



# **YMCA OF CATAWBA VALLEY VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK & CODE OF CONDUCT**

YMCA of Catawba Valley  
701 1st Ave NW  
Suite 104  
Hickory, NC 28601  
828-324-9622  
[www.ymcacv.org](http://www.ymcacv.org)

## **WELCOME TO THE YMCA**

Welcome to the YMCA of Catawba Valley. We're glad you are volunteering with us! We've designed this handbook to provide you with a general source of information about the Y.

## **ABOUT THE YMCA**

The YMCA is a worldwide organization that is committed to providing programs that help members and participants develop spirit, mind, and body. YMCAs are alive and well in more than 10,000 neighborhoods across the United States and in 140 countries around the globe.

Our Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

## **YMCA VALUES**

Character development is integral to all YMCA programs. We are guided by our core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Whether it be in child care, the gym, at camp or member services, we strive to develop character values in ourselves, our members, and participants. We believe strongly in our mission to promote and model these character-building values in all that we do.

## **YMCA HISTORY**

The YMCA was founded in London England in 1844 as the Young Men's Christian Association, to help people develop character in their daily lives .The movement spread quickly and reached the United States by 1851. In 1969, the YMCA of Catawba Valley was founded.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Because the YMCA of Catawba Valley strives to provide a safe environment for children and youth, the YMCA requires volunteers to authorize a background check.

Volunteers are the backbone of the YMCA. Volunteers not only founded the YMCA, but operated it in its entirety in the early days. The involvement today of thousands of talented, committed individuals greatly extends the range, quality and variety of YMCA programs.

The YMCA defines a “volunteer” as anyone who, without financial compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the YMCA of Catawba Valley.

### **RELEASE**

During your volunteer work with the YMCA, any photos taken of you may be used in future promotional materials.

### **VOLUNTEER RECORDS**

In order to keep your volunteer records current, please notify the HR Manager of changes to your name, address, phone number, email address, or emergency contact information.

### **UNABLE TO VOLUNTEER**

If you are unable to make a scheduled volunteer task time, please advise the YMCA director where you will be volunteering.

### **DRESS CODE**

Dress code for volunteers varies for each branch and from department to department. Please make sure that you are aware of the volunteer dress code in the department for which you are volunteering.

All sports volunteers are required to wear a visible YMCA-issued identification badge or coach/staff shirt at all times while on site, unless doing so presents a safety risk during play. Volunteers without proper identification must check in with staff and wear a temporary identifier while participating. Failure to comply may result in restricted participation or removal from volunteer duties.

### **TRACKING OF VOLUNTEER HOURS OF SERVICE**

In order for us to have an accurate record of your volunteer time, we ask that you complete a volunteer timesheet monthly.

**All expectations listed within this handbook are to be applied on the YMCA premises as well as any off-site YMCA activities.**

There are two categories of volunteers: **High-Access and Low-Access**. The category of volunteer determines the level of screening, training, and supervision the volunteer requires.

\*If uncertain whether a particular volunteer opportunity is High-Access or Low-Access, pick High-Access because this category provides the greatest protection for consumers and for your organization.

### **High-Access Volunteers**

High-Access Volunteers typically interact often or over an extended period with consumers. Such volunteers may be readily known to consumers under their supervision and to other volunteers and employees in the program. They may also supervise consumers with or without an employee present. High-Access Volunteers may carry a substantial amount of responsibility in a program serving consumers and such volunteers may have opportunities to develop relationships with consumers over time. Examples of High-Access Volunteers include a volunteer program instructor, a regularly scheduled volunteer coach, or a mentor for a consumer.

Recommended High-Access Volunteer screening process:

- An application with the Code of Conduct attached;
- In-person interview with behaviorally based interview questions; References; and
- A multi-state criminal background check and national sex offender registry check.

Recommended High-Access Volunteer training process:

- Initial Abuse Prevention Training required of employees in similar position; and
- Annual Abuse Prevention Training required of employees in similar position.

### **Low Access Volunteers**

Low Access Volunteers typically interact with consumers only in line-of-sight of an employee and only infrequently. Such volunteer might be a parent/guardian who is helping at a one-time event, or someone who only works with adults, not consumers. Low Access Volunteers may not be known by the consumers in the program or to other volunteers and employees. Low Access/Occasional Volunteers have limited access to consumers and have few opportunities to develop relationships with consumers over time.

