

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE- CHILD PROTECTION

The YMCA is committed to the safety and well being of all children and young people accessing our services. Please ensure you have read and comply with the [YG 104-O Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures](#) and the General Code of Conduct for all Staff and Volunteers given to you at the time of induction. This policy will give you an awareness of the risk of child abuse, indicators of child abuse and mandatory notification obligations and responsibilities.

All new staff/volunteers will receive training in Child Protection and in the areas of empowering and educating children on their rights to be safe and feel safe. Ongoing training in Child Protection will be provided on an annual basis and it is a requirement of all positions that you attend the sessions, either face to face or online.

Police Checks (National Criminal History Checks)

It is a YMCA requirement that all employees and volunteers over 18 years of age complete the consent form for a police check to be processed by YMCA Geelong prior to employment/volunteerism and every 3 years subsequently. The completed form is required to be sent to hr.geelong@ymca.org.au along with the identification listed on the consent form. The People & Culture team will process the application and make the payment on your behalf.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

YMCA requires that employees/volunteers must have applied for or obtained a Working with Children Check (Employee/Volunteer) prior to employment. If you currently hold a WWCC, you are required to notify the Department of Justice of your employment with YMCA Geelong; Telephone 1300 652 879. It is the responsibility of all employees/volunteers holding a WWCC to ensure they comply with any requirements of their check and all employees/volunteers should be aware of their obligations under the Working with Children Act 2005.

An employee under the age of 18 is not required to have a WWCC however they must obtain a WWCC card (Employee) before they complete their first shift as an 18 year old.

Volunteers are also required to obtain a WWCC (Volunteer) if performing roles that bring them into contact with children, such as coaches, chaperones, referees, judges and team managers.

[YG 138-O Working with Children Checks Policy](#)

NB: As of March 2019 we will not accept Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT registration cards as proof of WWCC as we cannot check breaches or validity of cards in accordance with our policy.

Disclosure

YMCA Geelong has a Disclosure of Matters Form that staff/volunteers can use to disclose any matters that could give rise to a conflict to the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and procedures. This could relate to an Employee/Volunteer's contact out of work hours with a minor who also accesses the YMCA Geelong's programs.

Please ensure you disclose any pre-existing involvement with children under 18/families to your supervisor as it may breach our Safeguarding Children and Young People policy/procedures.

Practice and Behaviour Guidelines

Purpose

YMCA Geelong is a not-for-profit organisation which recognises that all children and young people have the right to develop and reach their potential in environments that are caring, nurturing and safe. YMCA Geelong will provide a child safe environment. The expectation of staff/volunteers is to **provide supervision at all times in a safe environment** in which children can participate. Staff will also ensure the sun protection of children in our services.

The YMCA supports the position that in our society every child and young person deserves the right to thrive, learn and grow, be respected and valued and enabled to become an effective adult member of the community. The YMCA supports the concept that a community should protect and promote the safety, stability, health, development and learning of every child and young person throughout their childhood.

We are committed to safeguarding children and young people in our care and ensuring that they feel and are safe. Accordingly, we wish to ensure that our personnel strive for the highest possible standards with respect to safeguarding children and young people from abuse. To that end, we have developed these practice and behaviour guidelines to identify, and so prevent, behaviour that may be harmful to the children and young people in our care.

For clarity, children and young people refers to anyone under the age of 18 years and includes employees and volunteers as well as participants.

Application

All personnel, from our Board, Senior Managers, Senior Staff, to Casual Staff and Volunteers, are required to observe these practice and behaviour guidelines. Developed to protect children and young people engaged in our Services, these guidelines have been formally approved and endorsed by our Board.

**We have the power to
make a difference in
our community.**



Commitment

You should read these practices and behaviour guidelines in conjunction with:

- The specific requirements of your role as defined in your 'position description' statement.
- Our relevant policy and procedure documents, including our:
 - Safeguarding Children and Young People Statement, Policy and Procedures
 - Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations policy
- All applicable laws
- General community expectations in relation to appropriate behaviour between adults and children.

As part of your commitment to observing these practice and behaviour guidelines, you will be required to sign a YMCA Geelong formal statement of Commitment to the Practice and Behaviour Guidelines outlined in this handbook. We consider a failure to observe these guidelines as misconduct, and will take appropriate disciplinary action. Such disciplinary action may, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, include suspension while matters are investigated and / or dismissal. In addition to any internal disciplinary proceedings, we will report to the police all instances in which a breach of the law has or may have occurred.

