>Viewing or showing others pornographic materials</li> </ul>

## 2. Verbal Interaction

Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to participants or members in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Employees and volunteers must not initiate or engage in sexually oriented conversations with consumers or members. Employees and volunteers are not permitted to discuss sexual activities.

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate jokes</li> <li>Encouragement</li> <li>Praise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name-calling</li> <li>Bullying</li> <li>Ridicule or Humiliation</li> <li>Discussing sexual encounters</li> <li>Cursing</li> <li>Hazing</li> <li>Off-color or sexual jokes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shaming</li> <li>Belittling</li> <li>Derogatory remarks</li> <li>Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate another participant/member.</li> <li>Derogatory remarks about another participant/member or his/her family</li> <li>Inappropriate games like "Truth or Dare" and "Never Have I Ever"</li> </ul>

## B. Managing One-on-One Interactions

One-on-one interactions may occur in this organization's programming under **authorized** and **open-view circumstances**. This policy aims to ensure the organization communicates expectations for employees and volunteers and gives examples of appropriate behavior when one-on-one interactions occur. In those situations where one-on-one interactions are authorized, employees and volunteers should observe the following guidelines to limit the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:

- Meet participants or members in full view of others. (Examples may include disciplining to the side of the group discretely, swimming lessons, personal training sessions, or gymnasium.)
- Avoid any physical interaction during one-on-one interactions. Ensure physical and verbal interactions align with this organization's established policies and are limited to the task.



- If you are meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area where others can easily observe you.
- Inform other employees that you are alone with a consumer and encourage them to drop in or pass by the interaction randomly.
- Ensure one-on-one interactions are documented, especially if they are behind closed doors. Keep documentation of these meetings (such as in a shared calendar, etc.).
- 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.

### **C. Tutoring/Instruction**

One-on-one situations, such as tutoring and private instruction (Y one-on-one programs) sessions, introduce additional risks for false allegations. Staff and volunteers should be aware of our policies regarding tutoring and private coaching:

- Staff and volunteers must have supervisor approval for tutoring or private instruction sessions.
- Tutoring and private instruction sessions with our YMCA's youths may not occur outside the organization.
- Supervisors must keep a schedule of tutoring and private instruction sessions, including times, youths involved, and location of sessions. The supervisors are responsible for adding these to the facility building schedules. (i.e., dance/music lessons, tutoring)
- These sessions should be in the open and accessible to others dropping in to check on the situation .

### **D. Pre-existing Relationships for Staff and Volunteers**

The YMCA does not allow staff or volunteers to babysit, tutor, socialize, or contact participants outside of YMCA programs. However, the YMCA recognizes that there are pre-existing relationships that place you in social settings with participants. To protect the participants, YMCA, staff, and volunteers, the YMCA requires all staff and volunteers to disclose any pre-existing relationships with participants (i.e., church, neighbors, family, and/or child's friends.)

### **E. Off-site Contact**

- Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities (Not in the YMCA program or facility). This contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put staff, volunteers, and our organization at increased risk.

In addition, when outside contact is unavoidable, ensure that the following steps are followed:

- YMCA staff should not transport anyone other than your child or sibling to and from YMCA programs, even those you have pre-existing relationships with. The YMCA suggests a clear break in YMCA services before an employee transports or engages with a participant with whom you have pre-existing relationships outside of the YMCA.
- In cases where this may not be possible, staff should clearly define the terms of the agreement (date, times) for documentation.
- If young participants are to spend the night with staff's children, ensure administrators are notified to increase transparency. Ensure that rules prohibiting one-on-one interactions apply in this setting and that participants are not going into rooms alone.
- If participants will join staff and their children on vacation or other trips, try to avoid one-on-one interactions. Consider requiring the participant to get written confirmation from his/her parents/guardians that they have allowed their child to go (can be as simple as a text).
- Complete the Pre-existing Relationship Form and submit it to your supervisor for filing.