Examples of Low Access Volunteers include a one-time event volunteer (such as for a fun run), parents/guardians who assist at a program where their child is a participant, a volunteer who works strictly with adults outside of the organization's property, a volunteer who helps with business activities and does not interact with consumers, or a board member.

Recommended Low Access Volunteer screening and training process:

- A national sex offender registry check.
- Provide volunteer with the organization's Code of Conduct; and
- Review of abuse prevention policies

## SAFETY

### SAFETY AND HEALTH RULES

Volunteers are to observe all safety and health rules and use care to prevent accidents. The following list is not inclusive:

- Know the location of fire/safety exits and evacuation procedures
- Keep all aisles, walkways, working areas, and emergency equipment free of obstacles
- Refrain from running, fighting, horseplay, or distracting others
- Please report any unsafe items to the closest YMCA staff person immediately

### BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

The YMCA subscribes to the concept of “universal precautions”, which means that all human blood or other body fluids must be treated as if they were contagious. Universal precautions mean that you are expected to use certain procedures and to use personal protective equipment when necessary.

### CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION GUIDELINES

A principle endeavor of the YMCA is to provide a healthy atmosphere for the growth and development of children. Thus, the mistreatment or neglect of children, and the resulting severe affects, is of primary concern to the YMCA. Child abuse is mistreatment or neglect of a child by parent(s) or others resulting in injury or harm. Abuse can lead to severe emotional, physical, and behavioral problems. Because of our concern for the welfare of children, the YMCA has developed policies, procedures and training to aid in the detection and prevention of child abuse. All volunteers 16 and older who are involved in areas that allow them regular access to children under the age of 18 must undergo a criminal level II and sexual offender’s background check. **These volunteers are required annually to complete all assigned Praesidium Trainings for Child Abuse Prevention.**

## VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

### MISCONDUCT

Volunteers are expected to behave in a manner that is consistent with the YMCA mission, values and goals. The YMCA does not tolerate misconduct. Any misconduct toward any participants in YMCA programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer experience. Some examples of misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- Discriminatory behavior or harassment
- Child abuse, molestation, or indecent exposure
- Failure to report arrest or criminal conviction
- Mistreatment or neglect of members, guests or YMCA participants
- Falsification of any YMCA records
- Theft of or willful damage to YMCA property or to the property of others
- Dishonesty in any form
- Abusive or profane language
- Fighting or threatening to harm another person

- Possession of a weapon
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol on YMCA property or while representing the YMCA as a volunteer
- Possessing, distributing or manufacturing controlled substances
- Horseplay, unsafe or dangerous behavior
- Violation of any stated rules or commonly accepted rules of responsible personal conduct
- Conduct that does not support the stated purpose of the YMCA
- Volunteers will refrain from intimate displays of affection towards others in the presence of children, parents, and other volunteers
- Volunteers must appear clean, neat, and appropriately attired
- Use of tobacco in the presence of children or parents and/or on Y property is prohibited
- Volunteers must be free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's physical or mental health
- Volunteers are not to transport children in their own vehicle
- Volunteers will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity
- Volunteers are prohibited from being alone with children they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting children to your home.

### **YMCA INFORMATION**

Information regarding membership lists, participation fees, donors, financial aid, planning, medical conditions and other information is confidential and should be kept within the YMCA and should be shared within the YMCA only with those who have a legitimate need to know, as determined by management.

### **ARREST & CRIMINAL CONVICTION OF A VOLUNTEER**

A volunteer is required to report an arrest or criminal conviction to the YMCA. The report should be made promptly, within 5 days of when the arrest or conviction occurred or prior to any additional volunteering, whichever comes first. The report should be made in writing to the YMCA branch executive, and include the exact charge or conviction, the location or court and the date of the arrest or conviction. Failure to report arrests or conviction as require will be considered misconduct and grounds for termination of volunteer activities.

### **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS**

The YMCA is committed to maintaining an alcohol and drug-free environment. This is particularly important since many volunteers are responsible for the safety and welfare of children and youth. Therefore, the YMCA prohibits the use, sale, manufacture or possession of alcohol or drugs (except those properly prescribed by a physician and used in accordance with the physician's instructions) by any volunteer while volunteering for the YMCA, and/or while in any YMCA facility or vehicle.

