

POLICIES

Zero Tolerance Policy

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** has zero tolerance for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of children and teens (including minor staff) in its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with local law enforcement and the Department of Human Resources.

Minor staff is defined as any YMCA employee who is under the age of 18.

Prohibiting the Abuse or Mistreatment of One Child/Teen by Another Child/Teen

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** has zero tolerance for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity among children and teens (including minor staff) within the organization. We are committed to providing all with a safe environment. We will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child/teen by another. Conduct by children or teens 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.

In addition, our organization will not tolerate any behavior classified under the definition of bullying. To the extent that such actions are disruptive, the organization will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying Definition

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- 1. Physical Bullying**

When one person engages in physical force against another person, such as hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.

- 2. Verbal Bullying**

When someone uses words to hurt another person, such as being derogatory or calling others hurtful names.

- 3. Nonverbal or Relational Bullying**

When one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes:

- Social exclusion

- Friendship manipulation
- Gossip
- Intimidating gestures

4. **Cyberbullying**

The intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person through technology, including:

- Email
- Instant messages
- Text messages
- Digital pictures or images
- Social media
- Website postings or blogs

Cyberbullying may involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
- Posting sensitive or private information about another person
- Pretending to be someone else to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group
- Pornography

5. **Hazing**

An activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of willingness to participate.

6. **Sexualized Bullying**

Bullying involving sexual behaviors, including:

- Sexting
- Exposure to private body parts
- Discussing or showing pornography
- Sexualized language or innuendos

Anyone who sees an act of bullying and encourages it is also engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all youth, parents, employees, and volunteers.

Requiring Annual Review of Organizational Policies

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** will review existing abuse prevention policies annually to:

1. Ensure the purpose and goal of the policy are still relevant.
 2. Determine whether a policy should be combined with another policy or rescinded.
 3. Determine if the policy is up to date with current laws.
 4. Determine whether changes are required to improve the effectiveness or clarity of the policy and/or procedure.
 5. Communicate all policy changes to employees, volunteers, children and teens, and parents/guardians through written or electronic methods.
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EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Abuse Prevention Training

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** requires all employees and high-access volunteers to complete training on the following foundational abuse prevention topics before having access to children and teens:

1. The organization's policies related to preventing and responding to abuse
2. Maintaining appropriate boundaries with children and teens (including minor staff)
3. Definitions of abuse and facts about sexual abuse
4. Types of offenders and how offenders operate
5. How abuse happens in organizations
6. Preventing false allegations
7. Mandatory reporting requirements

Additional Required Training Topics

Employees and high-access volunteers will also receive training on:

1. High-risk circumstances for boundary violations
2. Recognizing red-flag behaviors and boundary violations
3. Responding to suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and policy violations
4. Recognizing and responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse
5. Effective monitoring and supervision

This training must be completed upon hire or before having access to children and teens and renewed annually.

Supervisor Training Requirements

Supervisors must complete additional training in effective staff supervision practices related to abuse risk management within 30 days of employment. Topics include:

1. Overview of the supervisor's role in abuse prevention
2. Supervision strategies that reduce risk
3. Increased presence and observation of programs
4. Using teaching moments in supervision
5. Responding to boundary violations or policy violations
6. Creating a culture of reporting and accountability
7. Steps to take when reports are made

All employees are responsible for annually completing training on:

1. Policies for preventing and responding to abuse
 2. Maintaining appropriate boundaries
 3. Additional abuse prevention education
 4. Supervisor abuse risk management training (for supervisors)
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INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND TEENS

Managing Interactions Outside the Organization

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** prohibits outside contact between employees or volunteers and children or teens (including minor staff) they meet through YMCA programs unless approved in writing beforehand by administration.

Any pre-existing relationship should be communicated to the employee's direct supervisor.

Examples of Outside Contact

- Babysitting arrangements
- Tutoring
- Private lessons or coaching
- Mentorship
- Social media, texting, email, or gaming contact
- Playdates or birthday parties
- Sleepovers
- Overnight trips or vacations
- Providing rides to or from activities
- Continued contact after program participation ends

Gift-Giving Policy

Molesters routinely groom youths by giving gifts and encouraging secrecy. For this reason, staff and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of youth and only under the following circumstances:

1. Administration approves the gift
2. Parents are notified
3. Food gifts follow allergy and food safety guidelines

Appropriate and Inappropriate Physical Contact

Our physical contact policy promotes a nurturing environment while protecting children, teens, employees, and volunteers.

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** encourages appropriate physical contact with children and teens (including minor staff) and prohibits inappropriate physical contact.

Any inappropriate physical contact by employees or volunteers toward children, teens, or minor staff may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Appropriate Physical Interactions

Inappropriate Physical Interactions

Side hugs

Showing affection in isolated areas or one-on-one

Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs

Lap sitting

Pats on the shoulder or back

Wrestling

Handshakes

Piggyback rides

High-fives and hand-slapping

Tickling

Pats on the head (when culturally appropriate)

Allowing youth to cling to an employee’s leg

Touching hands, shoulders, or arms

Allowing children older than kindergarten to sit on laps

Arms around shoulders

Unauthorized massages

Holding hands with young children when escorting

Unwanted affection

Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas outside authorized care

Appropriate and Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to children and teens in ways that may be considered harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Employees and volunteers must not:

- Initiate sexually oriented conversations

- Discuss their own sexual activities with children or teens

Appropriate Verbal Interactions Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

Positive reinforcement	Name-calling
Appropriate jokes	Discussing sexual encounters
Encouragement	Sharing personal problems with youth
Praise	Secrets
	Cursing
	Off-color or sexual jokes
	Shaming or belittling
	Derogatory remarks
	Threatening or humiliating language
	Negative comments about families
	Comments about physique or body development

RESPONDING AND REPORTING

Mandatory Reporting Requirements

All employees and volunteers must follow Texas mandated reporter laws. Employees and volunteers must:

1. Recognize signs of physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse
2. Know and follow organizational policies
3. Report suspected abuse or neglect as required by law
4. Follow up to ensure appropriate action has been taken

Cooperation with Investigations

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** takes every allegation of abuse or misconduct seriously and will fully cooperate with law enforcement and investigative authorities.

Employees and volunteers are expected to cooperate with:

- External investigations
 - Internal investigations
 - Authorized investigators appointed by the organization
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Reporting Red-Flag Behaviors and Policy Violations

All adult employees and volunteers are mandated reporters under state law and the Safe Sports Act of 2018.

The **Arlington - Mansfield Area YMCA** requires all employees (including minors) and volunteers to report concerns to their supervisor. Failure to report may result in termination.

1. Employee and Volunteer Response

If an employee or volunteer witnesses suspicious or inappropriate behavior, they must:

1. Interrupt the behavior and remind the individual of policy
 2. Report the behavior to a supervisor or director
 3. Make an anonymous report if uncomfortable reporting directly
 4. Contact the next management level if the concern involves a supervisor
 5. Complete an internal report without conducting an investigation
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2. Supervisor and Director Response

If a supervisor receives a report, they must:

1. Report the incident to the next-level supervisor or Vice President of Youth Development
2. Speak with the employee or volunteer involved

3. Review personnel records for similar complaints
 4. Determine the appropriate response considering:
 - Context
 - Severity
 - History of violations
 - Trainability
 5. Document the report without investigating
 6. Contact senior leadership if abuse concerns arise
 7. Notify parents/guardians when appropriate
 8. Assure the reporting individual the concern is being taken seriously
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3. Organization Response

The organization may:

1. Increase supervision or monitoring
 2. Apply disciplinary action up to termination and prosecution
 3. Gather additional information from employees, volunteers, or youth
 4. Offer counseling or healing resources
 5. Restrict media communication to the CEO only
 6. Determine organizational notifications through HR and executive leadership
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Responding to Suspected Child Abuse by an Adult

If abuse or neglect of a child or teen (including minor staff) is suspected, employees or volunteers must immediately report the concern to their supervisor.

This requirement applies whether:

- The abuse occurred on or off YMCA property
- The alleged perpetrator is an employee, volunteer, or another individual

Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously.

A person who reports suspected abuse in good faith is protected from civil or criminal liability.

Youth-to-Youth Interactions

Inappropriate youth-to-youth behaviors may include:

- Inappropriate touching
- Exposure of body parts
- Sexualized language
- Threats of sexual activity
- Sexual activity
- Aggressive physical contact
- Threats of aggressive behavior
- Cyberbullying
- Relational bullying
- Name-calling

Bullying is identified through:

1. Intentionality
 2. Repetition
 3. Power imbalance
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Cell Phone Policy

Employees and volunteers may bring personal electronic devices to work, but devices must not be visible or used while supervising youth unless specifically authorized.

Internet use, texting, and emailing youth are subject to the organization's electronic communication and social media policies.

Failure to follow this policy may result in progressive discipline.

Strictly Prohibited

Any misuse of phones or electronic communication with children under 18 is strictly prohibited and may result in immediate termination.

Prohibited activities include:

- Unauthorized contact with youth
 - Downloading unapproved services or apps
 - Accessing illegal or inappropriate content
 - Pornography or pornographic material
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Acceptable Use of Cell Phones During Program Hours

Employees and volunteers may use approved personal or YMCA-issued devices for:

1. Field trips
2. Off-site programs
3. Emergencies
4. Taking program photos when approved by a supervisor