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## **KENTUCKY YMCA YOUTH ASSOCIATION CHILD SAFETY POLICIES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

(Updated September 2018)

### **Policy Prohibiting Abuse or Mistreatment of Youth**

The Kentucky YMCA's reputation for creating positive, caring environments for young people is our greatest asset. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer to protect the young people in our programs and the trust the community has in us. The policies below have been established to protect our participants, our staff, our volunteers, and our standing with the community.

The Kentucky YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of youth in our programs. Any mistreatment, abuse, or failure to report allegations by a staff member or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service.

Any alleged or suspected abuse of a participant youth (including but not limited to: physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or inappropriate interactions electronically or in person) will be investigated, and the alleged abuser will be removed from youth contact until the investigation is complete; at which point the staff/volunteer will be cleared, put on probation, or terminated depending on the findings. If necessary, criminal charges and/or investigation may also result.

*The safety of our youth comes first, and although we will do our best to support our staff and volunteers, we will not continue to employ any staff or volunteer who cannot be undoubtedly cleared of any suspected or alleged abuse. The best policy is for staff and volunteers to follow the guidelines in this document in order to protect themselves from any suspicions or allegations.*



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## **Policy Prohibiting Abuse or Mistreatment of One Youth by Another Youth**

The Kentucky YMCA is committed to providing all youth with a safe environment. The Kentucky YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse, including but not limited to sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, inappropriate communication through technology of one youth by another youth.

In addition, the Kentucky YMCA 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 but not limited to:

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
  - d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
  - e. Inappropriate, mean, vulgar, or threatening social media posts
  - f. 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.
  - g. 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.



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**Policy Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate Physical Contact**

The Kentucky YMCA’s physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting participants, volunteers, and staff. The Kentucky YMCA encourages appropriate physical contact with youth and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by adults towards youth in the organization’s programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or ability to participate in future programming.

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

<b><i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Side hugs</li> <li>● Short hugs in public, initiated by the student</li> <li>● Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs</li> <li>● Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>● Handshakes</li> <li>● High-fives</li> <li>● Verbal praise</li> <li>● Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li> <li>● Open Hand Holding (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kisses</li> <li>● Showing inappropriate affection</li> <li>● Lap sitting</li> <li>● Wrestling of any kind</li> <li>● Piggyback rides</li> <li>● Tickling</li> <li>● Any type of massage given by/to a youth</li> <li>● Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth, staff, or volunteer</li> <li>● Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>● Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>



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**Policy Defining Appropriate And Inappropriate Verbal Interactions**

Adults 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.

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

The Kentucky YMCA's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

<b><i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Positive reinforcement</li> <li>● Appropriate jokes</li> <li>● Encouragement</li> <li>● Praise</li> <li>● Instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Name-calling</li> <li>● Discussing sexual encounters</li> <li>● Discussing alcohol/drug use</li> <li>● Involving youth in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers</li> <li>● Secrets</li> <li>● Offensive or sexual jokes</li> <li>● Shaming</li> <li>● Belittling</li> <li>● Showing favoritism</li> <li>● Derogatory remarks</li> <li>● Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth</li> <li>● Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family</li> </ul>



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### **Policy for Managing Risk when One Adult is Alone with One Youth**

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, adults should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:

<b><i>Additional Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When meeting with youth, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others. You should have a minimum of two adults or three students present at all meetings.</li><li>• Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Try to limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, one-armed hugs, and handshakes.</li><li>• 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. Do not stand between the youth and the door, let your face be seen.</li><li>• Inform other staff and volunteers that you are alone with a youth and ask them to randomly drop in.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>



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**Policy for Managing Interactions between Staff/Volunteers and Youth Outside of Scheduled Programs/Events/Activities**

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 the Kentucky YMCA at increased risk.

Preferred Option One:

The Kentucky YMCA prohibits interactions outside of regularly scheduled program activities unless approved by the organization’s Executive Administration.

