



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



# WORKING WITH YOUTH

CHILD SAFETY HANDBOOK  
YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo

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# Table of Contents

Types of Abuse.....	3
Code of Conduct with Youth .....	3
Bullying .....	5
Policies.....	5
Physical Conduct.....	5
Outside Contact.....	6
Verbal Interaction .....	6
One-on-One Interaction .....	7
Electronic Communication.....	8
Use of Electronic Communication Devices: .....	8
Gift Giving .....	9
Monitoring and Supervision .....	9
Bathroom Activities.....	9
Diapering .....	10
Locker Room and Shower Activities.....	10
Transition Times and Free Times.....	10
Playground Activities .....	10
Transportation Activities.....	11
Overnight Activities .....	11
Responding .....	12
Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations.....	13
Responding to Suspected Abuse by an Adult.....	15
Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors.....	16
Conclusion.....	18
Commitment to Child Safety.....	18

# CHILD SAFETY

## Types of Abuse

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

## Code of Conduct with Youth

The following policies are intended to assist Staff/Volunteers in making decisions about interactions with youths. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, the Staff/Volunteer's supervisor should be contacted.

The Association provides its youths with the highest quality services available. The Association is committed to creating an environment for youths 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 termination. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously. The Association will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

The Conduct with Youth outlines specific expectations of Staff/Volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Staff/volunteer will act in a caring, honest, respectful, and responsible manner and will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
2. In a YMCA program, staff/volunteer shall never leave a child unsupervised.
3. Staff/volunteer will treat all people equally regardless of sex, gender, race, religion, culture.
4. Staff/Volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of physical conduct as outlined by the Association (see detailed section below).
5. In order to protect staff, volunteers, and program participants – at no time during a YMCA program may staff/volunteer be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others (see detailed section below).
6. Staff/Volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of verbal interactions as outlined by the Association (see detailed section below).
7. Adult staff/volunteer may not date participants in their program under the age of 18 years.
8. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during working or volunteer hours or on program or camp premises is prohibited.

9. Staff/volunteers are prohibited from accessing, displaying, or possessing inappropriate information or pornography on the organization's property or equipment.
10. Staff/Volunteers will comply with the Association's policies regarding interaction with youths outside of the Association's programs (see detailed section below).
11. Staff/volunteers are prohibited from inappropriate electronic communication with participants and at no time shall Y employees or volunteers use personal cell phones to communicate directly with youth in Y activities (see detailed section below).
12. Staff/volunteer may not transport children in their own vehicles without parent permission and prior approval of Senior Management staff (at minimum, 2 staff required for transport).
13. Staff/volunteers may not single out children for favored attention. Any gifts received or given must be reported to your supervisor (see detailed section below).
14. Staff/Volunteers will not abuse youths in any way including (but not limited to) the following:
  - physical abuse – strike, spank, shake, slap
  - verbal abuse – humiliate, degrade, threaten
  - mental abuse – shaming, withholding love, cruelty
  - sexual abuse – inappropriate touch or verbal exchange
  - neglect – withholding food, water, basic care, etc.

Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate dismissal/removal from staff/volunteer duties.

15. All Staff/Volunteers must follow state specific mandatory reporting requirements. During Orientation, staff are trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. Staff/Volunteers will:
  - a. Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
  - b. Know and follow Association policies and procedures that protect youths 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.
16. Staff/Volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other employees, volunteers, adults, or youths to their supervisor or anonymously by calling 855-444-3911.
17. The Association cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any Staff/Volunteers shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the Association or persons given investigative authority by the Association. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.
18. All staff/volunteers must receive public sex offender registry clearance before having any contact with a child. Any individual registered on the public sex offender registry is prohibited from having contact with any child in YMCA care.

## Bullying

The Association will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. In addition, the Association will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, the Association 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 another.
- b. **Verbal bullying** – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful name.
- 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.
  - 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 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 youths and Staff/Volunteers.

