

Code of Conduct with Youth

The following policies are intended to assist staff and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with youth. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact your supervisor.

The Sidney-Shelby County YMCA provides our youth with the highest quality services available. We are committed to creating an environment for youth that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from our organization. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youth or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously. Our organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

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

1. Youth will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Youth 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 youth 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 inappropriately stare at or comment on the bodies of youth.
7. Staff and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youth.
8. Staff and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol during work hours or possess or use illegal drugs in the presence of youth.
9. Staff and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on our organization's property.
10. Staff and volunteers will not have secrets with youths and will only give gifts with prior permission from a parent/guardian and/or supervisor.

11. Staff and volunteers will comply with our organization's policies regarding interactions with youth outside of our programs.
12. Staff and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with youth.
13. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with youth in a private setting. Staff and volunteers will use common areas when working with individual youth.
14. Staff and volunteers will not abuse youth in any way 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 Sidney-Shelby County YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. In addition, our organization 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 youth, staff and volunteers.

16. All staff must follow state specific mandatory reporting requirements. (*See Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect for Ohio at <https://www.childwelfare.gov>) 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 organization policies and procedures that protect youth against abuse.
 - c. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws. Ohio Rev. Code 2151.421
 - 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 youth to our organization’s supervisor or Praesidium’s Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751.
18. Our organization 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 organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization. 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.

