



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM ABUSE

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS
AWAY FROM HOME

GENEVA LAKES FAMILY YMCA



CREATING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT >>>

The Geneva Lakes Family YMCA works in partnership with staff, volunteers, parents and guardians of children in Y programs to protect children from abuse.

Our youth participate in a wide variety of programs, including child care, camping, sports, aquatics, mentoring, leadership and more. The Y's programs follow the principles of youth development, which includes the belief that children need to be physically and emotionally safe in order to learn and thrive. Open, ongoing communication helps.

We believe that all kids deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. That's why, through the Y, millions of youth today are cultivating the values, skills and relationships that lead to positive behaviors, better health and educational achievement.

ABUSE DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN >>>

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with information and guidance on how to talk about child abuse and personal safety with your child, and how to respond.

Children are often faced with choices affecting their development and safety. It is our job as the Y and as parents to prepare children and ourselves for what could happen and to protect them from abuse.

There are policies to keep your child safe at the Y, but there are also simple rules you can teach and steps you can take to help keep your child safe when your child is not with you.

SAFETY STEPS AT THE Y >>>

The Geneva Lakes Family YMCA has over two hundred staff members and volunteers working with youth in the many programs we offer. We want all children and youth to be safe.

FACT: While rare, every major youth-serving organization in the country has had incidents or allegations of abuse by a staff member, volunteer, or program participant.

The Y takes these steps to keep your child safe:

We thoroughly screen staff and volunteers, including completing criminal background checks.

We train staff and volunteers in abuse prevention, and, in particular, how to recognize inappropriate favoritism or “grooming.”

We carefully supervise and monitor our programs.

We ensure that staff and volunteers understand their responsibility to report abuse.

We have policies to limit circumstances in which staff and volunteers are alone with a child or teen where others cannot observe them.

We have policies that limit staff contact with children and teens outside of YMCA programs.

KNOW THE POLICIES >>>

Know the policies of programs and organizations, such as organized sports, faith centers, camps, after school programs, clubs and schools, before allowing your child to participate in any program. If your child is in a YMCA program, read our staff/volunteer Codes of Conduct in the Member Handbook. If someone breaks a rule, let us know immediately.

PROGRAMS WITH ONE-ON-ONE CONTACT >>>

When your child is in a program with one-on-one contact, ask program staff or volunteers about the specifics of the planned activity before the youth leaves your care and make sure outings are in public.

Talk with your child after the activity.

Ask specific questions, such as:
“Has anyone asked you to keep a secret?”
“Did anyone make you feel uncomfortable?”

Keep in contact with the program staff or department director.



**It takes
everyone's
help to stop
abuse.**

INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD ABUSE >>>

KNOW THE FACTS

Child abuse can take many different forms.

Emotional abuse:

is the use of threats or words that can harm a child's feelings and self-esteem and the withholding of love and support. Examples include ridicule, rejecting, blaming, or communicating unrealistic expectations.

Physical abuse:

is the deliberate injury of a child by any person, including by another child.



Most abuse happens by people that youth know and trust. Abusers can be caretakers, friends, neighbors, activity leaders, parents, relatives, and even other youth.

Sexual Abuse Adult-to-Minor

includes genital touching, inappropriate hugging or kissing, playing sexually oriented games, and sexual intercourse. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, taking nude photos, and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or Internet.

1 in 4 girls and **1 in 6 boys** is sexually abused before their 18th birthday.

30% of children who are sexually abused are abused by **family members**.

60% of children who are sexually abused are abused by **a person the family trusts**.

Youth-to-youth sexual abuse is when a minor abuses another minor, under the age of 18. Although youth-to-youth abuse includes bullying and hazing, sexual abuse cases between youth are becoming increasingly prevalent. There are **7 incidents** of youth-to-youth abuse for every **1 incident** of adult-to-youth abuse.

