

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY



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**‘We believe in the power of
inspired young people’**

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

TERM	DEFINITION
Emotional or psychological abuse	<p>Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child or young person does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development.</p> <p>Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child or young person. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviours continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the child or young person's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.</p>
Physical abuse	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child or young person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally, or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child. Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking. It also includes giving children or young people harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child or young person at risk of being hurt.</p>
Sexual abuse	<p>Sexual abuse is any act that exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted standards. It includes actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity. (<i>Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse</i>).</p>
Grooming	<p>Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity.</p>
Neglect	<p>Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child or young person with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, hygiene, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child or young person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available to the family.</p>
Witnessing family violence	<p>Witnessing family violence is a specific form of emotional and psychological abuse. Witnessing family violence occurs when children or young people are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.</p>
Sexual exploitation	<p>Sexual exploitation occurs when children or young people are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. This can occur even if images of children were not specifically created for the purposes of pornography or gratification at the time of their production. Exploitation can also involve children or young people who are forced into prostitution.</p>
Harm	<p>Harm, to a child or young person, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child or young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or • sexual abuse or exploitation • a single act, omission or circumstance; • a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Bullying	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying can occur in person but also commonly occurs via social media. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal (name calling, put downs, threats) • Physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting) • Social (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating) • Psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).
Racial, cultural or religious abuse	<p>Racial, cultural or religious abuse is conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child/young person because of their culture, race or religion.</p>

DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY

TERM	DEFINITION
Child or young person	For the purposes of this policy, the YMCA considers a child or young person to be a person under the age of eighteen years.
Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy	<p>The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is the document that defines the principles and intent of the Movement in relation to child protective practice. The principles and intent of this policy are to be implemented locally to protect children and young people from any form of abuse, bullying and exploitation by Board Directors, staff, volunteers and other services users.</p> <p>The YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy has been adopted by the National Council of YMCAs of Australia and requires compliance by YMCA Australia and all of its Licensed Member Associations.</p>
Safeguarding Code of Conduct	Safeguarding Code of Conduct is an agreement with a set of rules of behaviour and proper conduct for all Board Directors, staff and volunteers when engaging with children or young people. Safeguarding Code of Conduct details an organisation's core values and explicitly communicates everyone's responsibility and obligation to adhere to the outlined standards of ethical behaviour when working with children and young people. It is effective in strengthening the control of an environment.
Extended guardianship	Extended guardianship is a term that acknowledges that children and young people rely on all adults to create a safe environment and act in an informed and committed way to protect them. It is expected that all YMCA People act as extended guardians of children and young people who take part in a YMCA service or activity.
YMCA Child Safety Strategy	<p>The YMCA Child Safety Strategy has been developed so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all YMCA People share the responsibility for the safeguarding of children and young people. • the safeguarding practices for children and young people within all YMCAs is strengthened. <p>This strategy incorporates the following main three pieces of work for the Movement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development of a Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. 2. The development of associated YMCA Licensing Standards. 3. An agreement with an independent child protection specialist organisation for the provision of an accreditation and audit program.
YMCA Movement	The YMCA Movement in Australia is a federation of Licensed Member Associations. Each Licensed Member Association is a member of the National Council of YMCAs of Australia. Each Licensed Member Association is a party to a YMCA Licence Agreement and is subject to abiding by the Constitution of the National Council of YMCAs of Australia.
YMCA People	YMCA People include all YMCA Board Directors, staff and volunteers (this includes school, university and TAFE students on placement with YMCAs).
YMCA Licensed Member Association	<p>It is a constitutional requirement of the YMCA Movement in Australia that to be a YMCA, the entity must have entered into a Licensing Agreement with YMCA Australia.</p> <p>Within this policy when this term is used it also incorporates Affiliated organisations.</p>
YMCA Licensing Standards	Each YMCA Licensee must comply with the YMCA Licensing Standards in existence at the time. The YMCA Licensing Standards outline the requirement and responsibilities of a YMCA Licensee.
User Groups	User Groups engage in a contract with a Licensed Member Association to use a YMCA managed or owned facilities or are fully/partly owned by a Licensed Member Association.
Service User	Service User is an individual who participates in a YMCA program or who uses a YMCA service or facility.
United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child	United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC, is the basis of all of Unicef's work. It is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history. Link here.
Discrimination	Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on (but not limited to) the grounds of race, age, religion, gender or sexuality.

PURPOSE OF OUR POLICY



“I have the right to give my opinion, for others to listen and value my contribution. I speak from the day I am born. As I grow we will communicate, but we may not always speak the same language. My right to speak is lost to those who have forgotten to listen.”

- Adapted from The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child.

The YMCA strives for an inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to reach his or her potential. We believe in the power of inspired young people, and as such, we want to provide a tangible expression of their rights and their voices. The safety and protection of children and young people is paramount.

