



## **CODE OF CONDUCT & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY SOUTH SHORE YMCA**

### **Code of Conduct**

The South Shore YMCA is committed to safeguarding the well-being of children and has established the following Code of Conduct & Child Protection Policy for all SSYMCA employees and volunteers. At all times employees and volunteers are required to adhere and comply with all written and stated policies of the SSYMCA. This includes the Mission and Character Values of Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility. SSYMCA does not discriminate or interfere with the lifestyle of its employees however it does require that in the performance of their job they will abide by these standards of conduct set forth by the SSYMCA:

**Attendance/Performance** - (*i.e.*, to be at work & on time every day); Be physically and mentally prepared for the job to be done; to recognize and respond positively to supervision; to learn the job at hand, as well as new jobs; to modify work habits and schedules (as required); to respond to the operational needs of the SSYMCA and the needs of its members and to cooperate with fellow employees and all others with whom work-related interactions occur.

**Dress** - Staff must appear clean, neat, appropriately attired and identifiable according to Department specific requirements.

**Physical Well Being** - Staff must be free of physical & psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's well-being. If in doubt a medical professional should be consulted.

**Role Modeling** - Staff will be a positive role model for youth by exhibiting professionalism in all interactions, portray an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, maturity and always maintain confidentiality to children and families.

**Social Network/Electronic Communication** - The purpose of the Social Networking/Electronic Communication Policy is to eliminate the potential for outside contact with youthful program participants via electronic means. The SSYMCA understands that certain communication is needed as part of program operation; the policy addresses how and when it can occur. The SSYMCA reserves the right to review an employee's public My Space/Blog/Facebook, etc. sites as well as SSYMCA email. Employees may be subject to termination if the sites are deemed inappropriate and do not meet SSYMCA values.

**Corrective Action**- the SSYMCA reserves the right to take any corrective action it deems appropriate where, in its opinion, an employee fails to adhere to the Code of Conduct & Child Protection Policy or in any other way acts in contradiction of the interests of the SSYMCA, its members, employees, volunteers and the community at large. Corrective action may take the form of progressive improvement plans including/ but not limited to verbal and or written warnings as well as termination. However, the severity of an employee's behavior/actions -- as determined exclusively by the SSYMCA -- will determine the results of any corrective action.

The following list is examples of /but not limited to *types* of conduct for which more severe **corrective action** may take place, including immediate termination:

- Any conduct that is deemed to be physically, emotionally, verbally and/or sexually abusive to participants, members, staff, volunteers, and guests/visitors.
- Falsification of any employment or volunteer application information, personnel record, payroll record, and /or any other record including obtaining employment through the use of any false statements.
- Violation of SSYMCA policies prohibiting unauthorized disclosure of confidential and proprietary information and recruiting SSYMCA participants to another competitive business or activity.
- Theft and other forms of dishonesty, including (but not limited to) the unauthorized use of the SSYMCA's time, material, equipment, or property.
- Violation of safety and security procedures and/or putting the SSYMCA at risk.
- Sleeping on the job (refer to overnight policies for B&H Camp staff) and/ or otherwise neglecting job duties.
- The carrying, use of or threat to use any type of weapon while on duty or on SSYMCA premises.
- Inappropriate language and jokes, sarcasm, sharing intimate details of one's personal life and any kind of harassment is prohibited.
- Defaming the SSYMCA, its members, employees and/or volunteers.
- Fighting, horseplay, practical jokes and/or other disorderly conduct which has the potential to result in property damage or injury to the SSYMCA, its members, employees and or/volunteers.
- Discrimination against SSYMCA members, employees, volunteers or community because of race, color, age, creed, gender, sexual preference, national origin or handicap is prohibited.
- Violation of the SSYMCA's "drug free workplace rules as noted in the Employee Handbook.
- Engaging in any other conduct which -- in the SSYMCA's sole discretion -- has a detrimental effect on the SSYMCA at large.

## **Child Protection Policy**

Your position with the SSYMCA may not involve working directly with children (child is defined as under the age of 18 years) however, you are a crucial component of creating an abuse-free zone at the SSYMCA. The SSYMCA believes our staff and volunteers play a key role in the prevention, recognition, responding, documenting and reporting of child abuse. Our belief is that all children deserve to be free from fear, intimidation, and abuse. It is the policy of the SSYMCA that ALL staff/volunteers complete the Redwoods Child Abuse Prevention On-line Training and receive/review and sign off on this Code of Conduct & Child Protection Policy before their regular duties begin and annually thereafter.

**Outside Vendors/Organizations** - Any program that is inherently one-on-one in nature (i.e. Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Counseling/Therapy sessions) will be requested to provide their Child Protection Policies to the South Shore YMCA.

**Supervision** - In order to protect the SSYMCA staff, volunteers, members and program participants, at no time; during a structured/licensed SSYMCA program, will a staff person be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. They should space themselves in a way that other staff can see them, always keeping in mind supervision of all children.

