

Young Chicago Authors Accountability Policy

Purpose:

Young Chicago Authors is committed to protecting youth participating in our programming by providing our staff with the knowledge and frameworks needed to guide their conduct. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines regarding the timely intervention towards or concerning inappropriate behavior observed during programming with youth so that abuse can be prevented. The Centers for Disease Control lists 5 environmental factors that contribute to sexual violence. This includes normalized violence, limited roles for women and gender nonconforming folks, privacy and silence, narrow definitions of masculinity, and power and control. The prevention will also aim to deconstruct these environmental factors of harm through methods of sharing power, creating space for ongoing feedback, and healing.

Additional Materials: Mandated reporting of child abuse, Restorative Policy, DCFS Call Info-Sheet

Policy:

It is the policy of Young Chicago Authors to inform and hold all employees responsible for their duties to keep young people safe from violence and abuse while in programming, and to report any known incidents to applicable staff. It is also the policy of Young Chicago Authors to hold employees accountable for acting in ways that prevent sexual harm in all forms.

Procedure for Employee-Youth Interaction and Child Protection:

1. During their new employee orientation, employees will review and sign the Young Chicago Authors Interaction Code (below) to indicate their understanding of behavioral expectations for working at Young Chicago Authors regarding the protection of youth and prevention of abuse. Supervisors may review and emphasize the importance of the Interaction Code in meetings, trainings and other staff interactions throughout the year.
2. When an employee has reasonable cause to believe that a violation of the Interaction Code has occurred, employees shall seek consultation with their supervisor or an employee in the next level of supervision above their position. (link to escalation policy)
 - a. Example violations may include: an employee giving a youth an expensive individual gift, an employee sending secretive texts to a youth, bullying behavior between two youth, Romantic/sexual relationship between a mentor and mentee (even when mentee is 17 or older), inappropriate interactions on social media such as sending lewd photos or messages.
3. For situations resulting in the decision to report the violation to DCFS or Law Enforcement, employees shall follow the relevant policy and procedure. (link to DCFS Call Info-Sheet)
4. For situations not resulting in the decision to report to an outside entity, the supervisor, employee and management team shall take immediate action regarding the violation by:
 - a. Corresponding with human resources (if the person causing a violation is an employee) or corresponding with the necessary parties involved (if the person causing a violation is a youth participant).

- b. Documenting the situation. (link to the escalation policy)
 - c. Creating, documenting and executing a plan to directly speak to any youth/employees involved in the violation separately while maintaining privacy and confidentiality.
 - i. Example follow up actions may include: an employee having extra meetings with a supervisor to discuss a performance improvement plan or behavior change, more frequent monitoring of two youth, or a plan to remind an entire group of staff about boundary expectations through training.
5. After completion of the above steps, the employee and supervisor will determine if and when to notify the family of the situation. The decision to notify will be made on a case by case basis with the safety of the young person as the paramount factor. If a YCA employee violates this code while in a school setting, YCA will notify the principal of the school.
 6. Failure to timely report alleged and/or suspected violations of the Interaction Code may result in disciplinary action.
 7. Removal + Re-entry policy for employees who are under investigation:
 - a. As soon as something is reported, the employee will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence.
 - b. Once the investigation is completed and if you are found liable, you are permanently banned from the space.

Young Chicago Authors Interaction Code

This code aligns with numerous Young Chicago Authors policies and is meant to reinforce behavior and expectations that are of the utmost importance to the prevention of harmful inappropriate behavior.

As an employee, 1099 contracted artist, volunteer or intern of Young Chicago Authors, the following code of conduct is expected to be adhered to with regard to harm prevention and safety.

I understand and agree that I will:

1. Treat all people participating in Young Chicago Authors programming with respect and dignity at all times regardless of gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual identity, or culture.
2. Never touch youth or anyone without asking for consent beforehand. Also never touch youth on private areas of their body (including breasts, genitals, buttocks, or any area considered private by the youth) and when making physical contact, only offer handshakes, high-fives, pats on the upper back, or occasional short hugs.
3. Never inflict any physical, sexual, verbal, financial, emotional abuse. This includes the use of corporal punishment of any kind.
4. Only be alone with a youth with a door closed when the purpose of my job task necessitates it (a confidential meeting or one-on-one services).

