



Valley Shore YMCA, Inc.

Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures

Prepared: 9/5/2018 Youth Safety Task Force
Approved by Board of Directors October, 30 2018

I. Code of Conduct For YMCA Staff and Volunteers

The Valley Shore YMCA (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. The code of conduct is designed to assure 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. No form of abuse will be tolerated and confirmed abuse will result in dismissal. This includes:

- Physical abuse- striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, and so on.
- Verbal abuse-humiliating, degrading, threatening, and so on
- Sexual abuse-touching, or speaking inappropriately
- Mental abuse-shaming, withholding kindness, being cruel, and so on
- Neglect-withholding food, water, or basic care.

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

1. Youths will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Youths will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, age, religion, culture, economic level of family or disability.
3. Staff will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact and maturity.
4. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by our organization.
5. Staff and volunteers will avoid situations in which they will be alone with a single child that cannot be observed by others.
6. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by our organization.
7. Staff and volunteers 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.
8. Staff and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youths.
9. Staff and volunteers will comply with our organization's policies regarding interactions with youths outside of our programs.

10. Staff and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with youths.
11. Staff will refrain from intimate displays of affection toward others in the presence of children, parents and staff.
12. Staff and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of youths.
13. Staff must appear clean, neat, and appropriately attired.
14. Smoking or use of tobacco during working hours or in presence of children or families is prohibited
15. Possession or use of any type of weapon or explosive device is prohibited.
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. 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. Any staff or volunteers that are suspected of abuse will be suspended immediately and will be referred to the appropriate authorities.

II. 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.

A. Physical Contact

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

The organization’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

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

B. Verbal Interaction

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

Our organization’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

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

C. One-on-One Interaction

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a youth. Our organization aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the organization administration.

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, staff and volunteers should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse

Additional Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others. • Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes. • If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by. • Call the front desk or inform other staff and volunteers that you are alone with a youth and ask them to randomly drop in. • Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

D. Off-site Contact

Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. This contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put staff, volunteers, and our organization at increased risk.

Our organization prohibits interactions outside of regularly scheduled program activities unless approved by the YMCA management.

In addition, when outside contact is unavoidable or unexpected, ensure that the following steps are followed:

1. Report the outside contact to your supervisor.
2. Ensure that staff or volunteers have the parents' permission to engage in outside contact with the youth. Consider requiring the parents to sign a release-of-liability statement.

E. Electronic Communication

Any private electronic communication between staff and youths, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. - is prohibited. All communication between staff and youths must be transparent.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

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

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.

In addition, provide this information to your participant's parents so that they know what is appropriate and inappropriate from your staff.

While assigned to work with youths, staff are not permitted to use electronic communications device except during approved breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with youths 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 organization issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of organization issued or personal electronic communication devices include:

- a. Field Trips
- b. Off-site Programs
- c. Emergencies

F. 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 of youths, 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 sensitive to food allergies

III. Monitoring and Supervision

When staff and volunteers are adequately supervised, potential offenders are less likely to act on their impulses because they face detection. When youths are adequately supervised, they too are less likely to engage in inappropriate interactions with others. Similarly, the physical plant must be monitored, particularly out-of-the-way locations or locations that might permit an offender undue access to or privacy with a youth. Effective supervision and monitoring require that a variety of methods be used frequently, at both scheduled and random times.

A. Facility Monitoring

Building architecture can increase or mitigate the risk of an incident or accident. Because most incidents of sexual behavior occur in private, the extent to which privacy is managed, risk is managed. In order to ensure that all of the locations are properly and consistently monitored, all staff are to be alert and monitor the facility as they engage in their work.

B. Checking Members into a Facility:

When anyone (members, guests, residents, construction workers, maintenance, cleaning crews, etc.) enters the facility during operational hours, they must check in with the front desk.

Staff is responsible for closing any doors they may find propped open to ward off unauthorized access. All staff are to redirect all visitors to the front desk.

