



# CHILD SAFETY AT THE Y

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# WELCOME

At the Y, we are committed to empowering all children to feel safe and be safe, both in their families and their communities. That's why we have embedded Child Safety into everything we do. This includes Y Safeguarding initiatives, as well as government mandated child safety requirements which all educators must be aware of.

Our employees and volunteers play a vital role in the protection of children in our programs. Their daily interactions with children enable them to notice changes in behaviour that others may miss. Their relationships with parents and carers allow them to engage in meaningful discussions about a child's home life and pick up on any stressors that may be affecting a child's wellbeing. They act as a role model for children and in a position of trust. This document outlines our mandated child safety responsibilities, in addition to the Y Safeguarding protocols. These include:

- The 11 Child Safe Standards
- Reportable Conduct
- Mandatory Reporting and Duty of Care
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes (for Children's Program staff only)

As parents and carers of the children and young people who access our services, being informed about how we keep children and young people safe, and being involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing is an integral part of how we all work together in our commitment to child safety.

To support our staff and volunteers in their understanding of each of these, the Y has developed this 'Child Safety Guide for Educators'. This guide was developed to assist our staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities while working with children and young people in the state of Victoria, and will also help you as a parent or carer.

Thank you!

**Carolyn Morris**  
CEO  
YMCA Victoria  
and Kingswin



**The Y acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we **live, learn and work**.



# The 11 Child Safe Standards



## Background

In 2013 the Victorian Parliament introduced its 'Betrayal of Trust' report following an inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and non-government organisations. In response to the report, in 2016 Victoria introduced minimum Child Safe Standards for organisations which work or volunteer with children. Following a recent review, the Commission for Children and Young People launched the 11 Child Safe Standards in July 2022.

## What are they?

The Child Safe Standards are designed to keep children safe by embedding a culture of child safety within the everyday thinking of leaders, staff and volunteers in organisations that work or volunteer with children. While the Y has already embedded child safety mechanisms into its practices through our Safeguarding policy, it is important that as a child safe organisation we are able to differentiate between our internal policy and external government requirements (such as the Child Safe Standards or the National Quality Framework).

The Standards are written as an outcome statement, each with underlining elements describing what the organisation needs to do to meet the overarching standard. There are 11 Standards and 50 elements.

## The 11 Child Safe Standards are:

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
4. Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people





## What are staff and volunteers responsibilities?

Our staff and volunteers need to be aware of the Child Safe Standards (the Standards) and how they relate to their work with children. The Standards are aimed at the organisation as a whole, focusing on driving a culture of safety through policies, procedures and practices. The Standards overlap in many ways with the National Quality Standard and areas of the Y Safeguarding Feel Safe Be Safe Framework which our staff and volunteers are already implementing within their services.

To support a consistent approach to embedding the Standards across the Y, a Child Safe Standards Self-Assessment and Action Plan is in place. These are used to identify strengths and improvement areas in relation to embedding the new Standards in a meaningful way across all programs and services at the Y. It also highlights where the Y Australia Safeguarding Licensing Standards and National Quality Standard overlap with the new Standards to link these all together.

The Self-Assessment and Action Plan is a 'living document', and is regularly reviewed and updated by senior management to ensure progress is monitored and outcomes are achieved.

The Y is a proud child safe organisation and as such strives to embed best practice child safety principles in everything we do. We understand the years of evidence based research that has informed the new Standards and embrace the call to action from the Commission for Children and Young People in ensuring Victoria is leading the way in its approach to child safety.





# Organisational Approach



Our culture of child safety is embedded throughout the entire organisation, including our frontline staff, Centre and Area Managers, and Senior Executives and Board of Directors.

Our stringent recruitment policies ensure that all staff are not just eligible to work with children and young people, **but suitable to work with children and young people**. We achieve this through a strong, robust recruitment process, which includes:

- Thorough reviews of CVs and resumes to identify and question any possible red flags
- Mandatory child safety questions during interviews
- Working with Children's Check (WWCC)
- Police check
- Reference checking only professional referees (who are also questioned about the candidates' suitability to work with children and young people).

Our induction training outlines staff behavioural expectations when interacting with children, as well as how to respond to and report concerns for children's safety and wellbeing. This also includes concerns involving other staff members' behaviour towards children and young people. This training is completed annually and is supplemented by additional child safety training modules which are mandated to be completed regularly.

All staff meetings, at all sites, include child safety as a standing agenda item to discuss. All business units are supported by a Child Safety team who are embedded in the Risk, Safety, Environment and Quality team. The Child Safety team are supported by Y Safeguarding, a national Safeguarding and Child Safety team, that includes all YMCA associations around the country.

