



FOND DU LAC FAMILY YMCA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY HANDBOOK



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CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

A foundational commitment of the Y is to provide a healthy atmosphere for the growth and development of children. Thus, child abuse, and the resulting severe effects, are of primary concern to the Y. Child abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of a child, by parent(s) or others, resulting in injury or harm. Because of our concern for the welfare of children, the Y has developed standards, guidelines, and training to aid in the detection and prevention of child abuse. In addition, employees are screened; background checks are conducted upon hiring, and staff members who have contact with children receive training in recognizing, reporting, and preventing child abuse. Some of the guidelines for employees are as follows:

- At no time during a Y program may a staff person be alone with a single child where he or she cannot be observed by others. Staff members should position themselves in such a way that other staff can see them.
- A child may not be left unsupervised.
- Staff shall not abuse or mistreat children in any way, including
 - Physical abuse- striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, and so on;
 - Verbal abuse- humiliating, degrading, threatening, and so on;
 - Sexual abuse- touching or speaking inappropriately;
 - Mental abuse- shaming, withholding kindness, being cruel, and so on;
 - Neglect- withholding food, water, or basic care.
- No type of child abuse will be tolerated. Any abuse by a staff member will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- Staff members may not transport children in their own vehicles.
- Profanity, inappropriate jokes, displays of intimate affection, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, parents, volunteers, or other staff is prohibited.
- Outside of the Y, staff members may not be alone with children whom they meet in Y programs. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, driving or riding in cars, and inviting children to their homes.
- Staff members may not single out children for favored attention and may not give gifts to youth or their parents.
- Program rules and boundaries must be followed, including appropriate touch guidelines. Children may be informed, in an age-appropriate manner, of their right to set their own "touching" limits for personal safety.
- Children may not be disciplined by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
- Staff members may not date program participants who are under the age of 18.
- Under no circumstances should staff members release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian (authorization on file with the Y).
- Staff members are to report to their supervisor or next level of supervision anyone who violates any of these child abuse rules to their supervisor or next level of supervision.
- Staff members are required to read and sign all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and to attend trainings on the subject, as instructed by management.
- Staff members are required to fully cooperate with any investigation by the Y, any law enforcement agency or any other authorized outside agency. Failure to do so is considered misconduct and will result in termination.
- Staff members are to make sure the rest room is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff members will stand in the

doorway of the rest room while children are using the rest room. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff members (i.e., not being alone with a child). If staff members are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open. No child, regardless of age, should be allowed to enter a bathroom alone on a field trip or at other off-site locations. Always send children in threes (known as the rule of three) and, whenever possible, with staff.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR INCIDENTS OF ABUSE

As required by mandated reporting laws, staff and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth—whether on or off organization 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.

In addition to reporting to state authorities, staff and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of youth perpetrated by staff or 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 your immediate supervisor or Director of Leadership Experience (HR). The following steps should be taken if abuse is suspected:

- If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell to you.
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident but it **IS** your 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 your supervisor or the designated organization authority.

APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL/VERBAL CONTACT WITH YOUTH

The Fond du Lac Family Y's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth and staff. Our organization encourages appropriate physical contact with youth and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff towards youth in the organization's programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Appropriate physical contact includes: side hugs, shoulder-to-shoulder hugs, pats on shoulder or back, handshakes, high fives, touching hands, shoulders, and arms, arm around shoulder, and holding hands with youth during escorting situations.

Inappropriate physical contact includes: full-frontal hugs, kisses, showing affection in isolated areas, wrestling, piggy back rides, tickling, any type of massage given to or by a youth, touching bottom, chest, or areas covered by a swim suit, and any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the staff.



Staff is prohibited from speaking to youth in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Appropriate verbal interactions include: positive reinforcement, appropriate jokes, encouragement, and praise.