C. General Supervision

General supervision procedures:

1. Administrative and Supervisory Visits to Youth Programs- Youth supervisors and administrators will regularly visit all youth programs to ensure that all activities are well-managed and that youth policies are observed by all in attendance.
2. Ratios- Each program will follow the ratio requirements that are directly to the goals of the program and the design of the program area. The staff or volunteer-to-youth ratio should be adjusted for programs that serve youths with special needs. Refer to local licensing requirements and general best practice guidelines for establishing adult-to-youth ratios.
3. Mixed Age Groups- In most incidents involving one youth abusing another youth, the youths are from different age groups. Each program is responsible for establishing specific guidelines for additional monitoring and supervision of activities that involve

youths from different age groups. Staff and volunteers must be aware that close line of sight supervision is required when monitoring programs that mix age groups.

D. Monitoring Youth in Facilities

Generally, youths under the age of 13, or 7th grade, should not be alone in the facility without a parent or guardian present unless part of a staff supervised program. By this age, most youths have had the experience of being without immediate parental supervision and are able to use self-protection skills in the event that they are approached inappropriately by another youth or by an adult.

That said, because the YMCA is responsible for all youths in the facility, the following procedures are implemented:

1. All youth members and youth guests must complete a membership application or waiver form signed by a parent or legal guardian which includes identifying information, any special medical or behavioral circumstances, any legal indemnifications, the youth's date of birth, and emergency contact information.
2. All youths must sign-in AND to sign-out of the facilities so that the program has a record of the youth who are in the facility at all times.
3. While in the facility, youths can be supervised directly, indirectly, or with a combination of the two techniques.
 - a. For direct supervision, the program may offer structured, scheduled activities like basketball tournaments, swimming activities, arts and crafts, etc. These activities should have one or more staff assigned to lead and supervise.
 - b. For indirect supervision, the program must designate certain building areas as authorized areas. Authorized areas could include a gymnasium, a game area, or a classroom for doing homework and so on. Authorized areas must be easily visible and routinely and systematically checked by staff. Youths should know that they will be supervised by staff at all times, and all staff should know which areas are authorized and which are not.
4. All program staff should wear name tags or identifying clothing so that the youth can easily recognize them as staff.
5. Membership staff will greet youths that enter the facility and direct youths to the structured activities or authorized area. All staff are to redirect youths who are not in an authorized area or who are not participating in a structured activity.

E. Bathroom Activities

Most incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in the bathrooms. Therefore, the following supervision guidelines are required for all staff and volunteers working with youth.

When supervising restroom use, adult staff members should first quickly scan the bathroom before allowing youths to enter.

1. For "Group Bathroom Breaks":
 - Staff or volunteers to take groups of two or more youths to the bathroom – following the "rule of three" or more.
 - If the bathroom only has one stall, only one youth should enter the restroom while the others wait outside with the staff.
 - If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many youths as there are stalls.
 - Minimize youths of different ages using the bathroom at the same time.
 - Staff to stand outside the bathroom door but remain within earshot.
2. For single use restrooms:
 - Youths must ask permission to use the bathroom.
 - Staff on duty to frequently check bathrooms and be alert for improper behavior
3. Staff may not use the bathroom at the same time as youths.
4. If assisting young youths in the stalls, the staff should keep the door to the stall open.

F. Locker Room Activities

The locker room procedures include:

1. Program staff to stand within earshot of the locker room when in use by youths.
2. Program staff to intermittently and briefly check inside the locker room so users know the locker room is monitored.
3. Staff to discourage the use of locker rooms by youths of different ages at the same time.
4. Staff to prohibit the use of locker room horseplay such as towel snapping.
5. Staff and youths must shower at different times.
6. While the youths shower, at least one staff member should stand in the bathroom doorway and within earshot of the youths. Ensure that only one youth is in each shower

G. Playground Activities

When program staff bring youth to playgrounds, playground supervision includes:

1. Youths to remain in line-of-site of staff at all times.
2. Youth are to be provided a definition of specific and narrow geographic boundaries around the playground area.
3. Barriers of supervision (such as storage sheds, playhouses, tunnels, and shrubs) are to be out of bounds to children.
4. Staff are assigned specific areas to supervise ("zone monitoring") and staff may not congregate.
5. Staff to conduct periodic roll calls for each age group.
6. Supervisors to conduct periodic check-ins and assessments of the activity period and of the entire activity area.

