



Policy or Procedure Name: YMCA Child Safety & Protection Policy & Procedures	Page	1 of 20
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Child Safety & Protection Policy & Procedures

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CHILD SAFETY & PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURES

1. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

The YMCA is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults in its care. It recognizes its responsibility to promote safe practices and to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse, and exploitation.

People working with children are responsible for reporting suspicions of child abuse, **not** for proving whether child abuse has occurred. It is the responsibility of a child protection agency to investigate, with police where necessary, and decide on the best plan for the child.

Throughout these policies and procedures, reference is made to children and vulnerable adults. In Ontario, the age of protection changed on January 1, 2018. Every person in Ontario, including someone who works with children, must call a child protection agency immediately to report their suspicion that a child may have been abused or is at risk of abuse.

Suspicions of abuse:

- a. Must be reported for children 15 years of age and under.
- b. May be reported for youth 16 and 17 years old. *

*Please note that the best practice is to *seek guidance* from a child protection agency for all children and youth under the age of 18 so that the child protection agency can determine the next steps.

The YMCA also recognizes that some adults may also be vulnerable to abuse, and therefore similar reporting procedures may be applied (with appropriate adaptations) to allegations of abuse and the protection of vulnerable adults (See Appendix J).

The YMCA is committed to ensuring that it:

- Provides a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Identifies children, young people and vulnerable adults who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- Takes appropriate action to see that such children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe at the YMCA.

In pursuit of these aims, the YMCA will annually review and approve policies and procedures with the aim of:

- Promoting and implementing appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults and protecting them from abuse while participating in YMCA activities and programs.
- Recruiting, training, supporting and supervising staff and volunteers to adopt best practices to safeguard and protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from abuse and to reduce risk to themselves.
- Requiring staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by this Child Safety and Protection Policy and the outlined procedures.
- Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers; and
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this policy, the procedures and adapting them whenever there is a notable change in the Association or if there are any legal changes.

The YMCA will refer concerns that a child or young person might be at risk of significant harm to the Children's Aid Society.

The senior member of the YMCA management team with special responsibility for child protection issues is: Ursula Motyka, Vice President of Human Resources.

1.1 Terminology

The YMCA recognizes the following definitions:

A **child** or **young person**, according to Ontario law, is someone under 15 years of age or someone up to 18 years of age if under the care of the Children's Aid Society. As of January 1, 2018, young people aged 16 and 17 years may also be deemed in need of protection and accordingly, suspicions of abuse of young people 16 and 17 years of age may be reported to a child protection agency.

A **vulnerable adult** is a person aged 18 years or older who may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

A **child in need of protection as defined by the Child, Youth and Family Services Act** is any child or young person who has been placed at risk through something a person has done to them or something a person is failing to do for them. This includes any form of physical harm, emotional deprivation, sexual mistreatment, or neglect which can result in injury or psychological damage to a child.

There are many different forms of abuse, and a child may be subjected to more than one form.

Physical abuse may consist of just one incident, or it may happen repeatedly. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or young person including deliberately causing ill health to a child or young person.

Emotional abuse involves harming a child's sense of self. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental health problems. For example: emotional abuse may include verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes terrorizing a child or exposing them to family violence. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether the child or young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. This may also include involving children and vulnerable adults in prostitution or pornography.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or young person's basic needs for his or her physical or emotional development and well-being such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter, and clothing, or not being responsive to a child's or young person's basic emotional needs.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

While the primary responsibility for the protection of children and youth from abuse rests with the Children's Aid Society, all YMCA staff and volunteers who encounter children and vulnerable adults have a duty to help protect them from abuse or risk of abuse (See Appendix O for Legal Responsibility).

The responsibility for managing this policy is mandated by the Board of Directors and lies with the YMCA's senior management for implementation and accountability. Every Association will appoint designated person(s) who will have responsibility for the implementation of the child safety and protection guidelines and procedures in their Association and office(s).

