

	Management Area: Children's Services	Version No: 9.0
	Category of Policy: Management Approved	Pages: 8 Approval Date: 28 February 2023 Policy Approver: CEO
Policy Title: Safeguarding Children and Young People – Safety Code of Conduct		Author: Head of Children's Services

YMCA SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Safeguarding Children and Young People – Safety Code of Conduct

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1. Purpose

This Code of Conduct aims to reduce any opportunities and risk of harm to children and young people. It sets out the behaviours required of all YMCA South Australia staff and volunteers towards and in the presence of children and young people.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff (whether casual, permanent, fixed-term, or temporary) and volunteers of the Young Men's Christian Association of South Australia Inc. or YMCA South Australia Youth and Family Services Inc. (collectively, 'YMCA South Australia').

3. Policy Access

This, and all other policies/policies relating to safeguarding children and young people, are accessible through YMCA South Australia's website <https://www.sa.ymca.org.au>

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 YMCA South Australia is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing its programs and services. YMCA South Australia supports the rights of the child and will strive to deliver a child safe environment at all times as per the *Children & Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA).
- 4.2 YMCA South Australia also supports the rights and wellbeing of its staff and volunteers and encourages their active participation in building and maintaining a safe environment for children and young people. Staff and volunteers must maintain the highest standards of professional conduct in their attitude and behaviour toward clients, colleagues and members of the community. In particular, staff recognises the power imbalance inherent in a staff / client relationship and will never act in a manner that exploits or could be seen to exploit that power imbalance.

5. Procedures

- 5.1 Staff and volunteers engaged in the direct delivery of programs and services for children and young people, are required to regularly access training in child protection and related matters and will be supported by YMCA South Australia to do so.
- 5.2 Staff and volunteers must remain alert to the risk indicators of harm, or risk of harm, to children and young people and promptly report suspected incidents to relevant authorities and to their manager / supervisor.
- 5.3 Staff and volunteers must avoid placing themselves in potentially compromising situations with children and young people, and ensure that in all circumstances, government and YMCA South Australia prescribed staff:child ratios are adhered to.

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- 5.4 Staff and volunteers must ensure they are never alone with a child where they cannot be observed by other YMCA South Australia staff members, volunteers or other adults.
- 5.5 Staff and volunteers must achieve an appropriate mix of male and female staff / volunteers wherever possible when preparing rosters for programs.
- 5.6 Young children under the age of eight in YMCA South Australia programs / services must be appropriately supervised in bathrooms, showers and locker rooms or be required to accompany one another in pairs at such times.
- 5.7 Pre-school children must be supervised and accompanied by an adult at all times while in a YMCA South Australia centre or program. Parents may need to be available to take children to the toilet in this instance.
- 5.8 Staff and volunteers are to ensure that parent / guardian permission is obtained in writing prior to any child / young person being taken on a YMCA South Australia excursion or camp
- 5.9 Staff and volunteers are to ensure that parent / guardian permission is obtained in writing prior to any photos of children / young people being taken.
- 5.10 Parents / guardians are to be informed of travel and sleeping arrangements prior to the commencement of any excursion or camp.
- 5.11 Parents and children / young people are to be appropriately informed of YMCA South Australia safeguarding policies and procedures, and relevant safeguarding options available to them.
- 5.12 Staff and volunteers are not to travel, or be accommodated alone with a child participant before, during or after a YMCA South Australia program, excursion or camp unless an emergency has been identified.
- 5.13 Staff and volunteers are not to discipline children through the use of physical punishment or the withdrawal of the necessities of care (including food, shelter and emotional warmth), or to verbally or emotionally abuse or punish children in their care.
- 5.14 Staff and volunteers are not, under any circumstances, to release a child from a YMCA South Australia owned or operated facility, program or service to anyone other than the authorised parent(s)/guardian(s), or to an individual authorised by parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing, including relatives of children.
- 5.15 Sign-in and sign-out logs showing arrival and departure times and parent(s)/guardian(s) signatures are to be maintained on a daily basis and kept on file at program/service sites. Staff and volunteers are required to be vigilant in witnessing the departure of individual children/young people.

