



## Safeguarding Children Staff/Volunteer Code of Conduct

### Appendix H

## Safeguarding Children and Youth Practices

As a YMCA Staff / Volunteer, you must be aware of the YMCA's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behavior, and acceptable responses and reactions. This agreement outlines the safe behavior expectations for all Staff/Volunteers in alignment with the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy.

All Staff/Volunteers are to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their job description as a positive role model to children/youth and as a representative of the YMCA.

These guidelines reflect the YMCA's commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for children/youth. By following these protocols, the organization can take proactive steps to safeguard their well-being and respond effectively to any issues or concerns that may arise.

**This means as a YMCA Staff/Volunteer, you commit to:**

### 1. Duty to Report to Child Protection Agency and/or Police

After notifying your supervisor or manager, promptly report concerns, issues, problems, suspected incidents, and any suspicious behavior to appropriate child protection agency or police as required. Utilize our procedures to handle any allegations involving Staff/Volunteers.

### 2. Internal Reporting

Promptly and without hesitation, notify your manager or supervisor of complaints from children/youth, or their families or caregivers, as well as any allegations or disclosures, suspicions of grooming, child abuse or neglect, concerns about child safety, and any breaches of the policy.

### 3. Duty of Care to Provide a Safe and Inclusive Environment

Act in accordance with your duty of care to ensure that all who access the YMCA's programs, services, and facilities are provided with a safe, inclusive environment, free of exploitation.

### 4. Reporting Inappropriate Behaviour

Report to your supervisor any suspicion, observation, or knowledge of inappropriate or discriminatory behavior that violates Y policies. This also includes any behaviour that is initiated by a child/youth that is sexual, violent, inappropriate or discriminatory in nature.

### 5. Seek Assistance with Confidentiality

Seek assistance in a timely manner and respect the utmost confidentiality of those involved whenever there is a need for clarification.

The following sections provide expectations about things to know and how to behave.

### Interactions:



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Use language and tone of voice that positively impacts the wellbeing of the children/youth, fostering a supportive and caring atmosphere. Use language that fosters a positive relationship with families and caregivers when talking about their children/youth.

Build and exemplify positive, nurturing relationships, creating an environment of security, confidence, and inclusivity.

Foster healthy and social environments for children/youth to connect with their peers.

Use fair, respectful, and appropriate strategies when responding to the unique developmental needs of each child/youth.

Empower children/youth by giving them the freedom to make choices and express their opinions.

Respect the child's/youth's rights to contact their parents/guardians or others if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or distressed during their time at the program, while ensuring minimal disruption to the activities. In instances of separation anxiety or homesickness, it is advisable for staff to contact the parents first.

#### **Physical Contact:**

Staff/Volunteers must always seek the consent of a child/youth before initiating any physical contact and provide a **clear explanation** of what they are doing and why.

Unnecessary physical contact, such as holding, kissing, cuddling, or touching inappropriately, must be avoided at all times. Any action that could be misinterpreted as having a sexual connotation, like a school-aged child sitting on a staff member's lap, is considered inappropriate.

When children/youth are upset, staff/volunteer should provide comfort and attend to their needs in an appropriate manner.

During physical activities, staff/volunteers should be aware of the impact of their actions and exercise caution regarding the intensity of play, especially during sports or other activities involving playful behavior.

#### **Safe Environments:**

Programs and services for children/youth should be designed with careful consideration of the physical environment. This includes choosing suitable spaces that promote child/youth safety, such as locations with adequate exits, proximity to washrooms, windows, and clear lines of sight.

Staff/Volunteers should not be one-on one (alone) in private / secluded spaces with a child/youth unless it is part of a specific service/program. If necessary, the area must have visibility (e.g., clear windows, doors ajar) as a minimum precaution.

Staff should be able to recognize and address potential safety issues in program locations and respond appropriately to minimize risks to children/youth.



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When undertaking activities with elements of risk, proper preparation, appropriate equipment, suitable clothing, and adequate supervision and safety measures must be in place to ensure a safe experience for the children/youth.