2.1 Management's Responsibility:

YMCA Management is responsible for ensuring that a safe environment is maintained in all facilities and programs by:

- Implementing all procedures relating to child protection
- Establishing a reporting protocol that complies with provincial child protection legislation
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers who have significant contact with children and vulnerable adults are oriented to child protection policies and procedures
- Establishing guidelines that ensure programs are developmentally appropriate and well planned; and
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers have read, understand, and signed the Child Safety and Protection Policy and Procedures sign off form or master policy sign off form (See Appendix A)

2.2 Staff and Volunteer Responsibility:

YMCA staff and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in their care by:

- Reporting that a child needs protection as provided in the Child, Youth and Family Services Act;
- Staff are encouraged to inform their supervisor should they require assistance or need clarification in the reporting requirements

- Following guidelines that ensure programs are developmentally appropriate and well planned; and creating a safe and caring environment for children and vulnerable adults that will challenge their development in spirit, mind, and body.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The YMCA supports and requires all staff and volunteers to observe the following code of conduct including verbal and non-verbal actions when involved in activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This code of conduct is a clear and concise guide of what is and is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working with children and vulnerable adults.

Through defining what is and is not acceptable behaviour, best practices can be promoted and opportunities for abuse minimized. This can also help prevent false allegations from being made against staff and volunteers.

All concerns about breach of this Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and responded to in line with the Association's performance management, disciplinary procedure and/or procedure for responding to concerns about child abuse.

3.1 Best Practices

- 3.1.1 Treat all children, youth, and vulnerable adults equally, with respect, dignity, and fairness.
- 3.1.2 Provide encouragement rather than negative criticism.
- 3.1.3 Involve parents wherever possible and reasonable.
- 3.1.4 Be vigilant and aware of how actions can be misinterpreted and always work in an open environment. Avoid private or unobserved situations with a child or young person unless personal assistance such as toileting or changing is required.
- 3.1.5 Ensure the number of adults is appropriate to safely supervise an activity.
- 3.1.6 Have two staff members present when in situations with children and vulnerable adults where it is necessary for staff to change or undress (i.e., swimming) so this activity is not misconstrued.
- 3.1.7 Avoid taking a child or young person alone on journeys. Where this is unavoidable the child should sit in the back seat. When feasible, parents should be advised before departure.
- 3.1.8 Staff and volunteers should avoid any online social media interaction with a minor without parental consent and only within a YMCAHBB approved digital platform setting i.e.: photos
- 3.1.9 Posting photographs of minors is prohibited outside of authorized uses as directed by YMCA Marketing and Communication guidelines.
- 3.1.10 Any YMCAHBB sanctioned interaction with a minor will occur on a YMCAHBB approved digital device.

3.2 Practices to be Avoided

In the context of your role within the YMCA, the following practices should be avoided:

- 3.2.1 Spending excessive (i.e., unwarranted) amounts of time alone with children, youth, and vulnerable adults away from others.

- 3.2.2 Relating to children, youth, and vulnerable adults from programs in non-program activities, such as babysitting or weekend visits.
- 3.2.3 Where possible, doing things of a personal nature for children, youth, and vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.

3.3 Prohibited Practices

In the context of your role within the YMCA, the following practices will not be condoned, and may also be prohibited by law and may impact continued employment:

- 3.3.1 Engaging in rough or physical contact is never permissible, whether in play or as a form of punishment.
- 3.3.2 Forming intimate emotional, physical, or sexual relationships with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- 3.3.3 Allowing or engaging in touching a child, youth, or young person in any sexually suggestive manner.
- 3.3.4 Allowing/encouraging children, youth, and vulnerable adults to swear or use sexualized language unchallenged.
- 3.3.5 Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, youth, or young person, even in fun.
- 3.3.6 Reducing a child, youth, or young person to tears as a form of control or isolating the child, youth, or young person from his/her peers (I.e., the use of time outs is not an acceptable practice)
- 3.3.7 Allowing allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- 3.3.8 Inviting or allowing children, youth, and vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home.
- 3.3.9 Asking children, youth, and vulnerable adults to keep any type of secret from other children, youth and vulnerable adults, staff or from their parents.
- 3.3.10 Utilizing personal devices to record, photograph or capture images of minors, or vulnerable adults; staff are expected to exercise sound judgement and discretion where individualized programming requires online interactions.

4 PROCEDURE FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The YMCA will take all reasonable steps to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working or volunteering with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

This recruitment and selection procedure has two functions:

- Provides the YMCA with an opportunity to assess the suitability of an individual to work/volunteer with children, youth, and vulnerable adults; and
- Provides the prospective employee or volunteer with an opportunity to assess the organization and the opportunities available.