## F. Electronic Communication

We know from several investigations into real-world child sexual abuse that predators will often use social media to gain access to or groom children before abuse. That's why connecting with children on any of your social media platforms is strictly prohibited. This prohibition includes private messaging, sharing social media accounts, and exchanging cell phone numbers, email addresses, and physical mailing addresses. "Good intentions" and "harmless gestures" do not excuse private communication with underage children, as such actions can be misinterpreted.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

Appropriate Electronic Communication	Inappropriate Electronic Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Communicating through "YMCA group pages" on social media or other approved public forums.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments.</li><li>Sexually oriented conversations.</li><li>Private messages between staff and volunteers with youths.</li><li>Posting pictures of organization participants on personal social media sites.</li><li>Posting inappropriate comments on pictures.</li><li>"Friending" participants on social networking sites.</li></ul>

## G. Cell Phone Use

Staff assigned to work with youths are only permitted to use electronic communication devices during approved breaks and emergencies.

Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact (via voice, text, or pictures/video) organization members and/or program participants for personal and/ or inappropriate reasons shall be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment.

- The YMCA will block or filter content on its internet and technology that it considers inappropriate. This includes pornography, obscene material, and other material that may be harmful to participants and members or contrary to the YMCA's mission.
- Refrain from using personal or YMCA-owned devices in restrooms, locker rooms, or other areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.
- Use the network for any activity or transmit any material that violates federal, state, or local laws.
- Refrain from harassing, bullying, taunting, hazing, or otherwise acting in a manner toward employees, volunteers, members, or participants that is counter to the mission. The Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA has zero tolerance for bullying/cyberbullying.
- Part-time staff should not use cell phones (text, call, email, other) during their shift at the YMCA unless it is an emergency to call their immediate supervisor, branch executive, or 9-1-1.
  - Staff should ensure their family knows their schedule so they do not reach out during shifts.
  - Part-time staff should not take photos, videos, or voice recordings of anyone in the program (participants, parents, or others).
  - If promotional pictures or videos are required for marketing, a full-time director/leader should capture those photos or videos on a Y camera or phone.
  - For most directors in roles that require promotional materials, the YMCA reimburses or has a phone on a plan. This will cover and/or count as a Y phone/camera.
- AFTER a photo or video is taken, directors are to remove them from the phone or camera and any deleted folders on the phone.
- Photos and videos should never be posted on staff's personal social media pages or used by staff for any reason outside of YMCA needs.

Risk & Safety will request pictures of facility issues, broken items, machines or areas where there are falls, items that are fixed after an incident/issue, or an injury to a member, staff member, or child, if safe to do so and not in a private area. Photos of people should never be taken without consent and with another staff member present. Consent can only be obtained from people 18 years and older. After taking the photo, it should be sent to the VP of Risk & Safety and deleted.

These photos should never show the entire face of an individual, especially a child, unless injury is on the face.

#### **H. Gift Giving**

- Giving and receiving gifts can be a blessing for both the giver and those receiving. The Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA has this Gift Giving and Gift Acceptance Policy to coincide with our Child Abuse Prevention Policies. The YMCA understands that offenders routinely groom participants/members by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the participant/member. They might instruct the participant/member to keep the gifts a secret, encouraging keeping other more significant or harmful secrets from trusted adults.
- Refusing gifts from participants/members or their families may be difficult. In many cultures, people give gifts to reflect their appreciation for people or services. To be respectful of participants/members and their families, the YMCA makes reasonable allowances for acts of gratitude involving small gifts of appreciation from participants/members and/or their families that have a monetary value not exceeding the Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA monetary or in-kind amount of \$50.00. Employees and volunteers must immediately disclose all such gifts to their immediate supervisor and/or a designated administrator.
- If a parent or member approaches an employee or volunteer with a gift that exceeds the Rowan-Cabarrus YMCAs monetary or in-kind amount of \$50.00, the employee or volunteer should politely decline the gift and refer to this particular policy. The employee or volunteer can also encourage the parent or member to speak with an immediate supervisor and/or a designated administrator if they have questions.
- YMCA employees providing a gift for a group, such as a camp group or group exercise class, must discuss this with their supervisor before giving out the gifts. Everyone in the group should receive a gift of the same or similar value, and staff should never select an individual to give a gift outside of the group. This could be a cause for discipline and termination.

