



YSO Policy: Appropriate Language and Conflict

Maintaining an environment in which everyone feels comfortable and safe to share personal experiences and voice their opinions without fear of judgment or of being offended is highly valued at the X Agency. To ensure that this occurs, appropriate and sensitive language must be used at all times. Therefore, profanity, racist, sexist, homophobic or other hurtful threats and derogatory language is strictly prohibited.

Policy:

- 1) Specific words or phrases can be deemed inappropriate by any staff member, peer leader or youth.
- 2) If inappropriate language is being used out of earshot of staff, a staff member should be notified immediately.
- 3) For minor infractions of the policy, such as slight uses of profanity or other instances in which the inappropriate language is deemed unintentional and was not directed towards someone, staff will give that person a warning, reminding them of the use of appropriate language at the program.
- 4) If the person uses inappropriate language a second time, they will be asked to speak with staff about their language use and why it is offensive and inappropriate. If behavior continues, parents will be contacted and asked to pick up the student (if middle school) or leave the building (high school). Also, failure to comply can lead towards suspension for one day; dismissal from the program.

Harassment: Bullying, intimidation, name calling

To ensure that the X Agency is a space in which all participants feel physically and emotionally safe, a supportive and open environment needs to exist. Preventing and prohibiting bullying and intimidation is important in creating this safe space. Recognizing that students and staff come from different backgrounds and lifestyles, this diversity should be used to promote understanding and tolerance between people.

No one's beliefs, socio-economic status, race, sexual orientation, gender, ability, religious or other affiliation, residency, or other personal characteristics will be used as a means of judging a person. Harassment can be further defined as a situation in which one person's words or actions in any way make another feel unsafe.

Procedure:

- 1) Any form of harassment or bullying must be reported to a staff member immediately.
- 2) Staff will separate all parties involved into different rooms to prevent the situation from escalating into physical violence.
- 3) A staff member and the student will discuss the situation. The student will be able to give his/her side of the story and what was said. Staff will go over the policy with the student and try to promote the understanding of safe space and tolerance at the program.
- 4) A meeting will also happen with the person subjected to the harassment and any witnesses if staff were not present for the altercation.
- 5) At a later date a meeting will be set between all parties involved.
- 6) The parents or guardians of the students will be notified of the incident and if necessary, a meeting will be arranged with staff in which consequences will be one of the issues discussed. Extreme or consistent violations of this policy can lead to suspension or termination from the program.





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This policy also extends past the limits of X Agency. All staff and program participants are expected to adhere to this policy outside of the program. If a member experiences any form of harassment from another participant at anytime, they will be held responsible upon returning to the program. This standard is extremely important in maintaining a safe and healthy environment, as well as building and ensuring trust among all participants in the program.

Conflict:

In the event of physical or verbal conflict, it is the hope of the X Agency that youth will resolve conflicts as they arise in a productive manner. Staff should support such efforts and work to ensure that issues do not escalate. Bringing parties together to discuss and mediate differences is our preferred approach in dealing with conflicts.

Conflict is defined as physical or verbal confrontation between opposing groups in which there is an attempt to harm or gain power over the other using bodily force, weapons or verbal assault. Hitting, pushing, shoving wrestling, holding, choking, grabbing, pulling as well as verbal assaults or abuse or any other type of harmful contact with someone else is classified as conflict.

Procedure:

- 1) If a fight breaks out between two or more individuals the remaining youth will be cleared out of the room to ensure their safety and to prevent others from getting involved.
- 2) Security should be called immediately.
- 3) Staff are not to put themselves in the middle of the fight, try and break it up, or restrain any of the individuals involved as this puts the staff member in harms way.
- 4) Staff should attempt to diffuse the situation verbally or through other means that do not put them in potential physical harm.
- 5) Once security arrives and the situation has ceased all youth involved will be separated in rooms away from each other with a staff member and security personnel.
- 6) Staff will then make sure that the youth has not suffered any major physical injuries. Any cuts, scrapes or other injuries suffered will be attended to.
- 7) Staff will discuss the situation with each respective youth involved to gain a better understanding of their perspective and possible motives for the fight.
- 8) Once the staff feels that the youth have calmed down and the safe environment has been reestablished, all parties involved will come together to discuss the situation. It is the responsibility of the staff to facilitate this conversation in a way that maintains a safe and calm environment. This conversation is meant to discuss the motives or causes of the fight, not the consequences or repercussions for the fight.

The parents or guardians of youth involved will be called and asked to come and escort them home to ensure each the safety of all parties involved outside of the program.

