

Purpose

The Billings Family YMCA is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment for all consumers. This policy establishes clear expectations for professional boundaries, appropriate conduct, communication, and interactions between staff, volunteers, and consumers. These standards are designed to prevent abuse, reduce the risk of false allegations, and promote transparency, accountability, and trust across all programs and services. Any behavior that violates these standards, places a consumer at risk, or undermines the YMCA's commitment to safety and integrity will be addressed promptly and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or dismissal from volunteer service.

All staff and volunteers are required to follow established guidelines related to physical contact, verbal interactions, one-on-one interactions, off-site contact, electronic communication, photography, gift giving, and professional boundaries.

Physical Contact and Verbal Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

Our YMCA's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting consumers and staff. Our YMCA encourages staff and volunteers to follow appropriate physical contact with consumers and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact.

The organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

Appropriate Physical Interactions

Side Hugs
Shoulder-to-shoulder or "temple" hugs
Pats on the shoulder or backs
Handshakes
Hi-fives or fist bumps
Verbal Praise
Pats on head when culturally appropriate
Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
Arms around shoulders
Holding children hands under the age of 6 when escorting in lines.

For sports, aquatics, dance and gymnastics see below*

Inappropriate Physical Interactions

Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas
Full-frontal hugs
Kisses
Showing affection in isolated area
Lap sitting
Wrestling
Piggyback rides
Tickling
Allowing a youth to cling to a staff or volunteers leg
Any type of massage
Any sort of affection that is unwanted by youth
Compliments relating to physique or body development

*** Field and court sports**

- Staff may use brief instructional contact for positioning or skill development when necessary and appropriate.

*** Gymnastics, dance, cheer and similar activities requiring spotting or physical guidance**

- Contact should be limited to what is necessary for instruction, proper technique, or participant safety and should occur in an observable and professional manner.

*** Aquatics and swim lessons**

- Instructors may use appropriate physical contact necessary to support water safety, skill instruction, rescue response, stroke development, floating, or proper body positioning. All contact should remain professional, observable, age-appropriate, and limited to what is necessary for participant safety and instruction.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from applying sunscreen, lotions, lip balm, make-up, and body tattooing to consumers or brushing a consumer's hair.

Physical restraint is used only in predetermined situations (when necessary to protect the child or other children from harm), administered only in a prescribed manner, and must be documented in writing.

Verbal Interactions

- Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to consumers in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, degrading, or humiliating. Staff and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with consumers. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with consumers.
- Staff and volunteers should use positive techniques of guidance. This includes redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement, rather than competition, comparison, and criticism.
- Staff and volunteers will respond to consumers with respect, consideration and treat all consumers equally, regardless of race, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, religion, disability or handicap, sex or gender, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, or economic level of the family.

Appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions

Positive reinforcement
Appropriate jokes
Encouragement
Praise

Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

Name-calling
Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving Consumers in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers
Secrets
Cursing
Off-color or sexual jokes
Shaming

One-on-One Interactions

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a consumer. Our YMCA aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the CEO or Associate Executive Director. Staff and volunteers cannot be left alone with a consumer during YMCA programming.

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 our YMCA at increased risk.

Our YMCA prohibits interactions outside of regularly scheduled program activities unless approved by the CEO or Associate Executive Director.

Off-Site contact with consumers is discouraged for staff and volunteers. These are activities such as babysitting, birthday parties, graduation parties, non-YMCA sporting events.

When off-site contact is unavoidable or unexpected, ensure that the following steps are followed:

- Report the off-site contact to your supervisor.
- 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.
- 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 situations where one-on-one interactions are approved these are the steps to be followed:

- Ensure one-on-one interactions have been approved by CEO or Associate Executive Director (AED).

- Ensure that staff or volunteers have their parents' permission to engage in outside contact with the consumer.
- When meeting one-on-one with a consumer, 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 consumer 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.

Situations such as Tutoring/Private Coaching and Counseling introduce additional risk for false allegations.

Staff and volunteers should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse.

- Staff and volunteers must have CEO or AED approval for any tutoring or private coaching sessions.
- Tutoring and coaching sessions with YMCA's consumer may not occur outside of the organization.
- Supervisors must keep a schedule of private tutoring, coaching and counseling sessions, which should include times, consumer involved, and location of sessions.

Abuse or Mistreatment of One Consumer by another Consumer

The YMCA has zero tolerance for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity among consumers within the YMCA. The YMCA is committed to providing all consumers with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one consumer by another consumer. Conduct by consumers that rises to the level of abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program.

Our YMCA will not tolerate nor condone any behavior that is classified as bullying, whether it be adult-to-consumer or consumer-to-consumer. Bullying is any obvious or premeditated act directed to a consumer or group of consumers with the intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate. These acts are targeted towards the same consumer/consumers over a continuous period. Bullying behaviors are subtle but left unchecked could lead to more abusive behaviors including sexual abuse. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

Physical bullying – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.

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.

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 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 include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Staff will take steps needed to eliminate bullying behavior, including immediate acknowledgement to the bully that their words or behavior is not acceptable at our YMCA, followed up by close attention that the offending behavior has ceased. If there is cause to believe it is a continuing issue, staff and volunteers must report it to their immediate supervisor.

Electronic Communication

Any private electronic communication between staff or volunteers and consumers, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. - is prohibited. All communication between staff and consumers 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"> • Sending and replying to emails and text messages from consumers ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth's parent • Communicating through "YMCA group pages" on Facebook or other approved public forums • "Private" profiles for staff and volunteers which consumers cannot access • Using technology for program purposes only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments • Sexually oriented conversations • Private messages between staff and volunteers with consumers • Posting pictures of YMCA participants on social media sites • Posting inappropriate comments on pictures • "Friending" participants on social networking sites
--	---

Staff and volunteers will not take or use photos, videos, or images of the Y and its programs, members, or participants without permission. Press inquiries must be directed to the Marketing and Communications Director. Staff and volunteers may not access, send, receive, download, produce, or distribute any offensive, profane, threatening, pornographic, or sexually explicit material at any time, for any reason.

Staff and volunteers may not access websites, newsgroups, or chat areas that contain material that is counter to the organization's mission or that promote illegal acts.

Photography

Only **authorized staff** may post pictures of YMCA activities on YMCA-owned or managed accounts, including those with consumers. The use of photos, video or images of the Y or its programs, members, or participants is prohibited on personal social media accounts.

Computer Devices

Staff may receive permission, in some situations, to use devices. In these cases, staff will have explicit directions from supervisors governing use.

Situations that may require the use of communication devices include:

- Field Trips
- Off-site Programs
- Music/radio activities
- Emergencies

Pornographic Material

Staff and volunteers are not to have possession of, display, be involved in production of or distribute any sort of pornography or pornographic materials at any time on YMCA property or during YMCA activities. Using YMCA computers to

access pornographic sites, send correspondence with sexual overtones or otherwise inappropriate messages, or develop online relationships is prohibited.

Gift Giving

Staff and volunteers must follow the YMCA's Gift Giving and Gift Acceptance policy.