5. Employees are prohibited from coming to YCA youth-facing programming and/or meetings under the influence of alcohol or non-prescription drugs.
6. YCA employees, interns + volunteers should exercise workplace professionalism by not engaging in smoking and/or drinking in YCA spaces while youth participants are present.
7. Staff members over the age of 21 shall not engage in drinking alcohol and/or smoking or doing drugs with participants or students who are under the legal drinking age.
8. Practice discretion if/when engaging in drinking alcohol and/or other substances with participants that are 21+ outside of YCA spaces (i.e. 27 year old teaching artist bumps into 23 year old participant at a bar or off-site party.)
9. Avoid transporting youth in your personal vehicle unless there is a safety emergency. If there is an emergency, please notify your supervisor via text message. Also, be sure to reach out to management regarding Uber/Lyft vouchers or CTA bus cards that are available for emergency situations.
10. Avoid giving *individual* youth any gifts in your role as an employee (gifts given to an entire group or gifts given to individuals from a group are permissible). *With the exception of mutual aid requests directly from youth participants via public asks.
11. Avoid using my role as a Young Chicago Authors employee to connect with program participants unless it directly relates to the nature of the business of YCA. Be sure to keep interactions over text or social media of a professional nature.
12. YCA staff will only document photos or videos for professional purposes and not personal use. Make an announcement about people having the right to not be recorded during programs. Only take photos or videos of program participants as directed by program leadership for the purposes of organizational marketing and when all participants have a signed photo consent form on file. YCA staff, volunteers + interns must respect people's wishes to not be photographed or recorded.
13. Maintain confidentiality in all matters pertaining to a particular youth, except with matters pertaining to suspected child abuse, suspected child neglect or threat of harm to a child or adult, which should be reported via our Escalation Policy.
14. Adhere to Young Chicago Author's child abuse and neglect reporting policy and the Illinois DCFS Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/).
15. When operating as a vendor or volunteer with Chicago Public Schools, YCA employees must adhere to their child protection and abuse prevention policies.
16. YCA recognizes that an imbalance of power in relationships, such as an employee to youth participant, can lead to inappropriate interactions if not managed appropriately by the employee. All YCA staff, volunteers and interns must exercise proper boundaries with our participants, as you will be seen as a person of authority:
 - a. YCA employees are legally prohibited from having a romantic/intimate relationship with a participant that is 17 or younger. It is strongly recommended for employees to not engage in intimate/romantic relationships with participants who are 18 or older that start while that participant is engaged in YCA programming.
 - b. YCA employees maintain proper boundaries through providing content warnings. YCA employees must recognize the difference between content that speaks to experienced violence versus content that talks about inflicting violence towards a marginalized group based on gender, race, or sexual orientation. Be very intentional about the content that you bring into workshops.
 - c. YCA defines "grooming" as *when someone in a position of trust or authority builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a young person and sometimes the family or the organization, to lower the young person's inhibitions*

so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them with the objective of sexual abuse. Grooming may be coercion over time and not a linear process.

- d. Below are a few examples of grooming:
 - i. Once someone has “aged out”, they should not work to develop personal relationships with minors
 - ii. Special attention to one person more so than the group - ie. always talking to one person...giving excessive compliments to one person
 - iii. Using the relationship that you gained with a person as a mentor to begin a personal relationship with them
 - iv. Mentorship sought out by the mentor and not be the mentee
 - v. References to how mature a minor is for their age or their personal appearance
 - vi. Connects with a minor on social media for personal reasons outside of the business of YCA
 - e. Professional + proper conduct includes:
 - i. No flirting should be happening during YCA programming.
 - ii. Following the agenda during programming based on YCA standards.
 - iii. Asking for help from coworkers if you are having trouble following the schedule or managing the participants
 - iv. Giving reminders to participants about boundaries and following up if someone violates policies
 - v. Avoid exchanging personal information before, after or during programming.
 - f. If I see something that doesn't seem appropriate, I will share it with my immediate supervisor, the Program Director, Director of Education, professional colleague and/or HR consultant.
17. If you feel as an employee, intern or volunteer that you are being harassed or harmed by a participant of any age, please notify your supervisor, Executive Director, Director of Programs and/or the Director of Education immediately.

I have read and agree to abide by the aforementioned code. I understand that any reported violation of these rules may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. I understand my responsibility in working with young people (14-25) to take disclosures of abuse seriously and to do any safety planning, resource referral, and informing of and empowering youth in their rights. Finally, I understand that child

abuse/neglect of persons under the age of 18 will be immediately reported to DCFS and appropriate parties.

Date:

Printed Name:

Signature:

Supervisor Signature: