

Statement for Prevention of Abuse

A principal endeavor of the YMCA is to provide a healthy atmosphere for the growth and development of children, youth and vulnerable young adults. The mistreatment or neglect of children and the resulting severe effects is of primary concern to the YMCA. *Child abuse is mistreatment or neglect of a child by parent(s) or others resulting in injury or harm. Abuse may be physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual and can lead to severe emotional, physical and behavioral problems.* Because of its concern for the welfare of children and youth, the YMCA has developed policies, standards, guidelines, and training to aid in the detection and prevention of abuse. In addition, employees and volunteers are screened and background checks are conducted. All employees receive some training in abuse prevention, and employees and volunteers who work with children, youth and young adults receive additional training in recognizing, reporting and preventing abuse, which includes training in recognizing signs of grooming for abuse.

*** Guidelines employees and volunteers are expected to follow with children, youth and vulnerable young adults (participants):**

1. Avoid being alone with a single participant where you cannot be observed by other staff or adults. (Association-approved programs designed for one-on-one contact have a separate code of conduct.)
2. You may not relate to participants who participate in YMCA programs outside of approved YMCA activities when the relationship was formed through the YMCA. For example, baby-sitting, movies, weekend trips, foster care, social networking, texting, etc. are not permitted. An exception must be approved in advance by the AVP/Risk Management and the branch executive or SVP/COO.
3. Giving personal gifts to program participant(s) or their parents is not allowed.
4. Program rules and boundaries must be followed, including appropriate touch guidelines.
5. Participants should not be singled out for favored attention.
6. Dating a program participant under age 18 is not allowed. Some YMCA programs may have additional restrictions.
7. Participants may not be disciplined by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
8. Verbally, physically, sexually, or emotionally abusing or punishing participants is not allowed.
9. Participants may be informed in a manner that is age appropriate of their right to set their own "touching" limits for personal safety.
10. Participants should only be released to authorized persons in programs with controlled pick-up procedures.
11. Any information regarding abuse or potential abuse should be documented in writing.
12. At the first reasonable cause to believe that *any* abuse exists, it should be reported to your supervisor or branch executive so that proper reporting can be initiated. Inability to consult with a supervisor or branch executive should not delay a call to authorities. Mandated reporters are required by law to report known or suspected instances of abuse and not doing so is a gross misdemeanor.
13. At the first reasonable cause to believe that *an employee or volunteer* has either crossed the boundaries of appropriate interactions, or has abused a participant, even if it was not during working hours, his or her conduct should be reported to the program director and the designated branch representative (Puzzle Master) or the branch executive. Appropriate actions will be taken regarding the employee or volunteer, including suspension or termination from YMCA employment or volunteer status, and the YMCA's protocol for making a report to the appropriate authorities will be followed.
14. Confidentiality of information related to abuse is crucial and should be limited to the immediate supervisor and/or branch executive and designated member(s) of the Association office staff. However, inappropriate and sexualized behaviors initiated by participants towards others in YMCA programs will be shared with the Puzzle Master and other staff who work with the participant.
15. Employees are required to fully cooperate with an investigation by the YMCA, any law enforcement agency, or any other authorized outside agency, and failure to do so is considered misconduct and will result in termination.

I understand the YMCA's Statement for Prevention of Abuse and agree to abide by the guidelines for ethical behavior. Furthermore, if I work in programs for care of children, day camp, resident camp or licensed programs, or I am a professional social services counselor, licensed or registered nurse, physician or teacher, or I have supervisory authority over any employee, volunteer or contractor for whom I believe has caused a participant to suffer abuse or neglect, I am aware that I am required by law to report known or suspected instances where a child, youth or vulnerable adult (or developmentally disabled person) has been abused or neglected, and not doing so is considered a gross misdemeanor.

Signature of Staff Member or Volunteer

Date