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- 5.16 Staff / volunteers employed in licensed or otherwise regulated Child Care and Children's Services are specifically required to have knowledge of, and at all times to adhere to, all Regulations.
- 5.17 Staff and volunteers providing direct care to children must be identified by a YMCA South Australia name badge and/or a branded uniform that is familiar to the children and is the same as that of their co-workers.
- 5.18 Staff and volunteers who have developed friendships with families and/or children who participate in YMCA South Australia programs / services prior to them being employed by YMCA South Australia must promptly advise their manager / supervisor.
- 5.19 YMCA South Australia does not encourage staff and volunteers to engage with children who participate in YMCA South Australia programs, or members of their family in non-YMCA South Australia activities such as baby-sitting and weekend trips. Such activities may only occur with prior written approval of the CEO. All staff and volunteers are obliged to immediately report knowledge of such activities to their manager / supervisor.
- 5.20 Under no circumstances can personal work be solicited by a YMCA South Australia staff member or volunteer while at YMCA South Australia or can a YMCA South Australia uniform be worn to this personal work.
- 5.21 Staff and volunteers are to:
- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as a positive role model to children / young people, and as a representative of YMCA South Australia.
 - Read, understand and formally agree to abide by YMCA South Australia policies and procedures around the safety of children and young people as outlined in the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, a copy of which will be given to them during induction to read and sign as understood.
 - Raise all concerns, issues, and problems with their manager / supervisor as soon as possible.
- 5.22 Safe Behaviours – At YMCA South Australia, we expect all YMCA people to:
- **Listen** and **respond** to the views of children, young people and their families. Hear what they have to say, no matter how big or small and always take them seriously.
 - **Protect** children and young people, put their safety first and do not cause harm in any environment – this includes online.
 - **Respect** and **support** all children and young people regardless of their backgrounds, everyone should be made to feel welcome and included.

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- **Speak** using clear language that is appropriate to children and young people.
- **Act** within the laws, regulations, policies and procedures and set a positive example for others.
- **Be aware** of signs that may indicate abuse or harm to children and young people and notice if they aren't themselves or things don't seem right.
- **Respond** appropriately to any suspected or disclosed abuse or harm to children and young people (and reporting concerns to relevant government agencies as required by law).
- **Empower** children and young people - this includes allowing them to do personal things for themselves.
- **Encourage** children and young people to be the best they can be without showing any favouritism.
- **Be professional** and **respect the boundaries** of your role at the Y – Y people should not be left alone with a child or young person (this includes transportation) or have any contact outside the Y's programs or facility unless approved by the CEO.s

5.23 Staff and volunteers must not engage in the following conduct, which is considered unacceptable, and will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal:

- Engage in rough physical games.
- Cuddle, kiss, hug or touch children in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive manner.
- Make negative, violent or sexually suggestive comments to a child even as a joke.
- Undertake a task of a personal nature that a child can do for him / herself (e.g. changing clothes, personal grooming, feeding, and toileting).
- Take a child / young person to your home, or encourage meetings outside the YMCA South Australia program/service activity.
- Discipline children / young people by use of emotional abuse, favouritism, physical abuse, verbal abuse, reference to cultural / ethnical differences or swearing.
- Transport of an individual child or group of children to or from YMCA South Australia programs / services in private vehicles without the written consent of your manager / supervisor or the CEO. This is only an option when all other avenues of transport have been excluded. A code of conduct for travelling in cars needs to be adhered to at all time.

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- Share accommodation with a child without other staff members, volunteers or children present.
- Mobile phone texting or emailing information directly to a child / young person is mobile or email address. All communication made should be directed to the parents / guardians.
- Use personal (non-work related) social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to contact or converse with children.
- Use personal mobile phones or other hand held devices to take photographs of children in care of the YMCA South Australia.

