



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Athens-McMinn Family YMCA  
COMPREHENSIVE CHILD  
PROTECTION POLICY**

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## **I. General Definitions**

### **A. Types of abuse**

- A.** Physical abuse is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a youth.
  
- B.** Sexual abuse is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth and an adult or between two youths. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other youth.
  
- C.** Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
  
- D.** Neglect is the failure to provide for a youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a youth from harm.

## II. Code of Conduct with Youth

The following policies are intended to assist staff and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with youths. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact your supervisor or our Praesidium Child Abuse Prevention Guardian which is our CEO/Executive Director.

The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA provides our youths with the highest quality services available. We are committed to creating an environment for youths that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated. Confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from our organization. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously. The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

The Conduct with Youth outlines specific expectations of the staff and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Youths will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Youths will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, age, or religion.
3. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by our organization.
4. Staff and volunteers will avoid affection with youths that cannot be observed by others.
5. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by our organization.
6. Staff and volunteers will not stare at or comment on youths' bodies.
7. Staff and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youths.
8. Staff and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of youths.
9. Staff and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on Athens-McMinn Family YMCA property.
10. Staff and volunteers will not have secrets with youths and will only give gifts with prior permission.
11. Staff and volunteers will comply with Athens-McMinn Family YMCA policies regarding interactions with youths outside of our programs.

12. Staff and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with youths.
13. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with youths in a private setting. Staff and volunteers will use common areas when working with individual youths.
14. Staff and volunteers will not abuse youths in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:

*Physical abuse:* hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints

*Verbal abuse:* degrading, threatening, cursing

*Sexual abuse:* inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations

*Mental abuse:* shaming, humiliation, cruelty

*Neglect:* withholding food, water, shelter

15. The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. In addition, the Athens-McMinn Family 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 steps needed 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:

- 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:
  - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
  - Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
  - Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
  - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
  - 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.

- 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 youths, staff and volunteers.

16. All staff must follow the State of Tennessee mandatory reporting requirements. Staff should be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. Staff will:
  - a. Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
  - b. Know and follow Athens-McMinn Family YMCA policies and procedures that protect youths against abuse.
  - c. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws.
  - d. Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.
17. Staff and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other staff, volunteers, adults, or youths to the CEO/Executive Director, our Board of Directors Chief Volunteer Officer, or Praesidium’s Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751.
18. The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA 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 or internal investigation conducted by the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA or persons given investigative authority by the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.
19. Staff and volunteers may not have engaged in or been accused or convicted of youth abuse, indecency with a youth, or injury to a youth.

### III. Policies

Policies define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior in an organization. Because offenders often violate policies to gain access to youths, when staff know and understand policies, they can identify, interrupt, and report policy violations. Simply interrupting a policy violation can prevent a false allegation of abuse or put an offender on notice that no one works in private, the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected.

#### A. Physical Contact

The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youths and staff. The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA encourages appropriate physical contact with youths and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or volunteers towards youths 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:

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Side hugs</li><li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder or "temple" hugs</li><li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li><li>• Handshakes</li><li>• High-fives and hand slapping</li><li>• Verbal praise</li><li>• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li><li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li><li>• Arms around shoulders</li><li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full-frontal hugs</li><li>• Kisses</li><li>• Showing affection in isolated area</li><li>• Lap sitting</li><li>• Wrestling</li><li>• Piggyback rides</li><li>• Tickling</li><li>• Allowing a youth to cling to an employee's or volunteer's leg</li><li>• Any type of massage given by or to a youth</li><li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the staff or volunteer</li><li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li><li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li></ul>

## B. Verbal Interaction

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to youths 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 youths. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with youths.

The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

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

## C. One-on-One Interaction

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a youth. The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by leadership staff.

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

### Additional Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions

- 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.

#### 1. Tutoring/ Private Coaching:

One-on-one situations, such as tutoring and private coaching sessions, introduce additional risks for false allegations. Staff and volunteers should be aware of our policies regarding tutoring and private coaching:

- a. Staff and volunteers must have supervisor approval for any tutoring or private coaching sessions.
- b. Tutoring and coaching sessions with Athens-McMinn Family YMCA youths may not occur outside of the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA facility and/or YMCA programming.
- c. Supervisors must keep a schedule of private tutoring and coaching sessions, which should include times, youths involved, and location of sessions.

