

# YMCA of the USA

## Child Abuse Prevention Training for Front-Line Staff

### Basic Practices for Preventing the Abuse of Children and Others in the Care of YMCAs

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These practices

- are excerpts from the more comprehensive resources described at the end of the checklist; the intention of this list is to urge YMCAs to consult those sources;
- can help prevent abuse as well as any accusations or suspicions of abuse that are unfounded;
- apply to children (birth to 11) and teens (12 to 17) as well as adults who are disabled, frail, or otherwise vulnerable to abuse; and
- apply to a YMCA’s main facilities, off-site or satellite centers, and property that a YMCA may use or rent.

Yes	No	Uncertain	
			1.0 AWARENESS AND COMMITMENT: All YMCA staff members and volunteers understand that, unfortunately, abuse is something that occurs in our society and all staff members and volunteers must pledge to do everything in their power to prevent it.
			1.1 Through words, tone, and action, our YMCA communicates to all staff members, volunteers, members, and program members (including youth participants and their parents) that the YMCA is serious about doing everything it can to prevent abuse of any kind.
			1.2 Our YMCA has designated a “point person” on abuse prevention for each major branch or unit—someone with easy access to the CEO and to whom staff members and volunteers are encouraged to address any questions, concerns, or suspicions.

Yes	No	Uncertain	
			2.0 POLICIES: All staff members and volunteers read and sign a code of conduct and other policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting suspicions or cases of abuse.
			2.1 All staff members and volunteers understand that they will be disciplined for failure to follow policies. Such discipline may include termination.
			3.0 TRAINING: Our YMCA trains all staff members and volunteers in abuse prevention, including, but not limited to, screening and supervision.
			3.1 We offer the training on a regular, ongoing basis, including training for new staff members and volunteers within three months of their start date, and every year or two thereafter.
			4.0 SCREENING: We make sure that all staff members and volunteers in supervisory positions are as rigorous as possible in screening out potential offenders. Our rigorous screening process includes the following, for staff members as well as volunteers:
			4.1 We assess each position to determine the degree of risk (e.g., amount of time to be spent with children, proximity to teens, setting [e.g., a camp cabin or a darkened nap room], and degree of relationship building), and we conduct screening accordingly.
			4.2 Our applications request information that could indicate a potential for abuse.
			4.3 We check all applicants' applications, resumes, and references.
			4.4 On printed materials and signage (e.g., staff and volunteer recruitment flyers, applications, newsletters), and in meetings and interviews, we emphasize the YMCA's policies and stance on abuse prevention.
			4.5 For all positions at high risk (e.g., close contact, bathroom, locker-room, and sleeping supervision) working directly with or in proximity to children, teens, and disabled, frail, or otherwise vulnerable adults, we

Yes	No	Uncertain	
			follow these procedures:
			4.5.a We conduct background and reference checks (including criminal history and fingerprinting where available).
			4.5.b Our interviews include open-ended, leading questions designed to uncover indications of an individual's potential for abuse.
			4.5.c We observe candidates interacting with children, teens, or vulnerable adults (i.e., with whomever the candidate would be working).
			4.6 We keep complete written records on the entire screening process, including verifications and background and reference checks.
			5.0 RECOGNIZING POTENTIAL FOR ABUSE: Our YMCA educates staff members and volunteers on the characteristics of abusers and the patterns of behavior that abusers often follow.
			5.1 Our staff members and volunteers also are aware of the potential for, and the importance of, guarding against, participant-on-participant abuse, for example, same-age child-on-child abuse.
			5.2 Our staff members and volunteers are aware that abusers may be of any age, race, income, ability, or religion.
			6.0 DOCUMENTING AND REPORTING: Our YMCA has established a process and forms for documenting incidents, unusual observations, suspicions, and identifications of abuse.
			6.1 All staff members and volunteers are aware of the process.
			6.2 All staff members and volunteers are aware of the signs of abuse in children, teens, and vulnerable adults.
			6.3 Our YMCA requires staff members and volunteers to report to supervisors any suspicions they have regarding abuse of children and others.
			6.4 All staff members and volunteers understand that reporting suspicious

Yes	No	Uncertain	
			behavior is everybody's responsibility and that they will be held accountable to do so.
			6.5 All staff members and volunteers are trained in what to do if a child, teen, or adult discloses abuse.
			6.6 The YMCA reports all cases of suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities and cooperates fully and in good faith with any investigations.
			7.0 COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES: The YMCA communicates with and educates families (e.g., parents) about the YMCA's policies and procedures as well as its commitment to the safety of their family members (e.g., their children).
			7.1 We assure families that they may visit and observe any program at any time and that they may express any concerns they might have to the staff members in charge.
			7.2 We encourage parents and guardians to discuss personal safety strategies with their children.
			8.0 OVERALL SAFETY MEASURES: All programs operate with the safety of participants foremost in mind, ensuring such things as the following:
			8.1 Prohibiting staff members, volunteers, and participants from engaging in any form of abuse, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical abuse—striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, and so forth;</li> <li>• verbal abuse—humiliating, degrading, threatening, and so forth;</li> <li>• sexual abuse—inappropriate touching or verbal exchanges;</li> <li>• mental abuse—shaming, being cruel, withholding kindness, and so forth; or</li> <li>• neglect—withholding food, water, or basic care.</li> </ul>
			8.2 Awareness on the part of all staff members and volunteers that no type of abuse will be tolerated and any type of abuse may be cause for

Yes	No	Uncertain	
			immediate dismissal.
			8.3 Good supervision—staff members and volunteers never leave any child or any vulnerable (e.g., disabled) teen or adult unsupervised.
			8.4 Age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate activities and groupings.
			8.5 Organized drop-off, pickup, and release systems (e.g., requiring identification and sign-outs).
			8.6 Guarding against the opportunity for such things as participant-on-participant abuse.
			8.7 Regular unannounced observations and visits from administrators and supervisors.
			8.8 Keeping people safe en route to YMCA programs, especially when transported in YMCA vehicles.
			9.0 PROTOCOLS FOR SUPERVISION AND INTERACTION: As staff members and volunteers interact with children, teens, and vulnerable adults, they should place themselves where other staff members and volunteers can see them.
			9.1 At no time is a staff person, volunteer, or participant ever alone with a single child, teen, or vulnerable adult where he or she cannot be observed by others.
			9.2 Mentoring programs are conducted in pairs or, better yet, groups. Never is a young person left alone with a mentor in an isolated environment, and mentors sign agreements to that effect.
			9.3 For trips and outings, the YMCA requires that two adults supervise the group in pairs.
			9.4 Whenever possible, staff members and volunteers conduct or supervise private activities in pairs—for example, when diapering or helping young children change into swimsuits or shower. When this is not feasible, staff

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			members and volunteers are positioned so that they are visible to others.
			9.5 The YMCA follows policies and practices on rest-room supervision that are based on risk involved, considering the age range of the children and the location of the rest room. (For instance, is the rest room at the YMCA where staff members can monitor who enters it, or is it off-site where strangers are likely to be present?)
			9.6 Regardless of location, children are never allowed to enter a rest room alone. The rule of three is followed, that is, two children and an adult or three children go to the rest room together.
			9.7 When supervising rest-room usage, adult staff members and volunteers stand in the doorway of the room, holding the door at least partially open. If assisting young children in toilet stalls, the adult keeps the door to the stall open.
			9.8 Staff members and volunteers are not allowed to transport children, teens, or vulnerable adults in their own vehicles.
			9.9 Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from fraternizing with young members and program members (those under 18 years of age) outside YMCA-sponsored or YMCA-supervised activities and programs or after normal YMCA hours. This includes, but is not limited to, babysitting and dating. Any exceptions require prior written approval.
			10.0 FACILITIES: Facilities that the YMCA owns or uses (e.g., schools, parks, places of worship) are designed, maintained, and supervised for optimum prevention of abuse.
			10.1 All persons entering and exiting the facility are monitored, and windows and entrances are secured against trespassers.
			10.2 All parts of the facility and outdoor areas, for example, parking lots and gardens, are well lit.
			10.3 There are no accessible and unmonitored or hard-to-see areas, such as unlocked closets, empty rooms, and the like.

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			10.4 The design of the facility allows for unobstructed supervision of staff members, volunteers, participants, and others.
			11.0 CRISIS COMMUNICATION: In case of an accusation of abuse, our YMCA has a documented crisis communication plan that identifies a crisis team and spokesperson, and that includes message points, fact sheets, an internal communication plan to staff members and volunteers, media relations procedures, and so forth.
			12.0 RECOGNITION OF NEED FOR MORE COMPLETE GUIDANCE: Our YMCA staff members and volunteers, especially our leaders, are aware that this checklist outlines only the most elementary practices and that it is essential that we seek important and more detailed guidance from other sources, described in a subsequent section.
			12.1 When confronted with an accusation of abuse, we inform and seek guidance from YMCA of the USA.