6. Breach of the Policy

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Breaches may be reported by employees / volunteers, participants or witnesses (including children and young people) and may be reported to the line manager, Safeguarding Lead or the People and Safety team if appropriate.

7. Definitions

Child or young person means a person who is under 18 years of age.

Harm means physical harm or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission) and includes such harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

At risk means:

- the child or young person has suffered harm (being harm of a kind against which a child or young person is ordinarily protected); or
- there is a likelihood that the child or young person will suffer harm (being harm of a kind against which a child or young person is ordinarily protected); or
- there is a likelihood that the child or young person will be removed from the State (whether by their parent or guardian or by some other person) for the purpose of —
 - being subjected to a medical or other procedure that would be unlawful if performed in this State (including, to avoid doubt, female genital mutilation); or
 - taking part in a marriage ceremony (however described) that would be a void marriage, or would otherwise be an invalid marriage, under the *Marriage Act 1961* of the Commonwealth; or
 - enabling the child or young person to take part in an activity, or an action to be taken in respect of the child or young person, that would, if it occurred in this State, constitute an offence against the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* or the *Criminal Code* of the Commonwealth; or

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- (d) the parents or guardians of the child or young person —
 - (i) are unable or unwilling to care for the child or young person; or
 - (ii) have abandoned the child or young person, or cannot, after reasonable inquiry, be found; or
 - (iii) are dead; or
- (e) the child or young person is of compulsory school age but has been persistently absent from school without satisfactory explanation of the absence; or
- (f) the child or young person is of no fixed address; or
- (g) any other circumstances of a kind prescribed by the *Children and Young People (Safety) Regulations 2017* (SA) exist in relation to the child or young person.

8. Key Relevant Documents

- Legislation
 - *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA)
 - *Children and Young People (Safety) Regulations 2017* (SA)
 - *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* (SA)
- Policies and Procedures
 - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
 - Safeguarding Children and Young People Mandatory Reporting Procedure
 - Safeguarding Children and Young People - Positive Behaviour Procedure
 - Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure
 - Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure
 - Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure
 - Recruitment and Selection Policy
 - Learning and Development Policy
 - Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy
- Other (e.g. International Standards, Forms etc.)
 - Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people
 - Guidelines for staff working or volunteering in education and care settings 2017 (2nd Edition, revised 2019)
 - Department for Education

4. Monitoring Evaluation and Review

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This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier for reasonable cause or upon the request of the YMCA South Australia Board. A Child Safe Environments compliance (CSEC) statement must be lodged when the policy is reviewed, or every 5 years at a minimum.

5. Version History

Version	Date	Description of changes	Effective Date	Review Date
1.0	2011	Child, Young and Other Vulnerable Persons Safety Code of Conduct	June 2011	June 2013
2.0	2013	Updated Child, Young and Other Vulnerable Persons Safety Code of Conduct	July 2013	July 2015
3.0	2014	Updated Child, Young and Other Vulnerable Persons Safety Code of Conduct	May 2014	May 2016
4.0	2016	Minor Amendments	May 2016	May 2017
5.0	May 2017	Review	25 May 2016	May 2018
6.0	May 2018	Reviewed in line with the adoption of YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy	26 July 2018	July 2019
7.0	February 2020	Updated wording to align with YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy Updated template	April 2020	April 2022
8.0	June 2022	Minor amendments. Inserted Safe Behaviours – YMCA Australia Licensing Standard.	June 2022	June 2024
9.0	January 2023	Addition of policy access Change of terminology of 'abuse' to 'harm or risk of harm' to reflect lower reporting thresholds in SA, Inclusion of additional definitions Addition of who can report policy breaches and how Addition of requirement to lodge CSEC statement upon review	February 2023	February 2025