- Staff shall never leave a child unsupervised.
- Staff shall know the whereabouts of children in their care utilizing face counts (formally head counts) attendance and the “rule of three” (where a staff is one of the three) during all transitions. The “rule of three” specifies that there should always be at least three people present – i.e., one staff and two children or two staff and one child, NOT three or more children unsupervised ( Camp B&H staff refer to Resident Camp Policy).
- Volunteers will never be alone with children without a staff member present.
- Staff will assess the restroom/locker room for safety and monitor the doorway area while children are using the restroom/locker room. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff (not being alone with a child). If staff is assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open. No child regardless of age, under any circumstances should ever use a restroom/locker room alone. Programs licensed by MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) will have bathrooms used exclusively for children and may not be used by adults during licensed programming.
- Volunteers will monitor doorway area only.

**Physical Contact** - Staff will respect children's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Staff should not place themselves in a situation where someone may misjudge their actions. Other than diapering and assisting with toileting accidents, children are not to be touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit. In addition, the following guidelines are important to follow:

- Avoid frontal to frontal contact
- Never touch a child in a place that would normally be covered by a bathing suit
- Refrain from kissing or showing intimate displays of affection (High fives are great!)
- Staff should not hold children over the age of 2years 9months on their lap, but should get down to the child’s eye level when comforting them
- Tickling, horseplay or roughhousing are not allowed

**Outside Contact/Communication** - Any and all contact made by the SSYMCA shall be ONLY via approved SSYMCA issued communication accounts, such as, but not limited to, phone/cell phone, SSYMCA email account, SSYMCA approved/sanctioned social networking page or web site. Staff and volunteers may not have outside contact with children they meet in SSYMCA programs or at the SSYMCA and should never be alone with children they meet at the SSYMCA outside the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, extra practices, coaching, inviting children to your home, any private special events such as movies, sporting events, or any other similar excursions, visits to any residence and /or any contact via electronic means.

- Any pre-existing relationship requires a letter from the family to be submitted to your Supervisor immediately. As a condition of employment a determination will be made re' the pre-existing relationship.
- Staff is not allowed to contact any program participant for non-related SSYMCA communication via personal contacts, including, but not limited to email, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular/regular phone, social networking pages and/or other communication vehicles.
- Staff will not share their personal contact information with any children participating in SSYMCA programs
- Parental/guardian permission must be given via Photo Release Form to take/publish photos of SSYMCA participants (i.e. Program Guide, SKC events, and/or classroom use).
- The use of personal cell phones to photograph SSYMCA participants is prohibited. Staff cannot use photographs taken at SSYMCA programs and/or of SSYMCA participants for purposes other than those directly related to the program or to the SSYMCA.
- Staff/volunteers will not give gifts (even small gifts), ask kids to keep secrets, or show favoritism to certain children. All will abide by the SSYMCA's approved physical and verbal guidelines set forth for interactions with youth (regarding sitting on laps, frontal hugs, secrets, tickling, etc).

**Transportation** - Staff are not allowed to transport children in their own vehicles. Should an emergency occur where the individual needs to be transported for medical treatment 911 will be called to transport. The SSYMCA Vehicle Policy must be abided by when transporting children in approved SSYMCA vehicles.

**Releasing Children** - Under no circumstances should staff release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other supervising individual (adult) authorized by the parent or guardian (written parent authorization on file with the SSYMCA). Drop-off and pick-up procedures must always be followed and IDs must be verified.

**Positive Guidance** - The South Shore YMCA believes that all children should experience success. We strive for a setting that provides children with opportunities to explore their environment within consistent, age-appropriate limits. We ensure that policies and procedures regarding child guidance promote the recognition of the individual and diverse developmental needs of each child. A high quality program can take place in a, mutually respectful and caring environment.

**Discipline** is a process whereby children can take increasing responsibility for their own actions. It is a cooperative process in which all staff members, children & families share responsibility.

Our policies and procedures for behavior management of children are directed to the goal of maximizing the growth and development of the children and for protecting the group and individuals within it.

Our child guidance techniques are used in a consistent, reasonable and developmentally appropriate way based on an understanding of the individual needs and stage of the development of each child. By using the following child guidance techniques, we strive to minimize inappropriate behavior while creating a positive and nurturing environment for all of the children in our care.

**Child Guidance Techniques will include:**

- Setting reasonable and positive expectations.
- Offering choices and providing children an opportunity to verbalize their feelings.
- Firm and reasonable limits and rules will be explained to children in an age-appropriate manner using clear, easy to understand words.
- Redirection- we will offer alternatives to children when undesirable behavior is displayed.
- Verbal intervention- we will talk with the child about his/her inappropriate behavior and give suggestions on how to deal with the situation more appropriately.
- Logical consequences- we will help the child understand the logical consequences of his/her actions, which will encourage self-control through understanding.
- If a child is acting out by hurting themselves or others, we may separate the child and assist them to an area where he/she can be supervised at all times until the child feels he/she can rejoin the group.
- If a child persists with particularly challenging behavior, the teacher and the parents will discuss appropriate management techniques together.
- Children shall participate in the establishment of rules and limits appropriate to their age.

**Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines:**

Staff will not abuse children, including:

- Physical abuse: strike, shake, slap
- Verbal abuse: humiliate, degrade, threaten
- Sexual abuse: inappropriate touch, exploitation, verbal exchange
- Mental abuse: shaming, withholding love, cruelty
- Neglect: withholding/forcing food, water, basic care, etc.
- Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet; or forcing a child to remaining in soiled clothing or forcing a child to remain on the toilet, or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.

Physical restraint (supportively holding a child in the least restrictive way) is used only in pre-determined situations (necessary to protect the child and/or other children from imminent danger. Staff must assess the situation and intervene in a calming non-threatening manner. The goal is to help the child regain self-control in the least restrictive way. All incidents must be immediately reported to your supervisor, parent notified (always maintaining confidentiality) and documented.

Staff should report any concerns about a child's physical condition, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. to the SSYMCA management. Questions or comments will be addressed to the parent and/or child in an open-ended, non-threatening way. Any questionable marks or responses will be documented and reported to the SSYMCA management.

Staff may not date program participants under the age of 18 years of age.  
Staff shall respond to children with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of gender, race, religion, culture or economic conditions.

Staff will be a positive role model for youth by exhibiting professionalism in all interactions, portray an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, maturity and always maintain confidentiality to children and families.

Staff is required to read and sign all policies related to preventing, recognizing, responding, and documenting and reporting child abuse and attend trainings on the subject, as instructed by a supervisor.

### **Responding to and Reporting Abuse: Basic Guidelines:**

When child abuse is suspected or disclosed by a child it is imperative that the staff/volunteer protect the child's right to privacy.

- Find a private place to talk—always maintain the “opportunity to be viewed”
- Be a good listener/observer—respond calmly, establish a good rapport
- Minimize the need for questioning—two to three clarifying questions are best
- Reassure the child—however do not make promises

**Mandated Reporting** - All SSYMCA staff fall under the MA guidelines of Mandated Reporting and are mandated by law to report all incidents of suspected abuse and/or neglect of children under the age of 18 to the Department of Children and Families via 51A Report. According to MA General Laws to Protect Children Section 51A-F no staff will ever be “discriminated or retaliated against” for making a report of suspected abuse.

All staff will report to their supervisor any indication of or warning signs concerning abuse and or neglect involving a child, inappropriate behavior by a staff member/volunteer AND any instances of staff violating this Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy SSYMCA staff who identify concerning behavior or a violation of policy by a fellow staff person must report the event to their supervisor or next /lateral chain of command and /or to the VP of Human Resources immediately.

### **Overview of Reporting Procedure**

1. Any form of child abuse (a child who is harmed or threatened with physical or emotional harm by the acts or lack of action /deliberately or through negligence or inability/of a caretaker) including physical, emotional, sexual or neglect if suspected, is to be reported to your supervisor immediately.
2. At that time both you and your supervisor (or next/lateral in chain of command) will report the abuse or neglect to the MA Department of Children and Families (DCF).

3. The Executive Director or designee and Program Director in consultation with DCF may jointly decide if, when, and/or how the parents/guardians should be advised that the SSYMCA has filed a 51A report.
4. Once the suspected abuse or neglect has been orally reported to DCF, a written report (51A) must be submitted within 48 hours. Please note that any mandated reporter who fails to make the required reports may be fined up to \$5000 and /or 2 1/2 years in jail. (Chapter 119 sections 51A-E).
5. If the alleged abuse involves a SSYMCA staff or volunteer, they will immediately be suspended from work and will remain suspended until a full investigation is completed. Reinstatement of a staff or volunteer will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of SSYMCA CEO Paul Gorman.

**DCF**

**DCF Area Office Directory: 9am- 5pm**

**Braintree-Coastal Area Office 781-794-4400**

Arlington 781-641-8500 (Canton Day Camp DCF contact)

Cape Cod & Islands 508-760-0200

Plymouth 508-732-6200

**Area Office Directory: 9am- 5pm**

**After 5pm weekends/holiday:**

Child-At-Risk-Hotline 1-800-792-5200

DCF Website: [www.mass.gov/dcf](http://www.mass.gov/dcf)

Children's Advocacy Center of Norfolk County:

[www.mass.gov/da/norfolk/CAC/index.html](http://www.mass.gov/da/norfolk/CAC/index.html)

Department of Children and Families: Guide for Mandated Reporters

**<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dcf/can-mandated-reporters-guide.pdf>**