



PROTECTING THE >>> NEXT GENERATION

ABUSE PREVENTION
POLICIES & PROCEDURES
THE YMCA OF BRISTOL



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I. GENERAL DEFINITIONS ›

TYPES OF ABUSE

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

II. CODE OF CONDUCT WITH YOUTH ›

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

The YMCA of Bristol provides youth with the highest quality services available. We are committed to creating an environment for youth that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and 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 youth or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Our organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation. The Conduct with Youth outlines specific expectations of the staff and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Youth will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Youth will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, abilities, or ethnicity.
3. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by our organization.
4. Staff and volunteers will avoid affection with youth that cannot be observed by others.
5. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by our organization.
6. Staff and volunteers will not stare at or comment on youth bodies.
7. Staff and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youth.

8. Staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care of youth will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in their presence.
9. Staff and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or on-line pornography, on our organization's property.
10. Staff and volunteers will not have secrets with youth and will only give gifts with prior permission from a supervisor.
11. Staff and volunteers will comply with our organization's policies regarding interactions with youth outside of our programs.
12. Staff and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with youth.
13. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with youth in a private setting. Staff and volunteers will use common areas when working with individual youth.
14. Staff and volunteers will not abuse youth in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:
 - Physical abuse:** Hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints
 - Verbal abuse:** Degrading, threatening, cursing
 - Sexual abuse:** Inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations
 - Mental abuse:** Shaming, humiliation, cruelty
 - Neglect:** Withholding food, water, shelter
15. 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 steps needed 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:

 - a. Physical bullying – When one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining one-another.
 - b. Verbal bullying – When someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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:

 - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
 - Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
 - Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
 - 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.
16. All staff must follow state specific 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:
- a. Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
 - b. Know and follow organizational policies and procedures that protect youth against abuse.
 - c. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws.
 - d. Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.
17. Staff and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other staff, volunteers, adults, or youth to our organization's supervisor or Praesidium's Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751.
18. 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.
19. Staff and volunteers may not have engaged in or been convicted of youth abuse, indecency with a youth, or injury to a youth.

III. POLICIES >

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

ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT OF ONE CONSUMER BY ANOTHER CONSUMER

The YMCA has zero tolerance for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity among consumers within the organization. The YMCA of Bristol is committed to providing all consumers with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one consumer by another consumer. Conduct that rises to the level of abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity will result in intervention, and/or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program or facility. 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, the organization will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

A. PHYSICAL CONTACT ▼

The YMCA of Bristol's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth and staff. We encourage appropriate physical contact with youth and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff towards youth in the Y's programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The YMCA of Bristol's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions include:

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 fist-bumping• 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 area

B. VERBAL INTERACTION ▼

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 or around youth.

The YMCA of Bristol's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

APPROPRIATE VERBAL INTERACTIONS	INAPPROPRIATE VERBAL INTERACTIONS
<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

C. ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTION ▼

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a youth. The YMCA of Bristol aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the Y's administration.

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:

ADDITIONAL 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 the likes.
- 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.

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:

- a. Staff and volunteers must have supervisor approval for any tutoring or private coaching sessions.
- b. Tutoring and coaching sessions with the Y's youth may not occur outside of the Y's facilities, and must take place in public areas.
- c. Supervisors must keep a schedule of private tutoring and coaching sessions, which should include times, youth involved, and location of sessions. All payments would go through the YMCA directly.

D. OFF-SITE CONTACT ▼

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

The YMCA of Bristol prohibits interactions outside of regularly scheduled program activities. In addition, staff are not permitted to babysit youth who are involved in our Y and/or its programs.

If off-site contacts are unavoidable (such as during mentoring programs), the YMCA of Bristol has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

APPROPRIATE OUTSIDE INTERACTIONS	INAPPROPRIATE OUTSIDE INTERACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking groups of youth on outings• Attending sporting activities with groups of youth• Attending functions at a youth's home with parents present	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking one youth on an outing without the parents' written permission• Visiting one youth in the youth's home, without a parent present• Babysitting YMCA youth• Entertaining one youth in the home of staff or volunteers• A lone youth spending the night with staff or volunteers

E. INTERNET USE AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION ▼

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 the YMCA of Bristol at increased risk.

The YMCA of Bristol prohibits interactions outside of regularly scheduled program activities. In addition, staff are not permitted to babysit youth who are involved in our YMCA and its programs.

If off-site contacts are unavoidable (such as during mentoring programs), the YMCA of Bristol has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

APPROPRIATE ELECTRONIC INTERACTIONS	INAPPROPRIATE ELECTRONIC INTERACTIONS
<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 non-YMCA social media sites• Posting inappropriate comments on pictures• "Friending" participants on social networking sites

YMCA programs that allow for internet use are strictly monitored to ensure that all sites that are available have been approved by our YMCA leadership and represent the type of conduct that is expected from a leader in our YMCA and in the community.

1. CELL PHONE USE

If your position involves providing direct service to members/participants/guests, you are not permitted to use your personal mobile communication device(s) while working. If you have an emergency situation which requires you to use your mobile device, you must notify your supervisor before taking/making the call/ text so that you can be relieved from your duties to attend to the situation.

Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact (via voice, text, or pictures/ video) Y 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 will need to use personal or Y issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of Y issued or personal electronic communication devices include:

- a. Field Trips
- b. Off-site Programs
- c. Emergencies

F. GIFT GIVING ▼

Molesters routinely groom youth by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the youth. They might instruct the youth to keep the gift(s) a secret, which then encourages the youth to keep secrets from parents. For this reason, staff and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of youth, and only under the following circumstances:

- 1. Administration must be made aware of and approve the gift.
- 2. Parents must be notified.

Staff should also not accept gifts from youth. If at any time a child gives a staff member a gift, the staff's supervisor should be made aware immediately so next steps can be determined.

G. DISCIPLINE IN YMCA PROGRAMS ▼

The YMCA of Bristol has establish age and developmentally appropriate expectations and behavioral guidelines for participants. To the extent that discipline of a participant is warranted, this organization will apply discipline in a professional, fair, and consistent manner. Employees and/or volunteers engaging in any discipline beyond verbal redirection should document the behavior and disciplinary method. The YMCA of Bristol retains the option to exclude participants from future programs based on disciplinary issues.

In all cases, employees and volunteers are prohibited from using physical contact for disciplinary purposes. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate participant behaviors.

H. USE OF TECHNOLOGY CODE OF CONDUCT ▼

The YMCA of Bristol strongly encourages employees and volunteers to refrain from electronic communication and/or social media use with participants. However, if these interactions are part of programming or otherwise unavoidable, the YMCA requires that staff and volunteers:

1. Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer to be, harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
2. Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
3. Prohibit private messages between employees, volunteers and consumers.
4. Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures or inappropriate comments on pictures.

The YMCA of Bristol staff monitors its social media pages and removes any posts that violate the Y's policies for appropriate behavior. The YMCA will inform parents/guardians of any such prohibited posts or online behavior. We highly encourage employees and volunteers to have "private" profiles so that consumers do not have access to their private information.

IV. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION ›

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, risk is managed. Before committing to the usage of a space, YMCA leadership and Risk Management team members should review the space to identify potential areas of concern as it relates to abuse risk management. Areas of concern should be identified and equipped with a plan to mitigate any risks that are presented.

The YMCA of Bristol always has a Manager on Duty team member who is directly responsible for the care and protection of the facility and those within the Y. Regular rounds should be conducted to ensure that all spaces are free from harm and that appropriate precautions are taken by those that are allowing access into the facility.

B. CHECKING MEMBERS AND VISITORS INTO A FACILITY

1. When anyone (members, guests, participants, construction workers, maintenance, cleaning crews, etc.) enters the facility during operational hours, they must check in with the front desk Greeter.
2. Our a single point of entry and exit in the facility is through Front sliding doors.
3. As there more than one exit, YMCA staff will ensure these other points of access are consistently checked and monitored.

C. GENERAL SUPERVISION

GENERAL SUPERVISION PROCEDURES:

1. Administrative and Supervisory Visits to Youth Programs – Our supervisors and administrators use scheduled and random observations of all programs, program locations and buildings; engage in spontaneous and scheduled conversations with employees, volunteers and consumers; conduct group and individual supervision and training meetings; and review program documentation, to ensure that safety standards are always in place.

2. Ratios – Each program will follow the ratio requirements that are directly related to the goals of the program and the design of the program area. The staff or volunteer-to-youth ratio should be adjusted for programs that serve youth with special needs. Refer to local licensing requirements and general best practice guidelines for establishing adult-to-youth ratios through the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS).