Compliance with these policies and procedures will be audited periodically to ensure:

- Recruitment guidelines are adhered to;
- Staff/volunteer operating guidelines when caring for children, youth and vulnerable adults are adhered to; and
- Training of new staff/volunteers on Child Safety and Protection Policy operating guidelines takes place.

4.1 Procedures for all Staff and Volunteers (excluding policy volunteers, fundraising volunteers, and board members):

For positions that require regular contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults the following procedures will apply (refer to the YMCA Employee Handbook for detailed employment procedures):

- 4.1.1 All job postings used to recruit and select staff/volunteers to positions involving regular contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults will include a statement that a Criminal Records and Judicial Matters Check/Vulnerable Sector Search screening is a requirement for the position.
- 4.1.2 Where an employee is under the age 18 years of age and recruited for a position responsible for the supervision, safety, and well-being of children i.e., child and youth programs, aquatics, etc., the employee will be fully trained on all policies and, where practical, assigned to work with another staff over the age of 18 years.
- 4.1.3 All applicants will be requested to complete an application (See Appendices K and L). The purpose of this is to obtain from the applicant relevant details including previous youth work involvement.
- 4.1.4 Prior to appointment, a Criminal Records & Judicial Matters Check/Vulnerable Sector Search will be requested for all volunteers/staff who hold a position of trust.
- 4.1.5 For every position of trust a minimum of three references (where practical and reasonable) will be completed before an offer of employment is made (See Appendix M). At least two of these references will be at arm's length. Where possible, at least one of the references will be from an employer or volunteer organization where the position required the incumbent to work with children, youth and/or young people. References from relatives will not be accepted.
- 4.1.6 Formal interviews, either in person, virtual or by telephone, will be required for all positions of trust with questions designed to determine the suitability for working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- 4.1.7 Potential employees and volunteers will be offered positions conditional upon the production of a satisfactory criminal records and judicial matters check/vulnerable sector search and acceptance of the employment obligations e.g., agreement to the child protection policy and procedures of the YMCA.
- 4.1.8 Where a Criminal Records & Judicial Matters Check/Vulnerable Sector Search is returned positive, the incumbent shall have an opportunity to speak to the content of their report for a determination to be made as to the eligibility of confirming employment. The decision to approve a Criminal Records & Judicial Matters Check/Vulnerable Sector Search with a positive finding shall be made by the President & CEO (Chief Executive Officer) or his designate, the Association Child Protection Lead.
- 4.1.9 During orientation, new staff and volunteers will be made aware of policies on protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults, on staff conduct, and legal requirements in reporting suspected abuse. This orientation will be completed within the first month of starting their position.
- 4.1.10 Until the orientation is complete, and a satisfactory Criminal Records and Judicial Matters Check/Vulnerable Sector Search is received, the new staff/volunteer will not have unsupervised access to children, young people, or vulnerable adults.
- 4.1.11 A Declaration may be authorized, with approval from the Association Child Protection Lead, for positions of trust where employment is required to commence due to:
 - Regulatory ratios,
 - Delivery of programs based on registration, or
 - Those community programs that are reliant upon a number of staff for program quality and integrity

5 EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR KEEPING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS SAFE

Management and all staff working with children and vulnerable adults will receive training adequate to familiarize themselves with child protection issues and responsibilities and the YMCA procedures and policies, with annual refresher training. The initial training will be documented in the employee's personnel file or volunteer file, as appropriate, on commencement of employment or volunteering.

In the event of any change to the Child Safety and Protection Policy, all staff will receive an orientation to the new policy and be required to complete a YMCA Child Safety and Protection Policy and Procedures sign off form (See Appendix A.)

5.1 Awareness and Training

The learning opportunities for staff and volunteers to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to keep children, youth, and vulnerable adults safe will include the following:

- 5.1.1 All staff and volunteers and other associates have training on child protection when they join the Association which includes an introduction to the YMCA's Child Safety and Protection Policy and Procedures.
- 5.1.2 All staff and volunteers are provided with opportunities to learn about how to recognize and respond to concerns about child abuse.
- 5.1.3 Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are provided with advice and support on keeping themselves safe.
- 5.1.4 Staff and volunteers with special responsibilities for keeping children, youth, and vulnerable adults safe have relevant training and regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.
- 5.1.5 Training is provided to those responsible for dealing with complaints and disciplinary procedures in relation to child abuse and inappropriate behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults.
- 5.1.6 Training and written guidance on safer recruitment practices is provided for those responsible for recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.
- 5.1.7 Opportunities exist for learning from practical case experience to be fed back into organizational training and development programs.

