

Child Abuse Prevention

A high priority of Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi is the physical and emotional safety of its members, staff, and volunteers. Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi maintains a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse, as described in this pronouncement (including one-on-one contact, child abuse, and grooming). Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi implements policies and procedures for members, employees, volunteers, visitors or any victims of sexual abuse or misconduct to report any suspicion or allegation of abuse.

DEFINITIONS

One-on-Contact Prohibition: Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi prohibits isolated one-on-one interaction between Club participants and staff or volunteers, including board members. This includes prohibiting one on-one contact at any time at the Club, in vehicles or by phone, text, letters, social media or any other means.

Exceptions may only be made when delivering approved medical or counseling services by a licensed, trained therapist or similar professional according to professional guidelines.

All staff and volunteers, including minor staff (under age 18), are strictly prohibited from meeting Club participants outside of any Club-sponsored activities. The only exception to this rule is if the Club participant is a child or sibling of a staff member or volunteer.

Child abuse is when an adult or another child, whether through action or by failing to act, causes serious emotional or physical harm to a child as described by law. Sexual abuse or misconduct may include but is not limited to:

- Any sexual activity, involvement, or attempt of sexual contact with a person who is a minor (under 18 years old).
- Sexual activity with another who is legally incompetent.
- Physical assault or sexual violence, such as rape, statutory rape, abuse, molestation, or any attempt to commit such acts.
- Unwanted and intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, brushing, massaging someone's neck or shoulders, and/or pulling against another's body or clothes.

Child Abuse

Prevention Policy • Inappropriate activities, advances, comments, bullying, gestures, electronic communications, or messages (e.g., by email, text, or social media).

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or trafficking. Grooming behaviors may include but are not limited to:

- Targeting specific youth for special attention, activities, or gifts.

- Isolating youth from family members and friends physically or emotionally. This can include one-on one interactions such as sleepovers, camping trips and day activities.
- Gradually crossing physical boundaries, full-frontal hugs that last too long, lap sitting or other “accidental” touches.

MANDATED REPORTING

Every staff member or volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi who becomes aware of or has suspicion of child abuse or neglect must immediately report to Club leadership. Club leadership is responsible for reporting the incident immediately to the appropriate authorities according to statewide mandated reporting laws, as well as to Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) within 24 hours after an event is reported to law enforcement.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi conducts and reports through a BGCA- approved process the following training for all staff members and volunteers with direct repetitive contact with young people (at the intervals noted for each).

Before providing services to young people, and annually thereafter:

1. BGCA-approved child abuse prevention
2. BGCA-approved mandated reporting
3. BGCA-approved grooming prevention

Annually:

- All the policies, including all safety policies, for Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi.

PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS

Every staff member and volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi is required to maintain appropriate physical contact with minors. Appropriate and inappropriate interactions include but are not limited to the following:

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Appropriate	Inappropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side Hugs • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs or kisses • Showing affection in isolated area(s) • Lap sitting • Wrestling or piggyback/shoulder rides • Tickling • Allowing youth to cling to an adult’s leg

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Every staff member and volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi is required to maintain appropriate verbal interactions with minors. Appropriate and inappropriate interactions include but are not limited to the following:

Appropriate	Inappropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive Reinforcement• Child-appropriate jokes (no adult content)• Encouragement• Praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name calling• Inappropriate jokes (adult-only content)• Discussing sexual encounters or personal issues• Secrets• Profanity or derogatory remarks• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth

ABUSE AND SAFETY RESOURCES

Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi prominently displays a BGCA-approved notice that shares ethics hotline, crisis textline and safety helpline information with members, staff, volunteers, and families. We also share all safety policies with parents and guardians upon receiving a youth membership application.

Adopted this 23rd day of October, 2024.

Lisa Nichols

Board Chair

DeVonte Thomas

Board Secretary

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