## Policies

### Physical Conduct

The Association’s physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youths and employees. The Association encourages appropriate physical contact with youths and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by employees towards youths in the Association’s programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The Association’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 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 the Staff/Volunteer</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>

### Outside Contact

The Association does not sanction, encourage or endorse the use of Association Staff/Volunteers for non-Association childcare activities. Such activities are outside of the scope of Staff/Volunteers or volunteer duties with the Association. Employees shall not engage in any conduct relating to after-hours childcare during work hours.

The Association does not assume any responsibility for off-duty employment including, but not limited to, legal liability that may occur. Under such circumstances, the Association is not an individual’s employer and does not provide workers’ compensation or other coverage for such non-Association employment or activity.

Should a Staff/Volunteers member provide care or instruction outside of the Association’s oversight, the individual requesting the care must sign a waiver as well as the CEO. Contact Human Resources for information.

### Verbal Interaction

Staff/Volunteers are prohibited from speaking to youths in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Staff/Volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youths. Staff/Volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with youths.

Our Association’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</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 youths in the personal problems or issues of Staff/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 youths</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family</li> </ul>

### One-on-One Interaction

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

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, Staff/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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place in full view of others.</li> <li>• Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The Staff/Volunteers should inform other Staff/Volunteers that they will be alone with a youth and ask them to randomly drop in.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

## Electronic Communication

Any private electronic communication between Staff/Volunteers and youths, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. - is prohibited. All communication between employees and youths 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 youths ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth's parent</li><li>• Communicating through "Association group pages" on Facebook or other approved public forums</li><li>• "Private" profiles for Staff/Volunteers which youths 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</li><li>• Private messages between employees and youths</li><li>• Posting unauthorized pictures of Association participants on social media sites</li><li>• Posting inappropriate comments on pictures</li><li>• "Friending" participants on social networking sites</li></ul>

## Use of Electronic Communication Devices:

While supervising children, staff and volunteers are expected to remain fully engaged and attentive. Personal use of electronic communication devices, including texting, social media, internet browsing, or non-work-related communication, is not permitted during program hours, except during approved breaks or in emergency situations. Staff should also ensure that friends and family understand they will not be available for personal communication while working.

Staff may use personal or Association-issued devices for approved, work-related purposes, including communication through designated parent communication apps. Any such use must be limited, purposeful, and directly related to program operations or child safety.

Situations that may warrant use of electronic devices include:

- Communicating with families through authorized apps
- Field trips
- Off-site programs
- Emergencies

## Gift Giving

Individuals who intend to harm children may attempt to build trust by offering special attention or gifts, sometimes encouraging children to keep these interactions secret. To help maintain healthy, transparent relationships and protect all participants, staff and volunteers must follow clear guidelines when giving gifts.

Staff and volunteers may only provide gifts in group settings—not to individual children—and only under the following conditions:

1. Gift-giving must be approved in advance by program administration.
2. Parents/guardians must be informed of the gift.

This approach helps ensure transparency, reinforces appropriate boundaries, and supports a safe environment for all children.

## Monitoring and Supervision

When Staff/Volunteers are adequately supervised, potential offenders are less likely to act on their impulses because they face detection. When youths are adequately supervised, they too are less likely to engage in inappropriate interactions with others. Effective supervision and monitoring require that a variety of methods be used frequently.

### Bathroom Activities

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

When supervising restroom use, Staff/Volunteers are to make sure the restroom/locker room is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing youth to enter.

Whenever possible Staff/Volunteers will stand in the doorway of the restroom while children are using the restroom. This allows privacy for the children and protection for the Staff/Volunteers.

- a. For “Group Bathroom Breaks”:
  - Staff/Volunteers are required to take groups of two or more youths to 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/Volunteer.
  - If there are multiple stalls, the Staff/Volunteers member should only send in as many youths as there are stalls.
  - Staff/Volunteers should make every effort to minimize youths of different ages using the bathroom at the same time.
- b. For individual use restrooms:
  - Youths must ask permission to use the bathroom.
- c. Staff/Volunteers are prohibited from using the bathroom at the same time as youths.
- d. If Staff/Volunteers are assisting younger children, doors must remain open.