Criminal Offences

Three criminal offences have been introduced to improve responses within organisations and the community to child sexual abuse. The offences form part of the Victorian Government's response to the recommendations of Betrayal of Trust, the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. These are:

1. 'Failure to disclose' offence
2. 'Failure to protect' offence
3. 'Grooming' offence

All staff and volunteers will receive fact sheets about these three offences as part of their induction. Further information can be found online at:

- www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence
- www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal
- www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/grooming-offence

Exceptions

There may be exceptional situations where these guidelines do not apply, for example, in an emergency situation. However, it is crucial that, where possible, you seek management authorisation prior to taking action that contravenes these guidelines or that you advise management as soon possible after any incident in which these guidelines are breached.

The Guidelines

Our practice and behaviour guidelines address the major areas where you interact with the children and young people who take part in our Services.

Sexual Misconduct

Under no circumstances is any form of 'sexual behaviour' to occur between, with, or in the presence of, children or young people participating in any endorsed YMCA program operated by YMCA Geelong Inc. Engaging in sexual behaviour while participating in our service is prohibited even if the young person involved may be above the legal age of consent.

'Sexual behaviour' needs to be interpreted widely, to encompass the entire range of actions that would reasonably be considered to be sexual in nature, including but not limited to:

- 'Contact behaviour,' such as sexual intercourse, kissing, fondling, sexual penetration or exploiting a child through prostitution.
- 'Non-contact behaviour,' such as flirting, sexual innuendo, inappropriate text messaging or use of social media, inappropriate photography or exposure to pornography or nudity.

Positive Guidance (Discipline)

We strive to ensure that children and young people participating in our programs are aware of the acceptable limits of their behaviour so that we can provide a positive experience for all participants. However, there are times when personnel may be required to use appropriate techniques and behaviour management strategies to ensure:

- An effective and positive environment
- The safety and/or well being of children, young people or personnel participating in our programs.

We require our personnel to use strategies that are fair, respectful and appropriate to the developmental stage of the children or young people involved. The child or young person needs to be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive manner. The YMCA Behaviour Management Policy outlines the process for appropriate disciplinary actions, this should be adhered to at all times.

Adhering to Role Boundaries

Our personnel should not, of their own volition or at the request of a service user, act outside the confines of their duties (as specified in their position description) when helping to deliver our programs.

Any person who is an employee of YMCA Geelong or a volunteer:

- Must not provide unauthorised transportation, such as providing a lift home or travel to competitions, events etc.
- Must not engage in activities with children or young people who are clients / members of our organisation outside authorised programs, such as attending extra-curricular activities (e.g. weekend football) without authorisation and disclosure to the Chief Executive Officer.
- Must not provide any form of support to a child or young person or their family, unrelated to our programs, such as babysitting services after hours without disclosure to the Chief Executive Officer.
- Must not accept an invitation to attend any private social function at the request of a child or young person who has participated, or is participating in programs, or at the request of their family. For example, staff and volunteers are not to attend private birthday parties.
- If any of our personnel become aware of a situation in which a child or young person requires assistance that is beyond the confines of that person's role, or beyond the scope of our organisation's usual service, they should at the earliest opportunity:
- Seek advice from management or
 - Refer the matter to an appropriate support agency, or
 - Refer the child or young person to an appropriate support agency, or
 - Contact the child or young person's parent or guardian.

Use of Language and Tone of Voice

Language and tone of voice used in the presence of children and young people should:

- Provide clear direction, boost their confidence, encourage and affirm them.
- Not be harmful to children, therefore personnel should avoid language that is:
 - Discriminatory, racist or sexist
 - Derogatory, belittling or negative, for example, calling a child a "loser" or telling them that they are "too fat"
 - Intended to threaten or frighten
 - Profane or sexual.

Supervision

Personnel are responsible for supervising the children and young people to which our organisation provides programs to ensure those participants:

- Engage positively with our programs. For example, ensure interactions with children and young people are positive and safe.
- Behave appropriately toward one another. For example, act as a positive role model for children and young people.
- Are in a safe environment and are protected from external threats. For example, adhering to any court imposed actions regarding family members or ensuring that a parent collects the child after class.

Personnel are required to avoid one-to-one situations with children and young people to whom we provide services, and (where possible) to conduct all activities and / or discussions with service recipients in view of other personnel.

Giving Gifts

Managers and Coordinators of their specific areas are to authorise any gifts to children or young people involved in our programs or to their families, including rewards, prizes, treats, or second-hand equipment.

In addition, supervisors must be notified regarding any gifts or favours from service users/families valued over \$100. This is to ensure that children/families are not given preferential treatment in exchange for gift giving.



Use of Electronic Communications

All communication to participants under 18 years of age must be directed to the parent or guardian.

- Restrict such communication to issues directly associated with delivering our programs, such as advising that a scheduled event is cancelled.
- Limit the personal or social content in such communications to what is required to convey the service-related message in a polite, friendly manner. In particular, do not communicate anything that a reasonable observer could view as being of a sexual nature.
- Do not use such communication to promote unauthorised 'social' activity or to arrange unauthorised contact.
- Do not request a child or young person to keep a communication a secret from their parents.
- Do not communicate with children or young people using Internet chat rooms or similar forums such as social networking sites, game sites or instant messaging other than those endorsed by YMCA Geelong i.e.: YMCA Facebook pages etc or on YMCA accounts. No communications should be sent by an employee's personal account to a customer all communications must be initiated on a YMCA platform (email account, Facebook page, instant messenger)

Personnel are not to communicate with children outside our services, such as siblings or friends who are known to the personnel via a child participating in the service to solicit friendships.

All our personnel, and the children and young people to whom we deliver our programs are required to follow our 'acceptable use' policy in relation to browsing websites on our organisation's computers.

Our personnel are required to ensure appropriate monitoring of children and young people when they use our organisation's electronic communication equipment to ensure that they do not inadvertently place themselves at risk of abuse or exploitation via social networking sites, gaming sites or web searches, or through inappropriate email communication.



Photographs of Children and Young People

Under these guidelines:

- Children and young people to whom we deliver service can be photographed while involved in our programs only if:
 - Our managers and coordinators of each area have granted prior and specific approval via permission on enrolment forms in our programs promotion.
 - The context is directly related to participation in programs.
 - The child is appropriately dressed and posed.
 - The image is taken in the presence of other personnel.
- Images are not to be distributed (including as an attachment to an email) to anyone outside our organisation other than the child photographed or their parents, without management knowledge and approval.
- Images (digital or hard copy) are to be stored in a manner that prevents unauthorised access by others, for example:
 - If in hard-copy form, in a locked drawer or cabinet.
 - If in electronic form, in a 'password protected' system.
- Images (digital or hard copy) are to be destroyed or deleted as soon as they are no longer required.
- Images are not to be exhibited on our website without parental knowledge and approval, or such images must be presented in a manner that de-identifies the child or young person. Any caption or accompanying text may need to be checked so that it does not identify a child or young person if such identification is potentially detrimental.
- Images are to be taken on a YMCA device or an authorised staff device and deleted once loaded to the Extranet system. The employer has the right to view an employee's personal mobile phone to ensure compliance with this policy.

Physical Contact with Children and Young People

Any physical contact with children and young people must be appropriate to the delivery of the particular service, for example:

- Children's Services: changing nappy, helping children off play equipment, helping children get changed after swimming, etc.
- Disability Services: high support needs such as toileting, changing, etc.
- Sport and Recreation: touches and holds as part of teaching.
- Youth Programs: assisting or comforting a distressed young person.

Under no circumstances should any of our personnel have contact with children or young people participating in our programs that:

- Involves touching of genitals, buttocks or breast area
- Is other than as part of delivering medical or allied health services
- Would appear to a reasonable observer to have a sexual connotation
- Is intended to cause pain or distress to the child or young person (for example, corporal punishment)
- Is overly physical (for example, wrestling, horseplay, massaging, tickling or other rough housing)
- Is unnecessary (for example, assisting with toileting when a child does not require assistance)
- Is initiated against the wishes of the child or young person, except if such contact may be necessary to prevent injury to the child or young person or to others. In which case:
 - Physical restraint should be a last resort
 - The level of force used must be appropriate to the specific circumstances, and aimed solely at restraining the child or young person to prevent harm to themselves or others
 - The incident must be reported to management as soon as possible.

Our personnel are required to report to management any physical contact initiated by a child or young person that is sexual and/or inappropriate (for example, acts of physical aggression) as soon as possible, to enable the situation to be managed in the interests of the safety of the child or young person, our personnel and any other participants.

Overnight Stays and Sleeping Arrangements

This refers to work related stays i.e.: AIS gymnastics camps, school holiday 2 day camps, interstate/international basketball tournaments, etc.

Overnight stays are to occur only with the authorisation of the Chief Executive Officer and of the parents / guardians of the children or young people involved and are to be notified in writing /email prior to the event.

Practices and behaviour by our personnel during an overnight stay must be consistent with the practices and behaviour expected during delivery of our programs.

Clause 8.1.22 of the [YG 104A-O Safeguarding Children and Young People Procedure](#)

states that employees/volunteers must not travel with or be accommodated alone with a child or young person before, during or after a YMCA program or service. Written consent of a parent/legal guardian is required for all travel undertaken under the YMCA programs. Parents are to be informed of travel and sleeping arrangements prior to the commencement of any excursion or camp. Provision can be made with permission of guardian/parents to travel as a Chaperone with one adult and a number of children and a YMCA staff member.

Standards of conduct that must be observed by our personnel during an overnight stay include:

- Providing children and young people with privacy when bathing and dressing
- Ensuring appropriate dress standards when children and young people are present, such as no exposure to adult nudity
- Not allowing children or young people to be exposed to pornographic material, for example, through movies, television, the Internet or magazines
- Not leaving children under the supervision or protection of unauthorised persons such as hotel staff or friends
- Not involving sleeping arrangements that may compromise the safety of children and young people such as unsupervised sleeping arrangements, or an adult sleeping in the same bed as a child or young person
- Ensuring that, where the risk assessment indicates that the child/ren require a staff member in the same room, two staff members are to be in the room
- Applying gender appropriate rooming strategies must be applied to staff and children
- The right of children to contact their parents, or others, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable or distressed during the stay
- Parents expecting that their children can, if they wish, make contact.

Change Room Arrangements

Parents/teachers/guardians/ YMCA staff are required to supervise children and young people in/ or outside of change rooms while balancing that requirement with a child or young person's right to privacy. In addition:

- YMCA staff should avoid one-to-one situations with a child or young person in a change room area
- YMCA staff are not permitted to use the change room area to, for example undress, while children and young people are present.
- YMCA staff need to ensure adequate supervision in 'public' change rooms when they are used.
- YMCA staff need to provide the level of supervision required for preventing abuse by members of the public, adult service users, peer service users, or general misbehaviour, while also respecting a child's privacy
- Female personnel are not to enter male change rooms and male personnel are not to enter female change rooms without appropriate notification i.e.: knocking, announcement of intent to enter, asking if anyone is in the facility.

Use, Possession or Supply of Alcohol or Drugs

While on duty, personnel must not:

- Use, possess, or be under the influence of an illegal drug
- Use or be under the influence of alcohol
- Be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs
- Supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to children and young people participating in our programs.

YMCA Staff who are required to take medication or are medicated while in the workplace must notify their supervisor as this may interfere with their ability to perform their tasks in the manner required. If the medication is required to treat a medical issue they must update their Staff Medical Information Form and provide it to their supervisor before commencing a shift.

[YG 192-O Drug and Alcohol Management Policy](#)

Transporting Children

Children and young people are to be transported only in circumstances that are directly related to the delivery of our programs and services must be pre-authorized by the CEO. For example; they should not be given “casual lifts”. Where permission is granted there must be a minimum of two responsible people in the vehicle at all times and parental permission forms must be completed authorising the transportation.

Children are to be transported only with prior authorisation from our managers and coordinators of specific areas, and from the child’s parent/guardian. Gaining approval involves providing information about the proposed journey, including:

- The form of transport proposed, such as private car, taxi, self-drive bus, bus with driver, train, plane or boat
- The reason for the journey
- The route to be followed, including any stops or side trips
- Details of anyone who will be present during the journey other than our personnel who are involved in delivering our programs.

A child is NEVER to travel alone with an adult.

[YG 160-O Transport of Children
in Children’s Services Policy](#)

