



YMCA Policy Preventing the Abuse or Mistreatment of Youths

Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of youths 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. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Our organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated.

Staff will read and sign this Code of Conduct for Staff documenting their understanding of the legal and ethical duty to report suspected mistreatment or abuse of youth.

Physical Contact

Our organization’s physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth and staff. Our organization encourages appropriate physical contact with youth and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff towards youth in the organization’s programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The organization’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

<i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated area • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Allowing a youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg • Any type of massage given by or to a youth • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the staff or volunteer • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas



Verbal Interactions

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

Staff and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youth. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with youth.

Our organization’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth 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 youth • Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family

One-on-One Interactions

One-on-one interactions are highly discouraged. In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, staff and volunteers should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:

<i>Additional Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others. • Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes. • If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by. • Inform other staff and volunteers that you are alone with a youth and ask them to randomly drop in. • 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.



Electronic Communication

Any private electronic communication between staff and youth, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. - is prohibited.

All communication between staff and youth must be transparent. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication.

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

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

Policy Prohibiting the Abuse or Mistreatment of One Youth by Another Youth

Our organization is committed to providing all youth with a safe environment. Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth.

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

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

1. Physical bullying – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
2. Verbal bullying – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
3. Nonverbal or relational bullying – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.



4. Cyberbullying – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
- a. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
 - b. Posting sensitive, private information about another person;
 - c. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and
 - d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
 - e. Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person’s willingness to participate.
 - f. Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

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