



YMCA of YAKIMA

Child Safety Guidelines
Youth/Parent/Guardian Handbook



KNOW



SEE



RESPOND

Dear Youth, Parents and Guardians,

At the YMCA, the safety and well-being of every child entrusted to our care are our highest priorities. We recognize that children and youth are most vulnerable when they are away from their families, and it is our responsibility to ensure that every child has a safe, positive, and enriching experience while at our programs.

As part of our ongoing commitment to abuse prevention, we want to take a moment to highlight the importance of this issue and share the measures we have in place to protect all children in our care. The following policies and procedures will continue to evolve as we evaluate and implement best practices. The information in this handbook was recommended by Praesidium, reviewed by staff and approved by the YMCA of Yakima's Board of Directors.

Abuse Prevention at the YMCA

We firmly believe that creating an environment where children feel safe, respected, and supported is essential to their development. We are fully committed to preventing all forms of abuse, whether physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual, and to fostering an atmosphere of trust and transparency. To ensure this, the YMCA has adopted rigorous policies, training programs, and safety protocols, which include:

1. **Background Checks and Screening:** All staff and volunteers undergo thorough background checks and screenings before being allowed to work with children. We also regularly update these checks to maintain the highest level of accountability.
2. **Staff Training:** Our staff receive extensive training on child protection, recognizing signs of abuse, and responding appropriately in the event of a concern. They are trained to handle all situations with care and professionalism, with the child's safety at the forefront.
3. **Clear Behavior Standards:** We maintain clear guidelines for appropriate behavior between staff, volunteers, and children. We also have specific rules in place to prevent one-on-one situations and ensure proper supervision at all times.
4. **Open Communication:** The YMCA encourages open communication with parents and families. If you ever have any questions or concerns regarding your child's safety or well-being, we encourage you to reach out immediately. Your feedback is vital to our continuous improvement.
5. **Reporting and Accountability:** We have a clear, confidential reporting process for any concerns related to abuse or inappropriate behavior. We take every report seriously and investigate all incidents promptly and thoroughly. Our commitment is to ensure that all children are safe and supported.

How Parents Can Help

We also encourage you as parents to be involved in the process of keeping our community safe. You can help by:

- **Talking to Your Child:** Help your child understand what healthy relationships look like, what behaviors are inappropriate, and what they should do if they ever feel uncomfortable.
- **Staying Informed:** Keep an open dialogue with your child about their experience at the YMCA. Encourage them to speak up about anything that doesn't feel right.
- **Trusting Your Instincts:** If you ever feel uneasy or have concerns about your child's safety, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Your child's well-being is our top priority.

Together, we can create a safe and positive environment for all children. Thank you for your continued trust in the YMCA. We are honored to partner with you in supporting your child's growth, development, and well-being.

Sincerely,

YMCA Executive Team

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General Definitions: Types of abuse

1. Physical abuse is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a consumer.
2. Sexual abuse is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a consumer and an adult or between two consumers. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other consumer.
3. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a consumer that results in an observable and material impairment in the consumer's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
4. Neglect is the failure to provide for a consumers basic needs or the failure to protect a consumer from harm.
5. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength (bullying can be verbal, social and or physical).

General Definitions: Types of Bullying

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:

- a. Physical bullying – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- b. Verbal bullying – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- c. 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.
- d. 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 exposure 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 consumers, staff and volunteers.

Code of Conduct of Employees & Volunteers with Consumers

The following policies are intended to assist staff and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with consumers. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact your supervisor.

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

No form of abuse will be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from our organization. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously. The Yakima Family YMCA will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

The Conduct with Consumers outlines specific expectations of the staff and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Consumers will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Consumers will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, age, or religion.
3. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined in our Abuse Prevention and Policies Handbook.
4. Staff and volunteers will avoid affection with consumers that cannot be observed by others.

5. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined in our Abuse Prevention and Policies Handbook.
6. Staff and volunteers will not stare at or comment on consumers' bodies.
7. Staff and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with consumers. Age appropriate relationships may be acceptable and must be shared with supervisor
8. Staff and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of consumers. Smoking/vaping or the use of tobacco/marijuana in the presence of consumers, on any YMCA premises, on duty, or on YMCA business during working/volunteer hours is prohibited.
9. Staff and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on any YMCA property.
10. Staff and volunteers will not have secrets with consumers and will only give gifts with prior permission from the supervisor and parent.
11. Staff and volunteers will comply with our policies regarding interactions with consumers outside of our programs as outlined in our Abuse Prevention and Policies Handbook.
12. Staff and volunteers will not engage in any type of electronic communication with consumers.
13. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with consumers in a private setting. Staff and volunteers will use common areas when working with individuals.
14. Staff and volunteers should never leave a consumer unsupervised.
15. Staff and volunteers will not abuse consumers 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. Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one consumer by another consumer. 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 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:

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

17. All staff and volunteers are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Washington State Law (RCW 26.44) and the Washington State Administrative Code (WAC 388-150) require that staff and volunteers report all incidents where there is reason to believe abuse has occurred. Staff will:

- a. Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.

- b. Know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect consumers against abuse.
 - c. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws.
 - d. Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.
18. Staff and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other staff, volunteers, adults, or youths to their supervisor, Local CPS 1-800-557-9671.
19. Our organization cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any staff or volunteer shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.
20. Staff and volunteers may not have engaged in or been accused or convicted of youth abuse, indecency with a youth, or injury to a youth.
21. Staff and volunteers must use positive techniques in guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement. Staff and volunteers will have age-appropriate expectations and set-up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline.
22. Staff and volunteers will be a positive role model to youths and will exemplify the YMCA Four Core Values of Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.
23. Staff and volunteers are not to transport consumers in their own vehicles unless there is an emergency situation, in which the Executive Director or Associate Executive Director must be notified immediately.
24. Staff and volunteers may not be alone with consumers they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting consumers to your home. Any exception requires a written explanation before the fact and are subject to the Executive Director's or Associate Executive Director's approval.
25. Under no circumstance should staff or volunteers release a consumer to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other adult authorized by parent/guardian (written authorizations are on file at the YMCA).
26. Staff and volunteers are required to read and sign all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting of child abuse, and attend trainings on the subject as instructed by the supervisor.

Physical Contact Guidelines

Our organization’s physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting consumers, employees and volunteers. Our organization encourages appropriate physical contact with consumers and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by employees or volunteers towards consumers, or consumer to consumer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and or services.

The YMCA’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions include but are not limited to (if there are questions about physical contact, please contact your supervisor):

<i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i>
<p>Contact initiated by the consumer such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and fist bumps • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated areas or while one-on-one • Lap sitting (unless age appropriate) • Wrestling, Piggyback rides, Tickling • Allowing a consumer to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg (unless age appropriate) • Allowing consumers, older than kindergarten, to sit on an employee or volunteer’s lap • Any type of massage given by or to a consumer • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the consumer or the employee or volunteer • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas that is outside authorized and documented personal care assistance • Hitting, Spanking, Shaking, Slapping • Unnecessary restraints

Verbal Interaction Guidelines

Employees, volunteers and consumers are prohibited from speaking to consumers in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Employees, volunteers and consumers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations including their belief or philosophy on sexual status and are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities. Any inappropriate verbal interaction by employees, volunteers and consumers towards others will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or services.

The YMCA's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions include but are not limited to (if there are questions regarding verbal interactions, please contact your supervisor):

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive reinforcement• Appropriate jokes• Encouragement• Praise• Strength-based conversations/respectful in all communication with consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name-calling• Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving consumers in personal problems• Secrets• Cursing, ridicule, humiliation, shaming, belittling, bullying, hazing, derogatory remarks• Distasteful or sexual jokes, racial slurs• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate consumers• Derogatory remarks about the consumer or their family• Compliments relating to physique or body development

Off-Site Contact with Youth

Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. This contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put staff, volunteers, and our organization at increased risk.

Our organization strongly recommends that staff and volunteers do not have outside contact with consumers with which they do not have a preexisting familial or social relationship (i.e., children are friends in school, families attend same church). However, if off-site contacts are unavoidable, our organization has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

<i>Appropriate Outside Contact</i>	<i>Inappropriate Outside Contact</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-existing social or familial relationship (ensure proper boundaries are drawn by the staff or volunteer while in organization’s programming). Must inform supervisor of previous relationship. • Attending public events in a shared community (like graduation, sports events, religious ceremonies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babysitting, tutoring, private lessons, coaching, mentorship • No pre-existing social interactions between staff or volunteer’s children and children served by the organization (playdates, birthday parties, sleepovers, overnight trips, vacations, transportation) • Taking one consumer on an outing • Visiting one consumer in the youth’s home, without a parent present • Entertaining one consumer in the home of staff or volunteers • A lone consumer spending the night with staff or volunteers

In addition, when outside contact is necessary, ensure that the following steps are followed:

- Staff must notify their Direct Supervisor of any relationship that will exist outside of the YMCA and complete the Outside Contact Form, which must be approved by the Executive team.
- Staff must have the parent’s permission to engage in outside contact with the youth.

