



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Abuse Information for Parents

Who should talk to my youth about safety?

A parent is the best person to teach a youth about personal safety. However, the staff at the organization will also be communicating similar messages. It is important for adults to be delivering a similar message.

When should I speak with my youth about safety?

While age and maturity matter and will impact the information you provide, as well as the manner in which it is provided, much of the content will be repeated for years to come. Start teaching very young children the correct names for their body parts.

What else can I do to help keep my youth safe?

Listen to your youth.

- Know your youth's daily activities and habits.
- Listen to what they like and what they don't like.
- Encourage open communication. Let your youth know they can talk to you about any situation.
- Reassure your youth that their safety is your number one concern.

Teach your youth.

- Set boundaries about places they may go, people they may see, and things they may do.
- Reinforce the importance of the buddy system.
- Tell your youth to trust their instincts—it's OK to say no.

Get involved.

- Know where your youth is at all times.
- Your youth should check in with you if there is a change in plans.
- There is no substitute for your attention and supervision.



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Practice safety skills.

- Rehearse safety skills so that they become second nature.
- Walk the route to and from your youth's favorite places (school, neighborhood friends, park), pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if someone is following him or her or if he or she needs help. Make a map with your youth showing acceptable routes (to school, to the organization), using main roads and avoiding shortcuts or isolated areas.

What personal safety skills should my youth have?

- Knows his or her full name, address, telephone number, and parents' names.
- Always checks first with parents or the person in charge before going anywhere or getting into a car, even with someone he or she knows.
- Always checks first with parents or a trusted adult before accepting anything from anyone, even from someone known to him or her.
- Always takes a friend when going places or playing outside without parents or supervision.
- Says NO if someone tries to inappropriately touch him or her.
- Leaves the area if someone behaves in a manner that makes him or her feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
- Knows it's okay to say NO.
- Knows who can help him or her if someone tries to inappropriately touch him or her or behaves in a manner that makes him or her feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.

Ten Ways to Protect Your Youth from Abuse

- Give your youth special attention.
- Know your youth's friends. Take special note of any adult your youth describes like a peer.
- Know your youth's activities.
- Routinely talk to your youth and let them talk to you.



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- Inform your youth about sexual abuse.
- Take note if adults show unusual interest in your youth and want to spend time alone with them.
- Question youths who arrive home with toys, jewelry, or clothing you did not buy.
- Take note if an adult has asked your youth to keep a secret.
- Periodically ask youths if anyone has made them feel uncomfortable or afraid.
- Be sensitive and follow up on vague disclosures such as "Mr. Billy acts weird."

Warning signs that a youth feels uncomfortable

- Increased seeking of affection from adults.
- Reluctance to spend time with a previously-favored adult.
- Reluctant to go to activities that were previously enjoyed.
- An uncharacteristic decrease in bathing and grooming.
- Withdrawal from typical childhood activities.
- Bed-wetting.
- Inability to control bowels.
- Preoccupation with sexual matters.
- Increased masturbation.
- Increased aggressiveness.
- Nightmares and sleep disturbances.

Common reasons youths do not report abuse

- Fear of rejection. No one will believe me.
- Fear of punishment. I'll get in trouble.
- Fear of abandonment. I'll have to leave home.
- Fear of retaliation. He'll hurt me if I tell.
- Fear of re-victimization. They'll think they can abuse me.
- Shame. I was aroused, what's wrong with me?



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FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Loyalty. He may get in trouble.
- Confusion. What did I do to attract him.
- Guilt. It was my fault. Mom and Dad told me not to do that.

How to respond if a youth discloses abuse

- Listen.
- Be sensitive to vague disclosures.
- Avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- Don't threaten or condemn the alleged perpetrator.
- Let the youth know you believe him or her.
- Tell the youth he or she was right to disclose.
- Assure the youth the abuse was not his or her fault.
- Reassure the youth that he or she will be safe.
- Avoid questions that could make the youth feel responsible.
- Get as many details as the youth is comfortable disclosing.
- Write down exactly what the youth said.
- Contact authorities.

Red flags for identifying youth molesters

- An adult enjoys being with your youth more than you do.
- A much older youth or adult spends excessive amounts of time with your youth.
- Your youth has new toys or gifts that you did not purchase.
- Your youth speaks knowledgeably of places or activities that you did not approve.
- A person continually offers to care for your youth so as to give you a breather or time to yourself. Often this person wants no money for helping.
- A person comes to your house regularly to spend time with or transport your youth to activities.



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- A person engages in activities that involve only your youth and that do not require the presence of others.
- A person wants to take individual pictures of your youth.
- An adult seems to spend all his or her time with youths and doesn't have adult peer relationships.
- A person wants to "bend" some rules to spend time with your youth.
- A person videotapes youth activities and does not have a youth involved in the activity.
- Your youth would rather spend time with a specific adult than with peers.
- Your youth tells jokes containing sexual innuendo and says he/she heard them from an adult.

How to report concerns

You can contact the following people at the Middlesex YMCA to report any concerns.

1. Heather Chandor, VP of Operations
 - 860.343.6207 or hchandor@midymca.org
2. Natalie Garrison, Director of Human Resources
 - 860.343.6214 or ngarrison@midymca.org

You can also complete the complaint form on the next page, either anonymously or with your contact information. This form can be put in an envelope to Heather Chandor or Natalie Garrison's attention and either dropped it off at the front desk or sent in by mail.