6 RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

In the event that a child discloses or there are grounds to suspect child abuse, the YMCA will take prompt and immediate action. The YMCA is mandated by provincial law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

6.1 General Procedures

- 6.1.1 Staff and volunteers of the YMCA will take allegations of abuse seriously.
- 6.1.2 The YMCA will ensure staff working with children and vulnerable adults are familiar with the procedure for handling a disclosure of abuse or neglect by a child. (Refer to Appendix E for the procedure).
- 6.1.3 Staff will follow the prescribed procedure for handling a disclosure.
- 6.1.4 The first priority will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk by taking any precautionary measures as advised by the Children's Aid Society. (Refer to Appendix D for child protection telephone numbers.)
- 6.1.5 In the event the reported incident(s) involve staff or a volunteer, the procedure for handling an allegation against a YMCA staff or volunteer will be followed. (Refer to Appendix G for the procedure.)
- 6.1.6 A report will be filed in accordance with relevant provincial child protection reporting requirements and the Association will cooperate to the extent required by the law with any legal authority involved. (Refer to Appendix B & C for report form and example.)
- 6.1.7 All information related to disclosures, or an allegation of abuse will be handled confidentially (Refer to Appendix N for Confidentiality and Privacy Protection).

7 MANAGING AN ALLEGATION COMPLAINT AND CLAIM OF ABUSE AGAINST THE YMCA

In the event of an allegation, complaint or claim of abuse against a staff or volunteer, the YMCA will follow the following procedures:

7.1 Incident Reporting

- 7.1.1 If a staff or volunteer suspects or receives an allegation or complaint of abuse about another staff, volunteer or student, they will follow the procedure for reporting an allegation or suspicion of abuse to the appropriate child protection authority. Refer to 6.1.5. and Appendix G for the procedure.
- 7.1.2 The staff or volunteer will notify their manager and branch Vice President as soon as a call to the child protection authority has been made. The manager or senior manager will also notify the YMCA's Child Protection Lead to ensure that the insurer is notified promptly of the allegation or complaint of abuse against the YMCA.

7.2 Information Management

- 7.2.1 Staff and volunteers will follow the documentation and information handling procedures required under relevant child protection legislation. Refer to Appendix F and O.
- 7.2.2 All records related to the allegation or complaint will be retained until such time as determined by the authorities, or by YMCA records retention requirements, or by the insurer, whichever is longer.

APPENDIX

Appendix A YMCA Child Safety & Protection Policy and Procedures Sign Off

- [Click HERE](#)



Appendix B Example of Completed Suspect Abuse Reporting Form

- [Click HERE](#)

Appendix C Printable Suspected Abuse Reporting Form

- [Click HERE](#)

Appendix D Telephone Numbers for Reporting Suspected Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Children's Aid Society of Hamilton905-522-1121
- Halton Children's Aid Society905-333-4441

- Brantford Children’s Aid Society* 519-753-8681
- Catholic Children’s Aid Society 905-525-2012
- Kawartha-Haliburton Children’s Aid Society (Haliburton Office) 705-457-1661

Appendix E Procedure for Handling Disclosure by a Child

1. The staff must investigate suspected marks and discuss with management who reported the marks and if support is needed to make a call to the Children’s Aid Society. At this time a decision must be made as to whether the call to the Agency is:
 - a. For consultation purposes
 - b. Non-abuse request or
 - c. Abuse request

If a report is not made to the Children’s Aid Society, the marks should be recorded on a chart stating the colour, approximate size and location. If a call is made to the child’s parents, the conversation should be recorded on the chart. (See Appendix C).

