



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

PROTECTING OUR KIDS PROTECTING OUR Y

Child Abuse Prevention Policies Staff Manual

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

Dear Colleague,

At the YMCA of Greenville, our mission is grounded in three core focus areas: Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility. As a valued member of our team, you play an essential role in advancing these principles through your daily work and interactions.

Given our close partnership with families and children, it is our organizational responsibility to ensure that all staff are equipped to recognize and prevent child abuse. The safety and well-being of all members and participants is our highest priority. Accordingly, all employees are required to complete mandatory trainings, including Child Abuse Prevention Training.

These trainings are designed to empower you with the knowledge and skills to identify signs of abuse and safeguard YMCA participants from harmful situations. Additionally, they will provide you with strategies to protect yourself by recognizing potentially risky circumstances. You will also gain insight into common red flag behaviors employed by abusers to obtain privacy, access, and control.

We appreciate your dedication to fostering a safe and supportive environment for the youth and families we serve. Should you have any questions regarding this manual or the child abuse prevention trainings, please do not hesitate to reach out to your supervisor for guidance and assistance.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to strengthening our community.

Sincerely,
Sam Franklin
President & CEO
YMCA of Greenville

Policy Prohibiting the Abuse or Mistreatment of Youths

Our organization has zero tolerance for 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.

Policy on the Annual Review of Organizational Policies

This organization is committed to maintaining effective, relevant, and legally compliant abuse and prevention policies. To that end, all applicable policies will undergo an annual review to:

- Confirm that the policy's purpose and goals remain relevant and aligned with organizational priorities;
- Evaluate whether any policies should be consolidated or retired;
- Ensure compliance with current laws and regulations; and
- Identify opportunities to improve clarity, effectiveness, or implementation processes.

Policy Review Process

When a policy (or group of policies) is identified for review, the policy owner will:

- Draft proposed updates in collaboration with appropriate stakeholders;
- Share and discuss the draft with relevant internal parties to assess clarity, relevance, and effectiveness;
- Submit the draft for formal review by Association Leadership;
- After the policy has been reviewed and finalized, submit the approved version for release;
- Communicate any updates to employees, volunteers, and relevant stakeholders through written or electronic communication methods. Additional communication efforts may include team meetings, training sessions, or supervisory check-ins.

Policy on Communicating Policy Changes and Required Training

The organization will formally communicate any changes to policies or procedures in a reasonable time. Updates will be released through email and employee portals to insure timely and clear distribution of updates.

Efforts will be made to inform consumers, parents, and guardians of any relevant changes through appropriate channels.

When policy updates necessitate changes in practice, training will be assigned to all applicable staff and volunteers. Completion of this training will be expected as soon as practical to ensure

consistent application and understanding of new procedures.

Acknowledgement of Policies, Code of Conduct, or Standards

All employees and volunteers with access to consumers 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 and annually thereafter. The organization shall ensure that all employees and volunteers have signed a written acknowledgment upon hire and annually thereafter by keeping signed acknowledgement forms in personnel files.

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 has zero tolerance for the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. The organization is committed to providing all consumers with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. Conduct that rises to the level of abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program.

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 and staff.

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 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 include but are not limited to:

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<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 an 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 staff or volunteer• Compliments relating to physique or body development• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

Policy Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

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

Our organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions include but are not limited to:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive reinforcement and redirection• 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• Oversharing personal history• Derogatory remarks• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate youth• Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family• Compliments relating to physique or body development

Policy for Managing One-on-One Interactions Between Employees, Volunteers, and Youth

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

In situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, staff should observe the

following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false-allegations of abuse:

Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions
<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 during one-on-one interactions. If unavoidable, ensure that physical and verbal interactions align with our established policies. 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.• Inform other staff and volunteers that you are alone with a youth and ask them to randomly drop in.• Ensure one-on-one interactions are documented. Keep documentation of these meetings.• 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:

- Staff and volunteers must have supervisor approval for any tutoring or private coaching sessions.
- Tutoring and coaching sessions with our organization's youth may not occur outside of approved sites.
- 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 and Youth Outside the Organization

Research shows many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. Allowing this contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put staff and our organization at increased risk.

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

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

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

Policy Governing Electronic Communication between Staff and Youth

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

All communication between staff 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"> • Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth's parent • Communicating through technology platforms and group pages on social media platforms or other approved public forums • Sharing social media posts from the YMCA of Greenville and other partner agencies highlighting programs, participants, or highlights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments • Sexually oriented conversations/communication including sexting, pornographic images, videos, and other types of pornographic materials. • Private messages between staff and volunteers with youth • Posting pictures of organization participants on personal or private social media sites • Posting inappropriate comments on pictures • "Friending" participants on social networking sites

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 must be mindful of following expectations:

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

Policy Addressing Staff Cell Phone/Technology Use During Program Hours

While assigned to work with youth, staff 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 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/Technology during Program Hours

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

- Field Trips
- Off-site Programs
- Emergencies

Policy Regarding Gift-Giving and Gift Acceptance

We strongly discourage employees from exchanging gifts with youth. However, gifts may be given under the following circumstances:

- To avoid favoritism, gifts should be given to an entire group (ie – huddles, divisions, sports teams) and not individuals. Gifts should be approved by your supervisor.
- Employees should communicate that the gift is given on behalf of the organization and not the individual employee.

Policy Regarding 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.

Cooperation with investigations includes, but is not limited to:

- Promptly acknowledging and responding to requests for information;
- Making oneself available for meetings with investigative officials;
- Providing full, accurate, and truthful information;
- Keeping all information confidential;
- Preserving relevant information and documents

Policy Governing Mandatory Reporting Requirements

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

Staff will 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 youth against abuse;
- Document in writing applicable information related to potential abuse such as names, ages, addresses, examples of potential abuse, and other pertinent information;
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the South Carolina Department of Social Services at 888-227-3484; and
- Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

Staff 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 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.