## Diapering

- a. The changing table shall be placed in an accessible area where adult actions can be observed by others.
- b. Diapers are only to be changed when at least two adults are present.
- c. There shall be written documentation of diaper changes.
- d. The employee shall notify their supervisor and the infant's parent if the employee notices anything out of the ordinary or concerning while changing the infant's diaper.
- e. Staff/Volunteers shall follow all licensing requirements having to do with diapering.

## Locker Room Activities

The following procedures are in place to ensure safety, privacy, and appropriate supervision during locker room and shower use:

- Staff/volunteers must remain within earshot of the locker room or shower area whenever it is in use by youth.
- Staff/volunteers should conduct intermittent, brief visual checks to ensure appropriate behavior and make it clear that the space is actively monitored, while still respecting privacy.
- Youth should be grouped by similar ages when using locker rooms whenever possible.
- Inappropriate behavior, including horseplay (e.g., towel snapping), is not permitted.

### **Shower-Specific Guidelines:**

- Staff/volunteers and youth must use shower facilities at separate times.
- Staff must coordinate with one another to ensure continuous supervision of youth while maintaining appropriate staff coverage.
- During youth shower time, at least one staff member must be positioned at the bathroom or locker room entrance, within earshot.
- Only one youth is permitted per shower space at a time.

## Transition Times and Free Times

Transition periods and free-choice (free) times can present increased risk, as youth may not be assigned to a specific group or staff member. During these times, staff and volunteers must maintain active supervision at all times. All youth are required to remain within staff line of sight, and staff should be intentionally positioned to monitor all areas, ensure appropriate behavior, and respond quickly to any concerns.

## Playground Activities

The playground procedures require:

- a. All youth must remain within the direct line of sight of Staff/Volunteers at all times.
- b. Clearly defined and limited playground boundaries must be established and communicated to both staff and youth before use. Youth are not permitted outside these boundaries without staff supervision.
- c. Staff/Volunteers will be assigned to specific supervision zones ("zone monitoring") to ensure full coverage of the playground. Staff are responsible for actively scanning their assigned areas, anticipating risks, and repositioning as needed to eliminate blind spots.

### Transportation Activities

Transporting youths may increase the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse because Staff/Volunteers may be alone with a youth or may make unauthorized stops with youths. In addition, transportation activities may provide a time for unsupervised youths to engage in youth-to-youth sexual activity.

The transportation guidelines:

- a. Staff/Volunteers should have written parent permission from all youths on the trip. Staff/Volunteers are to take these permission forms and medical releases with them on the trip.
- b. Staff/Volunteers shall have a list of the youths on the trip. The Staff/Volunteers shall take roll when boarding the bus, when leaving the bus, periodically throughout the trip, and then again when boarding the bus.
- c. Staff/Volunteers are to sit in seats that permit maximum supervision.
- d. Staff/Volunteers are discouraged, whenever possible, from permitting mixed age groups from sitting together.
- e. Any unusual occurrences shall be documented.

When public transportation is used:

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

### Overnight Activities

Overnight stays present unique risks to youths and Staff/Volunteers. They often involve changing clothes, groups of both genders and different ages in a more intimate atmosphere than usual, more unstructured activities, and increased supervision demands for Staff/Volunteers.

Supervision Guidelines:

- a. All overnight activities must be documented and approved in writing by the Program Director.
- b. Administrators are expected to regularly and randomly observe overnight activities on a scheduled and periodic basis.
- c. The Director should appoint a "lead" Staff/Volunteers to supervise the overnight. A meeting with all Staff/Volunteers shall be conducted to discuss the unique risks of overnight trips, unique elements of the specific overnight trip and to review the specific policies and procedures.
- d. Parents shall be provided with written information about the overnight activity. All parents must sign a permission slip for their youths to attend the overnight.