3. The ratios listed below are required for all child care and camp programs.

AGE OF CHILDREN	STAFF / CHILD RATIO
Six (6) weeks to 15 months)	1:4 (max group size of 8)
Twelve (12) to thirty (30) months)	1:6 (max group size of 12)
Twenty-four (24) to Thirty-Five (35) months	1:7 (max group size of 14)
Three (3) years	1:9 (max group size of 18)
Four (4) years	1:13 (max group size of 20)
Five (5) years	1:16 (max group size of 20)
School age: Five (5) to Twelve (12) years	1:20 (No Max)

4. 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 youth from different age groups. Staff and volunteers must be aware that close line of sight supervision is especially required when monitoring programs that mix age groups.

D. MONITORING YOUTH IN FACILITIES

At a YMCA facility, children must be 12 years old or above to be at the YMCA without an adult present. Children under the age of 12 must have an adult present while they participate in YMCA activities.

1. The YMCA requires 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.
2. While in the facility, youth can be supervised directly, indirectly, or with a combination of the two techniques.
 - a. For direct supervision, the program may offer structured, scheduled activities like basketball, swimming activities, arts and crafts, etc. These activities should have one or more staff assigned to lead and supervise.
 - b. For indirect supervision, the program must designate certain building areas as authorized areas. Authorized areas could include a gymnasium, a game area, or a room for doing homework and so on. Authorized areas must be easily visible and routinely and systematically checked by staff at least once per hour.
3. All program staff should wear name tags or identifying clothing so that the youth can easily recognize them as such.
4. The YMCA trains all staff:
 - a. To greet youth that enter the facility, to direct youth to the structured activities or authorized areas, and to redirect youth who are not in an authorized area or who are not participating in a structured activity.
 - b. To be aware of the risks involved with mixing age groups and how to monitor activities involving mixed age groups.
 - c. To routinely monitor high risk areas (such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and unused rooms and areas).

E. MONITORING HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

1. BATHROOM ACTIVITIES ▼

Most incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in the bathrooms. Therefore, the following supervision guidelines have been implemented:

When supervising restroom use, adult staff members should first quickly scan the bathroom before allowing youth to enter.

a. For “Group Bathroom Breaks”:

- Require staff to take groups of three or more to make trips the bathroom –following the “rule of three” or more.
- If the bathroom only has one stall, only one youth should enter the restroom while the others wait outside with the staff.
- If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many youth as there are stalls.
- Minimize youth of different ages using the bathroom at the same time.
- Require staff to stand outside the bathroom door but remain within earshot.

b. For single use restrooms:

- Require youth to ask permission to use the bathroom.
- Require all staff to frequently check bathrooms.

c. Prohibit staff from using the bathroom at the same time as youth.

d. If assisting young children in the stalls, the staff should keep the door to the stall open.

e. For diapering, the YMCA of Bristol requires that all staff adhere to the diapering processes set forth by the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS).

2. CHANGING ROOM ACTIVITIES ▼

The changing room procedures include:

- a.** Our participants do not go in a locker room per se, as we have individual changing and shower/restrooms which are private. We have at least one staff member stand in the area doorway and within earshot of the youth, and ensure that only one youth is in each individual room.

3. SHOWER ACTIVITIES ▼

Generally, our participants do not shower; however, we have individual shower rooms that are private, if they do:

- We have at least one staff member stand in the area doorway and within earshot of the youth, and ensure that only one youth is in each individual room.

4. TRANSITION TIMES AND FREE TIMES ▼

Transition times and free-choice times (or free times) pose a high risk for incidents because during these times, staff and volunteers may not be assigned a particular group of youth to supervise. To decrease the risk of incidents, the YMCA of Bristol will explore the following procedures for each program/activity (all may not apply to each program):

- a. Require youth to remain in line-of-sight of staff at all times.
- b. Specify the necessary staff-to-youth ratio.
- c. Specify narrow geographic boundaries in the program areas.
- d. Ensure that all staff are assigned specific areas to supervise ("zone monitoring").
- e. Include bathroom procedures.
- f. Require periodic roll calls for each age group.
- g. Require supervisors to conduct periodic check-ins and sweeps of the entire activity area.