## COMMUNICATION

### COMPLAINTS

If you have a complaint or problem at the YMCA, in most circumstances, the best course of action is to discuss the matter with your director. If the director is unable to resolve the matter to your satisfaction, you should discuss the matter with the Executive Director at your branch.

### VOICEMAIL, EMAIL, AND INTERNET

Use of data sent and stored on YMCA computer and communications systems is the property of the YMCA. These systems include telephone, facsimile, voicemail, electronic mail, and internet systems. Messages sent, stored or printed on YMCA equipment is also the property of the YMCA. There can be no expectations of privacy using these systems.

These systems are for business use. Examples of inappropriate use of these systems include the use of ethnic slurs, racial epithets, sexually explicit images, jokes, cartoons or anything that may be considered harassment.

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING

### TRAINING PROGRAMS

Many YMCA trainings, such as Child Abuse Prevention training, are required annually for volunteers.

### SCREENING

Each program, administrative and support volunteer who is 16 years or older is required to complete a YMCA background screening prior to beginning their volunteer service with the YMCA. Our background screening includes a minimum of a criminal history check and national sex offender search. Certain volunteer positions require a level II fingerprint screening.

## CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICIES

### GENERAL POLICIES

- To protect YMCA staff, volunteers and youth, staff/volunteers are not to be alone with a single child where he or she cannot be observed by others.
- Staff and volunteers should observe the following policies to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:
  - When meeting 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.
  - Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosure of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they

were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

- Never leave a child unsupervised.
- If a child is left unsupervised, notify a YMCA staff member immediately.
- Restroom supervision: Staff/Volunteers will make sure the restroom is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff/Volunteer will monitor the restroom area while it is being occupied by children. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff. If staff is assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
- All program ratios must be adhered to.
- Staff/Volunteers will take note of any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, and all symptoms or issues that are visible on a child. Questions or comments will be addressed to the parent or child in a non-threatening way. If a child states that the parent caused an injury, staff/volunteer will contact program director immediately. Staff/Volunteers will document any questionable marks or responses.
- Staff/Volunteers will respond to children in a respectful manner and treat all children equally, regardless of sex, race, religion, culture, economic level of the family, or disability.
- Staff/Volunteers may not transport children in their own vehicles.
- Staff/Volunteers may not be alone with children they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, driving or riding in cars, and inviting children to their homes. Any exceptions require written documentation and prior administrator approval.
- The YMCA prohibits the access, display, production, possession, or distribution of pornography on the YMCA's property or equipment or during any YMCA associated activity.
- Staff/Volunteers will not give excessive gifts to youth.
- Staff/Volunteers may not date program participants who are under the age of 18.
- Under no circumstances will staff/volunteers release children in child programs to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian.
- Staff/Volunteers are to report to a supervisor any observation or suspicion of another staff or volunteer in violation of these policies.
- Staff/Volunteers will not abuse children in any way, including:
  - Physical Abuse – striking, spanking, shaking, slapping
  - Verbal Abuse – humiliating, degrading, threatening
  - Sexual Abuse touching or speaking inappropriately
  - Mental Abuse – shaming, withholding kindness, being cruel
  - Neglect – withholding food, water, or basic care
- We do not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth.
- There are occasions in which staff/volunteers will need to use official personal or YMCA issued electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff will have explicit direction from supervisors governing use. Situations which may require use of personal or YMCA-issued electronic communications devices include:
  - Field Trips

- Off-site Programs
- Emergencies
- While assigned to work with youth, staff/volunteers 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. Staff/Volunteers need to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy.

## BULLYING

**We do not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take the necessary steps 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 by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.

**Verbal bullying** – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by 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 picture 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.

**Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying** – this policy applies to all youth, staff and volunteers.

Staff/Volunteers must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection,

positive reinforcement, and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism. Staff/Volunteers will have age-appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint is used only in predetermined situations (when necessary to protect the child or other children from harm), administered only in a prescribed manner, and must be documented in writing post incident.

**DEFINING APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT**

**The YMCA encourages appropriate physical contact with youth and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or volunteer towards youth in YMCA programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/volunteer experience.**

Staff/Volunteers will respect children’s rights not to be touched or looked at in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Other than diapering, children are not to be touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.

