

## Child Abuse Prevention Policy

The Mexico Area Family YMCA strictly follows a zero-tolerance policy regarding child abuse.

### I. General Definitions

#### A. Types of Abuse

- a. Physical abuse is injury that is intentionally or recklessly inflicted to a person.
- b. Sexual abuse is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth or teen and an adult or among youth and teens. This includes any activity which is intended to arouse or is for the offender’s sexual desire.
- c. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to any person that results in an observable and material impairment in the person’s growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- d. Neglect is the failure to provide for a youth or teen’s basic needs or the failure to protect a youth or teen from harm.

#### B. Age Categories

- a. Youth are individuals ages twelve (12) and younger.
- b. Teens are individuals ages thirteen (13) to seventeen (17).
- c. Adults are individuals ages eighteen (18) and older.

#### C. Parent(s) and Guardians

- a. The term “Parent” is used universally and represents any and all legal guardians or those who act in the place of a parent (*in loco parentis*) of youth and teen members, guests, and program participants.

### II. Policies

Policies define the nature and extent of acceptable behavior in our Mexico Area Family YMCA (“YMCA”). Stopping a potential policy violation: (1) establishes that violations will not be tolerated and will be detected; (2) puts offender on notice that no one will be able to create a situation where abuse is likely to occur (such as when someone works in private); (3) helps protect staff or volunteers from false allegations of abuse; and (4) demonstrates to everyone that the rules apply to all staff, volunteers, youth and teens at the YMCA.

#### A. Physical Contact

The YMCA’s physical contact policy is designed to promote a safe, fun, positive, and nurturing environment while protecting youth, teens, staff, and volunteers. Our YMCA wants to continue to encourage appropriate physical contact with youth and teens by staff and volunteers while prohibiting inappropriate physical contact with them. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or volunteers towards youth or teens will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment or exclusion from the ability to volunteer. While it is impossible to describe each and every type of appropriate and inappropriate physical contact, below are examples that taken with the guidance from this paragraph, will enable staff and volunteers to act appropriately.

Examples of Appropriate Physical Contact	Examples of Inappropriate Physical Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Side Hugs</li> <li>● Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs</li> <li>● Pats on the back or shoulders</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>	<p>Staff or volunteer initiated:</p> <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> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or staff or volunteer</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>
<b>Specific Exceptions to the above Physical Contact Rules</b>	
Trained, authorized early childhood educators, child watch staff and Inclusion staff are required by the nature of their duties and interactions to be exempt from the same above contact rules to the extent required by their training and the appropriate State and Federal Laws.	

**B. Verbal Interaction**

Similar to physical interaction, all verbal interaction is designed to create a safe, fun, positive, and nurturing environment. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to or with youth and teens in a way that is intended to be or could be construed by an observer to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, sexually provocative 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 youth.

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

<b>Examples of Appropriate Verbal Communications</b>	<b>Examples of Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Appropriate jokes</li> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Praise</li> </ul>	<p>Staff or volunteer initiated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name-calling</li> <li>• Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the personal problems or issues of staff and 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 youth</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family</li> </ul>

**C. One-on-One Interaction**

Abuse is most likely to occur when an offender is able to isolate a youth or teen. The YMCA is determined to minimize these situations and prohibits staff or volunteer-initiated one-on-one interactions absent an emergency which would leave the program participant unsupervised. In the event of emergency exception, the staff person or volunteer will document and notify their supervisor immediately. If you observe one-on-one interactions between employees and youth, you should report this to your supervisor or the Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751.

The “Rule of 3” implies that staff or volunteers must always have no fewer than one (1) other person present when interacting with youth or teens and will be the standard for avoiding one-on-one interactions. Thus, three (3) people will always be present at a minimum.

