



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

WORKING WITH YOUTH

CHILD SAFETY HANDBOOK

YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo

Revised 9.19.2018



Table of Contents

- Types of Abuse 3
- Code of Conduct with Youth..... 3
- Policies 5
 - Physical Conduct 5
 - Verbal Interaction 6
 - One-on-One Interaction 7
 - Off-Site Contact 8
 - Electronic Communication 8
 - Cell Phone Use:..... 9
- Gift Giving 9
- Monitoring and Supervision 9
 - Bathroom Activities 9
 - Diapering 10
 - Locker Room Activities 10
 - 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

CHILD SAFETY

Types of Abuse

1. *Physical abuse* – injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a youth.
2. *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 the adult or the other youth.
3. *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.
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. Youths will be treated with respect at all times.
2. A youth will never be left unsupervised.
3. Youths will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, age, or religion.
4. Staff/Volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by the Association.
5. Staff/Volunteers will avoid affection with youths that cannot be observed by others.
6. Staff/Volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by the Association.
7. Staff/Volunteers will not stare at or comment on youths' bodies.
8. Staff/Volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youths.
9. Staff/Volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of youths.
10. Staff/Volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on the Association's property.

11. Staff/Volunteers will not have secrets with youths and will only give gifts with prior permission.
12. Staff/Volunteers will comply with the Association's policies regarding interaction with youths outside of the Association's programs.
13. At no time shall Staff/Volunteers use personal cell phones to communicate directly with youths participating in Association activities. Texting/emailing/online messaging may be done ONLY if parents or supervisors are copied.
14. Staff/Volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with youths in a private setting. Staff/Volunteers will use common areas when working with individual youths.
15. Staff/Volunteers may not transport youths in their personal vehicles.
16. Outside of the Association, Staff/Volunteers may not be alone with youth whom they meet at Association programs. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, driving or riding in cars, and inviting youths into their homes.
17. Staff/Volunteers members may not single out children for favored attention and may not give gifts to youths or their parents.
18. Staff/Volunteers will not abuse youths in any way including (but not limited to) the following:
 - a. *Physical abuse* – hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints
 - b. *Verbal abuse* – degrading, threatening, cursing
 - c. *Sexual abuse* – inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations
 - d. *Mental abuse* – shaming, humiliation, cruelty
 - e. *Neglect* – withholding food, water, shelter
19. 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 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.
- Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person’s willingness to participate.
- Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all youths and Staff/Volunteers.

20. 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.
21. Staff/Volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other employees, volunteers, adults, or youths to their supervisor or by anonymously by calling 855-444-3911.
22. 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.
23. Staff/Volunteers may not have engaged in or been accused or convicted of youth abuse, indecency with a youth, or injury to a youth.

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"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Verbal praise • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in 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/Volunteer • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

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

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"> • When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place in full view of others. • Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes. • If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by. • The Staff/Volunteers member should inform other Staff/Volunteers that they will be 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.

Off-Site 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 worker's 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.

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">• Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youths ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth's parent• Communicating through "Association group pages" on Facebook or other approved public forums• "Private" profiles for Staff/Volunteers which youths cannot access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments• Sexually oriented conversations• Private messages between employees and youths• Posting unauthorized pictures of Association participants on social media sites• Posting inappropriate comments on pictures• "Friending" participants on social networking sites

Cell Phone Use:

While assigned to work with youths, Staff/Volunteers are not permitted to use electronic communications device except during approved breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with youths is strictly prohibited regardless of the type of device used and whether for business or personal reasons. Staff/Volunteers need to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy.

There are occasions in which employees will need to use personal or Association issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, Staff/Volunteers will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of Association issued or personal electronic communication devices include:

- Field Trips
- Off-site Programs
- Emergencies

Gift Giving

Molesters routinely groom youths by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the youth. They might instruct the youth to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the youth to keep secrets from parents. For this reason, Staff/Volunteers should only give gifts to groups of youths, and only under the following circumstances:

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

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, adult Staff/Volunteers should first quickly scan the bathroom before allowing youths to enter.

- 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 employee.
 - 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.

- Staff/Volunteers are required to stand outside the bathroom door but remain within earshot.
- b. For single 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 assisting young youths in the stalls, the Staff/Volunteers member should keep the door to the stall open.

Diapering

Diapering

- a. The changing table shall be placed in an open 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 are required locker room procedures:

- a. Staff/Volunteers shall stand within earshot of the locker room when in use by youths.
- b. Staff/Volunteers shall intermittently and briefly check inside the locker room so it is obvious the locker room is monitored.
- c. It is discouraged for youths of different ages to use the locker room at the same time.
- d. The use of locker room horseplay such as towel snapping is strictly prohibited.

Shower Activities

Staff/Volunteers and youths must shower at different times. Staff/Volunteers should work with their co-workers to coordinate the supervision of youths while they shower.

- a. While the youths shower, at least one Staff/Volunteers member should stand in the bathroom doorway and within earshot of the youths. Staff/Volunteers shall ensure that only one youth is in each shower.

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/Volunteers may not be assigned a particular group of youths to supervise. To decrease the risk of incidents, Staff/Volunteers shall require youths to remain in line-of-site of Staff/Volunteers at all times.

Playground Activities

The playground procedures require:

- a. Youths to remain in line-of-site of Staff/Volunteers at all times.
- b. Definition of specific and narrow geographic boundaries around the playground area.
- c. That all Staff/Volunteers are assigned specific areas to supervise (“zone monitoring”).

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 role 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

- Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above
- Seeking private time or one-on-one time with youths
- Buying gifts for individual youths
- Making suggestive comments to youths
- Picking favorites

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

- Interrupt the behavior.
- Report the behavior to a supervisor, director, or other authority.
- If he/she is not comfortable making the report directly, it may be made 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.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

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/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">• 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/Volunteer who has been reported.• Review the file of the Staff/Volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.• Document the report on the appropriate form.• 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.• 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. 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">• Review the need for increased supervision.• Review the need for revised policies or procedures.• Review the need for additional training.

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 to 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 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 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.• Accurately record everything learned in as much detail as possible. Remember notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.• 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.• If the alleged abuse involves a Staff/Volunteer, notify administration.• Suspend the accused Staff/Volunteer until the investigation is completed.

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. 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/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

- 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 Association, all sexual activity between youths and sexualized behaviors of youths must be consistently documented.

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/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

- If sexual activity between youths is observed, immediately separate the youths.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted.
- Notify the supervisor.
- Complete the necessary paperwork including what was observed and what the response was.
- Follow the 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 youths to return to the program.

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

- Meet with the Staff/Volunteers who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the youths involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision.
- Review the steps taken by the Staff/Volunteers on duty.
- Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed.
- Meet with parents of the youths 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.
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident

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

- d. Review the need for additional supervision
- e. Review the need for revised policies or procedures
- f. Review the need for additional training
- g. Alert others in the Association

Association Response:

After the internal review of the 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

- Review the need for additional supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.
- Alert others in the Association.