## D. Off-site Contact

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 Athens-McMinn Family YMCA at increased risk.

Appropriate Outside Contact	Inappropriate Outside Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking groups of youths on an outing</li> <li>• Attending sporting activities with groups of youths</li> <li>• Attending functions at a youth's home, with parents present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking one youth on an outing without the parents' written permission</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>

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. In these situations, the parents are required to sign a release-of-liability statement.

## E. Electronic Communication

Any private electronic communication between staff and youths, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. - is prohibited. All communication between staff and youths must be transparent.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

Appropriate Electronic Communication	Inappropriate Electronic Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youths ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth's parent</li> <li>• Communicating through "organization group pages" on Facebook or other approved public forums</li> <li>• "Private" profiles for staff and volunteers which youths cannot access</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 youths</li> <li>• Posting pictures of organization participants on social media sites</li> <li>• Posting inappropriate comments on pictures</li> <li>• "Friending" participants on social networking sites</li> </ul>

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

### **1. Cell Phone Use:**

While assigned to work with youths, staff are not permitted to use electronic communications device except during approved breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with youths is strictly prohibited regardless of the type of device used and whether for business or personal reasons. Employees need to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy.

Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact (via voice, text, or pictures/video) organization members and/or program participants for personal and/ or inappropriate reasons shall be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment.

### **2. Acceptable Use of Cell Phones during Program Hours:**

There are occasions in which staff will need to use personal or organization issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of organization issued or personal electronic communication devices include:

- a. Field Trips
- b. Off-site Programs
- c. Emergencies

## **F. Gift Giving**

Molesters routinely groom youths by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the youth. They might instruct the youth to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the youth to keep secrets from parents. For this reason, staff and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of youths, and only under the following circumstances:

1. Administration must be made aware of and approve the gift.
2. Parents must be notified.

## IV. Monitoring and Supervision

When staff are adequately supervised, potential offenders are less likely to act on their impulses because they face detection. When youths are adequately supervised, they too are less likely to engage in inappropriate interactions with others. Similarly, the physical plant must be monitored, particularly in out-of-the-way locations or locations that might permit an offender undue access to or privacy with a youth. Effective supervision and monitoring require that a variety of methods be used frequently, at both scheduled and random times.

### A. Facility Monitoring

Building architecture can increase or mitigate the risk of an incident or accident. Because most incidents of sexual behavior occur in private, the extent to which privacy is managed, risk is managed. As a staff member it is essential to be aware of surroundings and report any suspicious behavior.

### B. Checking Members into a Facility:

1. When anyone (members, guests, residents, construction workers, maintenance, cleaning crews, etc.) enters the facility during operational hours, they must check in with the front desk.
2. Other entrances and exits should only be utilized by staff and/or when a staff member is accompanying members and program participants.

### C. General Supervision

General supervision procedures:

1. **Administrative and Supervisory Visits to Youth Programs-** Youth supervisors and administrators will regularly visit all youth programs to ensure that all activities are well-managed and that youth policies are observed by all in attendance.
2. **Ratios-** Each program will follow the ratio requirements that are directly to the goals of the program and the design of the program area. The staff or volunteer-to-youth ratio should be adjusted for programs that serve youths with special needs. Refer to local licensing requirements and general best practice guidelines for establishing adult-to-youth ratios.
3. **Mixed Age Groups-** In most incidents involving one youth abusing another youth, the youths are from different age groups. Each program is responsible for establishing specific guidelines for additional monitoring and supervision of activities that involve youths from different age groups. Staff and volunteers must be aware that close line of sight supervision is required when monitoring programs that mix age groups.