### **IV. Monitoring and Supervision**

When staff and volunteers are adequately supervised, potential offenders are less likely to act on their impulses because they face detection. When youths are adequately supervised, they, too, are less likely to engage in inappropriate interactions with others. Similarly, the YMCA facility and grounds must be monitored, particularly out-of-the-way locations or locations that might permit an offender undue access to or privacy with a youth. Effective supervision and monitoring require that various methods be used frequently, at both scheduled and random times.

#### **A. Facility Monitoring**

Building architecture can increase or mitigate the risk of an incident or accident. Because most incidents of sexual behavior occur in private, the extent to which privacy is managed and risks are managed. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that all locations are consistently and adequately monitored. The Building Supervisor/Manager on Duty must complete a branch-specific facility checklist at least once during 7:30 a.m.—3:30 p.m. and again between 4:00 p.m. and close. On Sundays, only one documented facility checklist is required. Random documented checklists are strongly encouraged to ensure members are supervised and reducing any potential inappropriate interactions with others.

#### **B. Checking Members into a Facility:**

- When anyone (members, guests, construction workers, maintenance, cleaning crews, etc.) enters the facility during operational hours, they must check in with the front desk.
- Create a single entry and exit point in the facility when possible.
- If multiple entrances or exits exist, ensure these other access points are consistently monitored.

### C. General Supervision

- **Administrative and Supervisory Visits to Youth Programs** – Youth supervisors and administrators should regularly visit all youth programs to ensure that all activities are well managed and that youth policies are observed by all in attendance.
- **Ratios**—Each program should follow ratio requirements directly related to its program area. The staff or volunteer-to-youth ratio should be adjusted for programs that serve youths with special needs. Refer to local licensing requirements and general best practice guidelines for establishing adult-to-youth ratios.
- To protect the Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA staff, volunteers, and program participants, no staff member or volunteer may be alone with a single child and not be observed by others unless approved in advance by the YMCA administration. When staff or volunteers supervise children, they should space themselves so that other staff, volunteers, or participants can see them.
- **Mixed Age Groups**– In most incidents involving one youth abusing another youth, the youth are from different age groups. Each program is responsible for establishing specific guidelines for additional monitoring and supervision of activities that involve youths from different age groups. Staff and volunteers must know that close line-of-sight supervision is required when monitoring programs that mix age groups.

### D. Monitoring Youth in Facilities

The Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA allows youth 13 and older to enter and use the facilities without a parent or guardian. Upon entry, all YMCA members and program participants must check-in at the Member Services Area.

- Require a parent or legal guardian to complete a membership application which includes identifying information, any legal indemnifications, the youth's date of birth, and emergency contact information
- While in the facility, youths can be supervised directly, indirectly, or with a combination of the two techniques.
  - For direct supervision, the program may offer structured, scheduled activities like basketball tournaments, swimming activities, arts and crafts, etc. These activities should have one or more staff assigned to lead and supervise.
  - For indirect supervision, the program must designate certain building areas as authorized areas. Authorized areas could include a gymnasium, a game area, a lounge, a classroom for doing homework, and so on. Authorized areas must be easily visible and routinely and systematically checked by staff. Youths should know that they will be supervised by staff at all times, and all staff should know which areas are authorized and which are not.
- All YMCA staff should wear nametags or identifying clothing so that the youth can easily recognize them as staff.
- Train all staff:
  - Greet youths as they enter the facility; direct them to structured activities or authorized areas; and redirect youths who are not in an authorized area or not participating in a structured activity.
  - To be aware of the risks involved with mixing age groups and how to monitor activities involving mixed age groups.
  - This staff should document the scheduled and periodic sweeps of high-risk areas (such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and unused rooms) to monitor them routinely.

Ultimately, all kids must be supervised at all times, regardless of age. The key to remember is that they can be supervised directly in structured activities and indirectly in authorized areas.

## V. Monitoring High Risk Activities in Programs

### A. Bathroom Activities

Most incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in the bathrooms. Therefore, the following supervision guidelines are recommended:

Each site is unique, and specific bathroom policies will vary, possibly even within an individual facility. However, the following should be consistent regardless of location.