Child neglect is a form of abuse that occurs when a person responsible for the care of a child fails to provide necessary food, clothing, medical care, education, affection, shelter or supervision.



SIGNS OF ABUSE >>>

STAY ALERT

Watch for warning signs of child abuse:

Abrupt changes in behavior, anxiety, clinging, aggressiveness or withdrawal.

Discomfort with physical contact.
Fearfulness or depression.

Abuse or bullying of other children.

Avoidance of a particular person or place, or refusing to go to a friend's or relative's home for no apparent reason.

Sexual language or behavior that is not age-appropriate.

Unexplained bruises, welts, burns.
Unkempt or malnourished appearance.

Disturbed sleeping or eating patterns.

Sexually transmitted diseases and infections.

Why are children afraid to tell?

The abuser tells the child that his or her parents will be angry.

The abuser confuses the child about what is right and wrong.

The abuser tells the child that they will hurt a family member if they tell.

The abuser tells the child it is a game or a secret.

Children think it was their fault, or that they should have done something to prevent it.

The abuser may encourage the child to break rules set by their parents, causing the child to fear punishment if they tell.

A child may tell pieces of what happened or pretend it happened to someone else to see how you will react.

OPEN COMMUNICATION >>>

WHY SHOULD I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE?

Child molesters count on children not knowing the names of their body parts or the rules about their bodies. They count on children not knowing about sexual abuse. Teaching the right information to children when they are young helps them recognize when something isn't right or when someone may be taking advantage of them or doing something illegal. The more open communication you have with your child on serious topics like abuse and personal safety, the more likely your child will come to you for help and be able to say NO to potential abuse.

TEACH YOUR CHILD THREE RULES TO STAY SAFE >>>

Your language would of course be different for a 3-year-old than it would be for an 11-year-old.

1. The names of their body parts.

You want them to know the names of their body parts so they have the words to tell you if something is wrong. When you start teaching your child names of body parts like eyes, ears, nose, elbows, and knees, include private parts like breast, bottom, penis and vagina. Talking with children when they are young helps keep the lines of communication open when they get older.

2. Rules about their body.

Once they know the rules, they can tell you if anyone tries to break them. Children understand the idea of rules. We teach them rules about crossing the street and not poking people in the eyes. In the same way, we can also teach rules about their private parts. For example, don't touch them in front of other people and don't let other people touch them unless Mommy or Daddy knows about it. Teach them to not touch other children's private parts either. Model the rule: if they touch your private parts, gently remind them of the rule that other people are not allowed to touch your private parts. Teach them it's not OK for someone to try to get them to do things they aren't supposed to do, things that scare them, or things that make them feel uncomfortable.

3. What to do if someone tries to break the rules about their body.

If someone tries to break the rules about their body, they should tell you right away. Let them know that they will not get in trouble for telling you and that you are proud of them for following the rules about their body. Teach them that if someone tries to break the rules about their body, they can tell that person to STOP. Also, teach them it's not OK for someone to ask them to keep secrets from you.



HOW OFFENDERS BUILD TRUST WITH YOUTH >>>

Listen and watch for signs that your child is receiving special attention that other children or youth are not receiving.

GROOMING BEHAVIOR

Spends time building a friendship with the child and slowly gains the trust of the family.

Gives gifts or treats to the child and/or gives the child special favors.

Does things for the child that the parents may not be able to do.

Lays the foundation for future sexual secrets by encouraging harmless secrets.

Breaks down physical boundaries over time by playing physical

contact games, giving back rubs, tickling, or wrestling.

Gives youth opportunities to break rules such as using alcohol or drugs or viewing pornography.

This discourages the child from telling parents when abuse occurs, and pornography initiates sexual interest.

Takes pictures and videos of the child .

Increases affection or time alone, particularly outside the activities of school, sports, child care, and other activities.