## **A. Monitoring Youth in Facilities**

Children under the age of 12 must be under the supervision of their parent and/or guardian or they must be participating in a supervised program. We generally have children under the age of 12 participating in a program without a parent present. Because of these we must follow the following policies in order to protect youths:

1. Require a parent or legal guardian to complete a membership application which includes identifying information, any special medical or behavioral circumstances, any legal indemnifications, the youth's date of birth, and emergency contact information. In addition, require all youths to sign-in to the facilities at all times.
2. While in the facility, youths can be supervised directly, indirectly, or with a combination of the two techniques.
  - a. For direct supervision, the program may offer structured, scheduled activities like basketball tournaments, swimming activities, arts and crafts, etc. These activities should have one or more staff assigned to lead and supervise.
  - b. For indirect supervision, the program must designate certain building areas as authorized areas. Authorized areas could include a gymnasium, a game area, or a classroom for doing homework and so on. Authorized areas must be easily visible and routinely and systematically checked by staff. Youths should know that they will be supervised by staff at all times, and all staff should know which areas are authorized and which are not.
3. All program staff should wear nametags or identifying clothing so that theyouth can easily recognize them as staff.
4. All staff should:
  - a. Greet youths that enter the facility; to direct youths to the structured activities or authorized areas; and, to redirect youths who are not in an authorized area or who are not participating in a structured activity.
  - b. To be aware of the risks involved with mixing age groups and how to monitor activities involving mixed age groups.
  - c. To routinely monitor high risk areas (such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and unused rooms).

Ultimately, all kids must be supervised at all times, regardless of age. The key to remember is that they can be supervised directly in structured activities and indirectly when they are in authorized areas.

## **E. Monitoring High Risk Activities**

### **1. Bathroom Activities**

Most incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in the bathrooms. Therefore, the following supervision guidelines are recommended:

When supervising restroom use, adult staff members should first quickly scan the bathroom before allowing youths to enter.

- a. For “Group Bathroom Breaks”:
  - Staff should take groups of two or more youths to the bathroom – following the “rule of three” or more.
  - If the bathroom only has one stall, only one youth should enter the restroom while the others wait outside with the staff.
  - 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.
  - Require staff to stand outside the bathroom door but remain within earshot.
- b. For single use restrooms:
  - Require youths to ask permission to use the bathroom.
  - All staff should frequently check bathrooms.
- c. Staff are prohibited from using the bathroom at the same time as youths.
- d. If assisting young youths in the stalls, the staff should keep the door to the stall open.

## **2. Locker Room Activities**

The locker room procedures include:

- a. Staff should stand within earshot of the locker room when in use by youths.
- b. Staff should check the locked room for adults when taking program participants to change.
- c. Staff should intermittently and briefly check inside the locker room so users know the locker room is monitored.
- d. When possible, try to limit the use of locker rooms by youths of different ages at the same time.
- e. Locker room horseplay such as towel snapping, etc. is strictly prohibited.

## **3. Shower Activities**

Staff and youths must shower at different times.

- a. While the youths shower, at least one staff member should stand in the bathroom doorway and within earshot of the youths. Ensure that only one youth is in each shower

## **4. Transition Times and Free Times**

Transition times and free-choice times (or free times) pose a high risk for incidents because during these times, staff and volunteers may not be assigned a particular group of youths to supervise. To decrease the risk of incidents, implement the following procedures:

- a. Staff should position themselves so that youths remain in line-of-site of staff at all times.
- b. Staff should maintain proper age ratios at all time depending on the program.
- c. Staff should divide into zone monitoring mode when appropriate rather than congregating.
- d. Staff should follow all bathroom procedures.
- e. Require periodic roll calls for each age group.

- f. Supervisors should conduct period sweeps and check-ins.

## **5. Playground Activities**

The playground procedures require:

- a. Youths to remain in line-of-site of staff at all times.
- b. Staff should pay attention to barriers to line-of-sight supervision and address them with other staff. This includes hiding spots on playground, playground bathroom, storage shed.
- c. Staff should maintain zone-monitoring supervision.
- d. Staff should follow all bathroom policies.
- e. Staff to conduct periodic roll calls for each age group.
- f. Supervisors to conduct periodic check-ins and assessments of the activity period and of the entire activity area.

