

Reducing Risk at YMCAs



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Managing the Risk of Child Abuse at the YMCA — 5 Things You Need to Know

YMCAs are leaders in providing a safe and nurturing environment so all kids thrive in your programs and activities. It's central to your mission and core values — it's what you do.

The media spotlight has been on abuse within trusted organizations serving children, and rightfully so — children have been harmed. Here's what you need to know:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

1. Summary of child abuse laws and statutes of limitations by state: <https://www.childusa.org/2019sol>
2. Article from law firm on abuse litigation: <https://www.gordonrees.com/publications/2019/extended-time-limitations-on-sex-abuse-cases-expected-to-foster-rising-litigation>
3. Excellent resource on mandated reporting laws by state and other information: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>

1. **Victims' rights laws** are expanding in various states — although many states have no time limits on serious sexual abuse, many are allowing additional time for lower-level felonies to be brought forth. A number of states already have no statute of limitations on civil sex abuse litigation; others are expanding this.
2. **Organizations have failed to follow mandated reporting laws.** These laws are designed to make reporting incidents easy, protect the person making the report and quickly protect the children involved. Your internal procedures should not impede the procedures in the law.
3. **Protecting kids from abusive behavior is a daily responsibility of every staff and volunteer.** It is not one and done via a training video or workshop. Everyone must adhere to the code of conduct all day, every day. This needs reinforcement by your management team daily. How is this being accomplished at your Y?
4. **Quality supervision of staff prevents abusive behavior at the YMCA.** This is the single most important way to prevent abuse at the YMCA. Whether adult-to-child interactions or child-to-child misbehavior, they all require staff to know what each person is doing at all times.
5. **“Know, see, respond” should become your daily mantra.** Follow Y-USA and Praesidium guidelines for abuse prevention:
 - Know how to prevent access, privacy and control by adults and kids.
 - Know what abusive behavior is so you can prevent it.
 - See that staff, volunteers, kids are behaving appropriately.
 - See that staff are in designated program areas and observable.
 - Respond immediately to inappropriate behavior involving a child.
 - Respond in accordance with mandated reporting laws in your state.

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