



# Safety INSIGHTS

SAFETY and RISK Management News & Notes  
from **YMCA OF THE USA** Consulting

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## *Controlling MRSA*

Because of the recent media attention given to Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), Y-USA has posted information to assist YMCAs with media and/or member questions on the topic. The Y-USA Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) has issued a statement on the subject and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has additional information at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

The CDC reports that in outbreaks of MRSA, the environment has not played a significant role in the infection's transmission. MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact. The CDC suggests that individuals protect themselves from infections by practicing good hygiene; covering any open skin area such as abrasions or cuts with a clean, dry bandage; avoiding sharing personal items such as towels or razors; using a barrier between skin and shared equipment; and wiping surfaces of equipment before and after use.

An analysis of the information available from the MAC and the CDC would suggest a number of strategies that Ys can employ to both prevent infection and to educate members and staff. Education can include sharing that MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact. Good hygiene can be encouraged by posting "wash your hands" signs and perhaps installing hand sanitizer dispensers in various areas. Ys should enforce a policy of requiring all users who have open wounds to properly cover them when in any area of their facilities. The CDC also has a number of educational and awareness-raising posters available at their Web site. Additional practices to consider are ensuring that fitness area towels are not reused by various participants, using disposable wipes for cleaning equipment between uses and disinfecting all equipment each evening.

YMCAs should consider the implications of how they decide to deal with this issue. By being proactive and developing consistent policies and practices that are communicated to volunteers and staff, Ys will be well positioned should questions or an incident occur. More information is available under the "What's Hot" section of [www.ymcaexchange.org](http://www.ymcaexchange.org), from your local health department and from the CDC. ♦

## **Risk Management Classroom**

Risk Management Classroom is an accessible education program available for volunteers and staff through the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. The programs are available for use on any desktop computer with Internet access.

The trainings are informative, convenient and affordable. They are designed for busy nonprofit staff, are easy to navigate and include final tests with immediate scoring. Users who successfully complete a course may generate a certificate of completion showing their mastery of the material, which can be placed in an individual's personnel file.

Available training programs include *Risk Management, Volunteer Risk Management, Managing Employment Risks, Effective Staff and Volunteer Screening, Principles of Youth Protection, Driver and Vehicle Safety, Special Event Safety, Managing Facility Risks, Risk Management for Sports and Recreation Programs*.

A complete listing of available trainings and more information on these and other resources is available by visiting the Nonprofit Risk Management Center at [nonprofitrisk.org](http://nonprofitrisk.org) and clicking on the training tab. ♦

## *Stop Bullying Now*

While recent child abuse incidence trends at YMCAs show a decline in adult-to-child abuse, they also show a rise of child-to-child abuses. Some of these incidents are in the form of bullying. Bullying is on the rise in the US. Half of all students report being bullied at some time, while 15 percent of students are bullied on a daily basis. Twenty to forty percent of adolescents are victims of cyber-bullying. Many school systems are working diligently to educate and raise awareness about this phenomenon. As leaders in youth development YMCAs can assist in the effort to stop bullying by updating their child abuse prevention efforts and partnering with school efforts to reduce child abuse.

Bullying is like other forms of harassment in that it includes topics like power, gender, victims and bullies. Adults can intervene effectively to reduce bullying but rarely do. Studies show that when adults do not intervene, bullies may feel there is nothing wrong with their actions and victims may feel they deserve the bullying.

The US Department of Health and Human Services has developed a number of resources and programs that are available from *Stop Bullying Now* at [www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov). The Web site provides a number of facts, statistics, program resources and activities that help address the topic in a variety of ways. Encouraging the YMCA core values and building strong kids are effective ways to help reduce bullying in the community served by YMCAs. ♦

## *Self-Protection Skills for Youth*

Praesidium, Inc. has developed a program to teach teens self-protection skills that will last a lifetime. *Your Boundaries. Your Call* is designed to teach middle and high school youths how to protect themselves from sexual predators, recognize their personal boundaries, respond if someone tries to violate their boundaries, and what to do if someone is sexually abusing them or someone they know. The program includes a three-part DVD, a trainer's manual, a group discussion guide and creative, age-appropriate activities. For more information please visit [www.praesidiuminc.com](http://www.praesidiuminc.com). ♦

## **Prevention of Sauna Fires**

Sauna fires are one of the leading causes of fire damage in YMCAs. These fires are often caused when clothing, towels or papers are placed on the exposed rocks or heating units of a sauna.

Good risk management practice suggests that YMCAs should post signs that discourage members from placing anything on the rocks or heating units and urging that caution be taken.

Signs may help reduce this behavior; however, some YMCAs have taken a more direct step, mounting protective wooden slats vertically, floor to ceiling, around the heating unit. This keeps articles from being placed on the unit; by spacing the slats an inch or so apart, air and heat can still circulate. The appropriate materials are often available from lumberyards or from the sauna manufacturer. Any such renovation should be reviewed to ensure that it meets with local codes and the manufacturer's recommendation.

