



**HOPKINS COUNTY FAMILY YMCA**

**Child Abuse Prevention  
Policies and Procedures**

Revised 01/26/2023

We take the safety of children and youth seriously. The Hopkins County Family YMCA seeks to create a safe, nurturing environment in which its mission of youth development, healthy living and social responsibility can be accomplished. We depend on our staff and volunteers to create and maintain this environment. Our Code of Conduct is designed to ensure that all participants in our programs experience the learning and development our programs are meant to provide delivered by staff who act in a caring, honest, respectful and responsible manner consistent with the mission of the YMCA.

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

1. Staff will treat youth with respect at all times.
2. Staff will not verbally, physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse a child.
3. Staff will not be alone with children except with prior approval of senior leadership or in an emergency.
4. Staff will not use profanity in the presence of children, parents, participants or other staff.
5. Staff will respect children's rights to not be touched or looked at in ways that make them uncomfortable, and will respect their right to say no.
6. Staff will not display intimate affection towards others in the presence of children, parents, or other participants.
7. Staff will not accept gifts of money from children, parents or other participants, nor will staff give gifts of money to children, parents and other participants.
8. Staff/volunteers will not socialize, associate, or provide services (such as babysitting, private lessons, etc.) for program participants under the age of 18 years outside of Hopkins County Family YMCA activities. There will be no exceptions unless individually approved by the CEO.
9. Staff will report any suspected abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services and law enforcement agencies as required by law.
10. Staff will treat all children, regardless of age, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or disability with respect, compassion and kindness.

11. Staff will, at all times, portray a positive role model for children and youth by demonstrating respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
12. Staff will use only positive techniques of guidance and discipline, such as anticipation and prevention of potential problems, positive reinforcement and encouragement, and redirection.
13. Staff will never leave a child unsupervised in a YMCA program.
14. Staff will appear clean, neat and appropriately dressed.
15. Staff will not attend work with physical or psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's health or safety.
16. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, parents, volunteers, or other staff is prohibited.
17. Staff will not use tobacco products during work hours on the YMCA campus.
18. Staff will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during work hours.
19. All staff are responsible for reporting any suspicious behavior and taking further action if they reasonably suspect that abuse has or may be occurring.

**"If you see something, say something."**

The YMCA has additional specific policies for the protection of youth that are outlined in more detail describing the behaviors and procedures to be followed to assure that the code of conduct applies to situations that more commonly occur.

Staff and volunteers that work with youth are required to read, understand and sign these policies. Volunteers are not paid but are required to follow staff policies and procedures in the interest of protecting youth in their performance of volunteer work. The YMCA wholly appreciates the good work of our staff and volunteers and their desire to help serve our members and youth. Failure by staff or volunteers to follow the policies and procedures could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **POLICIES**

Policies define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior in an organization. Because offenders often violate policies to gain access to youths, when staff know and understand policies, they can identify, interrupt, and report policy violations. Simply interrupting a policy violation can prevent a false allegation of abuse or put an offender on notice that no one works in private, the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected.

### **POLICY 1: PROHIBITING THE ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT OF YOUTH**

The YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of youth in its programs. Abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following types:

- Physical abuse – Injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a youth (striking hitting, kicking, punching, pinching, etc).
- Sexual abuse – Any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth and an adult or between two youths. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or other youth.
- Emotional Abuse – Mental or emotional injury to a youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- Neglect – Failure to provide for a youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a youth from harm.

Any mistreatment or abuse by a staff member or a volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service.

### **POLICY 2: BULLYING**

The YMCA is committed to providing all youth with a safe environment in our programs. The YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth.

In addition, the YMCA 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:

- *Physical bullying* – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- *Verbal bullying* – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- *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 posting (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; and
  - 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.

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 by close attention that the offending behavior has ceased. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. The policy applies to all youth participating in YMCA programs, staff and volunteers.

### **POLICY 3: PHYSICAL CONTACT**

The YMCA’s physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth and staff. Our organization encourages appropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff towards youth in the organization’s programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination or employment.

