

YUMA PROVING GROUND  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)  
Child, Youth & School Services (CYSS)  
Touch Policy

1. PURPOSE: To provide guidance in the implementation of Touch Policy based on the understanding of individual needs and behaviors of children and youth while under the care of Yuma Proving Ground Child (YPG) and Child, Youth and School Services (CYSS).

2. SCOPE: This SOP applies to all CYSS program operations, within YPG. This includes all employees, caregivers, providers and volunteers in these programs.

3. REFERENCE:

a. AR 608-10, CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, 15 July 1997

b. AR 608-18, THE ARMY FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM, 30 October 2007

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. The policy will be coordinated with the ACS FAPM, Social Work Services and Command Judge Advocate.

b. The Training and Curriculum Specialist (TAC) will be responsible for implementing this guidance in training.

c. All CYSS staff working directly with children and youth will be responsible for following accepted touch guidelines according to the precepts outlined in this policy and as noted in the attached training sheet (Appendix A).

5. PHILOSOPHY:

a. The CYSS touch policy is used in all CYSS settings to include the Child Development Center (CDC), School Age Services (SAS), and Middle School/Teens (MS/T). This policy is accessible to all CYSS personnel, incorporated into orientation training and is available for all CYSS patrons. Because boundaries for appropriate and inappropriate touch have often been unconscious and undefined, CYSS management personnel will discuss the touch policy on a regular basis (during orientation and review every six months thereafter) with CYSS direct services personnel to ensure a current understanding.

b. Positive physical contact is an integral part of the child and youth development/age-appropriate approach to care. Positive physical contact is essential to the emotional/social growth of a child. Adults play a vital socialization role with children. Warm, positive relationships with adults help children develop a sense of trust in the world and directly affect children's self-esteem. Although initially holding and touching are a response to children's

needs, this positive physical contact develops a sense of trust and emotional security in children's dealings with adults that they will need to have positive relationships as they grow.

## 6. DEFINITIONS:

a. ***Appropriate touching.*** This is touching that creates a positive emotional/social growth in the child/youth touched and/or properly affects the safety and well-being of the child (i.e., holding hand of child while crossing the street. Examples of appropriate touching include hugs, and reassuring touches on the shoulder.

b. ***Inappropriate touching.*** This is touching that creates improper/negative emotional/social affect on the child and is a touching that violates law or societal norms. Inappropriate touching usually involves coercion or other forms of exploitation of the child/youth; satisfaction of adult needs at the expense of the child/youth; violation of a cultural taboo regarding sexual and/or physical contact between adults; and physical force. Inappropriate touch is often applied in anger and reinforces the concept with child/youth of "striking out" to respond to a problem. Examples of inappropriate touching include forced greeting kisses (hello/goodbye), corporal punishment, slapping, striking or pinching, prolonged tickling, fondling, or molestation. Actions described as inappropriate may be considered child abuse and fall under mandatory reporting requirements as described in Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for child and spouse abuse prevention and response and supervision of children.

## 7. TOUCH POLICY PROCEDURES:

a. Appropriate touching (such as hugging, handholding, assisting in physical activities, etc.) will occur in the normal interactions of staff and children; however, children's preferences for these contacts will be considered.

(1) Kissing is not allowed on the lips, but only on the cheeks, hands or head of child, and should normally be child-initiated. This practice may be developmentally appropriate in the CDC environment, but should be refrained from in SAS and MS/T settings.

(2) Taking into consideration the age or disability of the child. An adult staff member applying sunscreen to a 6 year old is appropriate, as opposed to a 15 year old.

(3) Requesting permission of youth to touch and respects the youth's response. (i.e. "Can I help you balance as you walk across the balance beam?")

(4) Responses affecting the safety and the well-being of the child/youth; e.g., a reassuring pat on a shoulder, comforting a child/youth in distress, reasonable restraint to prevent injury to him/herself or another child/youth.

b. The type and degree of physical contact between the caregiver and child/youth should not violate legal, moral or recognized societal standards. The physical contact should not be against the desires of the child/youth unless circumstances warrant the physical contact despite the child's wishes (i.e. physical restriction to prevent body harm or injuries).

c. Allegations of an inappropriate touching will be immediately investigated by pertinent agencies. The employee will be removed from program to administrative duties during the investigation.

d. Sports Programs

(1) Coaches should meet parents before training to discuss how and why they would need to touch their children.

(2) Coaches will not spend time in a closed room with a junior athlete, and will make sure there is CYSS staff present during training whenever possible.

(3) All volunteer coaches will complete background checks, attend a child abuse prevention class and will receive a touch policy briefing prior to coaching.

8. GUIDANCE POLICY PRECEDURES:

a. Child/youth guidance will be positive in nature and will be viewed as part of the teaching process. The primary responsibility for children's behavior rests with the parents. Staff should understand that when using child/youth guidance techniques, they are:

(1) Teaching children social skills necessary for the children's own happiness and group acceptance.

(2) Working to create an atmosphere and environment conducive to learning.

b. Staff should attempt to prevent behavior problems by:

(1) Reducing boredom by keeping children/youth busy and interested.

(2) Understanding the developmental level of the children in their care and not expecting accomplishments that are beyond the children's capabilities.

(3) Being clear and consistent in the limits they set.

c. Staff will be sensitive to the feelings (their own and the children's/youth's) underlying a problem situation.

(1) Staff will use "I" messages to clarify their own needs to the children/youth.

(2) Staff will listen when children's/youth's emotional needs are not being met (i.e., when a child is frustrated, angry, sad).