BE PROACTIVE: YOU CAN PREVENT ABUSE >>>

A PARENT'S CHECKLIST

Encourage your child to talk about any sensitive problems or experiences. Children need to be allowed to talk freely about their likes and dislikes, their friends, and their true feelings.

Teach your child about their body and the rules for their body.

Have personal safety talks with them.

Practice safety rules. Give your child "what if" situations and ask them what they would do. It gives them an opportunity to practice the skills they have been taught.

Talk to your child about their experiences in YMCA programs, school, sports, mentoring, and other activities.

Drop in on your child's programs.

Trust your instincts. Don't wait to tell the Y or any other organization if something seems "strange." Speak up.

Watch for warning signs of abuse. Listen and watch for signs of your child receiving special attention.

Encourage your child to tell you or another trusted adult if anything happens to them.

Know organizations' abuse prevention rules so you can report if anyone breaks them.

Every once in a while, ask your child these questions:

Is anyone scaring or threatening you?

Is anyone asking you to keep secrets?

Has anyone said anything to you that made you feel bad?

Is anyone touching you in a way that you don't like?

INTERNET RULES

The internet can place a child in danger. Set up rules before letting your child go online.

Talk about who they can communicate with and what sites they can visit.

Do not allow your child to download anything without permission.

Tell your child never to share personal information such as their name, address, telephone number, parent's work address or phone number, or the name and location of their school without parent's permission.

Encourage them to tell a trusted adult if they receive any message or come across anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, scared, or confused.

Tell your child they must never meet in person with anyone they meet online.

A child is six times more likely to tell about abuse if asked a specific question.

WHAT IF MY CHILD DISCLOSES ABUSE? >>>

Your reaction has a powerful influence on how your child responds. Here's a good way to respond:

1. STAY CALM.

Staying calm at a time like this will be very difficult for you. Avoid overreacting or expressing shock or outrage. Try not to cry.

2. LISTEN.

Listen carefully to what they tell you. Your child will be scared and may not give you many details. Ask questions like: "Can you tell me more about it?" "What did the person do?" "When did this happen?" or "How many times did this happen?"

3. COMFORT YOUR CHILD.

Let them know that you love them very much and that they have done nothing wrong. A big hug can work wonders. Tell them you believe them. Praise their courage in telling you. Don't ask them why they didn't tell you sooner—that will just make them feel guilty.

4. DON'T THREATEN OR CRITICIZE THE PERSON WHO COMMITTED THE ABUSE.

Although this is a natural response, avoid criticizing the person your child has identified as the abuser. Chances are, your child knows the person well and may even care very much for the person.

5. TAKE ACTION.

Trust your gut and your instincts.

Keep your child away from the person involved. Contact Child Protective Services (CPS) or the police to report abuse.

If you think your child is physically injured, seek out appropriate medical attention.

If you see signs of distress, withdrawal or acting out, consider counseling for your child.

Contact the organization where the person is involved. They will want to protect other children.

If you are not sure there was abuse, contact one of the Walworth County Abuse Child Protective Services at 262.741.3200.



KNOW



SEE



RESPOND



Mandated Reporting

TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE

Walworth County
Health & Human Services
262.741.3200 or 1.800.365.1587

ONLINE RESOURCES >>>

CONSENT FOR KIDS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3nhM9UIJjc>
Resource assisting younger kids in understanding consent and setting boundaries

THAT'S NOT COOL

<https://thatsnotcool.com/>
Targets teen dating and healthy relationships

LOVE IS RESPECT

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>
Targets teen dating and healthy relationships

NETSMARTZ

<https://www.missingkids.org/NetSmartz>
Online safety



WHO DO I CONTACT AT THE YMCA? >>>

If you would like more resources
on abuse prevention training
contact the Geneva Lakes Family
YMCA at 262.248.6211 or
info@glymca.org





YMCA VALUES

RESPECT RESPONSIBILITY HONESTY CARING



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Special thanks and credit to Praesidium, Inc. a nationally recognized abuse prevention consulting company.