

YMCA NSW

Statement of Commitment to Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults



YMCA NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that provides services to its local communities including programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults. YMCA NSW has locations across NSW and the ACT including camps, before and after school care, vacation care, community recreation and sporting facilities, swimming pools, youth services and disability and mental health programs and services. Our programs connect people to their communities to live happier, healthier lives.

YMCA NSW, including its Board of Directors, commits to creating and maintaining an environment that ensures all people involved in YMCA NSW activities, programs or services act in the best interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing.

There is a requirement for all YMCA NSW employees, volunteers (including its Board of Directors), student placements, consultants and contractors, affiliated associations, clients, parents, guardians, families and others associated with the YMCA NSW to understand the important responsibility they have to:

- Protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our people;
- Be alert to incidents of abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children, young people and vulnerable adults to whom we provide a service; and
- Create and maintain a safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access our programs and services.

This commitment is supported by YMCA NSW foundations of: values, strategic plan, stringent recruitment processes and organisational policy and procedure. The commitment will be achieved by:

- Acting in accordance with our values of honesty, respect, caring, responsibility and safety
- Respecting the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Creating an environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults to feel and be safe and feel safe to seek support and assistance to address their needs.
- Supporting families and providing an environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults to flourish and thrive
- Identifying supports or referrals within the community for families to support their children, young people and vulnerable adults if requested or required
- Not tolerating abuse, neglect, exploitation or unsafe or illegal behaviour of any kind
- Providing clear and accessible avenues for people to report any forms of abuse, harm, neglect, exploitation, unsafe behaviours, issues or other concerns to management and external authorities
- Avoiding all unsafe behaviours that place children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk
- Including parents/guardians, children, young people and vulnerable adults in safeguarding educational information or assisting them to source external resources and information
- Partnering with government, community groups, families and other key stakeholders to understand emerging issues, remain intuitive to changing social needs in the community and gaps in services within communities.

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YMCA NSW considers that a child is defined as a person under the age of 16 and a young person is under the age of 18¹,

YMCA NSW considers a person vulnerable when: a person is aged 18 years or over: and who is, or may be in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental, intellectual or physical disability. The person is, or may be, unable to take care of himself/herself, or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation. This vulnerability may be permanent or temporary. Adults with an intellectual disability are at increased risk of abuse and exploitation due to their diminished capacity to consent and their vulnerability potentially limiting their ability to describe and/or report abuse.

The definitions of abuse are described, in summary below:

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult involves a child in sexual activity. Sexual abuse also occurs when a child or young person involves another child or young person in sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a child or young person, engaging children or young people to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child or young person's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse. Encouraging a child or young person to view pornographic magazines and videos is also sexual abuse.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child, young person or vulnerable adult 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, young person or vulnerable adult. Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking. It also includes giving a child, young person or vulnerable adult 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 the child, young person or vulnerable adult at risk of being hurt.

Emotional or psychological abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child, young person or vulnerable adult does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child, young person or vulnerable adult. 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, young person or vulnerable adult's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child, young person or vulnerable adult with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, clean water, medical attention or adequate supervision to the extent that the child or young person or vulnerable adults health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional

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neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available to the family.

Witnessing family violence

Witnessing family violence is a specific form of emotional and psychological abuse. Witnessing family violence occurs when a child, young person or vulnerable adult is forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children, young people and vulnerable adults. 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, young person or vulnerable adults life. Exposure to family violence places children, young people and vulnerable adults at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.

Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is the sexual abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults through the exchange of sex or sexual acts for drugs, food, shelter, protection, other basics of life, and/or money. Sexual exploitation includes involving children, young people and vulnerable adults in creating pornography and sexually explicit websites.

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. Exploitation can also involve children or young people who are forced into prostitution

Harm

Harm to a child, young person or vulnerable adult is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child, young person or vulnerable adult's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It does not matter how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or
- Sexual abuse or exploitation;
- A single act, omission or circumstance; or
- A series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances

Bullying

Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:

- 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)
- Cyber-bullying (posting rumours and gossips, defaming and humiliating).

Risk of Significant Harm

A child or young person is at risk of significant harm if the circumstances that are causing concern for the safety, welfare or well-being of the child or young person are present to a significant extent.

The YMCA NSW Statement of Commitment to Safeguarding Children Young People and Vulnerable Adults is approved and endorsed by the YMCA NSW Board Directors.

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