



Dow Bay Area Family YMCA Child Abuse Prevention Code of Conduct

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

Dow Bay Area Family YMCA provides our youth with the highest quality programs and services available. We are committed to creating an environment for youth that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success. Annual Abuse prevention training is provided and required.

Abuse of any kind will not be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from this organization. The organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require an investigation.

The Code of Conduct with youth outlines specific expectations of employees and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. In order to protect YMCA employees, volunteers, and program participants, at no time during a YMCA program may an employee or volunteer be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. As employees and volunteers supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that others can see them.
2. When absolutely necessary to meet one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public area where you are in full view of others. Inform other employees or volunteers that you are alone with a youth and ask them to randomly drop in.
3. Employees and volunteers shall never leave a child unsupervised.
4. Employees and volunteers should conduct or supervise private activities in pairs; diapering, putting on bathing suits, taking showers, etc. When this is not feasible, employees and volunteers should be positioned so that they are visible to others.
5. Restroom supervision: employees and volunteers will make sure the restroom is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Employees and volunteers will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the employees and volunteers (not being alone with a child). If employees and volunteers are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open. No child regardless of age should ever enter a bathroom alone on a field trip. Always send children in pairs, and whenever possible, with employees and volunteers.
6. Employees and volunteers must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism. Employees and volunteers will have age appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint is used only in pre-determined situations (when necessary to protect the child or other children from harm) and, is only to be administered in a prescribed manner and must be documented in writing.

Revised 2/21/24

7. Employees and volunteers will conduct a health check of each child, each day, as they enter the program, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. Report any suspensions to supervisor immediately. Questions or comments will be addressed to the parent or child in a non-threatening way. Any questionable marks or responses will be documented and reported as appropriate.
8. Employees and volunteers must respond to children with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of ability, religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.
9. Employees and volunteers will respect children's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say no. Other than diapering, children are not to be touched in areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
10. Employees and volunteers will avoid physical affection with youth that cannot be observed by others.
11. Employees and volunteers will not stare at or comment on others' bodies.
12. Employees and volunteers will refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children, parents, and other employees and volunteers.
13. Employees and volunteers will not keep secrets with youth and will only give gifts in accordance with organizational policies.
14. While the YMCA does not discriminate against an individual's lifestyle, it does require that in the performance of their job they will abide by the standards of conduct set forth by the YMCA.
15. Employees and volunteers must appear clean, neat, and appropriately attired.
16. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during working/volunteer hours is prohibited.
17. Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of children or parents during working/volunteer hours or on Y property is prohibited.
18. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children or parents is prohibited.
19. Employees and volunteers must be free of physical or psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's physical or mental health. If in doubt an expert should be consulted.
20. Employees and volunteers will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
21. Employees and volunteers may not be alone with children they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, inviting children to your home, or visiting youth in their own home without a parent present. Any exceptions require a written explanation in advance and are subject to YMCA administrator approval.

22. Employees and volunteers are not to transport children in their own vehicles.
23. Employees and volunteers may not date program participants under the age of 18 years of age.
24. Under no circumstances should employees and volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian (written parent authorization on file with the YMCA).
25. Employees and volunteers shall not abuse youth in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:
- a. *Physical abuse*: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints
 - b. *Verbal abuse*: degrading, threatening, cursing
 - c. *Sexual abuse*: inappropriate touch, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations
 - d. *Mental abuse*: shaming, humiliation, cruelty
 - e. *Neglect*: withholding food, water, shelter
26. The 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 steps needed to eliminate such behavior. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all youth, employees, and volunteers.

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:

- 1. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
 - 2. Posting sensitive, private information about another person;
 - 3. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad;
 - 4. 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.

27. Employees and volunteers are required to read and sign all policies related to identifying, documentation, reporting and investigations of child abuse and to attend trainings on the subject, as instructed by a supervisor.

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

The organization’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

<i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Verbal praise • 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 area • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Allowing a youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg • Any type of massage given by or to a youth • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the employees or volunteers • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

Our organization’s electronic communication policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth and employees and volunteers. Our organization encourages appropriate electronic communication with youth and prohibits inappropriate uses of electronic communication. Any inappropriate electronic communication by employees or volunteers towards youth in the organization’s programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The organization’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication are:

<i>Appropriate Communication</i>	<i>Inappropriate Communication</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youths 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 employees and volunteers that youths cannot access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments • Sexually oriented conversations • Private messages between employees or volunteers and youths • Posting pictures of organization participants on social media sites • Posting inappropriate comments on pictures • "Friending" youth participants on social networking sites

Employees and volunteers are 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.

Employees and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youth. Employees and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with youth.

Our organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions:

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the personal problems or issues of employees and volunteers • Secrets • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth

Reporting

Because our organization is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance from abuse, it is imperative that everyone, including employees, volunteers, and vendors, actively participates in the protection of our consumers and youth. If suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations are observed, it is the responsibility of employees, volunteers, and vendors to immediately report their observations. Remember, at our organization, the policies apply to everyone.

All employees, volunteers, and vendors are encouraged to report concerns or complaints about other employees, volunteers, other adults or consumer to a supervisor or you can reach **Wendy Plewa at 989-941-2363 or call the Praesidium Helpline at 855-347-0751.**

Additional resources for reporting abuse:

Michigan Child Protective Services 855-444-3911

Adult & Elder Abuse 855-444-3911

I understand that any violation of the Child Abuse Prevention Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of my employment or assignment.

Employee/Volunteer Signature

HR/Supervisor Signature

Date