Child safety is discussed at the quarterly Operational leads meeting, which then feeds into our Risk Sub-Committee, who also have child safety as a standing item. This committee discusses how all risks to the organisation are being managed and reported to the Board of Directors. We also have a child safety board sponsor, who sits on the board and, among other things, acts as an advocate of child safety to the board while also providing a direct contact for our child safety team to our Board of Directors.





# National Quality Framework (NQF)



In our everyday practice we aim to exceed the National Quality Framework (NQF) which governs all early childhood and school aged education and care services in Australia. Overseen by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), it ensures all services operate to a high-quality standard.

You can learn more about the NQF by visiting the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority website ([www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)) or by speaking to any of our experienced educators.





# Duty of Care & Mandatory Reporting



## Duty of Care

### What is it?

Duty of care is a legal obligation (that we all have) to take reasonable steps to not cause foreseeable harm to another person or their property. Breaching a duty of care is commonly known as the law of negligence. A breach in the duty of care means one party that has done something, or failed to do something, which may result in injury to another and cause them to suffer a loss<sup>2</sup>.

### What are staff & volunteers responsibilities?

At the Y we advocate that all employees and volunteers report any concerns. For educators and teachers it is legally required to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm to children in their care.

Many things our educators do will be considered you fulfilling your duty of care.

Some examples include:

- Ensuring a safe and suitable environment for children
- Adequately supervising children
- Ensure that you have permissions (signed written form) when taking or using any photographs of children / young people
- Implementing strategies to prevent injuries
- Providing first aid to sick or injured children
- Contributing to the health and hygiene of young children by changing nappies

An employee or volunteer would fail to meet their Duty of Care if they could reasonably foresee a child being injured or harmed in some way and did nothing to intervene.

## Mandatory Reporting

### What is it?

Mandatory reporting (which differs from Reportable Conduct) is 'the legal requirement for certain groups of people to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities<sup>3</sup>.

### What are educators responsibilities?

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC), our educators are required to make a report to child protection if:

- in the course of practising their profession or carrying out duties of their office, position or employment;
- they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

This means that if our educators form a reasonable belief that a child in their program or service is being or has been physically or sexually abused, they must report their belief to child protection authorities covering the local government area where the child normally resides<sup>5</sup>.

**Importantly:** It is an offence if educators fail to make a mandatory report (in the circumstances outlined above).

If our staff (including educators) are concerned about a child's wellbeing, but not of physical or sexual abuse requiring child protection, they can contact The Orange Door<sup>4</sup> to seek advice or make a referral.

### How do Mandatory Reporting and Duty of Care relate?

An educator, in the course of their duties, believe that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, their Duty of Care is to report that belief to Child Protection. By doing so, their have taken the reasonable step to prevent foreseeable harm to the child.

If we look at both Mandatory Reporting and Duty of Care through a YMCA lens, we can see that any reasonable belief of physical or sexual abuse against a child would be considered a Child Safety concern. The best way our educators ensure they meet their obligations under Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting is to follow the 'Responding to Child Safety Concerns Procedure.' We require all staff and volunteers to adhere to this procedure, which means all our staff and volunteers act as 'Mandatory Reporters', even though Mandatory Reporting only applies to our educators

# Safeguarding Children and Young People Feel Safe, Be Safe Framework

## Background

In 2012 the Australian Government announced a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. In response to this announcement and to support all member Y's in proactively protecting children and young people, the Y Australia introduced its Safeguarding Policy in 2014. The policy has been regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it incorporates best practice principles and is supported by the Safeguarding Procedure which outlines the practical application of the Y's commitment to child safety.

## What is it?

Safeguarding is the Y's internal child protection policy. It is our way of keeping children and young people safe and is delivered in addition to all government mandated child protection obligations.

Safeguarding can be defined as all actions taken to identify and manage risks to children and young people, to empower children and young people and to support their development and wellbeing. It complements the delivery of the National Quality Framework and incorporates elements of the Child Safe Standards.

## Feel Safe, Be Safe Framework

Safeguarding is part of The Y Australia Feel Safe, Be Safe Framework (The Framework).

The Framework ensures that all member Y's, including YMCA Victoria, adhere to the [10 National Principles](#) for child safe organisations and the [58 YMCA Licensing Standards](#) required to maintain a YMCA license. It consists of three pillars (Culture, Operations and Environment) and 15 elements as illustrated below.

The elements within the Framework are incorporated into the daily operations of our services, from robust recruitment screening processes to maintaining connections with families, our staff practice this framework in a myriad of ways every day.



## What are staff and volunteers responsibilities?

Our staff and volunteers working with children and young people are in a position of trust and responsibility. It is important that our staff contribute to a safe and supportive culture within their services to foster a child's sense of wellbeing and empower them to speak out if they are feeling unsafe.