#### Establishing Boundaries

Staff/volunteers are required to maintain appropriate boundaries to ensure the safety and well-being of all children/youth involved in Y programs and services. The following guidelines must be strictly adhered to:

- **Limited Interactions:** Staff/volunteers must refrain from interacting with children/youth involved in YMCA programs/services **outside the scope** of the designated program or service. This includes activities such as birthday parties, social interactions, etc.
- **Private Arrangements:** Staff/volunteers should **not initiate**, seek, request, or accept private arrangements with parents/guardians of children/youth participating in YMCA programs/services while employed by the Y. This includes any arrangements outside of their work or voluntary roles, such as babysitting, sports coaching, or housesitting.
- **Contact Boundaries:** Staff/volunteers must **not engage** in 'direct/personal/private' contact with children/youth, such as 'friending,' 'following,' 'tagging,' 'direct messaging,' or communicating through mobile phone calls, texting, social media or email, outside of YMCA programming unless required by the specific program.
- **Gift-Giving:** Staff/Volunteers must not give personal gifts to children/youth participating at the YMCA unless it is approved as part of a specific program.
- **Confidentiality:** Personal information that is or may be deemed inappropriate must not be shared by Staff/Volunteers.
- **Prior Relationships Disclosure:** Staff/Volunteers must disclose any pre-existing relationships (e.g., friendships, relatives, work connections, etc.) that exist between them and families and/or children/youth who currently participate or have previously participated in YMCA programs. This disclosure should be made by advising the supervisor/manager for review and consideration. This ensures transparency and helps maintain a safe environment within the Y

#### Health & Safety

##### Supervision practices

All Staff/Volunteers must be clearly identifiable when working either by uniform, name tag or direct introduction to families, children/youth.

At all times staff must supervise children/youth based on age and program requirements and ensure they are accounted for.

Sign-in and sign-out procedures must be diligently followed. Staff/Volunteers must be vigilant in monitoring the arrival and departure of all children/youth.



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Children should only be released from YMCA programs/services to authorized parents/guardians or approved individuals confirmed by government-issued ID.

Staff must maintain program ratio requirements when working with children to ensure appropriate supervision.

General supervision is provided to children/youth over the age of 12 who visit a YMCA facility without parent/guardian accompaniment.

Visitors, vendors, contractors and special guests must have their government issued ID and / or work identification verified and sign into a visitor log on site detailing the time they enter, the time they leave and reason for visiting.

### **Life-Threatening Allergies**

Protecting children/youth who have life-threatening allergies is of utmost importance, and the YMCA's approach to minimize exposure to known allergens and gather detailed emergency response information from parents/guardians is critical. It is necessary to have clear communication and up-to-date information so that YMCA staff can provide a safe and supportive environment for all children/youth, including those with allergies.

**YMCA Staff/Volunteers:** Staff/volunteers who work directly with children/youth must be able to recognize the signs of allergic reactions and how to respond promptly and appropriately. This may involve calling for help, and / or administering medication, such as epinephrine in case of severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis).

**Allergy-Safe Environment:** Staff/Volunteers should take steps to maintain an allergy-safe environment for all children/youth. This will involve implementing policies and practices to reduce cross-contamination of allergens in food preparation areas and common spaces. This includes not permitting non-program provided food in our settings.

### **Overnight Supervision**

Staff/Volunteers must not be alone while sleeping in the same room with children/youth. For programs that require overnight supervision (e.g. overnight camp) with multiple children/youth in one accommodation, at least two staff must be present for children under the age of 11 and one staff for twelve and up.

In hotel rooms, tents, or exchange programs, staff/volunteers must not be alone overnight with children/youth unless it is their own child.

Parents/guardians must be informed of sleeping arrangements before any overnight stay.

Children/youth should not be left under the supervision or protection of unauthorized persons such as hotel staff, Parks Canada staff or friends.

### **Washroom / change room practices**



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Staff/volunteers have a duty of care to provide the appropriate level of supervision to children / youth when they use washroom/change room facilities. Extra vigilance is required in areas accessed by members of the public.

Staff/volunteers are obligated to uphold the privacy of children and youth in scenarios like changing clothes and showering. In cases where there's a potential risk of harm (e.g. situations like horseplay), intervention is required.

Staff/Volunteers must protect their own privacy in similar situations, including not exposing children / youth to adult nudity.

Staff/Volunteers should avoid one-to-one situations with a child / youth within a washroom/change room area.

### **Photography**

Photos or videos for specific programs can be taken only using Y-approved equipment and with parent/guardian permission through a signed release form.