5. PLAYGROUND ACTIVITIES ▼

The playground procedures require:

- a. Youth to remain in line-of-sight of staff at all times.
- b. Definition of specific and narrow geographic boundaries around the playground area.
- c. Specific instructions on how to monitor barriers of supervision (such as storage sheds, playhouses, tunnels, and shrubs).
- d. That all staff are assigned specific areas to supervise ("zone monitoring").
- e. Specific bathroom procedures.
- f. Staff to conduct periodic roll calls for each age group.
- g. Supervisors to conduct periodic check-ins and assessments of the activity period and of the entire activity area.

6. TRANSPORTATION ACTIVITIES ▼

Transporting youth may increase the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse because staff and volunteers may be alone with a youth or may make unauthorized stops with youth. In addition, transportation activities may provide a time for unsupervised youth to engage in youth-to-youth sexual activity. Therefore, it is the policy of the YMCA of Bristol not to transport youth in personal vehicles.

The Transportation Guidelines:

- a. Require written parent permission from all youth on the trip. Staff take these permission forms and medical releases with them on the trip or have them readily available.
- b. Require staff to have a list of the youth 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.
- c. Specify staff-to-youth ratios. When possible, do not count the driver in the supervision ratio.
- d. Require staff to sit in seats that permit maximum supervision.
- e. Discourage mixed age groups from sitting together. When possible, high risk youth are seated by themselves or with a staff member.
- f. Prohibit drivers from making unauthorized stops.
- g. Require documentation of any unusual occurrences.

When public transportation is used:

- a. In addition to the transportation procedures listed above, youth should remain in one area of the bus, if possible.
- b. Staff and volunteers that are assigned to a group should remain with that group on the bus.
- c. Take a headcount or call roll immediately after entering and leaving the bus.

In situations where staff transport youth in rented, chartered, or leased vehicles:

- a. Administrators must be notified of all transportation activities.
- b. Use the “rule of three” when transporting youth: At least two adults must transport a single youth, or at least two youth must be present if transported by a single adult.
- c. Youth must never be transported without written permission from a parent.
- d. Youth must be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops may be made.
- e. A staff member must document beginning and ending times and mileage, the names of youth, and other staff and volunteers who are involved in transportation, purpose of the transportation, and destination.
- f. Staff must avoid unnecessary physical contact with youth while in vehicles.
- g. When possible, staff should avoid engaging in sensitive conversations with youth.

7. OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES ▼

- a. Off-site activities and programs present unique risks for the safety of children and are among the most common settings where adult-to-child and child-to-child sexual misconduct occurs. Some of the special circumstances which cause these to be high-risk environments are that large groups are difficult to monitor, children may be more likely to act out in a less structured environment, organizations cannot screen all other adults who may have access to children off-site, and many off-site programs (like community-based care) include one-on-one interactions. It is important that supervisors and administrators are aware of these risks and take measures to minimize them through effective monitoring and supervision practices.
- b. Our supervisors and administrators use scheduled and random observations of all off-site activities and programs; conduct group and individual supervision and training meetings before and after offsite activities or programs; and review relevant program documentation and records, to ensure that safety standards are always in place.

The off-site procedures include:

- a. Requiring supervisor approval for all off-site activities.
- b. Requiring parental approval.
- c. Specifying staff-to-youth ratios for the activity.
- d. Requiring staff and youth to be easily identifiable.
- e. Including specific bathroom and locker room procedures as applicable to outing.
- f. Including transportation procedures.
- g. Including instructions for a supervisor to observe the off-site activities at scheduled times and random intervals.
- h. Considering specific recommendations based on the location and type of activity (for example, Camps, Amusement parks, Water Parks, Arcades, etc.).

8. Overnight Activities

The YMCA of Bristol does not have any Overnight Activities

9. NAPTIME/SLEEPING AREAS

The YMCA of Bristol does not have any Naptime/Sleeping Areas

10. TEEN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM ▼

Older youth who participate in teen leadership programs are still youth participants and not staff or volunteers. Therefore, even though they are often given more responsibility, teens in the leadership programs must be provided with guidelines regarding appropriate behavior, and then supervised accordingly. In addition, staff and volunteers must understand and recognize that these teens are still youth and not their peers. Therefore, the following guidelines are recommended for teen leadership programs:

a. Create a screening process for teen leaders which includes:

- A standard application.
- An interview with behaviorally based interview questions.
- References (from teachers, counselors, family, friends, etc.).

b. Train teen leaders in their role in programs and on program policies about appropriate and inappropriate interactions. This training should include the following information:

- Appropriate and inappropriate physical and verbal interactions and the importance of maintaining behavioral boundaries between teen leaders and younger youth and between teen leaders and staff and volunteers.
- Prohibiting teen leaders from being one-on-one with youth.
- Prohibiting teen leaders from escorting youth to the bathrooms.
- Prohibiting teen leaders from assisting youth with changing their clothes.

c. Create a system to monitor the teen leaders that includes:

- Designate a specific employee or volunteer who is in charge of the teen leadership program and its participants.
- Require teen leaders to wear clothing or lanyards that identify them as leaders-in-training and differentiate them from both staff, volunteers, and from younger youth.
- A staff person should be assigned to work directly with each teen leader.
- Consider requiring teen leaders to keep a journal documenting their daily activities and any problems they encounter. The program supervisor will review these journals on a regular basis.

11. DIAPERING / TOILETING AND PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANCE ▼

When assisting guest/participants with personal care:

- a. Always use the least intrusive methods possible. For example, allow the consumer to do as much as they can by themselves. To the degree possible, use verbal prompts, instead of physically touching guests/participants, to guide the consumer in self-assisting tasks.
- b. Avoid staring at the participant's body.
- c. Document any observed injury, disclosures of abuse, or any interactions that may have been misinterpreted.
- d. Avoid giving physical affection. If physical affection is necessary, limit it to handshakes or high fives. Avoid more intimate forms of physical affection such as hugs.
- e. Allow for informal monitoring as long as it does not infringe on the consumer's right to privacy. For example, if possible, keep the bathroom door cracked so passersby can see the adult assisting but not the consumer.
- f. Make every attempt to have employees of the same gender as that of the consumer to provide personal care.

For diapering:

- a. Placing the changing table in an area where adult actions can be observed by others.
- b. Encouraging that diapers only be changed when at least two adults, or individuals are present.
- c. Each diaper changing is documented.
- d. Informing supervisors if employees notice anything out of the ordinary or concerning while changing the participant's diaper. Requiring employees to know and follow all licensing requirements having to do with diapering.

For toileting:

- a. Require employees to stand in the doorway with the door ajar while the consumer uses the restroom.
- b. If employees must enter the restroom to assist a consumer, ensure that the door to the restroom remains open.
- c. When possible, send in only one consumer at a time. When not possible, send in only as many guest/participants as there are stalls.

Licensed child care/camp programs will follow Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) guidelines.

12. AQUATICS PROGRAMS ▼

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

13. MONITORING YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMMING ▼

To ensure safety and quality in the various youth sports programs, practices must be monitored and evaluated by an employee who is familiar with policies and procedures.

- a. Visits to the program.** The YMCA team will regularly visit programs and provide employees with feedback about visits and any necessary adjustments to program operations that is necessary.
- b. Vary observation times.** YMCA teams will drop in at different times each time there is a visit. This will ensure that we are seeing the program during unpredictable hours.
- c. Survey the physical environment.** YMCA teams will review if the location is a suitable location for the activity (e.g. size of area for number of youths, ability to supervise all areas used by youth, landscaping that may inhibit supervision)?
- d. Watch activities.** YMCA leadership will ensure that the employees are actively involved in programming.
- e. Observe bathroom and locker room activities.** YMCA team members must observe bathroom and locker room activities to ensure that the employees are complying with the established policies and procedures.

F. TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS WHO MONITOR ON-SITE & OFF-SITE PROGRAMS

- **Keep a record.** Document your supervision visits. Include information like your arrival and departure times, which youth 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 routine that staff follow to prepare for the youth to arrive.
- **Survey the physical environment.** Is this a suitable location for the activity (e.g. size of area for number of youth, ability to supervise all areas used by youth, 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 with what is actually going on at a given time.
- **Observe bathroom and locker room activities.** Observe bathroom and locker room activities to ensure that the staff are complying with the established policies and procedures.
- **Observe Interactions.**

V. 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 a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a 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. The YMCA has precise, unequivocal requirements for reporting to the authorities and for adhering to a serious-incident response plan.

A. THE YMCA'S MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

All employees and volunteers must follow state specific mandatory reporting requirements. Employees and volunteers must be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. Employees and volunteers will:

1. be familiar with the symptoms of abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse;
2. know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect against abuse;
3. report suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws; and
4. follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

Employees and volunteers will read and sign the Code of Conduct documenting employee's or volunteer's understanding of the legal and ethical duty to report suspected mistreatment or abuse.

