

GREATER JOLIET AREA YMCA

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE IN KEEPING KIDS SAFE

At the Y, we are committed to providing a safe and enriching experience for all children in our care. As a volunteer, you are a vital component of our Child Abuse Prevention Program. By working together, we can ensure that children in YMCA programs are safe and receive the support they need to learn, grow and thrive. The Greater Joliet Area YMCA has “zero tolerance” for abuse.

DEFINING THE TYPES OF ABUSE

Neglect: Failing to maintain a child’s health, safety and well-being

Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical injury

Sexual Abuse: Uses or involves a child for a sexual purpose or act

Emotional Abuse: Harm to a child’s mental and social development

Exploitation: Uses one’s position of power to maintain inappropriate relationships

THE RISK IS REAL

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18
- The highest risk exists for youth, ages 8-11
- 90% of victims know their perpetrators
- Once a child is victimized, they are more vulnerable to being abused again
- Child-on-child sexual, physical and emotional abuse, involving two adolescents, is prevalent and often goes unreported

HOW TO MAINTAIN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Encourage children to not keep secrets
- Talk with the children in your care to identify trusted adults in their lives
- Never be alone with children you have met at the Y or through YMCA programming

IDENTIFY PREDATORY BEHAVIOR AND ALWAYS REPORT YOUR CONCERNS

- Offenders of all ages draw victims into relationships and maintain the relationship in secrecy
- Offenders of all ages manipulate children into keeping unsafe secrets
- Offenders of all ages often exploit a position of power

APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT DEFINED

Appropriate physical contact:

- 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)

Inappropriate physical contact:

- Full-frontal hugs
- Kisses
- Showing affection in isolated areas
- 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 staff
- Compliments relating to physique or body development
- Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

Appropriate Verbal Interactions:

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Praise

Inappropriate Verbal Interactions:

- Name-calling
- Secrets
- Cursing
- Off-color or sexual jokes
- Shaming
- Belittling
- Derogatory remarks
- Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the personal problems or issues of staff
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth
- Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family

Appropriate Communication:

- Sending and replying to emails and text message 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 that youth cannot access

Inappropriate Communication:

- Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments
- Sexually oriented conversations
- Private messages between staff or volunteers and youth
- Posting pictures of organization participants on personal social media sites
- Posting inappropriate comments on pictures
- “Friending” participants on social networking sites

Appropriate Outside Contact:

- Taking groups of youth on an outing
- Attending sporting activities with groups of youth
- Attending functions at a youth’s home, with parents present

Inappropriate Outside Contact:

- Taking one youth on an outing without the parents’ written permission
- Visiting one youth in the youth’s home, without a parent present
- Entertaining one youth in the home of staff or volunteers
- One youth spending the night with staff or volunteers

REPORT YOUR CONCERNS AND ANY DISCLOSED ABUSE

As a YMCA volunteer, you are a Mandated Reporter. You are required to report your concerns to a Y staff team member within 24 hours. Together, we will follow the state’s Mandated Reporter guidelines. Remember, your role is to set in motion the process of getting help for the child.

COOPERATION WITH INVESTIGATIONS

The YMCA cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate of all cases of alleged abuse. Any volunteers should cooperate to 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 dismissal.

I understand that as a YMCA volunteer Child Abuse Prevention is my responsibility and I agree to abide by the statements and guidelines above.

Print Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____