



MERRIMACK VALLEY YMCA CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct outlines specific expectations of the staff and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together. Staff and volunteers will always act in a caring, honest, respectful and responsible manner.

For purposes of this document, the term child, children or youth shall mean any minor person under the age of 18 years or any individual of any age displaying a known or noticeable inability to make normal or reasonable social decisions for themselves.

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. As staff supervise children, they should place themselves in a way that other staff can see them.
2. Staff/Volunteers shall never leave a child unsupervised.
3. Restroom supervision: Staff/Volunteers will make sure the restroom is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff/Volunteers will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff/volunteer (not being alone with a child). If staff/volunteer 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. Always send children in pairs, and whenever possible, with staff.
4. Staff/Volunteer should 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/Volunteers will not abuse children in any way including (but not limited) to the following:
 1. *Physical abuse*: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints
 2. *Verbal abuse*: degrading, threatening, cursing
 3. *Sexual abuse*: inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations
 4. *Mental abuse*: shaming, humiliation, cruelty

5. *Neglect*: withholding food, water, shelter
6. Staff/Volunteers must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism. Staff/Volunteers 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/Volunteers will make note of any observed fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. Questions or comments will be addressed to the parent or child in a non-threatening way. Any questionable marks or responses will be documented.
8. Staff/Volunteers shall treat all children with respect and consideration regardless of race, age, gender, gender-identity, socio-economic status, religion, culture and ability.
9. Staff/Volunteers 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.
10. Staff/Volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by our organization. They will refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children, parents and staff.
11. While the YMCA does not discriminate against an individual's lifestyle, it does require that in the performance of their job they will abide by the standards of conduct set forth by the YMCA and adhere to character values and role model aptitude in all public places.
12. Staff/Volunteers must appear clean, neat and appropriately attired.
13. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or illegal drugs during work hours is prohibited.
14. Smoking, vaping or use of any tobacco in the presence of children or parents during working hours is prohibited. Smoking is not allowed on any Y property.
15. 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.

16. Staff and volunteers must be free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's physical or mental health. If in doubt, an expert should be consulted.
17. Staff and volunteers will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact and maturity.
18. Staff and volunteers may not be alone with children they meet in YMCA programs outside the YMCA.
This includes babysitting, sleep overs and inviting children to your home. An exception to this rule would require the parent/guardian of the child to submit a waiver for approval from the CEO/COO of such event which will hold the YMCA harmless for any resulting civil damages.
19. Staff/Volunteers will not use cell phones within any program area or within classrooms except for in an emergency situation.
20. Staff/Volunteers are not to transport children in their own vehicles.
Waivers must be used for any circumstance which may involve off duty group interactions.
21. Staff/Volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youth in our programs.
22. Our organization 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 youths, staff and volunteers.

23. All staff and volunteers must follow state specific mandatory reporting requirements and should be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. Staff and volunteers 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 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. Under no circumstances should staff or volunteers release children enrolled

in our licensed Child Care Programs to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian (written parent authorization on file with the YMCA).

27. Staff and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other staff, volunteers, adults, or youths to our organization's supervisor or Praesidium's Anonymous Helpline at 855-347-0751.

Any witnessed offenses or known breaches to this code of conduct should be reported to a Branch Executive or one of the following members of the Leadership Team at 978-725-6681:

Frank Kenneally	President and CEO	fkenneally@mvyymca.org
Claudia Soo Hoo	Chief Operating Officer	csoohoo@mvyymca.org
Jane Dinsmore	Chief Human Resources Officer	jdinsmore@mvyymca.org
Cathy Redard	Executive Director of Child Care Services	credard@mvyymca.org
Anne Whalen	Executive Director of Camping Services & Child Protection Guardian	awhalen@mvyymca.org



**Acknowledgement of Receipt and Understanding of the Merrimack Valley
YMCA's Code of Conduct**

I have received and understand the following policies:

- Code of Conduct
- Strategies to Prevent Child Abuse

By signing below you affirm you have received and reviewed the contents of the Code of Conduct and agree to abide by the policies and procedures herewith.

Employee/Volunteer Name (print)

Date

Employee/Volunteer Signature