Inappropriate verbal interactions include: name calling, involving youth in the personal problems or issues of staff, secrets, cursing, shaming, belittling, compliments relating to physique or body development, derogatory remarks, and harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN STAFF AND YOUTH OUTSIDE OF REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Our organization prohibits interactions outside of regularly scheduled program activities unless approved by the organization's Administration.

Managing risk when one staff must be alone with one youth

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, staff and 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

- When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place where you are 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.
- Inform other staff and volunteers that you are 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.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

Because the Y is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every staff member actively participates in the protection of youth. In the event that staff observes 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. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youth will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected. If staff witness suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another staff or volunteer, the staff or volunteer is instructed to do the following:

- Interrupt the behavior.
- Report the behavior to a supervisor, manager, or the Director of Leadership Experience (HR).
- If you are not comfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously
- If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management or the Director of Leadership Experience (HR).

- Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

Preventing Abuse or Mistreatment of One Youth by Another Youth

The Fond du Lac Family Y is committed to providing all youth with a safe environment. Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth.

In addition, our organization 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 the necessary steps 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:

1. Physical bullying – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
2. Verbal bullying – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
3. 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.
4. 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:
 - a. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
 - b. Posting sensitive, private information about another person;
 - c. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and
 - d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
 - e. 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.
 - f. 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 youth, staff and volunteers.

Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity

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

- If you observe sexual activity between youth, you should immediately separate them.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the youth.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Complete the necessary paperwork including what you observed and how you responded.
- Follow your 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.

Electronic Communication with Youth Participants

The Y takes its obligation to protect children very seriously. Y staff should not have contact or communication with minors (under age 18) who participate in Y programs outside of Y work time. With today's electronic communication options (e-mail, text messages, blogging, social networking sites) it is more important than ever that all employees understand the Y's policy on such contact or communication in order to protect youth and staff. For purposes of this policy, a "youth" is anyone under eighteen (18) years of age who participates in Y programs or whom a Y employee has met through Y programs.

Employees should not initiate personal phone calls with or receive personal phone calls from youth. A call is considered "personal" if it does not involve both a Y phone and Y-specific subject matter. When employees receive calls from youth on non-Y phones and/or regarding a non-Y subject, this must be immediately reported to a supervisor.

Text messaging with youth is not permitted. If an employee receives a text message from a youth, a supervisor must immediately be made aware.

Employees must not share any personal e-mail addresses or instant message names or nicknames with youth. Employees should not initiate or respond to e-mail or instant messages from youth while using any personal (non-Y) connection to the Internet.

Use of social networking sites to communicate with youth is only permitted if done through a Y-sponsored or approved site. No personal blog or social networking site should be used. Any website or blog maintained by an employee should not have pictures of or make reference to any youth, and employees should not request or accept to be linked as "friends" or connections with youth via social networking sites.

Communication between employees and youth should only be through Y e-mail accounts and phones, and any such communication with youth should be immediately reported to the employee's supervisor. Employees violating this policy or using electronic communication systems improperly are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Employees using Y electronic communication systems for defamatory, illegal, or fraudulent purposes also are subject to potential civil liability and/or criminal prosecution.



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I hereby acknowledge the following:

- I have received a copy of the Fond du Lac Family Y Child Protection Policy Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and understand the policies, rules, and benefits described in this handbook.
- I understand that if I have any questions regarding this information I should consult my supervisor or the Director of Leadership Experience (HR).
- I understand that the Y has the right to change these policies, rules, and benefits without notice.
- I understand that future changes in policies and procedures may modify, suspend, supersede, or cancel those found in this handbook, in whole or part, and that I and other employees typically will be notified of such changes through normal communication channels.
- I understand that any written or oral statements by a supervisor contrary to this handbook are invalid and should not be relied upon.
- I understand and agree that I will read and comply with the policies and information contained in this handbook and that my continued employment is contingent on my following these policies.

Employee's name (Please print)

Employee's signature

Witness' signature

Date

Note: Complete this form and return it to the Director of Leadership Experience (HR) for keeping in your personnel file.