- The first rule in child-serving activities is that **all children are supervised all the time**, which is especially critical during bathroom times.
- All bathroom policies and procedures should be:
  - Clearly and unambiguously stated.
  - Explicitly communicated and reinforced.
  - Religiously monitored and enforced.
  - Regularly reviewed to ensure that they still address the exposures and needs of the specific bathrooms and children to which and whom they apply; the review process should include staff critiques of the existing protocols and identification of any practical or ideological concerns.
- Protocol is to have an adult staff member scan the bathroom before the youth enters and directly supervise the children from the bathroom doorway; oversight can be maintained without infringing on the personal privacy provided by the individual stall or fixture.
- Staff, not children, should choose the group going to the bathroom; relationships and interaction between the children should be carefully considered – do not set the stage for bullying or other peer-on-peer abuse.
- The number of children allowed in the bathroom at one time should not exceed the number of stalls.
- If necessary, to ensure the children's privacy or safety, a staff member could send the children into an otherwise empty bathroom one at a time while supervising the rest of the children from outside the door.
  - Younger children's curiosity and inquisitiveness may result in inappropriate staring and/or touching.
  - Older children's behavior patterns and peer pressure may result in inappropriate behavior.
- There should be no co-mingling of adults and children when either are in a state of undress.
- Separate spaces for adults and children should be provided or access to the shared space should be restricted when children use it.
- Historically, bathroom time is when most peer-to-peer abuse occurs – youthful predators are very opportunistic – don't give them an opportunity.
- Rule of three is required/acceptable when a staff member must break away from the group for one reason or another (game set-up; bathroom; incident/behavior issues) 1 staff: 3 children or 2 staff: 1 child.
- Sending a responsible older child (including LITs or teenaged volunteers) to oversee the group is **not an acceptable protocol** – supervision must be by an adult.

### B. Showering

Staff and youths must shower at different times.

- While the youths shower, at least one staff member should stand in the bathroom doorway and within earshot of them. Ensure that only one youth is in each shower

- Consider utilizing shower curtains that do not go all the way to the floor so that staff can easily see how many youths are in each shower stall.

### **C. Transition Times and Free Times**

Transition and free-choice times (or free times) pose a high risk for incidents because staff and volunteers may not be assigned a particular group of youths to supervise during these times. To decrease the risk of incidents, implement the following best practices:

- Youths are required to remain on-site with staff at all times.
- Specify the staff-to-youth ratio.
- Specify narrow geographic boundaries in the program areas.
- Ensure all staff are assigned specific supervised areas ("zone monitoring").
- Include bathroom procedures.
- Require periodic roll calls for each age group.
- Supervisors will perform periodic check-ins and sweep of the entire activity area.

### **D. Playground Activities**

The playground procedures require:

- Youths are to remain on-site with staff at all times.
- Definition of specific and narrow geographic boundaries around the playground area.
- Specific instructions on how to monitor barriers of supervision (such as storage sheds, playhouses, tunnels, and shrubs).
- All staff are assigned specific areas to supervise ("zone monitoring").
- Specific bathroom procedures should be implemented so youth are not left unsupervised or under-supervised, and staff are not one-on-one with youth.
- Staff should conduct periodic roll calls for each age group.
- Supervisors should conduct periodic check-ins and assessments of the activity period and the entire activity area.

### **E. Transportation Activities**

Transporting youths may increase the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse because staff and volunteers may be alone with youth or may make unauthorized stops with youths. In addition, transportation activities may provide a time for unsupervised youths to engage in youth-to-youth sexual activity.

The transportation guidelines for contracted or YMCA-owned transportation:

- Require written parent permission from all youths on the trip. Staff take these permission forms and medical releases on the trip and/or have immediate access.
- Require staff to have a list of the youths on the trip. The staff take roll when boarding the bus, when leaving the bus, periodically throughout the trip, and then again when boarding the bus.
- Specify staff-to-youth ratios. When possible, do not count the driver in the supervision ratio.
- Require staff to sit in seats that permit maximum supervision.
- Discourage mixed-age groups from sitting together. When possible, high-risk youths should be seated by themselves or with a staff member.

- Prohibit drivers from making unauthorized stops.
- Require documentation of any unusual occurrences.
- **Staff are not allowed to transport minors in their personal vehicles.**

#### **F. Aquatics Programs**

Water Safety and Swim Lessons is a large part of what the YMCA does for the community. To provide a safe environment and reduce potential abuse within aquatics the following guidelines are in place.