YMCA Australia and all of its Licensed Member Associations, Board Directors, staff and volunteers have a legal, moral and Mission-driven responsibility to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer, govern or access a YMCA program, service or managed facility
- acknowledge that protecting children is everyone's business.

We recognise that child safe organisations and child safe communities do not just happen. They require conscious actions to protect children from harm and extended guardianship to all children and young people. We acknowledge that safety extends further than YMCA sites, programs and services and strive to develop communities that are safe for all children and young people. We understand our role in contributing to a child safe community.

We respect and support the diverse needs of all children, young people and their families including those who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, are from culturally and or/linguistically diverse backgrounds, have a disability or identify as LGBTQIA.

With this policy we reiterate our commitment to the way we improve child protective practice within the YMCA. The priority to protect children and young people will apply equally in all our YMCA locations, by all who take on the YMCA name and by all who work with or for the YMCA.





HOW WILL THIS POLICY APPLY





The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy of the YMCA has been adopted nationally by the Licensed Member Associations. The policy underpins policies and procedures of all the YMCA Licensed Member Associations.

HOW WE WILL ENSURE OUR POLICY IS **CONTINUALLY IMPROVED**

Together, the YMCA Movement will ensure this policy and our child safe practices are continuously reviewed and improved.

- We welcome feedback on our policies and practice, and will endeavour to ensure our complaints processes are child and young people friendly, developmentally appropriate, visible and accessible.
- We commit to responding to feedback and complaints in a timely manner.
- We commit to ensuring complaints and concerns are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- An annual report of the outcomes of the YMCA's Child Safe Strategy will be made available to children, parents, YMCA People and the community via the Movement Community Impact Report.



OUR POLICY COMMITMENTS

The National Council of YMCAs of Australia is responsible for the development and endorsement of the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. It delegates the implementation of the policy to the National Board of YMCA Australia and each of the Boards of the YMCA Licensed Member Associations.

Member Association YMCAs will ensure that localised policies, codes of conduct and procedures support compliance to the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

The role of each entity in relation to the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is detailed in the Appendix to this policy.

OUR COMMITMENT

TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access any of our programs, services or facilities.
- We commit to providing children and young people with nurturing experiences via positive and safe relationships with our YMCA people.
- We commit to developing the skills and capacity of children and young people to identify ('Know'), assess ('See'), and manage ('Respond') to unsafe situations.
- We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their view seriously and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- We commit to consulting with children and young people (and their families) who have additional needs or who are from diverse backgrounds.
- We commit to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and respect and understand that our Indigenous culture will be promoted to and with others.
- We commit to cultural safety for children, young people and their families from cultural and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and will provide child safety resources in alternate languages and images whenever possible
- We commit to respond appropriately to the needs of children and young people with a disability and provide a safe environment for them which includes educational resources, strategies and support to help improve the capacity of children, young people and their families to identify and respond to harm.
- We commit to supporting all forms of diversity, including children, young people and their families who identify as being LGBTQIA.
- We commit to support families and communities to promote children and young people's healthy development and wellbeing.
- We commit to take action to ensure that children and young people are protected from discrimination, exploitation, abuse or harm.



TO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- We commit to supporting parents and carers to protect their children. We will offer assistance that builds on a family's strengths and empowers them to meet the changing needs of their children and young people.
- We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children and young people.
- We commit to engaging and listening to parents views in regards to our child protective practice policies and procedures.
- We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers.
- We commit to supporting and strengthening families by providing information and access to other relevant community services.
- We commit to promoting safe communities for children and young people, both within and outside our organisation.

OUR COMMITMENT

TO YMCA PEOPLE

- We commit to having a management structure that supports and develops staff in their roles.
- We commit to providing all YMCA People with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include appropriate supervision.
- We will provide regular training for staff which includes the indicators of abuse, high risk environments and situations, the characteristics and stereotypes of victims and offenders, grooming and how to respond to children and young people that disclose abuse. Our YMCA people will be trained in how to 'Know, See and Respond' to child abuse.
- We commit to provide regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's safety and welfare.
- We commit to implementing strategies to support staff retention and therefore provide consistent and skilled staff that foster positive relationships.
- We commit to listen to all concerns voiced by YMCA People in regards to keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- We commit to provide YMCA people with access to other services that support safety and welfare.
- We commit to provide opportunities for YMCA People to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of child or young person abuse.