All staff and volunteers must read, understand and adhere to the YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedure. These documents outline the Y's commitment to child safety and provide practical guidance on how they can uphold and promote Child Safety in their everyday practice. They also provide guidance on how to respond to Child Safety concerns.

To support staff in applying Child Safety practices in daily operations, the Y provides mandatory training for all new starters and refresher training delivered annually. There are also a range of Child Safety resources available (See 'Resources' below) and all services have access to a dedicated Child Safety team for specialised support and enquiries.



## Stay Safe, Tell Someone



The [Stay Safe, Tell Someone](#) program was launched by the Y Australia in 2020 is based on the notion that if a child sees, hears or feels something they do not like, they will tell someone they trust, usually an adult. The program is aimed at encouraging children to tell someone if they see, hear or feel something that makes them (or anyone else) feel unsafe.

It is our staff and volunteers responsibility to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for children and to empower them to feel comfortable speaking out if they feel unsafe.

As a parent or caregiver, you may have seen these posters above at the service your child attends. We encourage staff and volunteers to talk about these posters with children.





# Information Sharing Schemes



## Background

The Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes were introduced in 2018 in response to Royal Commissions, coronial inquests and independent inquiries over the past decade that identified poor information sharing as a barrier to service collaboration with detrimental outcomes for children and families<sup>6</sup>. In April 2021, education and care services were included in the list of organisations that can share information to support or protect children and families in their services. **As the Y, the Information Sharing Schemes apply to Early Learning, Outside School Hours Care, School Holiday Programs and Occasional Care services only.**

## What is it?

There are two information sharing schemes, which sit within an overarching framework.

The Child Information Sharing Scheme (**CISS**) enables authorised organisations and services to share or request information to promote the wellbeing or safety of children.

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (**FISS**) enables authorised organisations and services to share or request information to facilitate assessment and management of family violence risk to children and adults.

Both the CISS and the FISS sit within the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, or **MARAM**. This Framework sets out the responsibilities of different workforces in identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk across the family violence and broader service system.

The information sharing schemes allow education and care services to:

- Respond to requests for information to promote child wellbeing or safety/and or assess and manage the risk of family violence
- Request information to promote child wellbeing or safety/and or manage risk of family violence
- Proactively share information to promote child wellbeing or safety/and or manage risk of family violence

## Examples of information sharing in an education and care setting

- An OSHC educator may want to share information about a child with the child's primary school teacher in order to create a holistic plan to better support the child's behavioural progress and emotional regulation
- An early learning educator may want to share information about a child's hearing with the child's maternal health nurse to better support the child's development
- An educator may have concerns about either a possible or known family violence risk involving one of the service families, and share this information with Victoria Police or Child Protection Authorities

There are strict guidelines that need to be adhered to when making or actioning information sharing requests. Educators must check with their Nominated Supervisor prior to requesting or sharing information under either scheme.





# Reportable Conduct



## Background

Between 2012-13 a committee within the Victorian Government released the [Betrayal of Trust](#) Report that found there was a need for independent scrutiny of organisations systems and processes to prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse. It was recommended an independent body be formed to facilitate this and from this, the [Commission for Children and Young People](#) (CCYP) was born. The CCYP administers the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

## What is it?

The Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) is an initiative that:

- requires some organisations (including YMCA Victoria) to respond to allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against their workers and volunteers (including contractors/casual educators), and to notify the CCYP if this occurs
- enables the CCYP to independently oversee those responses
- facilitates information sharing between organisations, their regulators, Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Regulation's Working with Children Check Unit and CCYP.

There are 5 types of conduct<sup>7</sup> that are required to be reported under the scheme:

- Sexual Assault (committed against, with or in presence of a child)
- Sexual Misconduct (committed against, with or in presence of a child)
- Physical Violence (committed against, with or in presence of a child)
- Behaviour that causes Emotional/Psychological harm
- Significant Neglect

## How does Reportable Conduct relate to Child Safety?

In essence, the main difference between Reportable Conduct and a Child Safety Concern is that Reportable Conduct is an action committed **specifically by staff, volunteer or contractor** of the Y. Any other instance of a concern, suspicion or confirmation of any abuse towards a child (e.g. by a parent, carer or member of the public) would be treated as a Child Safety Concern.

Any instances of Reportable Conduct will then be investigated<sup>8</sup> by the Child Safety Team at the Y, with independent oversight from the CCYP.

## What are staff and volunteers responsibilities?

We have responsibilities under the Reportable Conduct Scheme and under YMCA Policies & Procedures; however if our staff follow the Y's [Responding to Child Safety Concerns and Complaints](#) Procedure, it addresses our staffs responsibilities to both.

