



YMCA of Sydney

2nd December 2011

Parents and Families
 YMCA Children's Services
 Via email and mail

RE: Parent Information – YMCA Children's Services Update

Dear Parents and Families,

We would firstly like to thank all our parents and families who attended last week's information sessions. They were a great opportunity to inform you about YMCA child protection policies and procedures and the Y's ongoing commitment to providing industry-leading, safe and quality Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) facilities.

In addition, the sessions enabled us to update our parents and families on the matter currently before court as much as was legally possible.

We feel it is timely to provide a further update on the matter before court and to inform you about what the YMCA has done to date and what we are doing now as part of our ongoing commitment to those impacted by these events. We also wish to offer some advice on how to talk to your children should they be talking about the issue before court; realising this can be difficult for many parents.

Court proceedings

Since our last communications further allegations have been made against the accused. A third court hearing took place on Tuesday 29th November at Central Local Court but no further charges were laid. Instead the matter was adjourned until February 7th 2012. The suppression and non-publication order, put in place to protect the affected children and their families, was also maintained. A further hearing to determine the ongoing nature of the suppression order will take place on Monday 5th December at Central Local Court.

What has the Y done?

We at the YMCA appreciate how difficult the past months have been for our parents and families and want to reiterate our commitment to ensuring your children are always in the highest quality and safest care.

To date, the Y has:

- Reviewed all YMCA child protection policies and procedures.
- Engaged an independent body to conduct an audit of the Y's policies and procedures for Children's Services.
- Held three parent information sessions in the Sutherland Shire region.
- Provided ongoing communications to staff and 600 parents in the Sutherland Shire region.

What is the Y doing now?

As this case is ongoing, so too is our dedication to providing support, counsel and information to our families. We are also making some positive changes within our OSHC Centres.

These include:

- Advertising for the position of Child Protection Manager to oversee all Centres in NSW. This new role will be responsible for ensuring all policies and procedures relating to child protection are adhered to across the Centres and to act as a central support to staff.

In addition, the role will increase the already extensive training and awareness of Child Protection across the YMCA.

- Conducting Parent Information sessions across all Centres to provide an overview and debrief of the past year.
- An increase in Child Protection briefings for all staff across NSW Centres to ensure the Y remains at the forefront of industry standards.
- Ensuring staff display training calendars in each Centre.
- Ensuring staff profile boards are displayed in each Centre for everyone to view.

Professional counselling for parents and families not involved but in need of support

Given the high emotion of recent weeks and the ongoing impact of the court proceedings, we also wanted to take this opportunity to offer our parents and families who may not be directly involved in the proceedings but have still been deeply affected access to a professional counselling service. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with Adam Blatch at [REDACTED] should you feel counselling would be of benefit to you and your family at this time.

How to talk to your children if they are talking about the issue

Talking to your child about sexual abuse is never going to be an easy conversation, but it is a necessary one. While we acknowledge every parent will have their own way of communicating with their child, here are some tips to follow should they ask about the matter before court or sexual abuse more broadly.

- Let your children know the lines of communication are open.
- Set aside a time to talk when you won't be quickly interrupted.
- Answer simply and directly. Less is more. Be honest without being graphic.
- Listen to your child and let their questions guide you. Don't broach new subjects they haven't asked about.
- Be reassuring. Give them the confidence that they're okay.
- Monitor their exposure to media regarding the issues, the best you can.
- Be prepared to have this conversation again. Children may have further questions once they have processed the initial discussion.

We would also like to remind all concerned parents and carers to call the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or visit the Department of Family & Community Services at www.community.nsw.gov.au for more information.

Yours sincerely



Liam Whitley
General Manager
Children's Services