2. When a decision to report is made, the following information should be documented before calling:
 - a. Type of abuse suspected.
 - b. If physical, documented on chart the location, approximate size (relate size to coin) and colour of marks.
 - c. Name, address, birth date, telephone number and religion of child. Make sure to document any comments the child might have concerning the marks and the child’s condition at the time of the report.
 - d. The name and telephone number of the individual suspected of abuse and where they can be located. If individual suspected of abuse is not the parent, then the name, telephone number and parent’s location is to be given. It is important to let the agency know how to approach these parents.
 - e. If the decision to report was made after talking to the parents, then document where the incident occurred and any other information you might have.
 - f. If this is not first incident of concern, have other reports available for reference.
 - g. If any other person or agency has been involved with the child, have the name and telephone number available.
3. When you call the Children’s Aid, Society make sure:
 - a. You give your full name, professional title, and the name of the YMCA branch/department you work for.
 - b. Report all information you have documented.

Incidents of a Minor Nature That Occur Repeatedly

There are three basic steps in the procedure for dealing with “minor” but reoccurring incidents:

1. Record, in writing, all details related to the incidents, including date, time, observation, people involved, and the name of the staff member reporting the incident.
2. Monitor the situation and update record as appropriate. This documentation continues until the situation is judged severe enough to warrant further action or until suspicions are allayed.
3. Report if the evidence persists or escalates to a severe case.

Appendix F Guidelines for Writing Documentation

All documentation must be:

- Legible and handwritten by the person who suspected and reported the suspected abuse (never to be typed on a computer)
- Written with a ball point pen, not a marker or felt tip, which might smudge/leak
- Factual, based on your observations. Do not document your personal thoughts about how it might have happened or include second- or third-party information.
- Submitted as the original document. Do not re-write your documentation.
- Free of white-out, if you make a mistake, simply cross it out and initial any errors/changes
- Complete with the name(s) and phone number(s) of the individual(s) you spoke with at the Children's Aid Society (CAS) and/or Police Division;
- Complete with any directions you were given by a CAS and/or Police Division
- Signed, dated, and placed in a pre-labelled envelope- ensure the envelope is sealed (Child Care, Beyond the Bell and Camp program staff place their completed forms in a sealed envelope and address the envelope to General Manager of Inclusion)
- As a best practice in Child Care, Beyond the Bell, and Camp Program areas, contact the General Manager of Inclusion via email to advise that a report has been completed and forwarded.

Written documentation should include the following information:

- Child's name and address
- Observation date and time
- Description of the full incident(s), and/or situation(s) of suspected abuse (FACTS ONLY). Ensure to include dates, times, behaviours, specific words and interactions between the individuals involved
- Description of the physical condition of the child, including any injuries or signs of illness. Where appropriate, circle the attached Body Chart to indicate location of injury(s).
- Description of the emotional condition of the child, including any behavioural concerns, as well as the child's response upon disclosure (if applicable). Are there any noticeable changes in the child's behaviour?
- If known, a description of any further risks of abuse to the child, including the access of the alleged abuser to the child
- Describe fully the "action taken" on behalf of the child. Include all instructions and/or advice from the Children's Aid Society or Police Official.

Documentation regarding a CAS record is never to be given to anyone including Police or CAS unless a warrant or subpoena is provided. The release of any YMCA records will be directed to the Chief Operating Officer (Nicki Glowacki and the YMCA Child Protection Lead (Ursula Motyka).

Appendix G Procedure for Handling an Allegation Against an Employee or Volunteer

It can be very distressing when a staff member is accused of abusing a child. A YMCA staff member who receives a disclosure of abuse against another staff member or suspects a colleague of abuse has a legal obligation to report to the local Children's Aid. Staff must follow the procedures outlined below if a report is made against a colleague.

In many cases, handling of a situation in an inappropriate manner can cause an allegation of abuse. Staff should be familiar with and adhere to the YMCA Child Guidance Policies.

In general, an allegation against a staff member is usually made by a parent, a child or a colleague. In all cases, there is a legal obligation to report.

In the event that a parent makes an allegation against a staff member, the obligation to report also lies with the parent. The parent needs to be advised/reminded of their duty to report and be encouraged to make the report to the local Children's Aid. The staff member who has been informed of the situation or observed the situation, has the legal duty to report as well even if the parent(s) make a report. The staff member must follow the standard Children's Aid reporting procedures to report the allegation against another staff member.

If an allegation is made against a staff member, the staff member will be placed on a leave of absence during the course of the investigation.

