

Reducing Risk for YMCAs

Seven Safety Tips for Y Summer Staff — Protect Kids, Protect Yourself, Protect the YMCA

Ys have the most claims in the month of August. Activities have become routine, and staff may be less vigilant and focused. Here are some quick tips.

1. Staff must supervise kids; managers must supervise staff.

- Everyone is accountable for enforcing the YMCA code of conduct.
- Y staff must understand their role is to supervise, not play.
- Staff should never be talking on cellphones while working.
- Managers need to stop, look and listen to what is going on, and intervene quickly.

2. Staff needs to prevent bullying and kid-to-kid abuse.

- Communicate zero tolerance for bullying clearly to kids and parents.
- Avoid activities that encourage or promote bullying.
- No name-calling or funny nicknames for kids or staff.
- Create an inclusive atmosphere in games and activities.

3. Play sets are dangerous.

- Make sure they are age-appropriate for your group.
- Stand by the monkey bars and supervise kids to avoid falls.
- Inspect equipment before use — check for bolts, protrusions, etc.
- Staff should rotate positions to monitor kids at all times.

4. Watch for impalement hazards in play yards, parks and blacktops.

- Look around you before setting up games, basketball hoops, etc.
- Check for hose spigots, bolts sticking out of walls, sticks and poles that a child can run into if they fall or their game gets out of hand.
- Be attentive to your surroundings and modify for safety.
- Remove debris, trash and clutter so kids (and staff) do not trip and fall.
- Pay attention to how kids are using structures, benches, tables and equipment.

5. Staff should never be alone with a child unobserved.

- This is asking for trouble, violates Y policy and needs to be enforced.

6. Transitions from one activity to the next need to be monitored.

- Predators can use this as a time to be unobserved — make sure you have enough staff to keep an eye on the group.
- Be watchful and observant of kids and other staff.

7. Field trips and swim time need careful planning and staffing.

- Pool time is the most dangerous time of day — are you prepared? How?
- Extra staff/volunteers may be needed for off-site trips.
- Supervisors should visit off-site attractions or venues ahead of time.
- Have an emergency plan ready ahead of time.

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