**Overnights at the Facility:**

- a. Physical boundaries within the Association must be clearly defined and explained to youths.
- b. Each Staff/Volunteer shall be assigned to a specific group of youths to supervise. Each Staff/Volunteer should maintain a roll sheet that lists all of the youths in his or her group. Head counts and roll checks should be conducted routinely throughout the evening.
- c. Assign Staff/Volunteers to high-risk areas in the facility, such as the bathrooms, entrances and exits, hallways, etc. If it is not possible to assign specific Staff/Volunteers to these areas, assign specific Staff/Volunteers to conduct periodic facility “walk-throughs.”
- d. With regards to sleeping arrangements, separate the male and female youths into separate rooms and post Staff/Volunteers at the entrances and exits to these rooms. If this is not feasible, separate males and females by as much space as possible.
- e. When performing room checks, Staff/Volunteers should always go in pairs.
- f. At least one Staff/Volunteers must stay awake overnight.

**Overnights Away from the Facility:**

- a. Overnight stays at private homes are prohibited unless approved by the Administration.
- b. Physical boundaries at the off-site location must be clearly defined and explained to youths.
- c. Each Staff/Volunteers shall be assigned to a specific group of youths to supervise. Each Staff/Volunteers should maintain a role sheet that lists all of the youths in his or her group. Head counts and roll checks should be conducted routinely throughout the event.
- d. If in a cabin type setting, the Staff/Volunteers should be placed in bunks to maximize supervision around the cabin and in a way that decreases the chances of youths sneaking out (such as by the door).
- e. In hotel rooms, assign youths to rooms based on sex and age. Staff/Volunteers should have their own rooms. If Staff/Volunteers must share rooms with youths, they must have their own beds and never change in front of youths.
- f. All Staff/Volunteers are to be on duty in the halls or cabins at night until an hour after lights out and all rooms are quiet.

## Responding

How an organization responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect and/or harm to the individuals involved and damage the Association. Once a Staff/Volunteers 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/Volunteer, and to the Association. As such the Association has established precise, unequivocal requirements for reporting to the authorities and for adhering to a serious-incident response plan.

## Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

Because the Association is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every Staff/Volunteer actively participates in the protection of youths. In the event that Staff/Volunteers observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other Staff/Volunteers, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations.

Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Staff/Volunteers and Youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above</li><li>• Seeking private time or one-on-one time with youths</li><li>• Buying gifts for individual youths</li><li>• Making suggestive comments to youths</li><li>• Picking favorites</li></ul>

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths will be taken seriously. The Association's procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

### **Staff and Volunteer Response:**

If Staff/Volunteers witness suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another Staff/Volunteers, the Staff/Volunteer is instructed to do the following:

Guidelines for Staff/Volunteer Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interrupt the behavior.</li><li>• Report the behavior to a supervisor, director, or other authority.</li><li>• If he/she is not comfortable making the report directly, it may be made anonymously.</li><li>• If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management.</li><li>• Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.</li><li>• Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.</li></ul>

**Supervisor and Administrators Response:**

In the event that a supervisor or an administrator receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from a Staff/Volunteer, the supervisor is instructed to do the following:

Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report to the next level of administration and determine the appropriate administrator to respond to the concern.</li><li>• Determine the appropriate response based on the report.</li><li>• Speak with the Staff/Volunteer who has been reported.</li><li>• Review the file of the Staff/Volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.</li><li>• Document the report on the appropriate form.</li><li>• If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the state authorities and file a report.</li><li>• If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians.</li><li>• Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously.</li></ul>

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- a. Increased monitoring or supervision of the Staff/Volunteer, or program.
- b. If policy violations with youths are confirmed, the Staff/Volunteer will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution.
- c. If more information is needed, other Staff/Volunteers or youths shall be interviewed/surveyed.

