

North Suburban YMCA

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

The North Suburban YMCA (NSYMCA) is committed to providing quality childcare, day camp, and youth programs that are operated in a safe and caring environment. The Board of Directors will establish policies and procedures necessary to assist in the achievement of this commitment. Input from parents regarding program content and operation is always encouraged.

Child Abuse has become a critical national concern. It is of special significance for the NSYMCA due to our role as an advocate for children and their rights, as well as our responsibility of enriching the lives of both children and adults through our programs. To help prevent child abuse from occurring, the NSYMCA has worked in accordance with Praesidium Inc., a national leader in child abuse prevention, to establish the following policies and procedures.

Definition of Child Abuse

The State of Illinois defines child abuse as the following.

Physical Abuse is any non-accidental physical injury inflicted by another person with the intent of hurting the child.

Sexual Abuse occurs when an adult uses a child for sexual stimulation or gratification. This definition includes any sexual acts involving sexual molestation or exploitation.

General Neglect is defined as the failure of a caregiver to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision; no physical injury to the child has occurred.

Severe Neglect is the intentional failure of a caregiver to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care where injury has occurred or is likely to occur. This also includes situations of neglect where any person having the care or custody of a child willfully causes or permits the health of a child to be endangered.

Psychological or Emotional Abuse refers to any type of abuse that is not physical or sexual. Examples include frequent verbal humiliation, constant criticism, intimidation, threatening physical harm, arbitrary and unpredictable ways of interacting, and rejecting, degrading, or minimizing the importance of anything a child says or does.

Definition of Terms

Staff: all full-time and part-time staff, including directors, program leaders, teachers, and aides, especially those who work in youth programs. All volunteer staff who have frequent and routine contact with children (parents who volunteer for special events and parents in parent/child programs are excluded).

Programs Included: This policy is in effect for all NSYMCA programs serving children and/or youth from newborn to 18 years of age.

Effective January 2019

The NSYMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of youths in its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by a staff member or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service.

Mandated Reporting

All NSYMCA staff are required to report suspected child abuse to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (“DCFS”) hotline at 1-800-252-2873 as well as complete an incident report for immediate submission to their supervisor. Please see the “North Suburban YMCA Mandated Reporting” policy for additional information, including a copy of the Child Abuse Prevention Report Checklist form to be completed by any NSYMCA staff member suspecting child abuse/neglect.

Cooperation with Investigations

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegations of abuse/neglect will be taken seriously. The NSYMCA 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, internal investigation conducted by the NSYMCA, or persons given investigative authority by the NSYMCA. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.

Child Abuse Prevention Policies

1. The relationship between the NSYMCA staff and children in the NSYMCA shall remain professional at all times.
2. Staff shall not be alone with a child, unless one-on-one interactions have been approved, or extenuating circumstances arise – such as a lost child.
 - In child care and camp programs, a staff member must utilize the “rule of three” or more and may not be alone with a child in an area or location where they cannot be observed by other staff or adults. (Van and bus routes would be an exception to this requirement). This means that there must be at least two staff members present with one child, or two children with one staff member.
 - In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, staff should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:
 - When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others.
 - Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, 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 youth and ask them to randomly drop in.
 - 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.
 - In extenuating circumstances, such as a lost child or a medical emergency, staff should take every precaution to avoid any actions that may be misinterpreted. At no time should a staff enter or take a child into a room alone.