Reporting Procedures for Staff

Staff must follow these procedures when an allegation or disclosure is made against another staff member or when the abuse by the staff member is witnessed:

- Treat the allegations seriously and confidentially.
- Report immediately to management (includes Coach, Senior Staff or Manager) any allegations of abuse against a staff member.
 - Staff will notify their General Manager, Senior Regional Manager, and Vice President of the allegation. The Vice President will notify the President & CEO and the Vice President of Human Resources (Association Lead responsible for Child Protection)
 - If you are unable to reach a member of your leadership team, call your General Manager/Vice President. If they are not available, contact the President & CEO directly.
 - The staff member must complete the YMCA Child Abuse Reporting form and follow the reporting procedures.
 - Staff are required to keep information confidential and not to discuss the allegation with other staff, volunteers, parents or participants. Any questions regarding the incident should be referred to the President & CEO or his/her designate.
 - The Association Lead responsible for child protection (Vice President of Human Resources) is also to be made aware of the situation at the same time as the President & CEO.

Procedures for Management

Management will follow these procedures:

- Staff will notify their General Manager/Senior Regional Manager/Vice President of the allegation.
- The General Manager/Senior Regional Manager/Vice President will notify the President & CEO and the Association Lead (Vice President of Human Resources).
- Management will ensure that the appropriate procedures have been followed.
- If the allegation pertains to a staff/volunteer in a licensed Child Care Program (Full day Child Care Centre or School Age program) – a Serious Occurrence is required to be completed and filed with the Ministry of Education
- Management must take immediate steps to ensure that children are safe. This includes taking the necessary steps to ensure that the suspected staff member is not left alone with children and is placed on a leave of absence pending the investigation.
- Any questions and enquiries are to be referred to the President & CEO or to his/her designate.

Investigation Outcome

The YMCA will respond to the outcome of the child abuse investigation in the manner outlined in the current Human Resource Policy.

Appendix H Child Guidance Protocols

Introduction

The YMCA programs are designed and implemented with a focus on our YMCA Core Values of Belonging, Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, and Caring.

- YMCA programs recognize and accept each participant’s individuality and developmental level.
- It is the responsibility of all YMCA staff and volunteers to establish feelings of trust, caring and security with participants.
- In our programs, we will foster social acceptance through positive interactions between participants, and between staff, volunteers and participants.
- Build relationships with participants to get to know their strengths and understand their needs to program plan accordingly and minimize problematic environmental influences.

Child Guidance Principles

At the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford, our programs are designed and implemented with a focus on our core values: Belonging, Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, and Caring. All staff/volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults will:

Belonging

- Intentionally foster an inviting and safe environment for all children, youth and vulnerable adults in our program
- Make all children, youth and vulnerable adults feel welcome and engaged in our space by valuing the diversity each individual brings to the program
- Ensure that each child, youth and vulnerable adult can participate in activities by considering developmental levels and strengths so that planned activities are accessible to all (I.e., consider making changes to program space and activity when planning)
- Offer choices that are clear, concise and appropriate

- Set up program space to allow for self-reflection for participants to be alone while in full view

Respect

- Acknowledge and respect that all children, youth and vulnerable adults use alternative forms of communication
- Ensure that all equipment and materials are in good working condition and easily accessible by participants
- Tell participants when they are doing well and making good choices – be specific with praise by describing and labelling the behaviour you are praising to build confidence
- YMCA staff set the tone for program and are role models to participants – always be aware of the way you speak (tone), the words you use and body language when communicating to an individual, group or co-workers
- Remain calm and approachable when a participant engages in an undesirable behaviour so we can provide a teachable moment
- Ensure dignity is not compromised when attending to personal care needs or problem solving through a situation

Responsibility

- Know the name of every participant in your program and always use the participant's name
- Use person-first language when referring to a participant's ability or diagnosis (I.e., Sam has epilepsy rather than he is an epileptic)
- Be consistent with the expectations put in place and will work collaboratively to adhere to them

Caring

- Nurture kindness and validate participants' feelings to show empathy and support
- Engage and get to know each child in our program
- Actively listen to the children's values, goals and experiences
- View all participants as competent and capable and provide each with access and opportunity for participation

Honesty

- Will hold ourselves accountable and be honest if we make a mistake or do not follow through as promised
- Self-awareness and recognition of our own emotions/feelings in how we respond to situations and guide participants in managing their emotions/feelings
- Will demonstrate integrity and trust through our own actions and words
- Will clarify logical consequences to help develop understanding and self-discipline.