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

<b><i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side hugs</li> <li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder or "temple" hugs</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives and hand slapping</li> <li>• Verbal praise</li> <li>• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders</li> <li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-frontal hugs</li> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection in isolated area</li> <li>• Lap sitting</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a youth to cling to an employee's or volunteer's leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a youth</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the staff or volunteer</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>

## **APPROPRIATE, ALLOWABLE EXCEPTIONS FOR PROGRAMS AND AGE GROUPS**

### **EXCEPTIONS FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS & PRESCHOOLERS:**

1. Patting on bottoms (infants in Child Watch)
2. Holding hands (guidance)
3. Sitting close
4. Frontal hugs (if initiated by child)
5. Lifting & carrying
6. Back rubs (during nap time)
7. Helping young children at toilet (door should be open)

### **EXCEPTIONS FOR SWIM INSTRUCTORS & AQUATICS STAFF:**

1. Lifting & carrying
2. Sitting close, holding close
3. Arm around body
4. Holding hands

### **EXCEPTIONS FOR FITNESS INSTRUCTORS/PERSONAL TRAINERS:**

1. Touching body areas to identify areas for focus (ask permission first)

#### **POLICY 4: VERBAL INTERACTION**

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to youth in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Staff and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youth. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with youth.

The YMCA's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

<b><i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive reinforcement</li><li>• Appropriate jokes</li><li>• Encouragement</li><li>• Praise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name-calling</li><li>• Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers</li><li>• Secrets</li><li>• Cursing</li><li>• Off-color or sexual jokes</li><li>• Shaming</li><li>• Belittling</li><li>• Derogatory remarks</li><li>• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth</li><li>• Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family</li></ul>

#### **POLICY 5: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION & DEVICES**

Any private electronic communication between staff and youth, including the use of social networking websites like – Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. is prohibited.

All communication between staff and youth must be transparent. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

<b><i>Appropriate Electronic Communication</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Electronic Communication</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth's parent</li> <li>• Communicating through "organization group pages" on Facebook or other approved public forums</li> <li>• "Private" profiles for staff and volunteers which youth cannot access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments</li> <li>• Sexually oriented conversations</li> <li>• Private messages between staff and volunteers with youth</li> <li>• Posting pictures of organization participants on social media sites</li> <li>• Posting inappropriate comments on pictures</li> <li>• "Friending" participants on social networking sites</li> </ul>

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

While assigned to work with youth, staff are not permitted to use electronic communications devices except during approved breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with youth is strictly prohibited regardless of the type of device used and whether for business or personal reasons. Employees need to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy.

Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact (via voice, text, or pictures/video) organization members and/or program participants for personal and/or inappropriate reasons shall be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment.

There are occasions in which staff will need to use personal or organizational issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of organizational issued or personal electronic communication devices include:

1. Field Trips
2. Off-site Programming
3. Emergencies

**POLICY 6: GIFT GIVING**

Molesters routinely groom youths by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the youth. They might instruct the youth to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the youth to keep secrets from parents. For this reason, staff and



volunteers should only give gifts to groups (i.e., the entire class) of youth, and only under the following circumstances:

1. Administration must be made aware of and approve the gift.
2. Parents must be notified.
3. Gifts of food must follow food safety guidelines for those sensitive to food allergies.

### **POLICY 7: EVERY ALLEGATION OF ABUSE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND THERE IS COOPERATION WITH AUTHORITIES**

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youth or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected. All staff must report incidents and maintain strict confidentiality with co-workers, members, friends and family members. Staff are not responsible for investigating an incident, only reporting it. The YMCA will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated. Failure to comply with procedures may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

### **POLICY 8: MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & PROCEDURES**

Staff members are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. YMCA Staff have a legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of maltreatment and abuse. Staff will:

- Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse;
- Know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect youth against abuse;
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws as soon as possible, in no event later than 24 hours; and
- Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.
- It is the intention of the YMCA to assure that all suspicions of child abuse are reported to the Child Protective Services (CPS) and/or the local law enforcement agency.
- At the first reasonable cause to believe that any abuse exists, it should be reported to Child Protective Services, then your supervisor or YMCA leadership so that proper internal reporting can be initiated. Inability to consult with a supervisor or leadership should not delay a call to authorities. YMCA leadership will make the call with you should you need support, but Y Staff, by law, are mandated to report abuse or the suspicion of.