## **6. Transportation Activities**

Transporting youths may increase the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse because staff and volunteers may be alone with a youth or may make unauthorized stops with youths. In addition, transportation activities may provide a time for unsupervised youths to engage in youth-to-youth sexual activity.

The transportation guidelines include:

- a. We require written parent permission from all youths on the trip. Staff take these permission forms and medical releases with them on the trip.
- b. Staff should have a list of the youths on the trip. The staff take roll when boarding the bus, when leaving the bus, periodically throughout the trip, and then again when boarding the bus.
- c. Program staff ratios should be in force at all times during field trips.
- d. Staff should sit in seats that permit maximum supervision.
- e. Discourage mixed age groups from sitting together. When possible, high risk youths are seated by themselves or with a staff member.
- f. Drivers are prohibited from making unauthorized stops unless there is an emergency.
- g. Documentation is required of any unusual occurrences.

When public transportation is used:

- a. In addition to the transportation procedures listed above, youths should remain in one area of the bus, if possible.
- b. Staff and volunteers that are assigned to a group should remain with that group on the bus.
- c. Take a head count or call roll immediately after entering and leaving the bus.

In situations where staff transport youths in non-organization vehicles:

- a. Administrators must be notified of all transportation activities.
- b. Use the "rule of three" when transporting youths: At least two adults must transport a single youth, or at least two youths must be present if transported by a single adult.

- c. Youths must never be transported without written permission from a parent.
- d. Youths must be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops may be made.
- e. A staff member must document beginning and ending times and mileage, the names of youths, and other staff and volunteers who are involved in transportation, purpose of the transportation, and destination.
- f. Staff must avoid unnecessary physical contact with youths while in vehicles.
- g. When possible, staff should avoid engaging in sensitive conversations with youths.

## **7. Off-Site Activities**

The off-site procedures include:

- a. Supervisor approval is required for all off-site activities.
- b. Written parental approval is required for all off-site activities.
- c. Specifying staff-to-youth ratios for the activity.
- d. Staff and youths should be easily identifiable in designated YMCA attire.
- e. Bathroom and locker room procedures should be followed as much as possible.

## **8. Overnight Activities**

Overnight stays present unique risks to youths and staff. They often involve changing clothes, groups of both genders and different ages in a more intimate atmosphere than usual, more unstructured activities, and increased supervision demands for staff.

Supervision Guidelines:

- a. All overnight activities must be documented and approved in writing by the Program Director.
- b. Administrators are expected to regularly and randomly observe overnight activities on a scheduled and periodic basis.
- c. The Director should appoint a "lead" staff to supervise the overnight. A meeting with all staff is conducted to discuss the unique risks of overnight trips, unique elements of the specific overnight trip and to review the specific policies and procedures.
- d. Provide parents with written information about the overnight activity. All parents must sign a permission slip for their youths to attend the overnight.
- e. Determine the appropriate staff-to-youth ratios before the event and schedule staff accordingly.
- f. Meetings with the group should be hosted in open and observable areas; meetings should not be hosted in staff or youth rooms.

Overnights at the Facility:

- a. We do not allow overnight stays at our facility.

Overnights Away from the Facility:

- a. Overnight stays at private homes are prohibited.
- b. Physical boundaries at the off-site location must be clearly defined and explained to the youths.

- c. Assign each staff to a specific group of youths to supervise. Each staff should then maintain a role sheet that lists all of the youths in his or her group. Head counts and roll checks should be conducted routinely throughout the event.
- d. If in a cabin type setting, the staff should be placed in bunks to maximize supervision around the cabin and in a way that decreases the chances of youths sneaking out (such as by the door).
- e. In hotel rooms, assign youths to rooms based on sex and age. Staff should have their own rooms. If staff must share rooms with youths, they must have their own beds and never change in front of youths.
- f. All staff are to be on duty in the halls or cabins at night until an hour after lights out and all rooms are quiet.