**Association Response:**

Guidelines for Association Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the need for increased supervision.</li><li>• Review the need for revised policies or procedures.</li><li>• Review the need for additional training.</li></ul>

## Responding to Suspected Abuse by an Adult

### Staff or Volunteer Response to Abuse:

As required by mandated reporting laws, Staff/Volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth—whether on or off Association property or whether perpetrated by Staff/Volunteers, or others—to state 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 state specific mandated reporting requirements for definitions of abuse more specific reporting information.*

In addition to reporting to state authorities, Staff/Volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of youths perpetrated by Staff/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. Leadership Team

### Additional Guidelines for Staff/Volunteer Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse

- If Staff/Volunteers witness abuse, they should interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to a Staff/Volunteer, the Staff/Volunteer should assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell them.
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper Association authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing the suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.
- Remember it is not the Staff/Volunteers' job to investigate the incident, but it IS his/her 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 a supervisor or the designated Association authority.

### Supervisors and Administrators Response:

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First, determine if the youth is still in danger and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm.</li><li>• Gather as much information about the allegation as possible. 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.</li><li>• Accurately record everything learned in as much detail as possible. Remember notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.</li><li>• Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by mandatory reporting procedures. Make sure to get a case number and the name and contact information of the contact at the reporting agency.</li><li>• If the alleged abuse involves a Staff/Volunteer, notify administration.</li><li>• Suspend the accused Staff/Volunteer until the investigation is completed.</li></ul>

### Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors

The thought that one youth may sexually abuse another youth does not occur to many people. Youth-to-Youth sexual activity and sexualized behaviors often remain unreported in organizations because Staff/Volunteers and volunteers are not comfortable documenting these situations or may not know how.

#### Youth-to-Youth Interactions:

Most serious incidents of youth-to-youth abuse are preceded by subtler 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. The Association recognizes that the following interactions are high risk and should be prohibited:

Prohibited Youth-to-Youth Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hazing</li><li>• Bullying</li><li>• Derogatory name-calling</li><li>• Games of Truth or Dare</li><li>• Singling out one child for different treatment</li><li>• Ridicule or humiliation</li></ul>

**Staff and Volunteer Response:**

In order to adequately respond to and track incidents within the Association, all sexual activity between youths and sexualized behaviors of youths must be consistently documented.

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/Volunteers witness youth-to-youth sexual behaviors, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:

Guidelines for Staff/Volunteer Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If sexual activity between youths is observed, immediately separate the youths.</li><li>• Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted.</li><li>• Notify the supervisor.</li><li>• Complete the necessary paperwork including what was observed and what the response was.</li><li>• Follow the supervisor's instructions regarding notifying the authorities and informing the parents of the youth involved.</li><li>• In some cases, if the problem is recurring discipline may be required including not allowing one or both youths to return to the program.</li></ul>

**Supervisors and Administrators Response:**

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

Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet with the Staff/Volunteers who reported the sexual activity to gather information.</li><li>• Confirm that the youths involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision.</li><li>• Review the steps taken by the Staff/Volunteers on duty.</li><li>• Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed.</li><li>• Meet with parents of the youths involved.</li><li>• Determine what actions should be taken to make sure there is no recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.</li><li>• Notify the proper authorities.</li><li>• Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident</li></ul>

**Association Response:**

After the internal review of sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the Association will determine what can be done to prevent a reoccurrence, such as:

Guidelines for Association Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the need for additional supervision.</li><li>• Review the need for revised policies or procedures.</li><li>• Review the need for additional training.</li><li>• Alert others in the Association.</li></ul>

## Conclusion

### Commitment to Child Safety

The safety and well-being of every child in our care is our highest priority and a shared responsibility among all staff, volunteers, and program partners. The policies outlined in this handbook are not optional. They reflect our commitment to creating an environment where children feel safe, supported, and respected at all times.

Every interaction matters. By remaining vigilant, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and following these guidelines consistently, we help prevent harm and build trust with the children and families we serve. If concerns arise, it is our responsibility to act—promptly, appropriately, and in accordance with established procedures.

Together, we create a culture of safety where children can learn, grow, and thrive.