

YMCA NSW

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



Definitions and Risk Indicators of Abuse

The purpose of the following definitions and risk indicators is to provide guidance for assessing and responding to matters relating to the health and safety of children and young people. These definitions and risk indicators should only be used as a guide, and should not be relied upon solely to identify and assess risks associated with child abuse.

Definitions

Term	Definition
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.
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.
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.
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 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

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	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	<p>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.</p> <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. Exploitation can also involve children or young people who are forced into prostitution</p>
Harm	<p>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:</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; or • 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 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:</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) • Cyber-bullying (posting rumours and gossips, defaming and humiliating).
Domestic Violence	Violence, abuse and intimidation perpetrated by one person against another in a personal, intimate relationship. Domestic violence occurs between two people where one has power over the other causing fear, physical and/or psychological harm.
Grooming	Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child, young person or vulnerable adult with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children, young people and vulnerable adults. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before abuse begins. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom but abuse without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by SMS.
Financial Abuse	The improper use of another person's property or assets, or the use or withholding of another person's resources by someone with whom there is a relationship implying trust.
Systems Abuse	In its simplest form, systems abuse occurs when the needs of people with a disability who are in receipt of a service are not recognised, and essential services are not provided or are inadequate, inappropriate or poorly coordinated. The impact on individuals can include neglect or abuse resulting from poor practice, exclusion from community life and the loss of basic human rights.

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Risk Indicators

Term	Risk Indicators
Possible signs of neglect	Signs in children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> low weight for age and/or failure to thrive and develop untreated physical problems e.g. sores, serious nappy rash and urine scalds, significant dental decay poor standards of hygiene i.e. child, young person or vulnerable adult consistently unwashed poor complexion and hair texture child, young person or vulnerable adult not adequately supervised for their age/ability scavenging or stealing food and focus on basic survival extended stays at school, public places, other homes longs for or indiscriminately seeks adult affection rocking, sucking, head-banging poor school attendance
	Signs in parents or caregivers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unable or unwilling to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, safe home conditions leaving the child, young person or vulnerable adult without appropriate supervision abandons the child, young person or vulnerable adult withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods unable or unwilling to provide psychological nurturing has limited understanding of the child, young person or vulnerable adults needs has unrealistic expectations of the child, young person or vulnerable adult
Possible signs of physical abuse	Signs in children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bruising to face, head or neck, other bruising and marks which may show the shape of the object that caused it e.g. belt buckle, hand print lacerations and welts drowsiness, vomiting, fits or pooling of blood in the eyes, which may suggest head injury adult bite marks and scratches fractures of bones, especially in children under three years old dislocations, sprains, twisting burns and scalds (including cigarette burns) multiple injuries or bruises explanation of injury offered by the child, young person or vulnerable adult is not consistent with the injury abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs, without a history of major trauma swallowing of poisonous substances, alcohol or other harmful drugs general indicators of female genital mutilation e.g. having a 'special operation'
	Signs in parents and caregivers

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequent visits with their child or children to health or other services with unexplained or suspicious injuries, swallowing of non-food substances or with internal complaints • explanation of injury offered by the parent is not consistent with the injury • family history of violence • history of their own maltreatment as a child • fears injuring their child • uses excessive discipline
Possible signs of sexual abuse	<p>Signs in children, young people or vulnerable adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bruising or bleeding in the genital area • sexually transmitted diseases • bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs • person or person's friend telling you about it, directly or indirectly • describing sexual acts • sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for the person's age/vulnerability • going to bed fully clothed • regressive behaviour e.g. sudden return to bed-wetting or soiling • self-destructive behaviour e.g. drug dependency, suicide attempts, self-mutilation • child or young person being in contact with a known or suspected paedophile • anorexia or over-eating • adolescent pregnancy • unexplained accumulation of money and gifts • persistent running away from home/care • risk taking behaviours - self harm, suicide attempts
	<p>Signs in parents or caregivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposing a child, young person or vulnerable adult to prostitution or pornography or using a child, young person or vulnerable adult for pornographic purposes • intentional exposure of a child, young person or vulnerable adult to sexual behaviour of others • previous conviction or suspicion of child sexual abuse • coercing a child, young person or vulnerable adult to engage in sexual behaviour with other child, young person or vulnerable adult • verbal threats of sexual abuse • denial of adolescent's pregnancy by family
Possible signs of psychological abuse	<p>Signs in children, young people or vulnerable adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constant feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves • unable to value others • lack of trust in people • lack of people skills necessary for daily functioning • extreme attention-seeking behaviour • is obsessively eager to please or obey adults

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes extreme risks, is markedly disruptive, bullying or aggressive • is highly self-critical, depressed or anxious • suicide threats or attempts • persistent running away from home/care.
	<p>Signs in parents or caregivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child, or ignoring or withholding praise and attention • excessive or unreasonable demands • persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse, rejection and scapegoating • belief that a particular child is bad or 'evil' • using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment • domestic violence.
Possible signs of financial abuse	<p>Signs in vulnerable adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • restricted access to or no control over personal funds or bank accounts. • no records or incomplete records kept of expenditure and purchases. • missing money, valuables or property. • forced changes to wills or other legal documents. • stealing from others. • borrowing money. • begging.

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