## 9. Teen Leadership Program

Older youths who participate in teen leadership programs are still youth participants and not staff or volunteers. Therefore, even though they are often given more responsibility, teens in the leadership programs must be provided with guidelines regarding appropriate behavior, and then supervised accordingly. In addition, staff and volunteers must understand and recognize that these teens are still youths and not their peers. Therefore, the following guidelines are recommended for teen leadership programs:

- a. Create a screening process for teen leaders which includes
  - A standard application
  - An interview with behaviorally based interview questions
  - References (from teachers, counselors, family friends, etc.)
- b. Train teen leaders in their role in programs and on program policies about appropriate and inappropriate interactions. This training should include the following information:
  - Appropriate and inappropriate physical and verbal interactions and the importance of maintaining behavioral boundaries between teen leaders and younger youths and between teen leaders and staff and volunteers.
  - Prohibiting teen leaders from being one-on-one with youths.
  - Prohibiting teen leaders from escorting youths to the bathrooms.
  - Prohibiting teen leaders from assisting youths with changing their clothes.
- c. Create a system to monitor the teen leaders.
  - Designate a specific employee or volunteer who is in charge of the teen leadership program and its participants.
  - Require teen leaders to wear clothing or lanyards that identify them as leaders-in-training and differentiate them from both staff and volunteers and from younger youths.
  - Require a supervisor to conduct daily check-ins with teen leaders and their program supervisors.
  - Consider requiring teen leaders to keep a log documenting their daily activities and any problems they encounter. The program supervisor should review these logs daily.

## F. Supervisors and Administrators Monitoring On-Site and Off-Site Programs

**Keep a record.** Document your supervision visits. Include information like your arrival and departure times, which youths and parents were present, and a summary of the information collected. Provide staff with feedback about visits.

**Vary your observation times.** Do not develop a predictable pattern of observation. Drop in at different times each day. Occasionally leave and come back immediately.

**Arrive before staff.** Check punctuality and the routine that staff follow to prepare for the youths to arrive.

**Survey the physical environment.** Is this a suitable location for the activity (e.g. size of area for number of youths, ability to supervise all areas used by youths, landscaping that may inhibit supervision)?

**Watch activities.** Are they planned and organized? Are the staff actively involved? Ask to see the schedule of activities and compare with what is actually going on at a given time.

**Observe bathroom and locker room activities.** Observe bathroom and locker room activities to ensure that the staff are complying with the established policies and procedures.

**Observe Interactions.** Request a checklist from your Praesidium Guardian.

## V. Responding

How an organization responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect the harm to the individuals involved and the damage to the organization. Once a staff member, volunteer, youth, or parent has expressed a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a youth, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to the youth, to the accused staff member or volunteer, and to the organization. The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA has established precise, unequivocal requirements for reporting to the authorities and for adhering to a serious-incident response plan.

### A. Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

Because the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every staff member actively participates in the protection of youths. In the event that staff observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other staff or volunteers, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations.

Remember, at the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA, the policies apply to everyone.

#### Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Staff/Volunteers and Youth

- Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above
- Seeking private time or one-on-one time with youths
- Buying gifts for individual youths
- Making suggestive comments to youths
- Picking favorites

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

#### 1. Staff and Volunteer Response:

If staff witness suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another staff or volunteer, the staff or volunteer is instructed to do the following:

#### Guidelines for Staff/Volunteers Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations

- Interrupt the behavior.
- Report the behavior to a supervisor or director.
- It is mandatory that you report this to your supervisor or contact the Praesidium Hotline

- If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management. You can find an organizational chart with contact information in the back of this packet.
- Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.
- If at any point abuse or signs of abuse is suspected, you must file a report with Tennessee Child Protective Services.

## 2. Supervisor and Administrator Response:

In the event that a supervisor or an administrator receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from a staff member or volunteer, the supervisor is instructed to do the following:

### Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations

- Report to the next level of administration and determine the appropriate administrator to respond to the concern.
- Determine the appropriate response based on the report.
- Speak with the staff or volunteer who has been reported.
- Review the file of the staff or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.
- Document the report on the appropriate form.
- If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the Tennessee Department of Children's Services Child Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237-0004 and file a report. This should be done within twelve hours.
- If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians.
- Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously.