Option Two:

The Kentucky YMCA strongly recommends that staff and volunteers do not have outside contact with youth from the organization, unless they have a previous relationship with that youth (e.g. family member, family friend, neighbor, etc.). However, if off-site contacts are unavoidable, the Kentucky YMCA has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

<b><i>Appropriate Outside Contact</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Outside Contact</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting in a public place for a Y-focused exchange (money drop off, lost &amp; found, etc.)</li> <li>● Participating in a youth fundraising or Y-focused event</li> <li>● Attending public events where groups of youth are coincidentally present, but not invited</li> <li>● Attending functions at a youth’s home, with parents present (previous relationship or Executive Administration permission required)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taking one youth on an outing for any reason other than medical need</li> <li>● Visiting one youth in the youth’s home, without a parent present</li> <li>● Entertaining one youth, in the home of staff or volunteers</li> <li>● A lone youth spending the night with staff or volunteers</li> </ul> <p><small>**Outside contact stipulations above do not apply to youth a staff or volunteer knew prior to participation in Kentucky YMCA programs.</small></p>

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

1. Supervisors should identify for staff and volunteers what types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate.
2. Ensure that staff or volunteers have the parents’ permission to engage in outside contact with the youth. Require the parents to sign a release-of-liability statement.



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**Policy Governing Electronic Communication between Staff/Volunteers and Youth**

Any one-on-one electronic communication between staff and youth, including during the use of social networking websites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., is prohibited, outside of programming needs (with Supervisor approval).

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

<b><i>Appropriate Electronic Communication</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Electronic Communication</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending and replying to text messages from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth’s parent. You can email a copy of text chain if needed.</li> <li>• Communicating through “organization group pages” on Facebook or other approved public forums</li> <li>• Personal social media accounts for staff and volunteers which youth cannot access. Accounts must be set to PRIVATE.</li> <li>• **All communication with program participants belongs to the Kentucky YMCA and subject to review at any time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments</li> <li>• Sexually oriented conversations</li> <li>• Private messages between staff and volunteers with youth</li> <li>• Posting pictures of individual organization participants on social media sites</li> <li>• Posting inappropriate comments on pictures</li> <li>• Proactively “Friending” participants on social networking sites. Friend requests from youth can not be accepted on personal accounts.</li> <li>• YMCA Social Media accounts cannot have political content or content on their site not appropriate to be modeling for youth</li> </ul>

In addition, you may provide this information to your participant’s parents so that they know what is appropriate and inappropriate from your staff.

In all instances, records of electronic communication between staff and youth should be retained by the staff.



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### **Policy on Background Checks for Staff and Volunteers**

The Kentucky YMCA will conduct complete criminal background and sex offender registry checks on every potential staff and volunteer via Sterling Background Checks and Verified Volunteers, prior to said persons being allowed to have contact with or access to information of the organization's youth participants. These checks will be updated annually, at least once every year, at the cost of the Kentucky YMCA.

The Kentucky YMCA reserves the right to refuse work to any staff or volunteer, or potential staff/volunteer, whose background check indicates said person may be a potential threat to the safety of the organization's youth participants.

The Kentucky YMCA requires staff and volunteers to notify Executive Administration immediately if they are arrested, charged with, or convicted of a crime while they are working or regularly volunteering at our organization.

### **Policy on Staff and Volunteer Child Safety Training**

The Kentucky YMCA requires all staff and volunteers to complete a child safety training within 30 days of the start of work with the organization and/or before starting work with youth, and at least once per year following. Failure to complete scheduled trainings will result in said person being disallowed contact with our organization's youth participants.

Trainings include, but are not limited to, information of types of abuse, how to recognize and respond to potential abuse, reporting of alleged or suspected abuse, tips on how to prevent youth-on-youth abuse while in programming, effective youth and staff/volunteer supervision practices to prevent abuse while in programming.

### **Policy for the Reporting of Child Safety Concerns**

The Kentucky YMCA staff and volunteers are mandatory reporters, and are required by law to report to authorities any suspicion of child abuse or neglect, either within or outside of the bounds of our organization's programs/events/activities.

Staff and volunteers have a duty, and are trained, to disclose all concerns to senior staff and follow proper protocol for documenting and reporting both internally and to external authorities. This includes, but is not limited to, safe-keeper filing and Child Protective Services reporting.