B. REQUIRED COOPERATION WITH INVESTIGATORS

This organization takes every allegation of abuse or misconduct seriously and will fully cooperate with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse or misconduct.

Employees and volunteers shall cooperate with any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization.

Cooperation with investigations includes, but is not limited to:

- Promptly acknowledging and responding to requests for information;
- Making oneself available for meetings with investigating officials;
- Providing full, accurate, and truthful information;
- Keeping confidential information learned or transmitted during the investigation, unless directed by legal authorities, and
- Preserving relevant information and documents. An employee or volunteer's failure to cooperate with an investigation will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or dismissal from the organization.

C. 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 the protection of youth. In the event that staff observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other staff or volunteers, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations. Remember, at our organization, the policies apply to everyone.

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 youth
- Buying gifts for individual youth
- Making suggestive comments to youth
- Picking favorites

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youth will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

D. MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY IN RESPONDING TO REPORTS

This organization will protect the confidentiality of anyone who reports allegations or disclosures of abuse, or other violations of law or policy to the extent possible under law. Legal and civil authorities (police, child or adult protective services) may require confidential information in order to investigate any report of illegal conduct but this does not eliminate the requirement to maintain confidentiality within the organization and its employees, volunteers, and consumers.

E. FOLLOWING UP AFTER A REPORT, CONCERN, COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

1. Employees and volunteers will be given the time and attention necessary to allow them to share their thoughts in person.
2. They will be thanked for sharing their concerns with the organization and for contributing to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for everyone.
3. They will be advised that their concern is being taken seriously and that action will be taken.
4. They will be reassured that they have done the right thing by reporting and that their communication is valued.
5. They will be informed, in general statements, of the steps that the organization will take in addressing the matter.
6. They will be given contact information for someone in the organization with whom they can contact should they become aware of additional information.
7. They will be provided regular updates of how the process is advancing.
8. The organization will protect them from any form of retaliation.

1. 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 not comfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously.
- If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management.
- Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.
- Complete an incident report found in the Membership Office.

2. 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 and determine the appropriate administrator to respond to the concern.
- 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 through the incident reporting system found in the Membership Office.
- If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the 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:

- a. Increase monitoring or supervision of the staff, volunteer, or program.
- b. If policy violations with youth are confirmed, the staff or volunteer will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution.
- c. If more information is needed, interview and/or survey other staff and volunteers or youth.

3. 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.

F. RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ABUSE BY AN ADULT

1. STAFF OR VOLUNTEER RESPONSE TO ABUSE ▼

As required by mandated reporting laws, staff and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth—whether on or off organization property or whether perpetrated by staff, volunteers, or others—to the proper authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice. *Refer to Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) for definitions of abuse more, and specific reporting information.

In addition to reporting to state authorities, staff and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of youth perpetrated by staff or volunteers directly to leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk. Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following:

- a. Immediate supervisor
- b. Directors
- c. Administrators

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR STAFF / VOLUNTEER RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

- If you witness abuse, 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.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident but it **IS** your job to report the incident to your supervisor in a timely manner.
- Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to your supervisor or the designated organization authority.
- Be cooperative with any investigation.

2. SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSE TO ABUSE ▼

In addition to the above response procedures, supervisors and administrators should ensure the following:

GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISOR 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. For example, who made the report, who was allegedly abused, who was the alleged abuser, what was the nature of the alleged abuse, where and when did the alleged abuse occur, etc.
- Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.
- Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Make sure you get a case number and the name and contact information of the person with whom you speak 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.
- Be cooperative with any investigation.

G. RESPONDING TO YOUTH-TO-YOUTH SEXUAL ABUSE & SEXUALIZED BEHAVIORS

The thought that one youth may sexually abuse another youth does not occur to many people. Unfortunately, abuse between peers has increased 300% 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.

1. 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 youth and sexualized behaviors of youth must be consistently documented.

2. 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:

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS RESPONDING TO YOUTH-TO-YOUTH SEXUAL ACTIVITY

- If you observe sexual activity between youth, separate them immediately.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted (keep youth separated).
- Notify your supervisor.
- Complete any necessary paperwork including what you observed and how you responded. The incident report can be found in the Membership Office.
- 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 youth to return to the program.
- Be cooperative with any investigation.

