



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES

At Camp Takodah, the health and safety of every camper is our highest priority. That's why we've partnered with YMCA of the USA and [Praesidium](#), the leader in youth protection, to prevent bullying and other inappropriate behaviors at camp.

To be clear, we're taking abuse prevention to the next level—exceeding industry standards—as a preventative measure. In our 100 years of summer camp, we're not aware of any allegations of abuse between Camp Takodah staff and campers.

In addition to sharing our policies and procedures with you, we're providing you with information on how to keep your child safe from abuse. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ryan Reed, Camping Services Director, at 603-352-0447 or [ryan@cheshireymca.org](mailto:ryan@cheshireymca.org).

### STAFF

All camp staff are ages 18+ and pass a rigorous, standardized screening process, including:

- Application
- Phone Screening
- Interview
- Reference Checks
- Criminal Background Checks (Federal, State, Local, and National Sex Offender Registry)
- Voluntary Disclosure Statement
- Code of Conduct:
  - Our staff will exhibit the highest ethical best practices and personal integrity.
  - Our staff will provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
  - Our staff will not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a youth or adult.
  - Our staff will share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their supervisor or administrator.
  - Our staff will report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth to the state authorities.
  - Our staff will accept their personal responsibility to protect youth and adults from all forms of abuse.
- Drug screening for cause

All camp staff attend nearly two weeks of training before campers arrive, which includes policies and procedures related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse.

All camp staff are monitored and supervised by a team of year-round YMCA professionals.

### POLICIES

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with children or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Camp Takodah will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated. Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate dismissal.

In order to protect Takodah staff and campers alike—at no time during a Takodah program may a staff member be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. As staff supervise children, they should arrange themselves in a way that other staff can see them at all times.

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#### CHESHIRE YMCA

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Staff shall not abuse children, including:

- Physical abuse – striking, spanking, shaking, slapping
- Verbal abuse – humiliation, degrading, threatening
- Sexual abuse – inappropriate touching or verbal exchanges
- Mental abuse – shaming, withholding love; cruelty
- Neglect – withholding food, water, basic care/needs
- Bullying – tolerating mistreatment or abuse of a camper by another staff or camper

Staff must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement, rather than competition, comparison, and criticism. Staff will have age-appropriate expectations and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint is used only in pre-determined situations (necessary to protect the child or other children from harm), is only administered in a prescribed manner, and must be documented in writing.

Camp Takodah prohibits any interactions between staff and campers outside of scheduled summer camp programs unless approved by the Camping Services Director—including online communication, such as (but not limited to) social media, email, instant messaging, personal web pages, and other public domains on the internet.

## **BULLYING**

Camp Takodah is committed to providing all youth with a safe environment. Staff will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child by another child.

In addition, staff will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, staff will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength.

Bullying can take on various forms, including:

1. Physical bullying – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
2. Verbal bullying – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
3. Nonverbal or relational bullying – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
4. Cyberbullying – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs).

Cyberbullying can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person;
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
- Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Camp Takodah's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment, while protecting campers and staff. Camp Takodah encourages appropriate physical contact with children and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff toward children will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

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Camp Takodah’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

| <b><i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>  | <b><i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hugs</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives, hand-slaps, and ETs (touching finger tips)</li> <li>• Verbal praise</li> <li>• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders</li> <li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul> <p><i>Camp Takodah has a long tradition of expressing affection through hugs among staff and campers. Hugs can be misconstrued as inappropriate physical interactions. Hugs between adults and campers should always be initiated by the child, occur in public areas in sight of others, and last an appropriate amount of time.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection in isolated area</li> <li>• Lap sitting</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a youth to cling to an adult’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a youth</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the adult</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul> |

## VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Staff are prohibited from speaking to campers in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Staff must not initiate sexually-oriented conversations with campers. Staff are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with children.

Camp Takodah’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

| <b><i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>  | <b><i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Appropriate jokes</li> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Praise</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing relationships, sex, or sexual encounters</li> <li>• Discussing tobacco, drugs, or alcohol</li> <li>• Discussing personal problems or issues between adults</li> <li>• Discussing religious or political preferences</li> <li>• Name-calling</li> <li>• Secrets</li> <li>• Cursing</li> <li>• Off-color or sexual jokes</li> <li>• Ghost stories</li> <li>• Shaming or belittling</li> <li>• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youth</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family</li> </ul> |

While our staff are prohibited from sharing personal information on topics under “Inappropriate Verbal Interactions,” campers sometimes bring up similar issues that have been weighing on them. In those instances, staff are trained in the following:

- Assessing for health and safety risks
- Listening non-judgmentally
- Giving reassurance (e.g. “it sounds like you’re really struggling with this” or “you’re going to get through this”)
- Encouraging appropriate help (e.g. talking with a parent)
- Encouraging self-help and other support strategies (e.g. managing stress)

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## MANDATED REPORTERS

As required by mandated reporting laws, camp staff must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth to the New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).

While we're not aware of any allegations of abuse between Camp Takodah staff and campers in Takodah's history, we typically have several campers each summer who disclose abuse that is allegedly happening outside of camp.

If a child discloses abuse, camp staff are prohibited from investigating the situation and/or making their own determinations on the facts. Even if the allegations seem hard to believe, camp staff are required by state law to report the information in good faith.

When a child discloses abuse, camp staff will follow these guidelines:

1. Listen to the child non-judgmentally.
2. Ask non-leading questions to gather information.
3. Provide reassurance to the child.
4. Report the information to the Camping Services Director.
5. The Camping Services Director will make a report to the NH DCYF.
6. The Camping Services Director will notify the primary parent/guardian of the report.
7. The Camping Services Director will take any necessary actions to keep the child safe, including following any directives of the NH DCYF.