H. Off-Site Activities (such as Field Trips)

The off-site procedures include:

1. Advance supervisor approval must be obtained for all off-site activities.
2. Advance parental approval is required.
3. Staff-to-youth ratios must be specified for the activity.
4. Staff and youths must be easily identifiable.
5. Specific bathroom and locker room procedures as applicable must be determined and described to children before the outing.
6. Transportation procedures must be determined before the outing.
7. A supervisor is to observe the off-site activities at scheduled times and random intervals.
8. Specific recommendations based on the location and type of activity (for example, Amusement parks, Water Parks, Arcades, etc.) must be determined in advance of the outing.

I. Teen Leadership Program

Older youths who participate in teen leadership programs are still youth participants and not staff or volunteers. Therefore, even though they are often given more responsibility, teens in the leadership programs must be provided with guidelines regarding appropriate behavior, and then supervised accordingly. In addition, staff and volunteers must understand and recognize that these teens are still youths and not their peers. Therefore, the following guidelines are required for teen leadership programs:

1. Create a screening process for teen leaders which includes
 - A standard application

- An interview with behaviorally based interview questions
 - References (from teachers, counselors, family friends, etc.)
2. Train teen leaders in their role in programs and on program policies about appropriate and inappropriate interactions. This training should include the following information:
 - Appropriate and inappropriate physical and verbal interactions and the importance of maintaining behavioral boundaries between teen leaders and younger youths and between teen leaders and staff and volunteers.
 - Prohibiting teen leaders from being one-on-one with youths.
 - Prohibiting teen leaders from escorting youths to the bathrooms.
 - Prohibiting teen leaders from assisting youths with changing their clothes.
 3. Create a system to monitor the teen leaders.
 - Designate a specific employee or volunteer who is in charge of the teen leadership program and its participants.
 - Require teen leaders to wear clothing or lanyards that identify them as leaders-in-training and differentiate them from both staff and volunteers and from younger youths.
 - Require a supervisor to conduct daily check-ins with teen leaders and their program supervisors.
 - Consider requiring teen leaders to keep a log documenting their daily activities and any problems they encounter. The program supervisor should review these logs daily.

J. Bullying

Our YMCA will not tolerate nor condone any behavior that is classified as bullying, whether it be adult-to-youth or youth-to-youth. Bullying is any obvious or premeditated act directed to a child or group of children with the intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate. These acts are targeted towards the same child/children over a continuous period of time. Bullying behaviors are subtle but left unchecked could lead to more abusive behaviors including sexual abuse. 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.

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 up by close attention that the offending behavior has ceased. If there is cause to believe it is a continuing issue, staff and volunteers must report it to their immediate supervisor.

IV. Responding

Because our organization is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every staff member actively participates in the protection of youths. In the event that staff observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other staff or volunteers, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations to YMCA management.

Staff and volunteers are to be equally alert for and report youth-to-youth abuse as well. Youth-to-youth 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.

