

GREAT FUTURES START **HERE.**



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF CENTRAL GEORGIA**

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

The priority of Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Georgia is the physical and emotional safety of its members, staff and volunteers. Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Georgia maintains a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Georgia implements policies and procedures for members, employees, volunteers, visitors or any victims of sexual abuse or misconduct to report any suspicion or allegation of abuse.

DEFINITIONS

One-on-Contact Prohibition: Boys & Girls Clubs (local name) prohibits isolated one-on-one interaction between Club participants and staff or volunteers, including board members. This includes prohibiting one-on-one contact at any time at the Club, in vehicles or by phone, text, social media or any other means.

Exceptions may only be made when delivering approved medical or counseling services by a licensed, trained therapist or similar professional according to professional guidelines. All staff and volunteers, including minor staff (under age 18), are strictly prohibited from meeting Club participants outside of any Club-sponsored activities. The only exception to this rule is if the Club participant is a child or sibling of a staff member or volunteer.

Child abuse is when an adult or another child, whether through action or by failing to act, causes serious emotional or physical harm to a child. Sexual abuse or misconduct may include but is not limited to:

- Any sexual activity, involvement or attempt of sexual contact with a person who is a minor (under 18 years old).
- Sexual activity with another who is legally incompetent.
- Physical assault or sexual violence, such as rape, statutory rape, abuse, molestation or any attempt to commit such acts.
- Unwanted and intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, brushing, massaging someone's neck or shoulders and/or pulling against another's body or clothes.
- Inappropriate activities, advances, comments, bullying, gestures, electronic communications or messages (e.g., by email, text, or social media).

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Grooming behaviors may include but are not limited to:

- Targeting specific youth for special attention, activities or gifts.
- Isolating youth from family members and friends physically or emotionally. This can include one-on-one interactions such as sleepovers, camping trips and day activities.
- Gradually crossing physical boundaries, full-frontal hugs that last too long, lap sitting or other
- “accidental” touches.

MANDATED REPORTING

Every staff member or volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs (local name) who becomes aware of or has suspicion of child abuse or neglect must immediately report to Club leadership. Club leadership is responsible for reporting the incident immediately to the appropriate authorities according to statewide mandated reporting laws, as well as to Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) within 24 hours via the critical incident system.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Boys & Girls Clubs (local name) conducts and reports through a BGCA-approved process the following training for all staff members and volunteers with direct repetitive contact with young people (at the intervals noted for each).

Before providing services to young people, and annually thereafter:

1. BGCA-approved child abuse prevention
2. BGCA-approved mandated reporting
3. BGCA-approved grooming prevention

Annually:

- All the policies, including all safety policies, for Boys & Girls Clubs (local name)

PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS

Every staff member and volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs (local name) is required to maintain appropriate physical contact with minors. Appropriate and inappropriate interactions include but are not limited to the following:

Appropriate

- Side hugs
- Handshakes
- High-fives and hand slapping
- Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)

Inappropriate:

- Full-frontal hugs or kisses
- Showing affection in isolated area
- Lap sitting
- Wrestling or piggyback/shoulder rides
- Tickling

- Allowing youth to cling to an adult's leg

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Every staff member and volunteer of Boys & Girls Clubs (local name) is required to maintain appropriate verbal interactions with minors. Appropriate and inappropriate interactions include but are not limited to the following:

Appropriate

- Positive reinforcement
- Child-appropriate jokes (no adult content)
- Encouragement
- Praise

Inappropriate:

- Name calling
- Inappropriate jokes (adult-only content)
- Discussing sexual encounters or personal issues
- Secrets
- Profanity or derogatory remarks
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate youth

ABUSE AND SAFETY RESOURCES

Boys & Girls Clubs Central Georgia prominently displays BGCA-approved collateral that shares ethics hotline, crisis textline and safety helpline information with members, staff, volunteers and families. We also share all safety policies with parents and guardians upon receiving a youth membership application.

How to Respond

If a child discloses abuse, it is critical to stay calm, listen carefully, and never blame the child. Thank the child for telling you and reassure him or her of your support.

Some key actions/steps to take immediately if a child discloses abuse:

- Listen actively and avoid criticizing, second-guessing, or shaming the youth confiding in you. Do not interview the youth.
- Remain calm and supportive if a young person withdraws from telling, and offer anonymous sources of support, such as a helpline or hotline by phone, text or live chat. (we don't want to pressure youth and should instead reinforce that you and other adults care about their safety and will be there to listen when they are ready to talk more).
- Try not to focus on any mistakes or misjudgments you think may have put them at risk.
- Be clear about the limits of confidentiality by letting the member know what information you may be required to share with authorities; do not make promises that you are unable to keep.

Limit questioning to only the following four questions if the child has not already provided you with the information:

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Who did it?

If the relationship of the abuser is unclear, the following question can also be asked:

- How do you know them? After providing an immediate supportive response, it is imperative that the staff member who received the disclosure follow state mandated reporting laws. Often times this means reporting to a supervisor, as well as the appropriate authorities. Boys & Girls Club staff are not responsible for investigating or proving the truth about the allegation of sexual abuse. Staff have two roles: to report and to support.

Report: According to each state’s reporting laws, Club staff are mandated to report disclosures or **reasonable suspicions** of child sexual abuse to Child Protective Services (CPS). Clubs should have procedures in place to help with this reporting. Failure to report can have serious consequences for staff and the Club. If you believe the child is in immediate danger or needs medical attention, call your local law enforcement or 911.

Support: Provide practical and emotional support to children who disclose sexual abuse. Children should be able to continue to attend the Club as comfortably as possible. This may require the child, parents, and Club personnel discussing together how to create a safe environment that is devoid of questioning or judgment. It may be helpful to connect youth to additional assistance. When you are working with a young person who has been hurt, social workers, youth victim advocates, children’s advocacy centers and specialized police and child protection agencies are available to guide professionals through how to ensure safety planning takes place.

Suggested Responses to Disclosures of Abuse

Suggested Responses to Disclosures of Abuse	
Helpful Things to Say	Things to Avoid Saying
There are certain types of situations where we’ll have to get help from someone else.	You know I have to call the police and the person who did this will go to jail.
The most important part of my job is helping kids to be safe and sometimes I need to get help from other people who know about teen rights.	You owe it to other kids to report this person to keep others from being abused, too.

I'm glad we're talking about this.	Why didn't you tell? or Why did you...? ("Why" questions often imply blame.)
There are people who can help with this.	What happened to you is disgusting. It makes me sick.
You have a right to feel safe.	I promise you won't be taken from your home.
You have a right to feel better and there are people who can help.	You'll have to go to therapy.
We (The Club) will be here to support you.	I know how you feel, I was abused too...

Resources:

- [US Department of Health and Human Services Mandated Reporting](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Abuse Resources](#)
- [National Child Advocacy Centers and Child Advocacy Center Lookup](#)
- [National Child Abuse Hotline](#)

For additional resources, visit www.bgca.net/childsafety.