Staff/Volunteers will refrain from intimate displays of affection in the presence of children, parents, and staff/volunteers.

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

<b>Appropriate Physical Interactions</b>	<b>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</b>
Side hugs	Full-frontal hugs
Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs	Kisses
Pats on the shoulder or back	Showing affection in isolated area
Handshakes	Lap sitting
High-fives and hand slapping	Wrestling
Verbal praise	Piggyback/shoulder rides
Pats on the head when culturally appropriate	Tickling
Touching hands, shoulders, and arms	Allowing a youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg
Arms around shoulders	Any type of massage given by or to a youth
Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)	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, waist, or genital areas

## DEFINING APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE VERBAL INTERACTIONS

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, harassing or humiliating.

Staff and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youth, parents, staff or volunteers. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities, intimate details of one's personal life in the presence of children, parents, volunteers or staff.

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

<b>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</b>	<b>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</b>
Positive reinforcement	Name-calling
Appropriate jokes	Inappropriate jokes
Encouragement	Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers
Praise	Secrets
	Cursing/profanity
	Off-color or sexual jokes
	Shaming
	Belittling
	Derogatory remarks
	Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth
	Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family

## GOVERNING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STAFF AND YOUTH

For the protection of YMCA youth, staff and volunteers, 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 except when directed to do so by a supervisor to conduct official business on behalf of the **YMCA of Catawba Valley**. Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact (via voice, text, or pictures/video) youth for personal and/or inappropriate reasons shall be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment/volunteer experience.

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

<b>Appropriate Electronic Communication</b>	<b>Inappropriate Electronic Communication</b>
Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youth ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth's parent	Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments
Communicating with youth through "organization group pages" on Facebook or other approved public forums	Sexually oriented conversations
"Private" profiles for staff and volunteers which youth cannot access	Private messages between staff and volunteers with youth
	Posting pictures of organization participants on social media sites
	Posting inappropriate comments on pictures
	"Friending" participants on social networking sites

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

## CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES

Every staff member and volunteer has a legal and ethical duty to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse, molestation, neglect, or sexual misconduct to CPS. Suspicion means that it is understandable for a person to entertain such suspicion, drawing when appropriate on his or her training and experience to suspect abuse. The child protective agency will determine the accuracy of the report.

### **Types of abuse:**

- **Physical** – An injury or pattern of injuries that happens to a child that is not accidental. These may include burns, bruises, bites, welts, broken bones, strangulation or even death.
- **Neglect** – Neglect occurs when adults responsible for the well being of a child fail to provide for or protect the child. Neglect may include not giving food, clothing or shelter; failing to keep children clean; lack of supervision; and withholding medical care.
- **Emotional** – Any chronic and persistent act by an adult that endangers the mental health or emotional development of a child, including rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant criticism, making mean remarks, insulting and giving little or no love, guidance or support.
- **Sexual** – Sexual abuse is the sexual assault or sexual exploitation of children. Sexual abuse may consist of numerous acts over a long period or a single incident. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest, sodomy, fondling, exposing oneself, oral copulation, and penetration of genital or anal openings

as well as forcing children to view or appear in pornography. The perpetrator keeps the child from disclosing through intimidation, threats or rewards.

In the event that there is a suspicion of abuse in any form (physical, neglect, emotional, or sexual) with a child and the YMCA or participant in one of our programs, the YMCA of Catawba Valley will take immediate action as follows:

- If a staff/volunteer suspects or knows of abuse, they are to immediately report to their supervisor or directly to CPS. Suspected abuse can be observed, told or overheard. The staff members 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.
- The supervisor and staff member will privately meet with the child. The entire conversation will be documented and signed off by all staff involved. Supervisor reinforces to the staff the importance of confidentiality for the safety of all involved.
- All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Our organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated.
- If any staff member or volunteer is named in a suspected case, YMCA leadership will suspend their employment and/or volunteer responsibilities immediately during the investigation process.
- Supervisor will follow-up with staff involved.

### **ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND COOPERATION WITH AUTHORITIES**

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. The YMCA will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated.

### **INVESTIGATION STATEMENT**

The YMCA cooperates fully with authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any staff or volunteer shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand the Volunteer Handbook in its entirety.

Volunteer signature \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature for anyone under 18 \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_