Best Practices in Managing Serious Behaviour Situations

This policy is considered for behaviour that has changed from a couple of times a week, to frequent and expected occurrences. Staff will do the following:

1. Staff will seek the guidance and support of their supervisor in managing and maintaining a healthy perspective devoid of blame.
2. Supervisor seeks to understand the cause of the issue in order to identify what next steps are required.
3. Where the issue involves behaviour, staff will ensure documentation, including time, participants, staff present and circumstances, is completed.

4. Engage in a dialogue with caregivers to inform and further seek to understand how we can support desired outcomes.
5. Evaluate your response to each situation. Create a plan. Follow through with plan – this may include changing the environment and providing alternative strategies. This step will involve the family and maintain regular communication.
 - a. Where possible, modify and offer more options.
 - b. In consultation with the family, arrange for modified attendance schedules.
6. Confidentiality must be respected.
7. A best practice to support a child’s wellbeing and safety may include third party intervention and relevant community resources to provide support.
8. These steps will be taken as priority measures before considering any break in the provision/permanent removal of services.
9. The permanent removal of a child from a YMCA program must be authorized by the CEO or delegate and is considered only when all other measures and strategies have been exhausted and no alternative options exist.

Below are some examples of Serious Behaviour

- Biting
- Hitting
- Scratching
- Kicking
- Spitting
- Throwing items
- Swearing
- Leaving program boundaries without permission

Please note, the above are examples and other actions and behaviours may present in program that impact safety.

Appendix I Abusive Behaviour Between Children

Abusive behaviour between children, including sexual behaviour, generally involves an imbalance of power. For example, one child may be significantly older than the other, or one of the children may be more vulnerable for other reasons.

This kind of behaviour has many different causes and occurs along a continuum of severity. Responses to the child’s behaviour will therefore vary. A sensitive, collaborative approach and careful analysis by service providers, parents and the community are key components of any effective response.

Upon discovery of the allegations, the staff is to immediately intervene in the interests of protection and safety and then the parents of the children involved will be contacted and be involved in the response decision.

The decision as to whether to report to Children’s Aid is made on a case-by-case basis. There is no need to report:

- Normal sexual play or exploration between children of similar ages;
- Minor altercations or aggression between children; and

- Any other activity that is in the bounds of normal childhood behaviour

Factors to be considered when deciding to report include:

- The seriousness of the behaviour;
- The existence of a power imbalance between children;
- Is the behaviour considered harassment;
- Whether the behaviour resulted in harm to the child(ren); and
- The willingness and ability of the involved children's parents to respond appropriately.

In deciding whether to report to Children's Aid, ask yourself:

- Are the children behaving inappropriately for their age?
- Are they being coercive or exploitive?
- Is their behaviour impulsive or premeditated?
- Is there a pattern of domination, force, aggression (actual or threatened) or intimidation, which endangers the physical or psychological well-being of another child?

YMCA staff should document any behaviours that raise concern on an ongoing basis.

Appendix J Vulnerable Adult Abuse Policy

Definition

A vulnerable adult is someone defined as: an adult (18 years of age or older) who, because of disability, medical condition, communication problem, or advanced age, has difficulty expressing or acting upon their own wishes.

Types of Vulnerable Adult Neglect and Abuse

1. **Neglect:** Failure or refusal to meet the needs of a person who is unable to meet those needs themselves. The two forms of neglect are:
 - a. **Active Neglect:** Intentional or deliberate withholding of basic necessities and/or care for physical or mental health. Basic necessities include clothing, food, water, heat, medical treatment, medications, and needed aids or equipment.
 - b. **Passive Neglect:** Not providing basic necessities and care, with no conscious attempt to inflict distress. Examples of passive neglect include
 - Denial of service because of a lack of experience, information or ability
 - A lack of daily personal hygiene
 - Abandonment
2. **Abuse:** Any inappropriate action that causes, or is likely to cause, the person physical or psychological harm, financial or material loss. Abuse can be manifested in several forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, financial, material. Different types of abuse can occur in isolation or together. There are several specific types of abuse:
 - a. **Physical Abuse:** Any act of violence or rough treatment, whether or not physical injury results. Examples of physical abuse include rough handling, slapping, pinching, pushing, shoving, beating, twisting, shaking, burning, forced feeding, restriction of movement.

