



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA OF THE USA CODE OF CONDUCT WITH YOUTH

EFFECTIVE DATE:	June 1, 2018
DATE OF LAST REVIEW:	Sept 20, 2021
POLICY FUNCTIONAL AREA:	Child Protection
POLICY OWNER:	VP of Risk and Child Protection

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE:

This Code of Conduct sets forth YMCA of the USA's ("Y-USA") expectations of staff and volunteers related to interaction with youth.

APPLIES TO:

All YMCA of the USA staff and volunteers.

CODE REQUIREMENTS:

Y-USA promotes a safe environment for youth that is free from abuse. No form of abuse will be tolerated. Forms of abuse includes, without limitation, the following:

- **Physical abuse** is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a youth.
- **Sexual abuse** is 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.
- **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- **Neglect or Negligent Treatment** is the failure to provide for a youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a youth from harm.

For staff, confirmed abuse will result in immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. For volunteers, confirmed abuse will result in expulsion from Y-USA events.

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously. Y-USA will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

Y-USA will not retaliate against any staff member or volunteer that makes a report or participates in an investigation of suspected child abuse.

The following are requirements of all staff and volunteers:

1. Youths will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Youths will be treated fairly, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, age, or religion.
3. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by Y-USA Child Protection policies.
4. Staff and volunteers will avoid affection with youths that cannot be observed by others.
5. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined Y-USA Child Protection policies.
6. Staff and volunteers will not stare at or comment on youths' bodies.
7. Staff and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youths.
8. Staff and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of youths.
9. Staff and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography in their possession during Y-USA events.
10. Staff and volunteers will not have secrets with youths and will only give gifts with prior permission of Y-USA.
11. Staff and volunteers will comply with Y-USA Child Protection Policies regarding interactions with youths outside of our programs.
12. Staff and volunteers will comply with Y-USA Child Protection Policies regarding electronic communication and social media with youths.
13. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with youths in a private setting. Staff and volunteers will use common areas when working with individual youths.
14. Staff and volunteers will comply with Y-USA Child Protection Policies regarding transportation of youth.
15. Staff and volunteers will not abuse youths in anyway including, but not limited to, the following:
 - *Physical abuse* - hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary

restraints.

- *Verbal abuse* - degrading, threatening, cursing.
- *Sexual abuse* - inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations.
- *Mental abuse* - shaming, humiliation, cruelty.
- *Neglect* - withholding food, water, shelter.

16.Y-USA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. In addition, Y-USA will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we 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:

- *Physical bullying* – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- *Verbal bullying* – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- *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.
- *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 Code applies to all youths, staff and volunteers.

17.All staff and volunteers must follow state specific mandatory reporting requirements. Staff and volunteers should be trained to be aware of and

understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. Staff and volunteers will:

- Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
- Know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect youths against abuse.
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws within twenty-four (24) hours. An additional report will be made to the Center for SafeSport concerning any suspected abuse at sports events.
<https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/>
- Report abuse allegations to Y-USA by visiting LINK and clicking on the "Abuse and Aquatic Incident Reporting" option along the right rail of page: https://go.ymca.net/formstack/incident_reporting
- Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

18.Y-USA cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Staff and volunteers shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by Y-USA or persons given investigative authority by the Y-USA. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination of employment for Y-USA employees and expulsion from current and future Y-USA Events.

19.In order to participate in Y-USA events, staff and volunteers must not have engaged in or been accused or convicted of youth abuse, indecency with a youth, or injury to a youth.

KEY DEFINITIONS FOR THIS POLICY:

None.

EXCEPTIONS:

There are no exceptions to this Code.

QUESTIONS AND CONTACTS:

If you have any questions or need more information about this Code, contact: policy@ymca.net or the VP of Risk and Child Protection

RELATED POLICIES & CONTENT:

Child Abuse Prevention Policies

REVISION HISTORY:

Code Revision History		
Date	Description	Name of Person Making Change
9/20/2021	Updated with input from VP of Risk & Child Protection and Praesidium	VP, Deputy General Counsel & Chief Compliance Officer

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CODE OF CONDUCT

I have read and agree to comply with this Code of Conduct as well as Y-USA's Child Abuse Prevention Policies.

Printed Name