Effective January 2019

3. Private coaching or tutoring must have approval from a supervisor, may not occur outside of the NSYMCA, and must have a schedule maintained by the supervisor which includes times, youth involved, and location of sessions.
4. Each decentralized site of operation will install or have access to a local telephone on location during operation hours. Remote locations will have a procedure in place for communication during an emergency. Cell phones will be used in NSYMCA vans.
5. At no time should children be left unsupervised. Supervision is defined as visual observation in childcare centers. The exception is for children using bathrooms, locker rooms, or showers. These children should be accompanied by at least one other child.
 - **Group Bathroom Breaks:**
 - Only groups of three or more may go to the bathroom.
 - If a bathroom only has one stall, only one youth may go inside the stall while the others wait outside in a public space by the bathroom.
 - If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many youths as there are stalls.
 - Minimize youths of different ages using the bathroom at the same time.
 - Staff should stand outside the bathroom within earshot, with door open.
 - Staff may not use the bathroom at the same time as youth.
 - When necessary to assist young youth in the bathroom stalls, staff shall keep door to the bathroom or stall open at all times.
 - **Locker Room Policies:**
 - Staff shall stand within earshot while youth are using the locker room.
 - Staff shall intermittently and briefly check the locker rooms so users know the locker rooms are monitored.
 - Discourage use of locker rooms by youths of different age groups.
 - Prohibit locker rooms horseplay (i.e. towel snapping).
6. Staff members are prohibited from caring for children enrolled, or previously enrolled, in NSYMCA programs outside of approved NSYMCA activities, including baby-sitting or weekend trips, without written approval of the CEO. Under no circumstances should staff initiate outside contact for purpose of employment or personal relationships.
7. Physical contact by staff or volunteers should promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or volunteers toward youth in the NSYMCA's programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The NSYMCA has developed the following guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions. Please note that this list is not all-inclusive, and is subject to NSYMCA managing staff discretion.

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated areas • Lap sitting should be discouraged • Wrestling

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal praise • Pats on the head, when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, arms, shoulders • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands with young children in escorting situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piggyback rides • Allowing a child 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 or volunteer • Compliments relating to physique or body type • Touching bottom, chest, or genital area
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8. Staff are prohibited from speaking to a youth in a way that is, or could be construed by an observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Staff must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youth. Staff are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with youth.

The NSYMCA has developed the following guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions. Please note that this list is not all-inclusive, and is subject to NSYMCA managing staff discretion.

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<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 staff and volunteers • Secrets • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming, belittling, or derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate youth • Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family

9. When necessary to change a youth's clothes (i.e. diaper changes, changing into/out of swimming suits, etc.) at least two staff members are required to be in the room at all times.
10. Staff are prohibited from interactions with children enrolled in, or previously enrolled in NSYMCA programs outside of regularly scheduled program activities unless approved by the organization's Administration.
- Group outings/field trips:
 - All youth must have a permission slip stating where the outing is, what times the outing is taking place, and a release-of-liability signed by a parent in order to attend the outing.
 - Staff will take a record of all youth attending the outing with emergency contact information on the outing.

11. Any private electronic communication between staff and youth, including the use of social networking websites – Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. – is prohibited.

The NSYMCA has designated the following as appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication.

Appropriate Electronic Communication	Inappropriate Electronic Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending and replying to emails from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth’s parents. • 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 • Private messages between staff and youth • Posting pictures of participants on social media sites without the consent of the NSYMCA Administration • Posting inappropriate comments on pictures • “Friending” participants on social networking sites.

12. Staff are not permitted to use electronic communication devices (i.e. cell phones) while working with youth except during approved breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging, and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with youth is strictly prohibited regardless of the type of device used and whether for business or personal reasons.
 - There are occasions in which staff will need to use official personal electronic devices such as field trips, off-site programs, or emergencies.
13. Staff providing direct care for children will wear an identification badge/name tag or identifying shirt/uniform.
14. No NSYMCA staff shall transport children in a private vehicle unless authorized by CEO. When necessary to transport children, it shall be done in a van registered and insured by the NSYMCA or bus rented through a contract with a reputable company. No child will be allowed to ride in a bus alone; a NSYMCA staff member must accompany children during the ride.
15. Staff behavior and discipline actions with children must not be abusive. Constructive methods must be used for maintaining group control and handling individual behavior. Corporal punishment and other humiliating or frightening technique are prohibited.