Simply put, if our staff reasonably believe<sup>9</sup> that an instance of Reportable Conduct has occurred against a child, **they must:**

- Ensure the child is not in immediate danger<sup>10</sup>
- Report the conduct to their manager immediately
- Staff, or their manager, is required to notify the Child Safety Manager ASAP (the CCYP needs to be notified of any Reportable Conduct within 3 days of the organisation becoming aware of the conduct).
- The incident gets recorded on our incident management system.

If the Y commences an investigation (or engages an external investigator) into the allegation, our staff may be required to participate in the investigation<sup>11</sup>, usually by providing a statement.

We educate our staff to report matters factually, and not make assumptions or try to fill in the gaps. This also applies when participating in investigations.

# Resources

## The 11 Child Safe Standards

Further information about the Child Safe Standards (including the 50 elements) can be found on the Commission for Children and Young People [website](#) and a short snapshot of the Standards can be found [here](#).

Our dedicated Safeguarding team is always there to support you with any queries you may have about the Child Safe Standards.

<sup>1</sup> [www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file\\_uploads/Inquiry\\_into\\_Handling\\_of\\_Abuse\\_Volume\\_2\\_FINAL\\_web\\_y78t3Wpb.pdf](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/Inquiry_into_Handling_of_Abuse_Volume_2_FINAL_web_y78t3Wpb.pdf)

## Duty of Care & Mandatory Reporting

For any further information, visit the below websites:

- Mandatory Reporting Information [www.providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting](http://www.providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting)
- Child Protection
  - [www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection](http://www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection)
  - Phone number will depend on your area
- The Orange Door (Family Violence Referral Service)
  - [www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/](http://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/)
  - Phone Number will depend on your area
- Victorian Centre Against Sexual Assault
  - [www.casa.org.au/survivors-and-friends/childhood-sexual-abuse/](http://www.casa.org.au/survivors-and-friends/childhood-sexual-abuse/)
  - 1800 806 292

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.shine.com.au/service/public-liability-claims/duty-of-care>

<sup>3</sup> <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting>

<sup>4</sup> Child Protection contact details found here <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>

<sup>5</sup> <https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au/>

## Safeguarding Children and Young People Feel Safe, Be Safe Framework

As an employee or volunteer, it is important that they understand what Safeguarding is and how it applies to their work with children. We have resources available to our staff on our intranet, and to the wider public available on our website.

### Policies & Procedures

[Safeguarding \(Child Safety\) Policy](#)

[Child Safety Procedure](#)

[Responding to Child Safety Concerns Procedure](#)

### Y Safeguarding (YMCA Australia)

[Website](#)

## eSafety and Family Support

- Resources for digital safety concerns and information [www.esafety.gov.au/parents](http://www.esafety.gov.au/parents)
- Kids Helpline [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- Headspace [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)
- Parentline [www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au/parentline](http://www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au/parentline)

## Information Sharing Schemes

The Y Information Sharing Policy and Procedure is currently in development and will be implemented in 2022. In the interim, the [YMCA Information Sharing Work Instructions for Staff](#) provide educators with operational guidance on enacting the schemes.

External Resources can be found here:

- Child Information Sharing Scheme [www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme](http://www.vic.gov.au/child-information-sharing-scheme)
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme [www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme](http://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme)
- MARAM Framework [www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management](http://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/information-sharing-schemes/policy>

## Reportable Conduct

The Commission for Children and Young People has a range of Reportable Conduct Resources available

[www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme/](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme/)

<sup>7</sup> Information sheets about the types of conduct, definitions and examples are available on the [CCYP Website](#)

<sup>8</sup> Instances of Reportable Conduct will only be investigated if it does not interfere with a Criminal Investigation that is being conducted by Police. Clearance is always sought from Police prior to commencing an investigation into Reportable Conduct where there is a criminal element.

<sup>9</sup> Can include direct observation of behaviour, disclosure from child or parent/carer, observation of signs of abuse

<sup>10</sup> If our staff believe a child is in immediate danger or they reasonably believe a crime has occurred, they will contact Police.

<sup>11</sup> As per [Responding to Child Safety Concerns Procedure](#).



## CONTACT DETAILS

Contact our Child Safety team within  
Shared Services for any enquiries.

**safe@ymca.org.au**

*(Y Safeguarding - Y Australia)*

**safeguardingchildren@ymca.org.au**

*(Y Victoria external public facing email)*

**victoria.ymca.org.au/about-us/safeguarding**

*Child Safety*  
**OUR #1 PRIORITY**



*If you have a Child Safety concern,  
please fill out the report form located  
on our website and a member of the  
child safety team will be in contact.*