



# **SHIAWASSEE FAMILY YMCA**

## **CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

## **SHIAWASSEE FAMILY YMCA CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS PROGRAM**

The YMCA reaffirms its commitment to the personal growth and development of children and families through high standards of quality and safety in all program services provided or sponsored by the association.

The increasing incidence of reporting child abuse throughout the country has become 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 for both children and adults in all YMCA programs.

Child abuse is damage to a child for which there is no "reasonable" explanation. Child abuse includes non-accidental physical injury, neglect, sexual molestation, or exploitation, and emotional abuse. A child is defined as a person under 18 years of age.

A policy and related procedures for implementing a Child Abuse Awareness Program throughout the Association has been developed and is contained on the following pages.

This policy covers the required steps involved in the hiring, training, and supervision of staff; appropriate conduct related to the supervision of children; reporting procedures of suspected abuses; responsibilities to parents and recommendations for good practices related to the above.

The policy extends to all full or part-time employees who have frequent and routine contact with children.

### **CHILD PROTECTION LAW DEFINITIONS**

"Child" means a person under 18 years of age.

"Child abuse" means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare which occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment.

"Child neglect" means to harm a child's health or wealth by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare which occurs through negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

"Sexual abuse" means engaging in sexual contact or sexual penetration with a child by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare.

“Sexual exploitation” includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution by a person responsible for the child’s welfare or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the photographing, filming, or depicting of a child engaged in a listed sexual act.

### **STAFF RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION**

1. A minimum of two reference checks is recommended on all prospective staff.
2. All new staff will be given written materials explaining YMCA policies, procedures, and regulations. They should be aware of legal requirements and by their signature, acknowledge having received and read appropriate policies, standards and codes of conduct and reporting responsibilities.

### **STAFF RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN**

1. In order to protect YMCA staff and participants it is recommended that, at no time during a YMCA program, a program leader be alone with a single child unobserved by other staff.
2. Staff members are encouraged not to relate to children in YMCA programs in non-YMCA activities, such as babysitting or weekend trips without the knowledge of the responsible program or executive director.
3. Adult or adolescent YMCA staff are encouraged not to socialize with program participants under the age of 18 outside of YMCA program activities.
4. YMCA staff will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food and shelter.
5. YMCA staff will not be verbally or emotionally abusive when disciplining children.
6. Staff should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children each time they report for a program and indicate, in writing, any signs of injury or suspected child abuse.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES TO PARENTS**

1. Parents will be informed about their child’s program participation and the name of the program administrator.
2. Parents will be invited and encouraged to visit program sites at any time and need not ask permission to do so.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURES**

1. When there is suspicion of child abuse, the staff to whom it has been reported will immediately inform their supervisor and the executive director.
2. The designated YMCA staff person receiving the initial report is responsible for confirming the facts reported, the condition of the child and notification to FIA Services. This will be done
3. immediately, on the same day the report is received. The YMCA staff person is NOT responsible for the investigation. The Executive Director shall be informed as soon as possible.
4. All staff will be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of information in this area and will be instructed to discuss matters pertaining to abuse or suspected abuse only with appropriate YMCA director, investigating police officer, or FIA social worker.
5. Staff may not contact children or parents involved in an alleged child abuse incident without the permission of the appropriate Executive Director.
6. In the event the report incident involves an employed YMCA staff person or program volunteer, the Executive Director shall, without exception, suspend the person from all activities involving the supervision of children.
7. Reinstatement of a staff person or program volunteer will occur only after allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the Executive Director and investigating agency.

## **PROFILE OF A CHILD ABUSER**

### **Sexual Abuse**

#### Men 18-38

Low self esteem

Need for power and control

Poor family relationships

Difficulty in interpersonal relationships...relates to others immaturely both socially and emotionally...may not be involved with peers or engage in adult group recreational activities

Difficulty with impulse control

History of past physical/sexual victimization; 80-95% of child molesters were themselves molested as children

Primary interests are in children

May be involved in youth activities such as group leaders or coaches  
May be married or single...if married they are often experiencing marital difficulties...they have difficulty in developing satisfying, supportive, intimate relationships with adults  
May have a specific age of children they prefer to work with  
May or may not be homosexual  
Tend not to have substance abuse problems  
May have been insecure in childhood with frequent moves, early physical illnesses, and marital difficulties between parents  
Less of a team player  
Difficult time asking for help with his/her problems  
Don't admit to stress or recognize a need to have a plan to deal with it  
Use children to fulfill their needs or validate their sense of competence and well being  
Highly skilled at gaining the trust and confidence of children  
Sensitive to children's needs and have a way of putting children at ease  
Move frequently and unexpectedly  
Seeks opportunities to be alone with children  
Has an idealistic perspective of children...may refer to them as objects

### Adolescent

Lack of contact with peers  
Few or no extracurricular activities  
Generally, feels powerless and inadequate  
May feel more comfortable with children younger than themselves  
Males may frequently choose to babysit because they make themselves available and relate well to young children  
May come from a family where there has been physical or sexual abuse  
May seem socially immature for their age  
May lack a close relationship with a father figure

### Women

Married young  
Raised in a very strict home  
Her family was/is very religious  
Her husband is gone frequently and is not very supportive  
Is sexually naïve and immature  
Is very dependent on the father figure  
Frequently the victim of physical abuse  
Has low self-esteem  
Is lonely

### **Physical Abuse**

Negative attitude about life and people  
Labeled as having a "hot" temper

Blames others “he made me”, “it was her fault”  
History of abuse as a child  
Uses harsh, age-inappropriate discipline  
Offers illogical or unconvincing excuses for what occurred

### **Emotional Abuse**

Blames and belittles children  
Cold and rejecting  
Withholds love

**CAUTION:** A profile list, such as this, can be misleading because many of the characteristics here can describe men/women who do not molest. Having more than one or even all these items does not necessarily increase the odds of that person being a molester. Although this profile has some value in pointing out particular needs of people and risks associated with them, great caution should be used when assigning this profile to any one individual. Few molesters ever self-report the characteristics listed here. Neither are interviewers trained to properly elicit this information. Individuals with abusive personalities are often more subtle and skillfully manipulative in their approach to their employers, as well as their approach to children. This makes it essential for those responsible for hiring to gain information from collateral resources such as past employers, friends, families, and criminal background checks.

## **POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE**

### **Sexual Abuse – Behavioral Indicators**

Is reluctant to change clothes in front of others  
Is withdrawn  
Exhibits unusual sexual behavior and/or knowledge beyond that which is common for his/her developmental stage  
Has poor peer relationships  
Either avoids or seeks out adults  
Is pseudo-mature  
Is manipulative  
Is self-conscious  
Has problems with authority and rules  
Exhibits eating disorders  
Is self-mutilating  
Is obsessively clean  
Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs  
Exhibits delinquent behavior such as running away from home  
Exhibits extreme compliance or defiance  
Is fearful or anxious  
Exhibits suicidal gestures and/or attempts suicide

Is promiscuous  
Engages in fantasy or infantile behavior  
Is unwilling to participate in sports activities  
Has school difficulties

### **Sexual Abuse – Physical Indicators**

Has pain and/or itching in the genital area  
Has bruises or bleeding in the genital area  
Has venereal disease  
Has swollen private parts  
Has difficulty walking or sitting  
Has torn, bloody, and/or stained underclothing  
Experiences pain when urination  
Is pregnant  
Has vaginal or penile discharge  
Wets the bed

### **Emotional Abuse – Behavioral Indicators**

Is overly eager to please  
Seeks out adult contact  
Views abuse as being warranted  
Exhibits changes in behavior  
Is excessively anxious  
Is depressed  
Is unwilling to discuss problems  
Exhibits aggressive or bizarre behavior  
Is withdrawn  
Is apathetic  
Is passive  
Has unprovoked fits of yelling or screaming  
Exhibits inconsistent behavior at home and school  
Feels responsible for the abuser  
Runs away from home  
Attempts suicide  
Has low self-esteem  
Exhibits a gradual impairment of health or personality  
Has difficulty sustaining relationships  
Has unrealistic goal setting  
Is impatient  
Is unable to communicate or express his/her feelings, needs, or desires  
Sabotages his/her chances of success  
Lacks self-confidence

Is self-deprecating and has a negative self-image

### **Emotional Abuse – Physical Indicators**

Has a sleep disorder (nightmares or restlessness)

Wets the bed

Exhibits developmental lags (stunting his/her physical, emotional, and/or mental growth)

Is hyperactive

Exhibits eating disorders

### **Physical Abuse – Behavioral Indicators**

Is wary of adults

Is either extremely aggressive or withdrawn

Is dependent and indiscriminate in his/her attachments

Is uncomfortable when other children cry

Generally, controls his/her own crying

Exhibits a drastic behavior change when not with parents or caregiver

Is manipulative

Has poor self-concept

Exhibits delinquent behavior, such as running away from home

Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs

Is self-mutilating

Is frightened of parents, of going home

Is overprotective of or responsible for parents

Exhibits suicidal gestures and/or attempts suicide

Has behavior problems at school

### **Physical Abuse – Physical Indicators**

Has unexplained bruises or welts often clustered or in a pattern

Has unexplained and/or unusual burns (cigarettes, doughnut-shaped, immersion-lines, object patterned)

Has unexplained bite marks

Has unexplained fractures or dislocations

Has unexplained abrasions or lacerations

Wets the bed

### **Neglect – Behavior Indicators**

Is truant or tardy to school often or arrives early and stays late

Begs or steals food

Attempts suicide

Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs

Is extremely dependent or detached



Engages in delinquent behavior, such as prostitution or stealing  
Appears to be exhausted  
States frequent or continual absence of parent or guardian

### **Neglect – Physical Indicators**

Frequently is dirty, unwashed, hungry, or inappropriately dressed  
Engages in dangerous activities (possibly because he/she generally is unsupervised)  
Is tired and listless  
Has unattended physical problems  
May appear to be overworked and/or exploited

### **Neglect – Family Indicators**

Extreme paternal dominance, restrictiveness and/or overprotectiveness  
Family isolated from community and support systems  
Marked role reversal between mother and child  
History of sexual abuse for either parent  
Substance abuse by either parent or by children  
Other types of violence in the home  
Absent spouse (through chronic illness, depression, divorce, or separation)  
Severe overcrowding  
Complains about a “seductive” child

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

1. In order to protect YMCA staff, volunteers, and program participants – at no time during a YMCA program may a staff person be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. All staff supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other staff can see them.
2. Staff shall never leave a child unsupervised.
3. Restroom supervision: Staff will make sure the restroom is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. If staff are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open. No child regardless of age should ever enter a bathroom alone on a field trip.
4. Staff should conduct or supervise private activities in pairs, for example: 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 including:
  - physical abuse – strike, spank, shake, or slap
  - verbal abuse – humiliate, degrade, or threaten
  - sexual abuse – inappropriate touch or verbal exchange
  - mental abuse – shaming, withholding love, or being cruel
  - neglect – withholding food, water, basic care etc.
6. Staff must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism. Staff will have age-appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint is used only in predetermined situations (necessary to protect the child or other children from harm), is only administered in a prescribed manner and must be documented in writing.
7. Staff respond to children with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, or culture.
8. Staff will respect children's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say no. Other than diapering, children are not to be touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
9. Staff will refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children, parents, and staff.
10. While the YMCA does not discriminate against an individual lifestyle, it does require that in the performance of their job they will abide by the standards of conduct set forth by the YMCA.
11. Staff must appear clean, neat, and appropriately attired.
12. Using, possession or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during working 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 in the presence of children or parents is prohibited.
15. Staff will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.

16. Staff may not be alone with children they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting children to your home. Any exceptions require a written explanation before the fact and are subject to administrator approval.
17. Staff are not to transport children in their own vehicles.
18. Staff may not date program participants under the age of 18 years of age.
19. Under no circumstances should staff release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian
20. Staff are required to read and sign all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse.
21. Staff understands that any violation of this Code of Conduct may result in termination.