Photos shared with families should only contain images of their child and only be shared through YMCA issued devices or platforms. Staff/volunteers should only take photos of children/youth in the presence of other staff.

Children should be appropriately dressed in any photo.

Never upload or share photos/videos to personal or unofficial YMCA social media platforms.

Staff/volunteers must take reasonable steps to ensure that members of the public do not take photography/videography of children / youth at a Y service.

Staff/volunteers must take reasonable steps to ensure that parents/guardians take photos/videos only of their own children/youth.

### **Digital**

Staff/volunteers are expected to:

Not engage with children/youth (current or former) outside the YMCA via social media platforms, voice or video call, text or email, directly to a child/youth unless for the express purpose of conducting YMCA business, and with manager knowledge and approval. This contact must be from a YMCA supplied device only.

Communication should be directed to the parents or guardian unless the program requires direct contact with a youth.

Reduce the risk of children/youth being exposed to inappropriate content or contact when using YMCA technology.



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#### Travel and Use of Personal Vehicles:

Staff/volunteers are not permitted to transport children / youth in their personal vehicle unless in an immediate life-threatening situation and Emergency Medical Services are unavailable to attend.

Staff/volunteers should not travel alone in a YMCA vehicle with a single child/youth unless in unforeseen circumstances and there is no alternative. In such cases, the manager's approval is required and the child/youth's parent/guardian must be notified. The incident must be reported within 24 hours using an incident report submission to Risk.

#### **STRICTLY PROHIBITED: Unacceptable Practices**

A prohibited practice is any behavior by a staff/volunteer or placement student that puts children/youth at risk or that can inhibit a child's/youth's growth, self-esteem, or healthy development. The following practises are unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

**Abuse and Neglect:** Engaging in any form of abuse—physical, emotional, psychological, sexual—or neglecting a child/youth's basic necessities, such as food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, bedding, and emotional support. This also includes all types of discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

**Derogatory Language:** Making derogatory, culturally insensitive, violent, or sexually suggestive comments to or in the presence of a child/youth, causing humiliation, shame, fear, distress, or undermining their self-respect, dignity, or self-worth.

**Disciplinary Actions:** Disciplining children/youth through emotional abuse, favoritism, physical abuse, verbal abuse, referencing cultural differences, swearing, physical punishment, or any other offensive/inappropriate action.

**Harming or Exploitation:** Harming or exploiting any child/youth under any circumstances.

**Initiating Against Wishes:** Initiating physical contact against the wishes of the child/youth.

**Locking Exits:** Locking exits to confine a child/youth or leaving them in an area or room without adult supervision, except during a behavioural crisis that puts them or others in danger and / or when it is necessary for the emergency response.

**Personal Care Boundaries:** Staff/volunteers should not perform personal care tasks for child/youth who do not require assistance, such as toileting, first aid, or medical assistance.

**Physical Contact to Redirect:** Use of physical contact to redirect a child or youth where risk is not present is not permitted (e.g. arm grabbing, hair tugging, head tapping, grabbing a backpack or clothing, etc.)

**Physical Punishment:** Any form of punishment involving physical force intended to cause pain or discomfort, even if mild, including forcing children to eat or drink against their will.



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**Physical Restraint:** Physically restraining a child/youth, such as holding them down, confining them to a space (e.g. closet, storage room) or any device (e.g. high chair, stroller, bus seat) for disciplinary purposes instead of supervision, unless the restraint is necessary to prevent immediate harm to the child/youth or others. Physical restraint should be the last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent, and must be reported to management promptly.

**Sexual Behavior and Exposure:** Engaging in any sexual behavior or conversations of a sexual nature with or in the presence of children/youth. Staff must not expose children/youth to pornographic material through discussions, movies, television, internet/social media, or magazines.

**Unsupervised Children:** Leaving children unsupervised in any situation.

**Using Locked Rooms:** Using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child/youth by separating them from other children.

These **practices are strictly prohibited**. Any violation will result in immediate action and appropriate consequences.

*I, hereby acknowledge that I have received and read this agreement. I understand that as a staff or volunteer of the YMCA, it is my responsibility to comply with the principles and standards outlined in the Safeguarding Children Staff/Volunteer Code of Conduct.*

*I understand that any violation of these practices may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, and may result in a report to the Child Protection Agency or Police.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ [Employee Name]

YMCA Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_