(3) No cursing, labeling, delivery attempt to shame or humiliate.

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d. Staff will work at increasing children's appropriate behavior by using three techniques:

(1) *Focus Time*. Each child, each day, will have a caregiver's focused, individual attention for a short time (as little as 10 minutes).

(2) *Positive Reinforcement*. Rewarding desired behavior.

(3) *Effective Praise*. Praise that is specific, immediate, and sincere.

e. Staff will decrease children's inappropriate behavior by using the following methods:

(1) *Ignoring*. Ignoring behaviors that are undesirable, but not dangerous or destructive.

(2) *Substitution*. Replacing an inappropriate expression of an activity with an appropriate expression of the same activity.

(3) *Modifying the Environment*. Taking children outside, going on field trips, putting away toys that are causing problems, and reorganizing space in the room.

(4) *Choosing Appropriate Consequences*. Consistent consequences each time the behavior occurs are related to the behavior in an obvious manner, and are acceptable to the caregiver/provider.

(5) *Separation from the group* (always supervised!) and/or time-out. This works best when accompanied by a statement showing disapproval, but also acknowledgement of the child's feelings. For short time only!

f. At no time, will the staff use cursing as a means of guidance or discipline.

g. Staff will consult their program director or Training and Curriculum Specialist regarding children/youth who exhibit severe and continuing behavior problems.

9. POC for this action is the undersigned at 328-2332.

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MARTIN E. CLARK  
Chief, Family Support Division

### Appendix A -- Touch Policy Techniques Training Sheet

1. GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES: Individual personalities and special needs are always considered.

a. Guidance will be *constructive, consistent, and positive*. Good behavior will be noted and praised. The following forms of punishment will not be used.

(1) Corporal punishment (shaking, pushing, jerking, spanking, pinching, etc.)

(2) Emotional punishment (threatening, sarcasm, humiliating, nagging, etc.)

b. The following techniques will be used for positive behavior modification.

(1) Emphasizing good behavior (e.g., “I like the way Mary helped to clean up, don’t you?” “George, what a good job you are doing.”).

(2) *Short, honest, to-the-point statements* (firm, but not hostile) when a child is displaying objectionable behavior (e.g., “Stop that, I don’t like it!” “Don’t do that, it makes me angry!” “You may not hurt other children.”).

(3) *Separation from the group* (always supervised!!) and/or time-out. This works best when accompanied by a statement showing disapproval, but also acknowledgement of the child’s feelings (i.e., “I know that you are very angry, but you will need to sit in this chair for a while—it is not all right to hit other children!”). Short time only, based on age of child!

(4) *Discussion* of ways to vent feelings other than hitting other children or messing up their play items (i.e., take a walk, get a cold drink of water, take deep breaths, talk about it to the Staff).

(5) *Diversion* by changing activities (i.e., finding another item to offer the unhappy child, bringing out something interesting).

(6) Offer *alternatives* for objectionable behavior (i.e., use punching bag, softballs for throwing or kicking, controlled running). When a group is out of control, change activity and/or location (if indoors, go outdoors or to a different area—get control back *one child at a time*).

(7) *Show genuine enthusiasm when a child decides to cooperate!* Use supportive remarks (i.e., “I knew you could share that game with Susie—you really know how to cooperate!”). Do not gush—children can sense genuine friendship and praise.

(8) *Restrict use of materials and/or equipment* for a specific activity if the child cannot use it properly. Deprivation of meals, snacks or outdoor play cannot be used as punishment for inappropriate behavior during other activities!

(9) *Teach age-appropriate behavioral skills through role modeling.* Emphasize good manners and concern for others at all times.

c. Parents will be contacted regarding their child's behavior only under the following circumstances:

(1) *The Program Lead initiates the contact* in an appropriate manner (privately, away from other parents or children and with a non-condemning approach). The staff/provider will make every effort to solve the problem of inappropriate behavior through accepted behavior modification techniques before parents are contacted. Once parents are involved, it is from the approach of how best we can help the child modify his/her behavior.

(2) In case of *continuing problems* with the same child, a supervisor will request a consultation with the parent and a *behavior management plan* to help the child will be initiated. If the parent refuses to cooperate, service can be denied. If the parent cooperates, every effort will be made to assist child in gaining age-appropriate behavior. This effort will involve all staff, the parents of the child and other outside agencies.

2. TOUCH TECHNIQUES: Genuine, common sense of affection for the individual child will be apparent at all times.

a. All CYSS staff will evidence a genuine attitude of affection for and approval for all children/youth in the following manner.

(1) *A friendly facial expression.* Even when correction is required, a firm but friendly attitude must be maintained. A warm smile directed at each and every child can work wonders.

(2) *Eye contact.* A warm expression, a wink, a look of concern and getting down to child's eye level results in positive touch techniques.

(3) *Conversation.* Talking with each child or youth, results in very real contact. Always maintain a pleasant tone of voice (no yelling can sound firm).

(4) *Appropriate body contact,* meaning occasional hugging, kisses on the cheek, or pats on the back. This contact is necessary in the emotional growth occurring in each child.

(5) Excessive, adult initiated physical contact is prohibited! Constant hugging, kissing on the mouth, stroking or other forms of touching children will not take place. "Cuddling" is acceptable for short periods of time (when needed and/or requested by the child) and only as developmentally appropriate in a CDC setting.

**My signature acknowledges that I have read, understand, and will comply with the Yuma Proving Ground CYSS Touch Policy.**

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Employee Signature

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Date