One-on-One Interactions with Youth

Most abuse occurs when a person is alone with a consumer, or when a consumer is alone with another consumer. Our organization aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interaction unless approved in advance by the organization administration. If you observe an inappropriate one-on-one

interaction between a staff and a consumer, immediately report this to the supervisor or the Executive Team.

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:

<i>Additional Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When meeting one-on-one with a consumer, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others. • Limit contact to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, fist bumps, 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 consumer and ask them to randomly drop in.

Electronic Communication and Social Media

The YMCA of Yakima strongly encourages employees and volunteers to refrain from electronic communication and/or social media use with consumers. However, if these interactions are part of programming or otherwise unavoidable, this organization offers the following guidelines:

All communication between staff and youth must be transparent. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication.

<i>Appropriate Electronic Communication</i>	<i>Inappropriate Electronic Communication</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth’s parent • Communicating through “organization group pages” on Facebook or other approved public forums • “Private” profiles for staff and volunteers which youth cannot access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments • Sexually oriented conversations • Posting pictures of organization participants on personal social media sites • Posting inappropriate comments on pictures • “Friending” participants on social networking sites

Gift-Giving and Gift Acceptance Policy

Gifts to Youth

This organization strongly discourages employees and volunteers from exchanging gifts with consumers. However, gifts to consumers may be given under the following circumstances:

1. Gift requests must be submitted in writing to a supervisor and/or a designated administrator prior to being purchased;
2. The supervisor and/or designated administrator will determine a cost limit regarding how much can be spent on the gift (limit should be under \$25).
3. Parents/guardians of the consumers must be notified about the gift item and why the consumers are receiving the gift.
4. Employees and volunteers are prohibited from giving gifts to individual consumers except when the gift is authorized by a supervisor or designated administrator and given to all consumers (i.e., celebration of special events/holidays or group recognition).
5. We require employees and volunteers to communicate that the gift is given on behalf of the organization, not the individual employee or volunteer.

Gifts from Youth

Sometimes it may be difficult to refuse gifts from consumers or their families. In many cultures, people give gifts to reflect their appreciation for people or services. In order to be respectful of consumers and their families, the organization makes reasonable allowances for acts of gratitude involving small gifts of appreciation from consumers and/or their families that have a monetary value not exceeding *\$50*. Employees and volunteers must disclose all such gifts to their immediate supervisor and/or a designated administrator. Under no circumstances can money be accepted from consumers or their families as a gift.

Grievance and Reporting Process

The YMCA encourages youth, parents and guardians to report any red-flag behavior or policy violations immediately. You can make the report to the program staff or any member of the leadership team. You can call or email the Certified Praesidium Guardian at 509-490-3908 or jabremerman@yakimaymca.org. If leaving a voicemail, we would prefer to have contact information to follow-up but the reports can also be made anonymously. You may also complete a YMCA Grievance Reporting Form which is located at each YMCA site and drop completed form in the drop box.

Once your grievance is received, it will be reviewed by our team, and we will take appropriate steps to investigate and resolve the matter. We strive to respond within (5-10 business days). While we may not always be able to provide a direct follow-up if you choose to remain anonymous, we will ensure that your concern is addressed.

To report suspected abuse, call the 24/7 Helpline 1.855.347.0751. The Praesidium's Helpline is dedicated to YMCA's and is a way to report suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and policy violations. Anonymously, if desired.

The helpline does not replace any applicable mandated abuse and neglect reporting to state authorities. To report suspected abuse in WA State, call 1.855.420.5888.