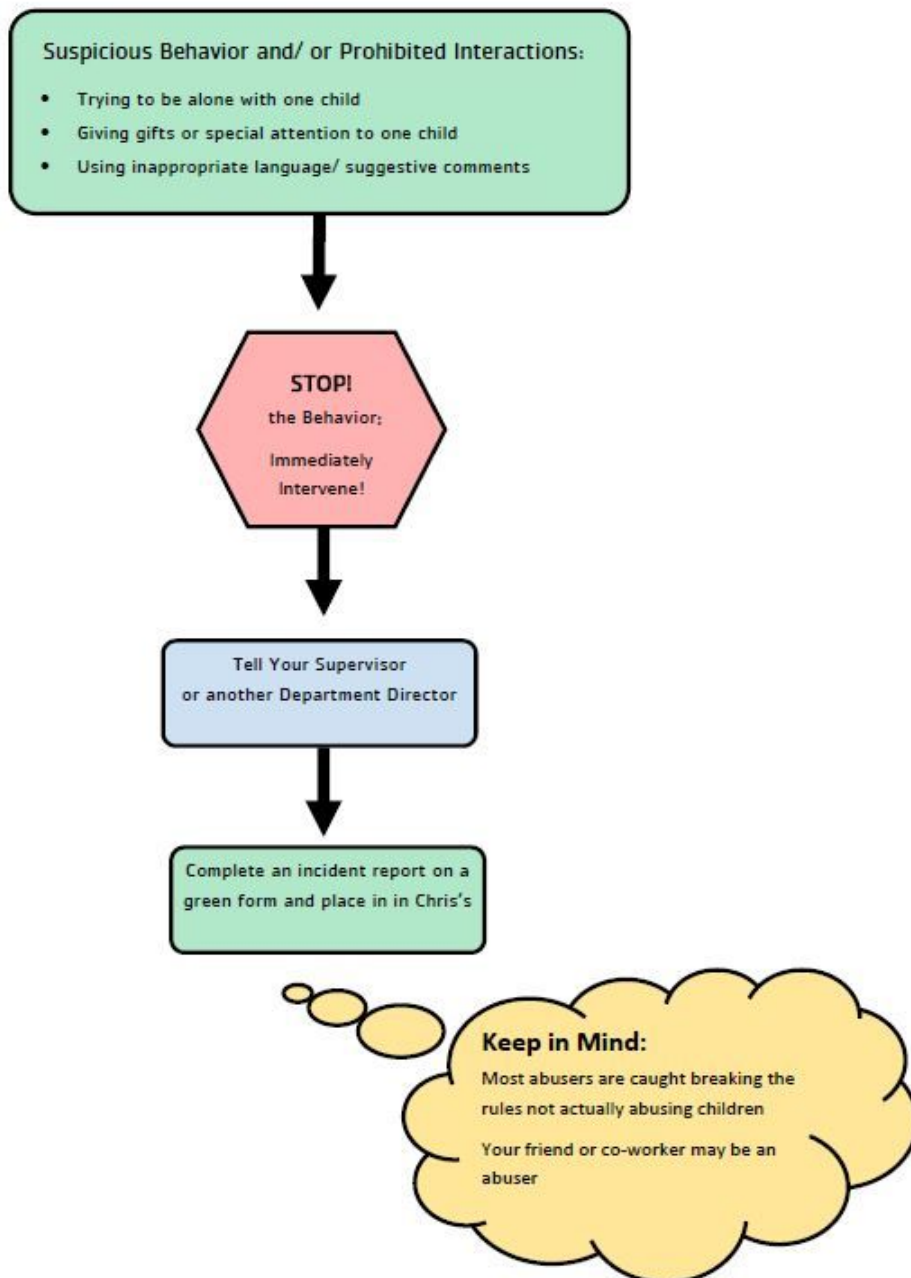
All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected. All staff must report incidents and maintain strict confidentiality with co-workers, members, friends and family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

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse: YMCA employees serving youth programs (school age, camp, youth coaches and trainers) are recognized as mandated reporters under CT State statutes and are required to report known or suspected abuse to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) by telephone at 1-800-842-2288 no later than 12

