YMCA of San Diego County Policy

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Child Abuse Prevention & Reporting Procedure

I. Introduction
1. Child abuse is damage to a child for which there is no “reasonable” explanation. Child abuse includes non-accidental physical injury, neglect, sexual molestation, and exploitation and emotional abuse.

2. The YMCA has a ‘zero tolerance’ of child abuse, that is to say abusive behavior is never appropriate at the YMCA.

3. The incidence of reported child abuse is a critical national concern. It is a special concern of the YMCA because of the organization’s role as an advocate for children and its responsibility for enhancing the personal growth and development of both children and adults in all YMCA programs.

II. Definition of Staff
1. As used in this statement, staff shall mean all full or part-time YMCA employees and all program volunteers. Parents who volunteer for a special event are excluded.

III. Staff Recruitment, Training and Supervision
1. Reference checks on prospective staff shall be conducted, documented and filed prior to employment or appointment to volunteer work.

2. Staff shall be fingerprinted and subject to criminal records search prior to employment or appointment to volunteer work.

3. Staff shall be photographed and pictures shall be attached to personnel or volunteer records.

4. All Staff shall wear YMCA staff identification badges during program operation. Program Staff shall wear YMCA staff t-shirts when working. Two t-shirts will be provided to each staff member.
5. Staff shall participate in an orientation program that includes the following written materials explaining YMCA policies, procedures, and regulations:
   - YMCA Policies and Procedures
   - Emergency Procedures and Safety Practices
   - Safety and Accident Prevention
   - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting Procedure
   - Code of Conduct

6. Staff shall be made aware of legal requirements and, by their signatures, acknowledge having received and read appropriate policies, standards, codes of conduct, and reporting responsibilities.

7. Staff shall participate in child abuse prevention training approved by the YMCA. Initial training shall be completed prior to active employment or volunteer work. Program specific child abuse prevention training shall be completed within 60 days of employment. Refresher training shall be completed annually thereafter, and additional training shall be taken from time-to-time as required by position.

8. Management staff responsible for programs involving the care of children shall make unannounced visits to each program site to assure that standards, policies, program quality and performance of staff are being maintained. Written reports of these visits shall be completed.

IV. Staff Relationships with Children
1. In order to protect YMCA staff and program participants, at no time during a YMCA program shall a staff person be alone with a single child, except clinical services and respite care, which require one-on-one settings.

2. Staff shall make sure suspicious or unknown individuals do not occupy the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff shall stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. If staff assist younger children, doors to the facility shall remain open.

3. Staff shall never take a child home with them. If a parent does not pick up a child after the site closes, staff shall call other authorized persons stated on the child’s registration form, and inform his/her supervisor. If the child has not been picked up one hour after the program closes, the child is considered abandoned. The staff member shall call the sheriff or the police department to pick up the child.
4. Staff shall not be alone with the children they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting children to a private home. Any exceptions require a prior written Exemption Request with executive director approval.

5. Adults and children shall not sleep together under any circumstances. In an overnight situation, staff shall keep a frightened child nearby if necessary, but not in the same bedroll. Children who are asleep shall not be touched, unless necessary to awaken them.

6. Staff shall not date program participants under the age of 18 years.

7. Staff shall not abuse children. Abuse includes:
   - physical injury: strike, spank, shake, slap
   - verbal abuse: yell, humiliate, degrade, threaten
   - sexual abuse: inappropriate touch or verbal exchange
   - unjustifiable punishment: shaming, cruelty
   - neglect: withholding food, water, basic care

8. Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and will be cause for immediate dismissal.

9. Staff who supervises children and youth shall receive training in and use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism. Staff shall have age appropriate expectations and establish guidelines and environments that minimize the need for adult intervention. Physical restraint is used only in pre-determined situations (necessary to protect the child or other children from injury), and is only administered in a prescribed manner and must be documented in writing following the incident.

10. Staff shall respond to children with respect and consideration, and treat all children equally, regardless of gender, ability, race, religion or culture.

11. Staff shall respect a child’s right to not be touched in any way that is uncomfortable for the child. Other than diapering, children are not to be intentionally touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
12. Children shall be instructed to avoid any person not identified by a staff identification badge and/or staff t-shirt.

13. Staff shall be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children each time they report for a program and indicate, in writing, any notable emotional or physical changes.

V. Responsibilities to Parents
1. Parents of program participants shall be informed of YMCA hiring processes and training provided to staff to ensure child safety.

2. Each decentralized site of operation shall install or have access to a telephone or mobile phone on location during operating hours.

3. Parents shall be provided with the name and phone number of the program director, and shall be introduced to program staff.

4. Parents shall be invited and encouraged to visit the program at any time and need not ask permission to do so.

5. Parents shall receive regular written information about program content, schedules and feedback regarding their child’s participation in the program, including behavior, general health and abuse risk management.

6. Established program ratios of staff to participants shall be maintained at all times, with a minimum of two staff at each program operating site.

7. Parents shall be informed that YMCA staff shall not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for participants’ children outside of approved YMCA activities, including babysitting or weekend trips.

8. In all programs where children are signed into and out of the program, staff shall not release a child to anyone other than the child’s parent or guardian, or other adult authorized in writing by the parent or guardian. Written parent authorization shall be kept on file at the YMCA site.

9. Upon request, the YMCA shall offer information and resources to parents on child abuse.
VI. Reporting Procedures

A. Child Abuse

1. Staff are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse. The YMCA requires staff to report knowledge of or reasonable suspicion of suspected child abuse to Child Protective Services (CPS) by telephone (1-800-344-6000) immediately or as soon as practically possible, and in writing within 36 hours. Reasonable suspicion means that it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain such a suspicion drawing on prior training or experience, to suspect child abuse. Failure to make the appropriate reports may result in termination of employment or volunteer appointment.

2. The role and requirements of staff who suspects an incident of child abuse is as follows:
   - Immediately inform direct YMCA supervisor
   - Call CPS
   - Complete and submit current Suspected Child Abuse Report form
   - Complete and submit YMCA Accident/Incident Report Form to supervisor. Attach a copy of the Suspected Child Abuse Report form.

3. The role and requirements of YMCA staff supervisor:
   - After receiving the initial report, immediately confirm the facts reported and the condition of the child
   - Notify the executive director
   - Confirm that staff called CPS
   - Confirm that staff completed the current Suspected Child Abuse Report form and submitted it within 36 hours. A photocopy of the report shall be retained in branch records.
   - Review and route YMCA Accident/Incident Report Form.

4. The role and requirements of the Executive Director:
   - Determine if and how the child’s parents or legal guardian will be notified of the report. The executive director or designated staff may discuss a report personally with parents unless there is a reason to believe:
     A child is in immediate danger from the parent, and/or
     The parent is likely to flee with the child.
   - In the event a staff member is alleged to have abused a child, the executive director or designee shall notify the parents.
   - If the reported incident involves a staff member, the executive director shall, without exception, notify the Vice President of Human Resources at the Corporate Office and suspend staff member pending the outcome of an
investigation. Suspension of the staff member shall be without pay until the person is cleared and reinstated as described in the Personnel policy. If the allegations are substantiated or policies have been disregarded, the staff’s member’s employment or volunteer appointment shall be terminated. Reinstatement of a staff member shall not occur until all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the executive director, the Vice President of Human Resources and the investigating agency.

- Review and submit YMCA Accident/Incident Report Form to the Corporate Office

5. Staff shall not disclose confidential information and shall not discuss matters pertaining to abuse or suspected abuse except with the executive director or a corporate officer.

6. The Vice President of Risk Management or his designee shall conduct any internal investigation of a reported event involving a staff member.

**B. Unusual Behavior**

1. Observations of suspicious or inappropriate interactions with a youth or child that do not constitute child abuse may be reported to any program director or the Executive Director, or may be reported to the Vice President of Risk Management. Such reports may be oral or in writing, anonymous or identified. The YMCA Accident/Incident Report Form may be used.

**Staff Code of Conduct**

The following Staff Code of Conduct was developed to clearly communicate practices and behavior that are appropriate and inappropriate. The Staff Code of Conduct was developed for the safety of YMCA participants and the protection of YMCA staff. Staff refers to all full or part-time YMCA employees and program volunteers.

1. At no time during a YMCA program may a staff person be alone with a single child.

2. Staff shall never leave a child unsupervised.

3. Staff shall make sure restrooms are not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff shall stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. If staff are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
4. Staff shall conduct or supervise private activities in pairs – diapering, putting on bathing suits, taking showers, etc. When this is not feasible, staff should be positioned so that they are visible to others.

5. Staff shall not abuse children. Abuse includes: physical injury – strike, spank, shake, slap; verbal abuse – yell, humiliate, degrade, threaten; sexual abuse – inappropriate touch or verbal exchange; unjustifiable punishment – shaming, cruelty; neglect – withholding food, water, basic care, etc. Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and will be cause for immediate dismissal.

6. Staff shall use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism. Staff shall have age appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for adult intervention. Physical restraint is used only in pre-determined situations (necessary to protect the child or other children from harm), and is only administered in a prescribed manner and must be documented in writing.

7. Staff will conduct a health check of each child, each day, as they enter the program, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. Questions or comments shall be addressed to the parent or child in a non-threatening way. Any questionable marks or responses will be documented.

8. Staff shall respond to children with respect and consideration and treat all children equally, regardless of gender, race, ability, religion or culture.

9. Staff shall respect a child's right to not be touched in any way that is uncomfortable for the child. Other than diapering, children are not to be intentionally touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.

10. Staff shall refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children, parents and staff.

11. Staff shall appear clean, neat and appropriately attired as required by the current YMCA Dress and Appearance Standards.

12. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during work hours is prohibited.
13. Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of children or parents during working hours is prohibited.

14. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one’s personal life, and any kind of harassment is prohibited.

15. Staff shall portray a positive role model by maintaining an attitude of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

16. Staff shall not be with children who are involved or enrolled in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes: babysitting, sleep-overs, and inviting children to a private home. Any exceptions require a written Exemption Request with Executive Director approval.

17. Staff shall not transport children in personal vehicles.

18. Staff shall not date program participants under the age of 18 years.

19. In the programs where children are signed into and out of the program, staff shall not release a child to anyone other than the child’s parent or guardian, or other adult authorized in writing by the parent or guardian. Written parent authorization shall be kept on file at the YMCA site.

20. Staff shall not bring, discuss, or view inappropriate or unauthorized material (i.e. pornographic) at work.

21. Staff are required to read, sign, and abide by all policies related to identifying, documenting and reporting child abuse and attend trainings on the subject as instructed.

22. All Staff shall wear YMCA staff identification badges during program operation. Program Staff shall wear YMCA staff t-shirts when working.

23. All YMCA staff are considered mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. Staff shall not disclose confidential information and shall not discuss matters pertaining to abuse or suspected abuse except with the Executive Director or corporate officer.

24. YMCA staff will not give personal gifts of any kind to program participants.
25. Staff shall not participate in any sports activity while on duty or during a break from duty. Coaching, demonstrating or supervising a sports activity is allowed.

26. Staff are required to report violations of Code of Conduct to direct supervisor.

27. Staff are required to fully cooperate with any investigation of alleged abuse.

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