- Staff are required to communicate to supervisors any participants with unusual bruises and behaviors in programs.
- Staff are required to ensure that all participants are safely in the care of a parent/guardian at the end of swim lessons.
- Participants are never to be left alone during swim lessons.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for restroom breaks for children.
- Instructors are all trained about appropriate touch in and out of the water.
- Swim lessons are always conducted within view of the lifeguards, other staff, and parents are encouraged to stay on deck while lessons are in progress.

#### **G. Sports Programming**

- Coaches will always practice on a scheduled bases. The Sports Director should know when, where, and what time your team will practice each week.
- Parents should always remain at the practice and game locations with players. Youth should not ever be left at a sports field without a parent/guardian.
- Coaches will review/train on appropriate and inappropriate interactions with youth, Child Abuse Prevention policies, and never transport a child in your vehicle. (See Prior Relationship Form)
- Report any unusual bruising or behaviors of players to the Sport directors, as the YMCA and you are a mandated reporter of Child Abuse.
- Coaches encourage players, use positive reinforcement, respect others, including the referees, control your emotions, and applaud both teams play.

#### **VI. Off-Site Activities**

- Supervisor approval is required for all off-site activities.
- Requiring parental approval.
- Specify staff-to-youth ratios for the activity. Certain off-site activities may require a higher staff-to-youth ratio depending on the trip's degree of activity, location, or other risk factors,
- Requiring staff and youths to be easily identifiable.
- Including specific bathroom and locker room procedures as applicable to the outing.
- Including transportation procedures.
- Including instructions for a supervisor to observe the off-site activities at scheduled times and random intervals.

## VII. Overnight Activities

Overnight stays present unique risks to youths and staff. They often involve changing clothes, groups of both genders and different ages in a more intimate atmosphere than usual, more unstructured activities, and increased supervision demands for staff.

- **Supervision Guidelines**

- All overnight activities must be documented and approved by the Executive and VP of Risk and safety, preferably in writing.
- Administrators are expected to regularly and randomly observe overnight activities on a scheduled and periodic basis.
- If the director is absent, the director should appoint a “lead” staff member to supervise the overnight. All staff should meet before the trip, to discuss the unique risks of overnight trips, the unique elements of the specific overnight trip, and the specific policies and procedures.
- Parents should meet with Y staff before the trip and be provided with written information about the overnight activity. All parents must sign a permission slip for their youths to attend the overnight.
- Determine the appropriate staff-to-youth ratios before the event and schedule staff accordingly.
- Meetings with the group should be held in open and observable areas and not in staff or youth rooms.

- **Overnights at the Facility**

- Physical boundaries within the organization must be clearly defined and explained to the youths.
- Assign each staff member to supervise a specific group of youths. Each staff member should then maintain a role sheet that lists all the youths in his or her group. Head counts and roll checks should be conducted routinely throughout the trip (morning, afternoon, evening, and night).
- Assign staff to high-risk areas in the Y facility, such as the bathrooms, entrances and exits, hallways, etc. If it is impossible to assign specific staff to these areas, assign specific staff to conduct periodic facility “walk-throughs.”
- Regarding sleeping arrangements, separate the male and female youths into separate rooms and post staff at the entrances and exits to these rooms. If this is not feasible, separate males and females by as much space as possible.
- When performing room checks, staff should always go in pairs.

- **Overnights Away from the Facility**

- Overnight stays at private homes are prohibited unless approved by the administration.
- Physical boundaries at the off-site location must be clearly defined and explained to the youths.
- Assign each staff member to supervise a specific group of youths. Each staff member should then maintain a role sheet that lists all the youths in his or her group. Head counts and roll checks should be conducted routinely throughout the event.
- If in a cabin-type setting, the staff should be placed in bunks to maximize supervision around the cabin and in a way that decreases the chances of youths sneaking out (such as by the door).
  - In hotel rooms, assign youths to rooms based on sex and age. Staff should have their own rooms. If staff must share rooms with youths, they must have their own beds and never change in front of youths.



- All staff are to be on duty in the halls or cabins at night until an hour after lights out and all rooms are quiet.
- Staff must be accessible and available throughout the night, preferably staying awake the entire night.

