



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## Child Abuse Prevention

At the core of our mission is a commitment to improving the overall health and well-being of children and families. A vital component of this is keeping children safe from physical, emotional, and sexual harm. As a volunteer, you play a critical role in protecting the lives of children. All volunteers are expected to be proactive leaders in protecting the children in our community.

If you suspect that a child is being harmed, please immediately report any suspicion to a department director. The supervisor will determine the appropriate action and the need to contact a child protective agency. As a volunteer for a youth-serving organization you are required by law to report any suspicions of abuse. Failure to report any suspicions may result in Corrective Action.

### 4 Steps to Keeping Everyone Safe

- **Watch**-for suspicious or inappropriate behavior.
- **Interrupt**- take action (without accusing); remind the person of the rules and what's acceptable.
- **Report**- tell someone in authority immediately. You are a mandated reporter.
- **Check back**- if nothing has changed, tell someone.



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## **STAFF/VOLUNTEER/CHILD INTERACTION**

The following policies relate to volunteers and interaction with children:

- Staff/Volunteers should interact with children in a respectful manner and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, or culture.
- Staff/Volunteers should portray themselves as a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
- Any type of abuse is not tolerated and may be cause for immediate separation
- At no time during a Y program should an employee/volunteer be alone with a single child where others cannot observe them.
- Staff/Volunteers must remain in the line of sight of YMCA staff at all times.

YMCA Staff will be assigned to help oversee each scheduled activity. The YMCA will also require parents/guardians to remain on-site during scheduled activities.

- Staff/Volunteers should limit interactions with youth to YMCA-sanctioned activities and programs.
- Staff/Volunteers may not transport children in their own vehicles.
- Staff/Volunteers should avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes.



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## Recognizing Warning Signs

Abusers need three things: access, privacy & control. Recognize warning signs such as these:

- Access:**
- Willing to break rules to be around children
  - Grooms parents and community to allow increased access to children
- Privacy:**
- Seeks opportunities to be alone with children (ex: offers private lessons)
  - Communicates privately with children (ex: texts, social media, email)
  - Discourages other adults from monitoring their activities with children
- Control:**
- Encourages children to keep secrets
  - Overly involved with child's private life
  - Encourages children to "stretch" the rules
  - Becomes progressively more physical

For supplemental training information, contact Kevin Freyenberger at 219-462-4185 ext. 239 or [kfreyenberger@valpoyymca.org](mailto:kfreyenberger@valpoyymca.org)

Additional Resources

<https://www.childhelp.org/story-resource-center/child-abuse-prevention/>



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## **Child Abuse Reporting Procedures & Training**

Every staff member and volunteer has a legal and ethical duty to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse, molestation, neglect, or sexual misconduct. Proper authorities will determine the accuracy of the report.

In the event that there is a suspicion of abuse in any form (physical, neglect, emotional, or sexual) with a child at the YMCA or program participant, the Valparaiso Family YMCA will take immediate action as follows:

1. If a staff/volunteer member suspects or knows of abuse, they are to immediately report to their supervisor or to proper authorities. Suspected abuse can be observed, told or overheard. The staff member should be careful to only listen to the child and not make him/her feel questioned or interrogated. If you feel that the child is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
2. The department director and Sr. Program Director will privately meet with the child. The entire conversation will be documented and signed off by all staff involved.



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## **Child Abuse Prevention Policies & Reporting Guidelines & Training**

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 also fully understand and agree to comply with the Valparaiso Family YMCA's Child Abuse Prevention Policies.

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**Employee/Volunteer Name (Print)**

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**Date**

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**Employee/Volunteer Signature**