**D. Off-site Contact**

Abuse often occurs off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. Therefore, intentional contact initiated by staff or volunteers of any kind with youth or teens in a program outside of regularly scheduled activities or planned and approved events is prohibited, absent a preexisting relationship with that teen or youth’s parent(s) **AND** each and every such contact is previously approved and acknowledged – in writing – by parents, the Vice President of Association Child Care & Inclusion Services, and the Senior Vice President of Human Resources prior to any off-site contact.

**E. Electronic Communication**

Any private electronic communication between staff or volunteers and youth or teen program participants, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. - is prohibited. Should staff or volunteers receive private communication from a youth or teen, they must immediately notify their supervisor. All communication between staff, volunteers and youth must be transparent.

All communication between staff or volunteers and youth must be approved by the youth’s parents/guardians and must be in an open electronic environment. The “Rule of Three” must be observed in all electronic communications between youth and staff or volunteers. For example, there should be two (2) employees or volunteers included in on text messages and emails with youth. Direct, private messaging between youth and staff or volunteers is not allowed.

Violation of this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

<b>Appropriate Electronic Communication</b>	<b>Inappropriate Electronic Communication</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth’s parent or guardian</li> <li>● Communicating through “organization group pages” on Facebook or other approved public forums</li> <li>● “Private” profiles for staff and volunteers which youth 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 staff or volunteers with youth or teen participants</li> <li>● Posting pictures of organization participants on social media sites</li> <li>● Posting inappropriate comments on pictures</li> <li>● “Friending” participants on social networking sites</li> </ul>

**Electronic Devices Use (including cell phones):**

While assigned to directly supervise youth and teens, staff and volunteers may only use YMCA sponsored electronic devices (including cell phones) for supervisor-approved program purposes and emergencies. Staff and volunteers may never take or possess photos of youth or teen program participants other than for the sole purpose of posting on a YMCA site. Staff and volunteers may be directed to turnover any electronic device used for YMCA related photos as part of an investigation. Youth participants are not permitted to share cell phones with other youth participants.

**F. Gift Giving**

Abusers routinely groom youth or teens by giving gifts. For this reason, staff and volunteers may only give gifts to groups of youth/teens with the prior approval of the Executive Director and with notification to the parent(s).

**G. Questions**

All questions regarding these policies should be directed to the Association Child Care Services Department. Please call (314) 436-1177 and ask for the Association Child Care Department.

**III. Monitoring and Supervision**

Youth and teens in YMCA programs will be supervised at all times. When youth and teens are adequately supervised, potential offenders are less likely to act on their impulses because they face detection. When youth and teens are adequately supervised, they are less likely to engage in inappropriate interactions with each other. YMCA facilities shall be monitored, particularly out-of-the-way locations or locations that might permit an offender undue access to or privacy with a youth or teen.

**A. Facility Monitoring**

In order to ensure that all of the locations are properly and consistently monitored, routine facility checks are conducted and documented, with particular attention to high risk areas such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and unused rooms.

**B. Checking Members and Guests into a Facility**

Anyone who enters a full facility branch beyond the established control point must check in with the front desk. All other facilities shall have similar procedures which are consistent with their physical and operational structures. All members and guests are subject to a Sex Offender National Registry check, which is rerun monthly. No individual who is on the State or National Sex Offender Registry shall be permitted on YMCA property or at YMCA activities. Individuals who fail such screening are provided a letter to such effect and denial of entry to YMCA premises and activities.

**C. General Program Supervision**

Proper supervision of program participants will reduce the risk of abuse and protect the staff and volunteers from false allegations. Teens and youth in YMCA programs must be supervised at all times.