3. SUPERVISORS RESPONSE ▼

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

GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISORS RESPONDING TO YOUTH-TO-YOUTH SEXUAL ACTIVITY

- Meet with the staff who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the youth 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 youth involved.
- Determine what actions should be taken to make sure there is no recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.
- Notify the proper authorities.
- Complete the necessary paperwork including what you observed and how you responded. The incident report can be found at all department head's desks
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident.
- Be cooperative with any investigation.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE ▼

After the internal review of the sexual behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the YMCA will determine what can be done to prevent a recurrence, 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.

Protecting the Next Generation – Recap

Our Promise to Youth and Families

At the YMCA, the safety and well-being of children is our top priority. Guided by Praesidium's best practices and the YMCA's core values – **Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility** – every staff member and volunteer plays a vital role in creating a culture of safety.

• **Child Abuse Is Preventable**

The YMCA believes child abuse **can be prevented** when strong systems, clear expectations, and consistent supervision are in place. Prevention is not just about reacting to incidents—it is about: – Reducing risk before harm occurs – Creating safe environments for youth – Holding ourselves and one another accountable

Every YMCA staff and volunteer shares responsibility for prevention.

• **The Safety Equation**

Abuse typically occurs when three conditions are present:

1. Access to a child
2. Privacy with a child
3. Control over a child

YMCA policies are designed to limit or remove these conditions through: – Open, observable program spaces – Two-deep leadership and supervision standards – Clear boundaries and behavior expectations. When we reduce access, privacy, or control, we reduce risk.

• **Everyone Is Responsible for Child Safety**

Child abuse prevention is not just the responsibility of leadership or supervisors. It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers who are associated with the YMCA of Bristol. All YMCA staff and volunteers are required to: – Complete child abuse prevention training – Follow YMCA policies at all times – Speak up about concerns – Report suspected abuse or policy violations.

• **Professional Boundaries Are Essential**

Maintaining appropriate boundaries protects youth and staff.

YMCA staff and volunteers must understand and follow expectations related to – Appropriate physical contact – One-on-one interactions – Electronic communication and social media – Transportation and supervision – Gifts, favoritism, or special privileges

Boundary violations are often early warning signs and must be addressed immediately—even if abuse is not suspected.

• **Recognizing Red Flags and Grooming Behaviors**

Staff and volunteers must be alert to warning signs that may indicate risk, including: Excessive attention to a specific child, Favoritism or special treatment, Secrecy or isolating behavior, Changes in a child's behavior, mood, or attendance, Ignoring or bending YMCA policies

If something feels inappropriate or violates policy, it must be reported.

- **High-Risk Areas Require Extra Awareness**

Certain YMCA environments require increased supervision, including: - Locker rooms and restrooms - Transportation and field trips - Overnight programs and camps - One-on-one instruction - Mixed-age programs.

Staff and volunteers must: - Remain vigilant and visible - Avoid isolation with youth - Follow all supervision and ratio requirements.

- **Mandatory Reporting: What Staff and Volunteers Must Do**

All YMCA staff and volunteers are **mandatory reporters** under YMCA policy.

Staff are required to: - Report suspected child abuse immediately - Follow state reporting laws - Follow YMCA internal reporting procedures - Report concerns even if unsure

Do not investigate on your own. Reporting protects children and ensures concerns are handled appropriately. Failure to report can put children, staff, and the YMCA at risk.

- **Policies Protect Children, Staff, and the YMCA**

YMCA child protection policies: - Clearly define acceptable and unacceptable behavior - Provide consistency across programs - Support staff in making safe decisions

All staff are expected to: - Know YMCA policies - Follow them consistently - Apply them in all settings. Policies apply at all times—regardless of role, location, or seniority.

- **Creating a Culture of Safety**

Child abuse prevention is ongoing. A strong YMCA culture of safety includes: - Regular training and refreshers - Open communication - Supportive leadership - Accountability at all levels, and cooperative with any investigation.

Staff are encouraged to ask questions, raise concerns, and support one another in maintaining a safe environment.

YMCA Staff Commitment

If something seems unsafe, inappropriate, or against policy—say something and report it.

Together, we create a safe, welcoming YMCA where children can learn, grow, and thrive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ABUSE PREVENTION MANUAL

I have read and agree to comply with the YMCA of Bristol's policies regarding sexual abuse prevention.

Signature of Employee or Volunteer

Date

Signature of Supervisor or Admin Staff

Date