**VIII. Supervisors and Administrators Monitoring On-Site and Off-Site Programs** Supervisors must visit program locations, either on or off-site, once each quarter and/or once during a sports season and document the visit.

- **Keep a record.** Document your supervision visits. Include information like your arrival and departure times, which youths and parents were present, and a summary of the information collected. Provide staff with feedback about visits.
- **Vary your observation times.** Do not develop a predictable pattern of observation. Drop in at different times each day. Occasionally, leave and come back immediately.
- **Arrive before staff.** Check punctuality and the staff's routine to prepare for the youths to arrive.
- **Survey the physical environment.** Is this a suitable location for the activity (e.g. size of area for number of youths, ability to supervise all areas used by youths, landscaping that may inhibit supervision)?
- **Watch activities.** Are they planned and organized? Are the staff actively involved? Ask to see the schedule of activities and compare it with what is actually going on at a given time.
- **Observe bathroom and locker room activities** to ensure the staff complies with the established policies and procedures.
- **Observe Interactions.**

## IX. Responding

How an organization responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect the harm to the individuals involved and the damage to the organization. Once a staff member, volunteer, youth, or parent has expressed concern or made an allegation about the treatment of the youth, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to the youth, to the accused staff member or volunteer, and to the organization. Organizations must establish precise, unequivocal requirements for reporting to the authorities and for adhering to a serious-incident response plan.

- **Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations**  
Because our organization is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every staff member actively participates in protecting youths. If staff observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other staff or volunteers, it is their responsibility to report their observations immediately.

### Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Staff/Volunteers and Youth

- Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above.
- Seeking private time or one-on-one time with youths.
- Buying gifts for individual youths.
- Making suggestive comments to youths.
- Picking favorites.

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to protect the rights of all those involved.

- **Staff and Volunteer Response**

If staff witness suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another staff or volunteer, the staff or volunteer is instructed to do the following:

### Guidelines for Staff/Volunteers Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations

- Interrupt the behavior.
- Report the behavior to a supervisor, director, or other authority.
- If you are uncomfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously.
- If the report concerns a supervisor or administrator, contact the next management level.
- Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

- **Supervisor and Administrator Response**

In the event that a supervisor or an administrator receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from a staff member or volunteer, the supervisor is instructed to do the following:

### Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators' Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations

- Report to the next level of administration, Human Resource Director, and/or VP Risk & Safety.
- Determine the appropriate response based on the report.
- Speak with the staff or volunteer who has been reported.
- Review the file of the staff or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.
- Document the report on the appropriate form.
- If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the state authorities and file a report.
- If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians.
- Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously.

- **Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:**

- Increase monitoring or supervision of the staff, volunteer, or program.
- Suspension of staff or volunteers until an investigation has been finalized.
- If policy violations with youths are confirmed, the staff or volunteer must be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution. Disciplinary action will follow the guidelines found in the Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA Employee Handbook.
- If more information is needed, interview and/or survey other staff, volunteers, or youths.

- **Organizational Response**

### Guidelines for Organizational Response

- Review the need for increased supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.

## X. Responding to Suspected Abuse by an Adult

- **Staff or Volunteer Response to Abuse**

All staff must follow mandatory reporting requirements. Staff should be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse.

**Staff will:**

- Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
- Know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect youths against abuse.
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to your immediate supervisor and/or VP of Risk & Safety.
- Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

- **Mandated Reporters**

If you are aware of or suspect any youth abuse, it is your obligation to:

- Report to your supervisor or authority immediately.
- Supervisors report to the VP of Risk & Safety.
- VP Risk & Safety will contact Child Protective Services/Department of Social Services.
- The CEO will report to Y-USA, Insurance, Board Officers, and others.
- Staff may also reach out to the Praesidium's Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751 may be called to discuss a potential child abuse issue.

### Additional Guidelines for Staff/Volunteer Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse

- If you witness abuse or failure to follow policy/procedures, interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell you.
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident, but it is your job to report it to your supervisor promptly.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.
- Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to your supervisor or the designated organization authority.