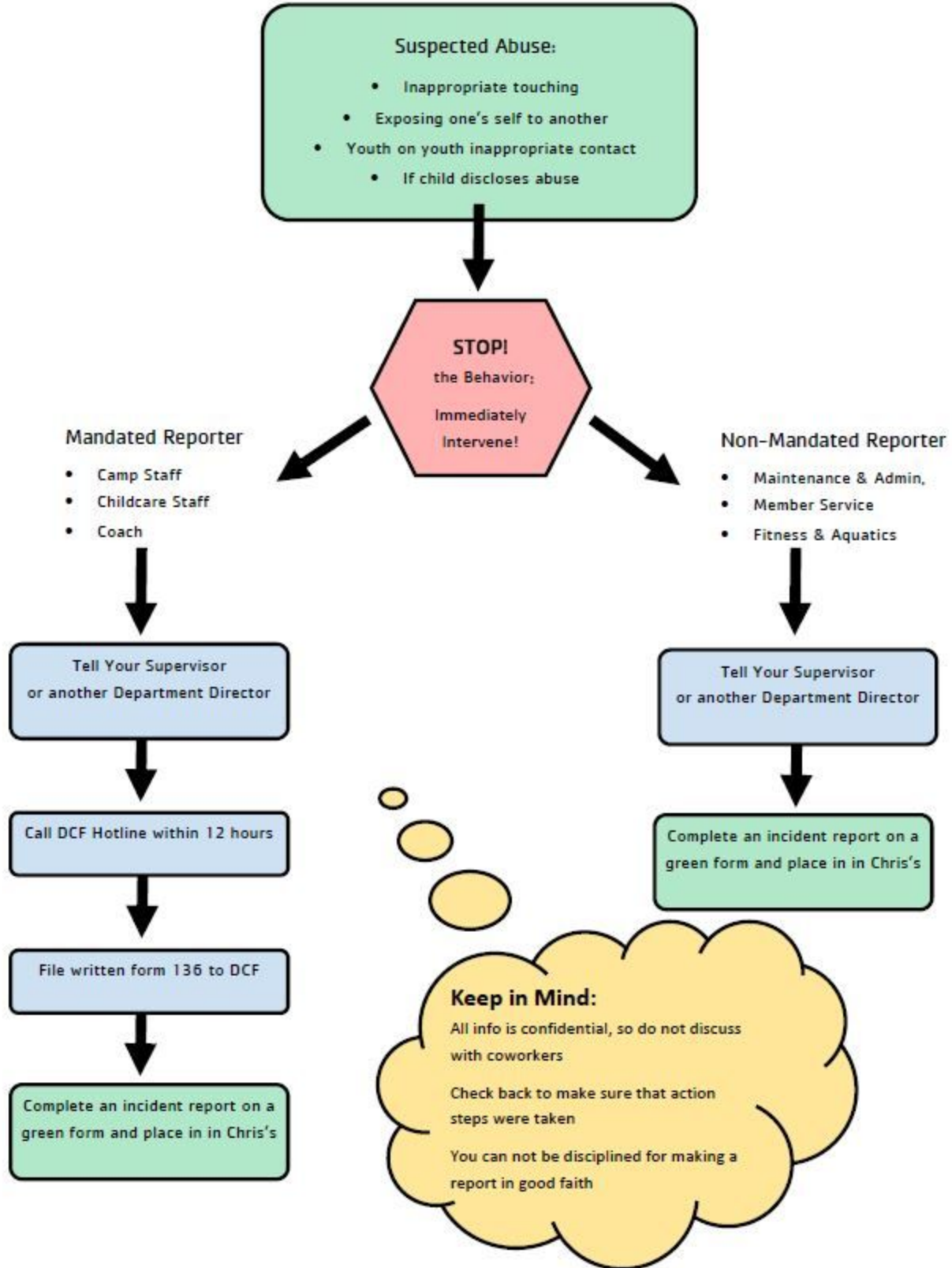
hours after reasonable cause has been suspected and in writing (DCF-136 Form) within 48 hours. Reporting is to be made when staff have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused, neglected, or placed in imminent risk of serious harm. Staff are protected by law from discrimination or retaliation for reporting in good faith suspected abuse or neglect. False reports of child abuse may result in penalties. Seek assistance of YMCA management immediately if you are unsure. Copies of all documentation must be maintained in the child's file.

Below is a flowchart that describes the response procedure staff would take if (1) they were to observe suspicious behavior or (2) if they suspect abuse of a child.

Process for Handling Suspicious Behavior and/or Prohibited Interactions



Process for Handling Suspected Abuse



Acknowledgment of Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures

I have read and agree to comply with my organization's policies and procedures regarding child abuse prevention.

Name of Employee or Volunteer: _____

Signature of Employee or
Volunteer

Date

This signature page must be

1. printed
2. signed, and
3. returned to your supervisor to be placed within your personnel file

Copies of this Policy and Procedure Manual may be found in the Employment section of our website at vsymca.org.

Thank you for protecting the children of our YMCA.