

A Message from Our Chair

April 2024

With National Child Abuse Prevention Month recognized every April, our Ys have a responsibility to continue to educate our staff, volunteers, members and communities about preventing child sexual abuse, and an opportunity to highlight how we are intentional in doing so.

I am pleased to share that 100% of our NC YMCA associations are registered for **Five Days of Action** next week, April 15-18! This statewide commitment to the week-long campaign designed to raise awareness and inspire adults to take action to protect children from sexual abuse is so critical.

Child safety and sexual abuse prevention are integral to who we are at the Y. We can do all sorts of work on our brand and communication about our brand and offer a wide variety of programs to meet needs, but if we have anything out of order in the child protection arena, it undermines all that we have done. If we're not taking care of the basics--and preventing child sexual abuse is certainly one of the basics--then all that work to build our brand in the community is irrelevant. We are about being a safe place in the community, and that requires the constant attention of our staff and volunteers.

At the YMCA of High Point, we are lifting up the Five Days of Action and the "Know, See, Respond" theme to educate people about the facts of child sexual abuse, to recognize the signs of abuse, and to respond if you think there may be abuse. We have the responsibility to report anything suspicious, and then the experts can act as needed. Throughout the year, we also continually educate staff and volunteers. We're about to start youth soccer, and at coaches' meetings, we'll talk about protocol if a coach sees anything that seems unusual or concerning. We'll do this with our camp staff and then we'll do it again as we shift to afterschool programming for the fall.

This month we also will meet with our insurer and review our policies and procedures around aquatics and child safety; by walking through our facilities with us and meeting with our leadership, we have a third-party set of eyes to help identify any potential gaps we may have.

So, we do this work continuously, but participating in national events like the Five Days of Action enables all our Ys to raise awareness within our membership and our communities about our commitment to child protection and how we focus on this every day. I hope all of our Ys will leverage the [campaign materials](#) provided via YUSA's LINK to raise awareness. It's another opportunity for us to speak with one voice as one Y about our core value to protect children.

Lynn Lomax,
CEO, YMCA of High Point
Chair, NC Alliance Board of Directors