**D. Inappropriate Behavior Among Youth and Teens**

Most serious incidents of abuse among youth and teens are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or tease tickling. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe. The YMCA recognizes that the following interactions are high risk and are prohibited:

<b>Examples of Prohibited Youth-to-Youth, Teen-to-Teen, and Teen-to-Youth Behavior</b>
<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 youth or teen by others for negative treatment</li><li>● Ridicule or humiliation</li><li>● Sexually related behavior of any kind</li></ul>

#### *IV. Responding*

The YMCA provides our youth and teens with the highest quality services available. We are committed to creating an environment for youth and teens that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

**All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youth or teens or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and investigated.**

No form of abuse will be tolerated and any staff, volunteer, member, guest, teen or youth who is accused of abuse of a youth or teen will be immediately removed from the facility and prohibited from all YMCA property and activities for the duration of an investigation. If the investigation establishes that abuse is believed to have occurred, the staff member's employment or the volunteer's ability to volunteer will be immediately terminated. For all individuals found to have abused a teen or youth, they will be permanently prohibited from all YMCA property and activities.

The YMCA will both report to and fully cooperate with law enforcement, YMCA of the USA, and the Missouri Department of Social Services or Illinois Department of Children & Family Services regarding allegations of abuse which are made and require investigation.

How the YMCA 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, teen or parent has expressed a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a youth or teen, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to the youth, teen, the accused staff member or volunteer, and to the organization.

Because the YMCA is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every staff member and volunteer actively participates in the protection of youth and teens. In the event that staff or volunteers 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.

#### ***Reporting Procedures***

At the first report of suspicion of child abuse, the staff or volunteer observing the abuse or to whom it has been reported shall inform the Executive Director of the respective branch and the Vice President of Association Child Care and Inclusion Services.

Every effort will be made to remove any immediate threats and provide a safe environment.

Upon gathering appropriate data, as listed on the Association Child Abuse Report Form, the Program Director and the individual suspecting or witnessing the abuse must immediately utilize the hotline online reporting process or in case of an emergency, immediately use the hotline phone process to report the incident. The Mexico Area Family YMCA as well as YMCA staff and volunteers are mandated reporters, meaning all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect must immediately be reported.

A call is made in "good faith" only reporting a suspicion. It's the Department of Social Services' responsibility to investigate the case. In the event the reported incident or suspicion involves an employed staff person or program volunteer, the branch Executive Director will, without exception, suspend the person from all program responsibilities involving the supervision of children. Suspension will be without pay in accordance with the discipline policy as defined above. Should the Mexico Area Family YMCA reinstate the individual, the employee will receive applicable back pay.

### ***Internal Reporting Procedures***

A child abuse or neglect report is required for **every** suspected abuse or neglect case occurring in **ANY** YMCA program, branch facility, off-site location, involving adult on child OR child on child abuse.

- Staff must complete in detail the Association Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting on-line reporting form which can be found at <https://sites.google.com/ymcastlouis.org/intranet/safety/incident-reporting> or hard copy form located in the Association Risk Management Resource Directory.
- Staff must also make the report on-line to noted Illinois OR Missouri hotline link (emergency situations may require a phone call)
- Staff must submit the Association Child Abuse Reporting form (if using a hard copy) and copy of the on-line acceptance report confirmation to the CEO.
- Staff must submit the on-line follow up email report if the report does not meet the criteria for abuse or if it will be investigated further to the CEO.

The CEO will complete the Y-USA Reporting Intake System Portal data entry, and will notify the Board President and CEO of the Missouri State Alliance.

When a report is made to the Child Abuse Hotline, it is critical to provide as much objective, identifying information as possible. Answers to the questions that will be posed to the person making the hotline call can be collected by using the pre-populated Association Child Abuse Reporting Form. The reporting person will be asked to supply as much identifying information as possible, including but not limited to:

- His/her name and contact information (phone number, etc.)
- Child's name
- Any knowledge of the child having a history of abuse
- Signs of the abuse
- Parent's name, work schedule, work phone number, etc.

The above information is included on the YMCA Child Abuse Reporting Form. A determination will be made by the hotline as to whether enough information is present to create a formal "report" and move forward with an investigation. Please update Association Child Abuse Reporting Form if the report will be taken or not and send it to the Executive Director and the Vice President of Association Child Care and Inclusion Services. If it is determined that the report is sufficient, the report will be sent to Jefferson City, Missouri and Springfield, Illinois to investigate whether there is a history of offenses.

Regardless of where the incident or alleged offense takes place, if an employed staff person is involved, it will be considered job related and an additional internal investigation completed. Reports of this nature **MUST** be called into the hotline as online reporting is prohibited.

The Department of Social Services will notify the YMCA within forty-five (45) days after the close of the investigation as to the results of the investigation only if an employee or program volunteer is involved in the allegation. Otherwise, the Mexico Area Family YMCA may have no knowledge of the outcome.

All staff and volunteers must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of information in this area. Therefore, staff are instructed to discuss matters pertaining to abuse or suspected abuse only with the Program Director or Executive Director. Mexico Area Family YMCA staff and volunteers may not contact children or parents involved in a child abuse incident without permission of the Vice President of Association Child Care and Inclusion Services and the Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer.

### ***External Reporting Procedures***

- When a complaint is received, it will be forwarded to the Vice President of Association Child Care and Inclusion Services, the Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer and the Vice President of Business Administration.
- After review of the complaint, necessary parties will be contacted for additional information as needed.

- If the complaint involves child abuse or neglect, all reporting procedures will be strictly followed.

### **Important Phone Numbers**

Child Abuse Hotline (Emergency Only)

Missouri 1-800-392-3738

### **Important Online Resources**

Missouri: <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm>

Praesidium Guardian Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751

### *Signs of Child Abuse/Neglect*

#### *Physical Abuse – Physical Indicators*

- Unexplained Bruises and Welts
  - On face, lips, mouth
  - On torso, back buttocks, thighs
  - In various stages of healing
  - Clustered, forming regular patterns
  - Reflecting shape of article used to inflict (belt buckle, cord, etc.)
  - On several different surface areas
  - Regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation
- Unexplained Burns
  - Cigar, cigarette burns, especially on sores, palms, back or buttocks
  - Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso
- Unexplained Fracture
  - To skull, nose, facial structure
  - In various stages of healing
- Unexplained Lacerations/Abrasions
  - To mouth, lips, gums, eyes

#### *Physical Abuse – Behavioral Indicators*

- Wary of adult contact
- Apprehensive when other children cry
- Behavioral extremes
- Aggressive or withdrawn
- Frightened of parents
- Afraid to go home
- Reports injury by parents/others

#### *Physical Neglect – Physical Indicators*

- Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress
- Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs
- Abandonment

#### *Physical Neglect – Behavioral Indicators*

- Begging, stealing food
- Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure)
- Constant fatigue, listlessness or falling asleep in class
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- States there is no caretaker at home

#### *Sexual Abuse – Physical Indicators*

- Difficulty in walking or sitting

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas

*Sexual Abuse – Behavioral Indicators*

- Unwilling to change for gym or participate in PE
- Withdrawn
- Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge
- Poor peer relationships
- Reports sexual assault by caretaker

*Emotional Abuse – Physical Indicators*

- Sleep disorders (nightmares/restlessness)
- Wets the bed
- Exhibits developmental lags
- Hyperactive
- Eating disorders

*Emotional Abuse – Behavioral Indicators*

- Overeager to please
- Seeks out adult contact
- Views abuse as being warranted
- Exhibits changes in behavior
- Excessively anxious
- Depression
- Unwilling to discuss problems
- Exhibits aggressive or bizarre behavior
- Withdrawn
- Apathetic
- Passive
- Unprovoked fits of yelling or screaming
- Exhibits inconsistent behavior at home and school
- Feels responsible for the abuser
- Runs away from home
- Attempts suicide
- Low self-esteem
- Gradual impairment of health or personality
- Unrealistic goal setting
- Impatient
- Unable to communicate or express his or her feelings, needs or desires
- Sabotages his or her chances of success
- Lacks self-confidence
- Self-deprecating and has a negative self-image