



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN

## Child Abuse Prevention Policies Staff & Volunteer Manual

YMCA OF GREENVILLE

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Our Mission: The YMCA of Greenville, following the example of Christ, builds healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

Updated January 2022

Dear Colleague,

At the YMCA, we are focused on three things: Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility. As a Y staff member or volunteer, you play a crucial role in all three focus areas.

The safety of our members and participants is top priority. Because the Y works closely with families and children, it is our organizational duty to enable staff and volunteers to identify and prevent child abuse. That's why we require all staff and volunteers to participate in child abuse prevention training.

These trainings will help you identify potentially harmful encounters, report suspected abuse, and protect yourself from high-risk situations. Additionally, these trainings will help illustrate typical grooming behaviors that abusers use to gain privacy, access, and control.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the lives of the youth in our community. If you have any questions about this manual or child abuse prevention trainings at the Y, don't hesitate to ask your supervisor for support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scot Baddley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Scot Baddley**  
YMCA of Greenville  
President & CEO

## **Policy Prohibiting 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.

## **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:

- **Physical bullying** – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- **Verbal bullying** – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- **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.
- **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, social media, and 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.
- **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.

- **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.

## Policy Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate 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 and volunteers towards youth in the organization’s programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer services.

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

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</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>• Full-frontal hugs</li> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection in an isolated area</li> <li>• Lap sitting</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a youth</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or staff or volunteer</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>

## Policy Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate 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:

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

## Policy for Managing the Risk When One Staff Member or Volunteer is Alone with One Youth

Our organization does not allow staff or volunteers to be alone with youth from our organization. If it is unavoidable, staff members or volunteers should notify their supervisors and follow the guidelines below.

In 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:

### Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions

- 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.
- These guidelines should also be applied when outside partners or agencies are involved in YMCA programs or in YMCA facilities.

## Tutoring/ Private Coaching

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

1. Staff and volunteers must have supervisor approval for any tutoring or private coaching sessions.
2. Tutoring and coaching sessions with our organization's youth may not occur outside of approved sites.
3. Supervisors must keep a schedule of private tutoring and coaching sessions, which should include times, youth involved, and location of sessions.

## Policy for Managing Interactions between Staff/Volunteers and Youth Outside of Regularly Scheduled Program Activities

Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. This contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put staff, volunteers, and our organization at increased risk.

Our organization strongly recommends that staff and volunteers do not have outside contact with youth from the organization. However, if off-site contacts are unavoidable, our organization has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

Appropriate Outside Contact	Inappropriate Outside Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking groups of youth on a YMCA approved field trip, conference, or event</li> <li>• Attending YMCA sponsored activities with groups of youth</li> <li>• Attending family functions such as graduations, celebrations, funerals, etc. with prior supervisor approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Babysitting or any other kind of caregiving activity</li> <li>• Taking one youth on an outing without the parents' written permission</li> <li>• Visiting one youth in the youth's home, without a parent present</li> <li>• Entertaining one youth in the home of staff or volunteers</li> <li>• A lone youth spending the night with staff or volunteers</li> </ul>

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

1. Staff and volunteers should communicate to their supervisors all pre-existing relationships with youth in our programs.
2. Supervisors should identify for staff and volunteers what types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate.
3. Staff or volunteers should have the parents' permission to engage in outside contact with the youth.

**Policy Governing Electronic Communication between Staff/Volunteers and Youth**

Private electronic communication between staff/volunteers and youth, including the use of social networking platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), instant messaging, texting, gaming platforms, etc. - is prohibited.

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

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

This information should also be communicated to your participant's parents so that they know what is appropriate and inappropriate from your staff.

In some instances, electronic communication with youth is unavoidable. This pertains most often to staff under the age of 18 and Youth In Government participants. In those instances, staff/volunteers must be mindful of following expectations:

1. Staff/Volunteers should understand the dangers that exist with one-on-one communication and take steps to ensure all communication is appropriate.
2. All electronic communication occurring in a one-on-one fashion should be documented and staff should notify their supervisor of any such occurrences.
3. All electronic communication must be saved and must be available if the YMCA wants to review any communication.
4. Any inappropriate topics or conversations must be reported to supervisors immediately.

**Policy Addressing Staff/Volunteers Cell Phone Use During Program Hours**

While assigned to work with youth, staff and volunteers are not permitted to use electronic communication devices except during approved breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging, emailing pictures, or accessing social media while assigned to work with youth is strictly prohibited regardless of the type of device



used and whether for business or personal reasons. Employees and volunteers need to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy.

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.

### **Acceptable Use of Cell Phones during Program Hours**

There are occasions in which staff and volunteers will need to use official personal or organizational issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff and volunteers will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of personal or organization-issued electronic communication devices include:

1. Field Trips
2. Off-site Programs
3. Emergencies

### **Policy Regarding Allegations of Abuse and Cooperation with Authorities**

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.

### **Policy Governing Mandatory Reporting Requirements**

All staff and volunteers must report suspected abuse cases to YMCA leadership and to the South Carolina Department of Social Services at 864-467-7750.

Staff and volunteers will be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse.

Staff/Volunteers will:

1. be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse;
2. know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect youth against abuse;
3. document in writing applicable information related to potential abuse such as names, ages, addresses, examples of potential abuse, and other pertinent information;
4. report suspected child abuse or neglect to the South Carolina Department of Social Services at 864-467-7750; and
5. follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken

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

## **Investigation Statement**

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.