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- a. Increase monitoring or supervision of the staff, volunteer, or program.
- b. If policy violations with youths are confirmed, the staff or volunteer must be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution. Disciplinary action will follow the Progressive Disciplinary Process outlined in this manual.
- c. If more information is needed, interview and/or survey other staff and volunteers or youths.

### 3. Organizational Response:

#### Guidelines for Organizational Response

- Review the need for increased supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.

## B. Responding to Suspected Abuse by an Adult

### 1. Staff or Volunteer Response to Abuse:

As required by mandated reporting laws, staff and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth—whether on or off Athens-McMinn Family YMCA property or whether perpetrated by staff, volunteers, or others—to state authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice.

In addition to reporting to state authorities, staff and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of youths perpetrated by staff or volunteers directly to leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk. Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following:

- a. Immediate supervisor
- b. Directors
- c. Administrators

#### Additional Guidelines for Staff/Volunteer Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse

- If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell to you.
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident but it **IS** your job to report the incident to your supervisor in a timely manner.
- Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to your supervisor or the designated organization authority.

#### 4. Supervisors and Administrators Response to Abuse:

In addition to the above response procedures, supervisors and administrators should ensure the following:

##### **Guidelines for Supervisor and Administrators Responding to Allegations or Incidents of Abuse**

- First, determine if the youth is still in danger and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm.
- Gather as much information about the allegation as you can. For example, who made the report, who was allegedly abused, who was the alleged abuser, what was the nature of the alleged abuse, where and when did the alleged abuse occur, etc.
- Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.
- Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Make sure you get a case number and the name and contact information of the person with whom you speak at the reporting agency.
- If the alleged abuse involves a staff member or volunteer, notify your crisis management team and follow your crisis management plan.
- Suspend the accused staff or volunteer until the investigation is completed.

### **C. Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors**

The thought that one youth may sexually abuse another youth does not occur to many people. Unfortunately, abuse between peers has increased 300% in the past few years. Youth-to-Youth sexual activity and sexualized behaviors often remain unreported in organizations because staff and volunteers are not comfortable documenting these situations, or may not know how.

#### **1. Youth-to-Youth Interactions:**

Most serious incidents of youth-to-youth abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or roughhousing. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe. Our organization recognizes that the following interactions are high risk and should be prohibited:

### Prohibited Youth-to-Youth Interactions

- Hazing
- Bullying
- Derogatory name-calling
- Games of Truth or Dare
- Singling out one child for different treatment
- Ridicule or humiliation

In order to adequately respond to and track incidents within the organization, all sexual activity between youths and sexualized behaviors of youths must be consistently documented.

### 2. Staff and Volunteer Response:

Youth-to-youth sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

If staff witness youth-to-youth sexual behaviors, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:

### Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity

- If you observe sexual activity between youths, you should immediately separate them.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the youths.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Complete the necessary paperwork including what you observed and how you responded.
- Follow your supervisor's instructions regarding notifying the authorities and informing the parents of the youth involved.
- In some cases, if the problem is recurring discipline may be required including not allowing one or both youths to return to the program.

### 3. Supervisors and Administrators Response:

In the event that a supervisor or administrator receives a report of a youth's sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the supervisor should do the following:

### **Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity**

- Meet with the staff who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the youths involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision.
- Review the steps taken by the staff on duty.
- Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed.
- Meet with parents of the youths involved.
- Determine what actions should be taken to make sure there is no recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.
- Notify the Tennessee Department of Children's Services' Child Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237-0004 .
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- a. Review the need for additional supervision
- b. Review the need for revised policies or procedures
- c. Review the need for additional training
- d. Alert others in the organization

#### **4. Organizational Response:**

After the internal review of the sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA will determine what can be done to prevent a reoccurrence, such as:

#### ***Guidelines for Organizational Response***

- Review the need for additional supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.
- Alert others in the organization.

## SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

### A. Board of Directors

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**Acknowledgment of Comprehensive Child Protection Policy Manual**

I have received a digital copy of the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA Comprehensive Child Protection Policy Manual, read the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA Comprehensive Child Protection Policy Manual, and agree to comply with the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA's Code of Conduct and policies regarding child abuse and sexual abuse prevention.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Employee or Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Staff Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

