Child/Teen Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for Child/Youth/Teen Participants outlines specific expectations of all minor members and program participants.

Abuse or Mistreatment

The Cambridge YMCA's top priority is keeping our children, teens, and all other vulnerable populations safe. Any form of abuse or mistreatment of children, teens, employees, and volunteers is prohibited. Minor members and program participants shall not abuse or mistreat employees, volunteers, or other children/teens in any way. Use of abusive language, obscene or profane language, including racial, religious or sexual references directed at other people will not be tolerated. It is important to treat others as you would like to be treated.

All children/youth/teens shall not engage in the verbal or emotional abuse or mistreatment of other children, teens, employees, or volunteers.

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
• Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise	• Name-calling • Bullying • Ridicule or Humiliation • Discussing sexual encounters • Cursing • Hazing • Indecent or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks, including about another child/teen or his/her family • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate other children/teens • Inappropriate games like *Truth or Dare* and *Never Have I Ever*

All children/youth/teens shall not engage in the physical abuse or mistreatment of other children, teens, employees, or volunteers.

Appropriate Physical Contact	Inappropriate Physical Contact
• Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder • Pats on the shoulder of back • Handshakes • High-fives • Verbal Praise • Pats on the head • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Elbow taps	• Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated areas • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Exposing oneself • Any type of massage given by or to a child/teen • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child/teen or staff/volunteer • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas • Hitting • Spanking • Shaking • Slapping • Unnecessary restraints • Viewing or showing others pornographic materials

Personal Relationships

Appropriate personal relationships between children or teens are encouraged. However, the Cambridge YMCA strongly discourages romantic relationships between participants while in programming. Children/teens are not permitted to hold hands, sit on others' laps, use full-frontal hugs, or kiss other child or teen participants while in programming.

There should never be, under any condition, a romantic or otherwise personal relationship between a child/teen participant and an employee or volunteer.

One-on-One Interactions

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child/teen, or when a child/teen is alone with another child/teen. The Cambridge YMCA aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the Department Director.

If a child/teen or parent observes one-on-one interactions between employees and a child/teen, you should report this following child and reporting guidelines:

Parent Reporting

If a parent has a concern, we encourage them to address it as soon as possible so we can work toward a timely resolution.

How to Report a Concern:

1. Speak with Program Staff
    a. When appropriate, parents should discuss concerns directly with the staff member or program coordinator.
2. Contact Program Leadership
    a. If the concern is not resolved, or if a parent is not comfortable speaking with program staff, they may contact the Department Director.
3. Submit Your Concern
    a. Concerns may be communicated in person, by phone, by email, or in writing. Parents should provide as much information as possible, including dates, locations, and individuals involved.
    b. If a parent or guardian wishes for their concern to be anonymous, they may report a concern using an anonymous Google Form.

***Any concerns involving participant safety, suspected abuse, neglect, harassment, discrimination, or other serious matters should be reported immediately to program leadership.**

After Reporting a Concern

- The Cambridge YMCA will review the concern promptly.
- Additional information may be requested if needed.
- Appropriate action will be taken to address the concern.
- The Cambridge YMCA will communicate with the parent regarding the status or resolution of the concern when appropriate and consistent with privacy requirements.
    - Documentation of the follow-up conversation will be included in the overall report/response to the incident.

Child Reporting

Children may report concerns to:

- Any staff member or volunteer they trust
- The Program Coordinator
- The Program Director
- A parent or guardian, who may then contact program staff

Staff members/volunteers must take all concerns seriously and should listen respectfully, provide support, and seek assistance from program leadership when appropriate.

Children will never get in trouble for reporting a concern, even if they are unsure whether something is wrong. We encourage children to speak up whenever they have questions, concerns, or feel unsafe.

For Preschool - Early Elementary Children, staff will:

- Regularly remind children that they can talk to a trusted adult if something makes them feel sad, scared, confused, or uncomfortable.
- Use language such as, “If something doesn't feel right, tell a grown-up.”
- Read books and use role-play activities about asking for help.
- Introduce staff members by name and explain that they are safe adults to talk to.
- Reinforce that children will not get in trouble for asking questions or reporting concerns.