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## PARENT RESOURCES ON PROTECTING THEIR CHILDREN

### Who should talk to my youth about safety?

A parent is the best person to teach a youth about personal safety. However, camp staff will also be communicating similar messages. It is important for adults to be delivering a similar message.

### When should I speak with my youth about safety?

While age and maturity matter and will impact the information you provide, as well as the manner in which it is provided, much of the content will be repeated for years to come. Start teaching very young children the correct names for their body parts.

### What else can I do to help keep my youth safe?

Listen to your youth.

- Know your youth's daily activities and habits.
- Listen to what they like and what they don't like.
- Encourage open communication. Let your youth know they can talk to you about any situation.
- Reassure your youth that their safety is your number one concern.

Teach your youth.

- Set boundaries about places they may go, people they may see, and things they may do.
- Reinforce the importance of the buddy system.
- Tell your youth to trust their instincts—it's okay to say no.

Get involved.

- Know where your youth is at all times.
- Your youth should check in with you if there is a change in plans.
- There is no substitute for your attention and supervision.

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Practice safety skills.

- Rehearse safety skills so that they become second nature.
- Walk the route to and from your youth's favorite places (school, neighborhood friends, park), pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if someone is following him or her or if he or she needs help. Make a map with your youth showing acceptable routes, using main roads and avoiding shortcuts or isolated areas.

### **What personal safety skills should my youth have?**

- Knows his or her full name, address, telephone number, and parents' names.
- Always checks first with parents or the person in charge before going anywhere or getting into a car, even with someone he or she knows.
- Always checks first with parents or a trusted adult before accepting anything from anyone, even from someone known to him or her.
- Always takes a friend when going places or playing outside without parents or supervision.
- Says NO if someone tries to inappropriately touch him or her.
- Leaves the area if someone behaves in a manner that makes him or her feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
- Knows it's okay to say NO.
- Knows who can help him or her if someone tries to inappropriately touch him or her or behaves in a manner that makes him or her feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### ***Warning signs that a youth feels uncomfortable***

- Increased seeking of affection from adults.
- Reluctance to spend time with a previously-favored adult.
- Reluctant to go to activities that were previously enjoyed.
- An uncharacteristic decrease in bathing and grooming.
- Withdrawal from typical childhood activities.
- Bed-wetting.
- Inability to control bowels.
- Preoccupation with sexual matters.
- Increased masturbation.
- Increased aggressiveness.
- Nightmares and sleep disturbances.

### ***Common reasons youths do not report abuse***

- Fear of rejection. No one will believe me.
- Fear of punishment. I'll get in trouble.
- Fear of abandonment. I'll have to leave home.
- Fear of retaliation. He'll hurt me if I tell.
- Fear of re-victimization. They'll think they can abuse me.
- Shame. I was aroused, what's wrong with me?
- Loyalty. He may get in trouble.
- Confusion. What did I do to attract him?
- Guilt. It was my fault. Mom and Dad told me not to do that.

### ***Ten Ways to Protect Your Youth from Abuse***

- Give your youth special attention.
- Know your youth's friends. Take special note of any adult your youth describes like a peer.
- Know your youth's activities.
- Routinely talk to your youth and let them talk to you.
- Inform your youth about sexual abuse.

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- Take note if adults show unusual interest in your youth and want to spend time alone with them.
- Question youths who arrive home with toys, jewelry, or clothing you did not buy.
- Take note if an adult has asked your youth to keep a secret.
- Periodically ask youths if anyone has made them feel uncomfortable or afraid.
- Be sensitive and follow up on vague disclosures such as “Mr. Billy acts weird.”

### ***How to respond if a youth discloses abuse***

- Listen.
- Be sensitive to vague disclosures.
- Avoid expressing shock or outrage.
- Don’t threaten or condemn the alleged perpetrator.
- Let the youth know you believe him or her.
- Tell the youth he or she was right to disclose.
- Assure the youth the abuse was not his or her fault.
- Reassure the youth that he or she will be safe.
- Avoid questions that could make the youth feel responsible.
- Get as many details as the youth is comfortable disclosing.
- Write down exactly what the youth said.
- Contact authorities.

### ***Red flags for identifying youth molesters***

- An adult enjoys being with your youth more than you do.
- A much older youth or adult spends excessive amounts of time with your youth.
- Your youth has new toys or gifts that you did not purchase.
- Your youth speaks knowledgeably of places or activities that you did not approve.
- A person continually offers to care for your youth so as to give you a breather or time to yourself. Often this person wants no money for helping.
- A person comes to your house regularly to spend time with or transport your youth to activities.
- A person engages in activities that involve only your youth and that do not require the presence of others.
- A person wants to take individual pictures of your youth.
- An adult seems to spend all his or her time with youths and doesn’t have adult peer relationships.
- A person wants to “bend” some rules to spend time with your youth.
- A person videotapes youth activities and does not have a youth involved in the activity.
- Your youth would rather spend time with a specific adult than with peers.
- Your youth tells jokes containing sexual innuendo and says he/she heard them from an adult.

### **How to report concerns**

- We consider ourselves partners with you—please feel free to contact us any time for support and/or resources:
  - Ryan Reed, Camping Services Director, 603-352-0447, [ryan@cheshireymca.org](mailto:ryan@cheshireymca.org)
  - Artie Lang, Executive Director, 603-352-0447, [artie@cheshireymca.org](mailto:artie@cheshireymca.org)
- Contact the NH DCYF:
  - (800) 894-5533
  - <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/cps/stop.htm>

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