- If it is perceived that a child is in imminent danger at that moment, 911 will be called instead of CPS. The supervisor or YMCA leadership will be called to bring support to the immediate situation.
- All reports to CPS or legal authorities must be reported to Katie Beeny (270-821-9622 ext. 108) or Michelle Hale (270-821-9622 ext. 106).
- Mandated reporters are required by law to report known or suspected instances of abuse and not doing so is a gross misdemeanor. **Who is a mandated reporter?** A mandated reporter is any person in his or her official supervisory capacity who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect caused by a person over whom he or she regularly exercises supervisory authority, including employees, volunteers and independent contractors. In addition, mandated reporters within the YMCA are employees or volunteers who work in programs for care of children, including day camp, preschool, licensed programs, or who are doctors, professional social services counselors, teachers or licensed or registered nurses.
- Any information regarding abuse or potential abuse should be documented in writing on paper. Do not report suspicions of abuse via text message or phone call without also completing a documentation form.
- Following substantiated reports of crossing boundaries of inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse, appropriate actions will be taken regarding an employee or volunteer, including suspension or termination from YMCA employment or volunteer status, and the YMCA's protocol for making a report to the appropriate authorities will be followed.
- Confidentiality of information related to abuse is crucial and should be limited to the immediate supervisor and/or YMCA leadership. However, inappropriate and sexualized behaviors initiated by participants towards others in YMCA programs may be shared with the Puzzle Master and other staff who work with the participant.

## **POLICY 9: INTERNAL DOCUMENTING AND REPORTING**

- **Report** observations, knowledge of rule-breaking and/or an incident to your supervisor and the Puzzle Master.
- **Puzzle Master – The Organization Abuse Prevention Point Person(s)**  
The purpose of having a point person is so that observations are funneled to one person who can pick up a trend. If multiple people are used as point persons and people are not communicating, an organization is not getting the combined picture that might identify a potential abuser. You never know if you are reporting the first piece or the final piece of a puzzle.
- Employees should **report suspicions of an employee or volunteer who is breaking or bending the rules of appropriate behavior** with participants to their supervisor or the program director AND to the Puzzle Master – even if it was not during work hours. We don't want staff to wait to

report until they have suspicions of abuse; we want them to report rule-breaking or any other behaviors that might be considered “grooming.”

- Employees should **report any sexualized behaviors by children and youth**, even minor ones, to a parent or guardian, a supervisor, a program director, and **to the Puzzle Master**. The behavior should be documented and communication may be through sharing of the documentation. Sexualized behaviors are the yellow and red flags of potentially more serious sexual touching behaviors between youth. This must be prevented.
- Employees **report all abuse**, whether it happened at home, in a licensed program or in any other Y program or facility, to the supervisor or program director AND to the Puzzle Master.
- **The Puzzle Master’s role is as a safety net. He or she makes sure that any next steps in reporting happen, whether internal or to external agencies.**
- **Our YMCA’s Puzzle Masters are Katie Beeny and Michelle Hale.** Katie Beeny and Michelle Hale are Certified Praesidium Guardians (certified in abuse prevention: including the best practices in organizational abuse prevention, specific steps to take to prevent incidents of abuse by employees, volunteers or program participants, and how to respond effectively if an allegation or incident occurs) and can offer guidance on whether a specific behavior should be reported. The report should be made with Katie Beeny ([katie.beeny@hopcoymca.com](mailto:katie.beeny@hopcoymca.com)). Please ensure all reports are written or typed and submitted via email or in person (no text messages).

## **POLICY 9 AMENDMANT: Procedure for Employee and Volunteer Responding to Peer-to-Peer Sexual Activity**

Peer-to-peer (youths under the age of 18) sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

If employees or volunteers witness peer-to-peer sexual behaviors that are contrary to defined behavioral expectations between youths, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:

- If you observe sexual activity between youths, you should safely separate them as soon as possible.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the youths.
- Report suspected peer-to-peer abuse to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws as soon as possible, in no event later than 24 hours; in the State of Kentucky, **YOU** are a mandated reporter.