## XI. Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors

### *Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators' Responding to Allegations or Incidents of Abuse*

- First, determine if the youth is still in danger, and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm.
- Gather as much information about the allegation as you can.
- Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember that your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.
- Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Ensure you get a case number and the name and contact information of the person you speak with at the reporting agency.
- If the alleged abuse involves a staff member or volunteer, notify your crisis management team and follow your crisis management plan.
- Suspend the accused staff or volunteer until the investigation is completed.

The thought that one youth may sexually abuse another youth does not occur to many people. Unfortunately, abuse between peers has increased in the past few years. Youth-to-youth sexual activity and sexualized behaviors often remain unreported in organizations because staff and volunteers are not comfortable documenting these situations or may not know how.

- **Youth-to-Youth Interactions**  
Most serious incidents of youth-to-youth abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or roughhousing. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe. Our organization recognizes that the following interactions are high-risk and should be prohibited:

### *Prohibited Youth-to-Youth Interactions*

- Hazing
- Bullying
- Derogatory name-calling
- Games of Truth or Dare
- Singling out one child for different treatment
- Ridicule or humiliation

In order to adequately respond to and track incidents within the organization, all sexual activity between youths and sexualized behaviors of youths must be consistently documented.

- **Staff and Volunteer Response**  
Youth-to-youth 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. If staff witness youth-to-youth sexual behaviors, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:
  - Complete the necessary paperwork, including what you observed and how you responded.
  - Follow your supervisor's instructions regarding notifying the authorities and informing the parents of the youth involved.
  - In some cases, if the problem is recurring, discipline may be required, including not allowing one or both youths to return to the program.

- **Supervisors and Administrators Response**

In the event that a supervisor or administrator receives a report of a youth's sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the supervisor should do the following:

### *Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity*

- Meet with the staff who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the youths involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision.
- Review the steps taken by the staff on duty.
- Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed.
- Meet with parents of the youths involved.
- Determine what actions should be taken to prevent recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.
- Notify the proper authorities.
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- Review the need for additional supervision
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures
- Review the need for additional training
- Alert others in the organization

- **Organizational Response**

After the internal review of the sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the organization will determine what can be done to prevent a reoccurrence, such as:

### **Guidelines for Organizational Response**

- Review the need for additional supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.
- Alert others in the organization.

## **XII. Maintaining Ongoing Awareness of Abuse Prevention amongst Participants and Parents**

### **A. Participants**

Participants can contribute to their safety if they know what is acceptable and what to expect from employees, volunteers, and other participants. Our YMCA uses a variety of methods for maintaining ongoing awareness through out the year of abuse risk and prevention amongst participants such as:

- 5 Days of Action
- Group activities
- Videos
- Online activities
- Posters, signs, and bulletin boards
- Newsletters
- Workshops

### **B. Parents**

The YMCA will share information with parents, throughout the year, on how to communicate with their child in age appropriate ways to encourage at home learning on safe touches, safe adults, rule breaking, and No, Go, Tell. The YMCA will offer many methods of communication and topics we will share are:

- Share YMCA policies on Child Abuse Prevention within the YMCA.
  - Appropriate / Inappropriate Interactions
    - Physical, Verbal, Electronic,
  - Babysitting, One-on-One Interactions (Rule of 3)
  - Reporting
- Tips for talking with your child.
- Teaching the child parts of their bodies.
- Rules about appropriate physical touch.
- What if someone tries to break the rules.
- Warning signs.
- Responding to inappropriate behavior or touch your child reports.
- Recommended reading for children and their parents.
- How to report anonymously red-flag, inappropriate behaviors, or policy violations.

### **XIII. Victim-Centered Response Plan**

#### **A. Be Prepared**

The Rowan-Cabarrus YMCA's designated victim assistance coordinator is the VP of Risk and Safety, Amanda Hesse.

It is understood and staff will be trained on:

- The dynamics of disclosure and why survivors sometimes take years to come forward.
- Survivor's recollection of events may be fuzzy but that does not mean the survivor is not credible.
- Document all details, including the name of the reporter when they made their report and who took the report.
- Thank the individual for reporting. "Thank you for telling me." Inform the reporter that the information will be passed to the designated organization point person who will follow up with additional support as soon as possible.