More information about facility design and saunas is available from YMCA Facility Consulting (formerly BFS/Property Management Department) at the [www.ymcaexchange.org](http://www.ymcaexchange.org). ♦

## *Do You Have a Culture of Safety?*

Creating a culture of safety at your YMCA may be challenging, but it is surely important in your ongoing safety efforts; no one person can do it all. All staff must understand that safety is important and is everyone's responsibility. Creating a safety culture at your YMCA helps.

Want to know how you're doing? The quick test below was developed by YMCA Services Corporation to evaluate your efforts and to help Ys identify areas for renewed or increased efforts.

### Safety Culture Quick Test

- Does your YMCA conduct and document regular drills (at least quarterly) following written, site-specific procedures?
- Do appropriate staff and volunteers regularly conduct documented inspections of equipment and facilities?
- Are volunteer leaders involved in the YMCA's safety and risk management efforts?
- Are staff recognized for success in managing safety within their area of responsibility? (ex: driver recognized for an accident free period of service)
- Are staff disciplined for failing to follow procedures or policies? (ex: baby sitting participants outside of YMCA programs)
- Are accident and claims reports reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis by both staff and volunteers?

How'd you do? This is only a quick review of techniques and practices that have been found to be effective in YMCAs.

A *New Employee Safety Orientation Checklist* has been posted at [www.ymcaexchange.org](http://www.ymcaexchange.org); from the main menu, select Operations, then Legal & Risk Management. More information about developing good safety practices is available from YMCA Services Corporation at [www.yervicescorp.com](http://www.yervicescorp.com) and from the Nonprofit Risk Management Center at [nonprofitrisk.org](http://nonprofitrisk.org). ♦

## **Preventing Gymnastic Injuries**

More than 86,000 gymnastics-related injuries are treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgery centers and hospital emergency rooms each year. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons offers the following tips to prevent gymnastics injuries:

- Always take time to have participants warm up and stretch.
- A certified coach should spot gymnasts during all sessions.
- Conduct daily documented inspections of all equipment.
- Equipment must be arranged to avoid the accidental collision of gymnasts with equipment or other athletes during workouts.
- The training facility should have appropriate floor padding.
- Mats must be placed and secured under the equipment.
- Staff certified in first aid must be available for practice and events.
- Be prepared for emergency situations by developing a written plan.

More resources and information on gymnastic safety are available from USA Gymnastics at [www.usa-gymnastics.org](http://www.usa-gymnastics.org) and from the National Safety Council at [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org). ♦

## Ladder Safety

While using a ladder might seem simple enough, it is easy to take some aspects of ladder safety for granted in the workplace. In fact, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reports that falls from movable ladders represent one of the leading causes of occupational injuries.

So whether you're an old pro or a new staff member, take care when using any type of ladder. OSHA recommends the following tips for handling ladders properly:

- Look out for overhead hazards like power lines when positioning or climbing a ladder.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder, such as a stepladder, in a partially closed position. All locks on a ladder must be fastened properly.
- Always maintain a "three-point" (two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand) contact on a ladder when climbing.
- Do not try to obtain additional height by placing a ladder on unstable bases, such as boxes or barrels.
- Inspect ladders before and after use for proper function and possible defect.
- Set up the ladder on a level surface with a proper angle.
- Secure the bottom of all extension ladders and ensure that the ladder extends 3 feet above the upper landing.
- Never stand on the top step of any ladder.

More information about employee safety and injury prevention is available from your Workers' Compensation Insurance provider and by visiting [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). ♦

### **RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT:**

The **AquaGuard** pool alarm system utilizes sonar technology to protect outdoor pools from unauthorized use. When fences and motion activated lighting is not enough, AquaGuard may be the answer. More about this product may be found at [www.aquaguardpoolalarm.com](http://www.aquaguardpoolalarm.com). ♦

## Risk Management Discussion Board

YMCA of the USA has a discussion board available for all those interested in safety and risk management. The board allows for timely discussion on a variety of topics related to safety and risk management efforts. Users may pose questions, share information or simply search the board for more information. Various staff members monitor the board, facilitate discussion and assist where appropriate.

This month's discussions include those about lifeguard incentive programs, MRSA infections, workers compensation, and the use of MySpace or Facebook in staff screening. To join the discussion board, interested staff and volunteers may go to [www.ymcaexchange.org](http://www.ymcaexchange.org). From the top of the home page, select Discussions, then "Create an Account." ♦

Safety Insights is produced on a monthly basis for Y-USA Consulting by Safe-Wise Consulting, LLC.

YMCA staff and volunteers may subscribe to the newsletter distribution list by sending an email request to: [safety.insights@ymca.net](mailto:safety.insights@ymca.net)

Past issues are available at [www.ymcaexchange.org](http://www.ymcaexchange.org) and [www.safe-wise.com](http://www.safe-wise.com) ♦