- Notify your supervisor and parent/guardian (when applicable)
- Complete the necessary documentation including what you observed and how you responded.
- Follow your supervisor's instructions regarding notifying the authorities and informing the parents/guardians of the consumers involved.
  - i. Do not attempt to determine whether the consumer's behavior was "sexual curiosity". There is not a standard definition of what normal sexual curiosity looks like. An external body, such as law enforcement, utilizes criterion to investigate and determine whether the youth's behavior is sexual curiosity.
- If the problem is recurring, additional action may be required including not allowing one or both consumers to return to the program.
- Identify how youths will be managed or supported to prevent further occurrences of sexual activity (i.e., safety or behavioral plans including additional supervision requirements)

### **POLICY 10: CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS – EMPLOYEES**

Because we are a youth-serving organization and the safety of children is of the utmost importance, the YMCA requires a criminal background check for all full-time and part-time employees upon hire, once a conditional offer of employment has been extended by the hiring manager or a representative of Human Resources. These criminal background checks will be conducted in accordance with applicable law. \*Child Care staff also are required to have a Child Abuse and Neglect check.

### **POLICY 11: CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS – VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers working directly with children and youth are required to have passed a criminal background check.

### **CONSEQUENCES**

1. Consequences may include all forms of corrective action up to and including termination. Self-reporting is encouraged and may impact consequences.
2. All efforts will be made to help supervisors support their staff successfully. However, supervisors may also have consequences similar to those of their employees when it can be shown they have not provided adequate support to ensure procedures and abuse prevention rules are followed.

## **EDUCATING PARTICIPANTS**

Participants may be informed in a manner that is age appropriate of their right to set their own "touching" limits in a Personal Safety Talk, and they will be encouraged to tell an adult who listens if someone is abusing them.

## Process for Handling Suspicious Behavior and/or Prohibited Interactions

Suspicious Behavior and/or Prohibited Interactions:

- Trying to be alone with one child
- Giving gifts or special attention to one child
- Using inappropriate language/suggestive comments



**STOP!**  
the behavior:

**Immediately  
Intervene!**



Tell Your Supervisor  
or COO/CEO &  
Report to Puzzle Master

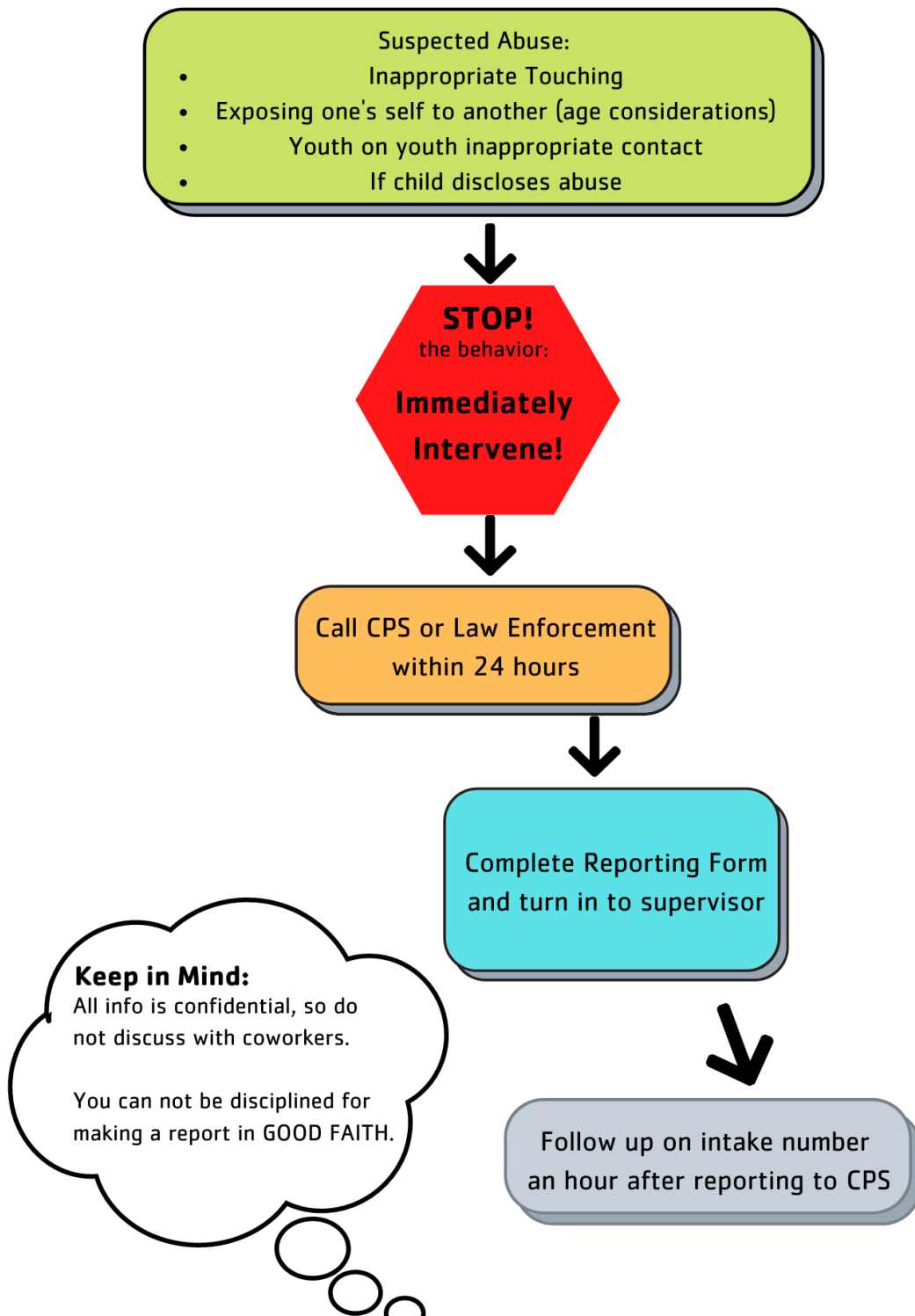


Complete an incident report &  
turn in to supervisor or  
anonymous lock box

**Keep in Mind:**

Most abusers are caught  
breaking the rules, not  
actually abusing  
children.

## Process for Handling Suspected Abuse



## **COMMITMENT TO ABUSE PREVENTION**

**I read the Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures. In particular, I read the behaviors listed under "Not Allowed" and I understand my employment can be terminated if I break the rules. I understand the Y's abuse prevention policies and procedures, and I agree to abide by the guidelines as stated. I also know that the association Puzzle Master plays a crucial role in determining if grooming and rule breaking is occurring. I will report all rule-breaking to our Puzzle Master; my information may be the key piece that's needed. I will also report all sexualized behavior of youth to the Puzzle Master to help prevent peer-to-peer abuse. Furthermore, if I work in programs for care of children, day camp, preschool, or licensed programs, or I am a professional social services counselor, licensed or registered nurse, physician, or teacher, or I have supervisory authority over any employee, volunteer or contractor for whom I believe has caused a child to suffer abuse or neglect, I am aware that I am required by law to report known or suspected instances where a child (or vulnerable adult or developmentally disabled person) has been abused or neglected, and not doing so is considered a gross misdemeanor.**





## **HOPKINS COUNTY FAMILY YMCA**

### **Acknowledgment of Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures**

I have read and fully understand that I have a legal and ethical duty to report suspected mistreatment or abuse of youth. No type of abuse will be tolerated and may be cause for immediate termination. We are committed to providing all youth with a safe environment. I fully understand and agree to comply with the Hopkins County Family YMCA's Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Reporting Guidelines.

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Staff Member Signature

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Date

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Staff Member Name (Printed)

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(Supervisor Signature)

Please return signed acknowledgement to your supervisor. It will be filed in employee's personnel file.

\*\* Employees/volunteers should keep the Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Reporting Guidelines document.