TO ENSURE A CHILD SAFE ORGANISATION

- We commit to creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe.
- We commit to using best practice standards in the recruitment, screening and employment (including (but not limited to) police and/or working with children check) of YMCA people.
- We commit to providing safe physical environments that when possible, are designed with children, young people, their families and YMCA people.
- We commit to regularly auditing our facilities and immediate surrounding environments to assess their safety.
- We commit to monitoring our online environments to ensure their safety.
- We commit to promoting, supporting and building positive relationships between children and young people, and other users accessing our facilities.
- We commit to ensuring user groups of our facilities comply with our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.



The YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People policy was developed by YMCA Australia in consultation with the Australian Childhood Foundation and the Institute of Child Protection Studies. The wording and content, in part or full, cannot be reproduced in any way by any third party that is not YMCA Australia or a YMCA Licensed Member association.

SAFE BEHAVIOURS

All YMCA people are required to observe child safe principles and exhibit the highest standards of professional behaviour at all times.

All YMCA people are to:

- comply with the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- comply with all relevant laws, regulations, policies and procedures
- have a working knowledge of children's and young people's rights appropriate to their role
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse (including verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse), neglect, bullying and grooming
- respect and support the diverse needs of all children, young people and their families including those who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, are from culturally and or linguistically diverse backgrounds, have a disability or identify as LGBTQIA
- demonstrate extended guardianship, and promptly and without hesitation report:
 - complaints from children, young people or their families
 - allegations or disclosures of child abuse or neglect
 - concerns about child safety
 - any breaches of this Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- listen and respond to the views of children, young people and their families, and encourage meaningful contributions
- demonstrate positive guidance and appropriate behaviour management strategies
- exhibit physical contact with children and young people which is appropriate to the delivery of programs and services
- ensure as far as practicable that YMCA person is not left alone with a child or young person in a YMCA program or facility, unless specifically approved
- protect the privacy of children, young people and their families

YMCA People must not:

- put children/young people at risk of abuse or neglect
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves
- use personal phone, camera or video camera to take images of children and young people
- exhibit any type of favouritism towards a child/young person
- transport a single child or young person alone unless specifically approved
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children or young people
- use inappropriate language, in the presence of children (e.g. swearing, sexually explicit language)
- discriminate against any child, including on the basis of gender identity, culture, race, or disability
- have any contact outside of the YMCA with a child/young person or their family who participates in a YMCA program or service without the organisation's consent (includes direct contact such as in person as well as indirect such as by phone, or online)
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse or neglect

By observing these standards YMCA people acknowledge their responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to Management.

APPENDIX

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY?

ENTITY	ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY
National Council of YMCAs of Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the principles and intent of this policy • Adhere to its status as a Priority One Licensing Standard. • Ensure the policy is reviewed on a three yearly cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations or organisational learnings that precipitates a change to the policy. • Facilitate regular discussions at all levels of the Movement to support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to protecting children and young people.
National Board – YMCA Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a review of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy each three years as a minimum at a time determined or promoted by changes to legislation, regulations or organisational review. • Develop, monitor and annually review the YMCA Licensing Standards to ensure that they are continuously improved to support the safety of children and young people. • Promote and monitor the requirements of the Priority One Licensing Standard. • Approve an independent child protection specialist organisation to work with the YMCA, in consultation with the Movement. • Monitor all Licensed Member Associations and their affiliates accreditation with the agreed independent child protection specialist organisation. • In collaboration with Licensed Member Associations, develop and implement a YMCA Child Safety Strategy for the Movement every three years. • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to the National Office function to allow for the development and effective oversight of the YMCA Child Safety Strategy and the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. • Develop and promote opportunities for the Movement to enhance a culture of transparency, accountability and continuous improvement and learning in relation to the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. • Provide an annual report identifying risks and areas for improvement. • Advocate for, and promote the rights of, children and young people nationally. • Ensure the voice of young people and children is heard in relation to the review and further development of this policy.
Licensed Member Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all YMCA People understand their obligations in accordance with the intent and principles of YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and its implementation at a local level. • Ensure that the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is complied with. • Ensure that localised policies, codes of conduct and procedures support compliance to the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. • Adhere to the YMCA Licensing Standards. • Comply with the National Critical Incident Policy in respect to Notifiable Incidents. • Ensure an annual review (as a minimum) is completed in regard to child safety and reported to the Member board. • Allocate adequate resources to enable the effective implementation of local policies and operational procedures that are compliant with the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. • Support the YMCA Child Safety Strategy. • Achieve and maintain accreditation with an agreed independent child protection specialist organisation. • Provide YMCA Australia with the outcome reports of independent audits. • Advocate for and promote the rights of children and young people at a local level. • Ensure the voice of young people and children is heard in relation to the implementation and further development of this policy. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels of the Association to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for the safety of children and young people. • Ensure children, staff, volunteers, Board Directors and safety are listened to and have a way of being heard in regards to child protective practice. • Empower and engage children and young people in local policy and/or operational procedure development that has a direct impact on them.