For School-Age Children, staff will:

- Review program expectations and reporting options at the beginning of the school year, monthly thereafter, and when a situation arises.
- Discuss examples of when to tell an adult (bullying, unsafe behavior, rule violations, feeling excluded, etc.).
- Provide multiple trusted adults children can approach.
- Encourage the use of a suggestion box for children who are uncomfortable speaking up face-to-face
- Encourage peer support while emphasizing that safety concerns should be shared with adults.

For Teens, staff will:

- Explain confidentiality and its limits in age-appropriate terms.
- Encourage the use of the suggestion box and anonymous Google Form.
- Emphasize that reporting concerns helps protect themselves and others.
- Encourage self-advocacy and participation in problem-solving when appropriate.

Concerns related to safety, bullying, inappropriate behavior, abuse, neglect, harassment, or discrimination will be addressed promptly and in accordance with YMCA policies and applicable laws.

After a concern has been reviewed or investigated, the program coordinator will follow up with the child in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Staff will provide information that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding while maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals involved. Specific details regarding investigations, personnel matters, disciplinary actions, or information about other participants will not be disclosed. Documentation of the follow-up conversation will be included in the overall report/response to the incident.

When appropriate, parents or guardians may also be informed that a concern was reported and addressed.

Electronic Communication

The Cambridge YMCA avoids electronic communication with children/teens as much as possible and will most often communicate to children/teens through parents and guardians.

If a situation arises where electronic communication with a child/teen is necessary, any electronic communication between employees/volunteers and children/teens must be approved by a child/teen's parents/guardians and the Department Director.

The "Rule of Three" must be observed in all electronic communications between children/teens and employees/volunteers (there should always be two employees/volunteers included on any electronic communication). **Direct, private messaging between children/teens and employees/volunteers is not allowed.**

Children/teen participants will comply with the Cambridge YMCA's policies governing the use of personal mobile communication devices:

- Childcare program participants are not permitted to use personal electronic devices during program hours
- Aquatics, Youth Sports Programs, and members may use personal electronic devices when in the building
    - Child/teen participants are not permitted to share cell phones with other child/teen participants.

Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco

Possession and/or use of alcoholic beverages, drugs and tobacco products while at the Cambridge YMCA is strictly prohibited. Children/teens will not be permitted to participate in any program while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or illicit substances. Parents/guardians will be notified as appropriate.

Weapons

We want the Cambridge YMCA to be a safe place for children, teens, and families. Weapons and items that may be considered weapons are prohibited. Anyone found to be in possession of such items will be required to leave and the items will be confiscated. Parents/guardians, and/or the authorities will be notified as appropriate.

Violence

The Cambridge YMCA seeks to provide a safe environment for individuals in our community. Violence and threats of violence will not be tolerated on our grounds, in organization facilities, in other facilities being utilized by our organization, or during Cambridge YMCA sponsored activities and events.

Employees are available to assist in the resolution of differences.

Disruptive Behavior

Inappropriate or disruptive behavior is not permitted in our organization. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Graffiti
- Littering
- Spitting
- Throwing objects that could intentionally or unintentionally harm others or cause disorder.

Bullying

The Cambridge YMCA will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child/teen by another child/teen. 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:

1. **Physical bullying** – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
2. **Verbal bullying** – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful name.

3. **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.
4. **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:
    a. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
    b. Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
    c. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
    d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
    e. 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.
    f. 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 children/teens, employees, and volunteers.

Reporting

It is imperative that everyone, including children/teens, actively participates in the protection of children/teens. In the event that children/teens observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other employees, volunteers, or other children/teens, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations. See the Child Reporting section for the process of reporting.

Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Employees/Volunteers and Consumer

- Violation of any abuse prevention policies outlined by the organization
- Seeking private time or one-on-one time with a child/teen
- Buying gifts for individual child/teen
- Making suggestive comments to a child/teen
- Picking favorites