#### **B. Once a Survivor Has Been Identified**

- Ensure the victim-survivor is secure and safe from additional harm, to the extent possible .
- Where applicable, prevent the accused from having further access to consumers until a
- Follow all mandated reporting procedures.
- Branch Executive will inform Crisis Management Team.
- Any staff person or volunteer named in the suspected case will be suspended until an investigation is complete. After completion of an investigation by the Department of Social Services and/or Law Enforcement and the YMCA, employment status will be evaluated.
- Documentation should be written clearly of what was observed or heard. Do not speculate or offer opinion.
- Crisis Management Team will contact Department of Social Services Child Protection Services to make the report.

#### **C. Communication**

The Crisis Management Team will designate a point person to respond to all inquiries from parents/guardians, the media, and other stakeholders.

- Crisis Management Team will prepare a short media statement in advance or anticipation of receiving a media or public inquiry.
- All oral and written communication should speak with a voice of compassion and confidence.
- All employees and volunteers should know how to refer media inquiries to our CEO.

As soon as possible, meet in person, not over the phone, with identified victim/survivors and their parents/guardians.

- Reassure them that you are taking the allegation or incident seriously.
- Find out what response they desire and be prepared to explain what support you will offer, such as counseling or therapeutic services.

If appropriate, reach out in writing to parents/guardians of all consumers attending the program in which the accused offender was involved or had contact with consumers.

- The message should communicate:
  - **Empathy:** Begin by stating that such incidents run counter to the YMCA's values.
  - **Facts:** Include a summary of the incident, including information about any suspensions, investigations, arrests, etc.

- **Contact Request:** Ask parents/ guardian to contact the YMCA or authorities if they suspect their child may have been abused.
- **YMCA Response:** Explain that the YMCA is fully cooperating with the authorities. Describe proactive steps the organization is taking such as offering resources to individuals, hosting a parent/community meeting, training employees, and volunteers, and conducting an independent investigation to learn from this incident so the YMCA can prevent it from happening again.

Host a parent/community meeting to speak directly with concerned families and directly answer any questions before rumors or misinformation is spread.

- Communicate as much information as you can about the incident.
- Provide information regarding the proactive steps that leadership is taking in response to the incident.
- Describe resources the organization is providing families and give parents/guardians a chance to ask questions.
- Provide parent/guardian with information about how to talk to their child about abuse.

#### **D. Ongoing Communication and Response**

- Determine how to manage ongoing relations with authorities, parents/guardians, the community, and media relations.
  - Consider adding a designated page to our website with updated details about the incident.
  - Crisis Management team will assign staff to handle communications and outreach efforts.





FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### PRE-EXISTING RELATIONSHIP FORM FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The YMCA does not allow staff or volunteers to babysit, tutor, socializing, or other contact with participants outside YMCA programs. However, the YMCA recognizes that are preexisting relationships that place you in social settings with participants. For the protection of the participants, YMCA, staff, and volunteers the YMCA requires that all staff and volunteers disclose any preexisting relationships with participants (ie. Church, neighbors, family, and/or child's friends.)

- YMCA staff should not transport anyone other than your child or sibling to and from YMCA programs, even those you have pre-existing relationships with. The YMCA suggests a clear break in YMCA services before an employee transports or engages with a participant with whom you have pre-existing relationships outside of the YMCA.
- In cases where this may not be possible, staff should clearly define the terms of the agreement (date, times) for documentation.
- If young participants are to spend the night with staff's children, ensure administrators are notified to increase transparency. Ensure that rules prohibiting one-on-one interactions apply in this setting and that participants are not going into rooms alone.
- If participants will join staff and their children on a vacation or other trips, ensure the Rule of Three applies to avoid one-on-one interactions. Consider requiring the participant to get written confirmation from his/her parents/guardians that they have allowed their child to go (can be as simple as a text).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Form Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Circle: Staff Volunteer

Child's Name (First & Last)	Relationship outside the YMCA?	Do you also know his/her parents?	How often do you see this participant away from the YMCA? (daily, weekly...)
		Yes No	
		Yes No	
		Yes No	
		Yes No	
		Yes No	

Can the YMCA contact the parents/guardians of the above named, if needed, to verify this document? ☐ Yes ☐ No



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FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Notes on these preexisting relationships (transport, tutoring, staying the night with staff child, etc.)

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_