Recommended Reading for Young Children and their Parents/Guardians

If Only I had a Green Nose, by Max Lucado

Theme: Self-esteem, self-acceptance, peer pressure, bullying

Age range: K-8th

Summary: Punchinello is a Wemmick who falls into the trap of peer pressure. Once he stops visiting his maker, he becomes desperate to get a green nose like everyone else. The popular green nose then changed to red, then blue, and so on. Punchinello becomes tired of trying to fit in and becomes sad. His friend, Lucia, lets him know that his maker asks about him every day. He decides to go back to see his master, Eli, and he helps Punchinello be the Wemmick that he made him to be.

Impatient Pamela Calls 9-1-1, by Mary Koski

Theme: Calling for help, patience, and knowing important information

Age range: 1st-4th

Summary: This book teaches a very important lesson about when to call 911 for help. It also stresses the importance of learning pertinent information such as your home address. Throughout, the book stresses the importance of being patient and waiting to call 911 until there is truly an emergency.

Little Monkey's One Safe Place, by Richard Edwards

Theme: A safe place for children

Age range: K-3rd

Summary: Little monkey searches through the jungle for the one place where he can be safe. He found his one safe place in his mother's arms. This book can help you talk with children about safety, whether it is in the arms of a parent/guardian

or in the arms of someone else. This book helps adults work with kids on helping them locate a place where someone makes them feel secure and loved.

My Body is Private, by Linda Girard

Theme: Appropriate touching

Age range: 1st- 5th

Summary: A mother-child conversation introduces the topic of sexual abuse and ways to keep one's body private. The book respects readers' intelligence by using the proper terminology for genitalia and the generic term "bottom" to mean the buttocks. This book is a good teaching tool for discussion of a serious topic. It is one that all ages would find beneficial. Gray areas such as tickling are explored. Tickling can be fun, but it can also go too far where the one being tickled is not enjoying it. That is another example of when to demand that a certain "touch" or tactile activity be stopped. The children are well within their rights to do so at any time. Hugs and kisses are described as generally being welcome and acceptable, but children should not be forced to kiss or endure being kissed by someone who makes them feel uncomfortable.

Something Happened and I'm Scared to Tell, by Patricia Kehoe

Theme: Sexual Abuse

Age range: 1st- 4th

Summary: This book takes an honest approach to the subject and, more importantly, emphasizes that the blame for sexual abuse belongs to the perpetrator not the victim. Many victims have been groomed to believe the opposite and need this message. This book is a good resource for school counselors and for parents/guardians.

The Right Touch, by Sandy Kleven

Theme: Appropriate touching

Age range: 1st -4th

Summary: This book gives tools for parents/guardians to facilitate discussions with their children. The book addresses bad touch and good touch, private parts, and telling parents/guardians or other trusted adults if someone makes children feel uncomfortable. Be aware that the book includes an illustration of the mom and son looking at a book and their book has a picture of a little boy and girl naked so that they can identify "private parts".

The Trouble with Secrets, by Karen Johnson

Theme: Secrets/ Follow up to discussing good touch/bad touch

Age range: 1st -4th

Summary: This book uses concrete examples to help children learn how to decide which secrets should be kept and which should be told. This is an appropriate book to read with young children, who need to understand the difference between a good secret and a toxic secret. It helps children realize they are not alone, and that not all secrets are fun, and that some even need to be shared with a trusted adult.

Who Is a Stranger and What Should I Do? by Linda Walvoord Girard

Theme: Strangers and what children should do in different situations

Age range: 3rd-6th

Summary: This book discusses both strangers that do not pose a threat and those who may make children feel uncomfortable. More importantly, the book describes specific steps that children can take in various situations such as when children are approached by a stranger, when children see strangers in playgrounds, when strangers call by phone or ring the doorbell. In addition, the book describes some "tricks" that strangers may use to lure children into talking with them or going somewhere with them. In all situations, children receive specific advice for keeping themselves safe. For younger children, this book will be best received, and its suggestions best reinforced, if read with a parent/guardian.

Your Body Belongs to You, by Cornelia Spelman

Theme: Touching

Age range: K-2nd

Summary: This is an introduction to talking about physical boundaries with children. The kids start to learn about touching without having to hear about "bad" people or scary things. Additionally, it gives the parent/guardian and child a common vocabulary to use in their early discussions. The book encourages children not to keep secrets if they are approached and touched inappropriately or made to touch someone else against their will. Private parts are rightfully defined as the parts of the body one's underwear and bathing suits cover. The book stresses what to do if the touch is neither wanted nor welcome and that it is perfectly all right not to want to be touched in certain ways.