- b. Sexual Abuse: Any sexual behaviour directed toward a vulnerable adult without his or her full knowledge and informed consent. It includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, or any act designed to harm the adult for the abuser's sexual gratification. Sexual abuse also includes taking advantage of the vulnerability of a resident to engage in sexual behaviour, with or without the person's consent.
 - c. Psychological, Verbal or Emotional Abuse: Behaviour leading to debilitating emotional stress or mental anguish. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands on a person. It can also include degrading, isolating, rejecting, constant criticism, belittling, name-calling, silent treatment, social isolation, denial of privacy, denying participation in discussions regarding his/her own life, and instilling fear through intimidation and threats.
 - d. Financial Abuse: Improperly or illegally taking/keeping the person's money or other valuable possessions. Some examples include misrepresenting what the person is signing, forcing a person to sell property, stealing a person's money, pension cheques or possessions, obtaining goods or power by fraud, forgery and extortion, wrongful use of power of attorney, not paying the person's bills, not making "comfort money" available.
 - e. Medical Abuse: Any medical procedure or treatment that is done without the permission of the older person, or the person's legally recognized proxy. It also refers to actions that are not within accepted medical practice. Medical abuse includes using medication, prescriptions or treatments without the person's consent, withholding medication or overmedication (use of chemical restraints), forcing treatment, refusing to let the person see her or his own physician, using treatments beyond or without a physician's orders, using unnecessary medical treatments.
3. Violation of Rights: Denial of an adult's basic rights (according to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Adults (1975) and United Nations Principles for Older Adults). Examples include withholding information, denying privacy, visitors, worship, restricting liberty, confining a person in a hospital or institution, censoring mail, not informing the person of their rights.

Appendix K Employment Application

- o [click HERE](#)

Appendix L Volunteer Application

- o [click HERE](#)

Appendix M Reference Checking Form

- o [click HERE](#)

Appendix N Confidentiality and Privacy Protection

Confidentiality

It must be emphasized that strict confidentiality is extremely important in these situations/circumstances. Inappropriate disclosure of information about the case, whether it has been “proven” or not can result in a lot of extra pain and suffering for the family involved as well as the child. Open discussion about the case among the staff members or volunteers is not appropriate. Intentional disregard of confidentiality will result in disciplinary measures being taken.

Staff must report that a child is or may need protection even when the information is supposed to be confidential or privileged. (The only exception for “privileged” information is in the relationship between solicitor and a client.)

Privacy Statement

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford and any groups that are officially associated with the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/ Brantford (HBB YMCA) respect your personal privacy. We appreciate your concern about your personal information and believe ensuring the security of your personal information is an important part of our job. We strive to protect any personal information you give to HBB YMCA (address, name, email address, phone number, etc.). If we ask you to provide us with any personal information, we will tell you the purposes for which we intend to use that information. **We will not collect, use, or disclose your personal information without your consent. We will not collect personal information about you unless you choose to provide that information to us. We do not use techniques that collect personal information about you without your knowledge. Your personal information is not lent or sold to anyone for any purpose.** It is our intention to fully comply with the “Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act” passed by the Government of Canada in April 2000 – for your benefit and ours.

Appendix O Legal Responsibility

1. Penalty for Failure to Report

Failure to report is an offence under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act. Any professional or official who fails to report their suspicion of a child’s abuse is liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$5,000.

2. Protection from Liability

Should civil action be brought against a person who made a report, they will be protected unless they acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his/her belief or suspicion.

Appendix P Abuse Prevention Strategy

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford views the prevention of abuse and the safety of children and vulnerable adults participating in YMCA programs and services as of the utmost importance and priority.

While the YMCA views prevention of abuse as a primary priority, it also recognizes the importance to protect the Association from the catastrophic losses associated with abuse. The two main risks to the association as related to abuse are adverse impacts to financial position (via lawsuits) and reputation (affecting ongoing revenue, grant funding, and philanthropy). **Both risks hold the potential to permanently and irreparably damage the YMCA's ability to operate.**

While the Child Safety & Protection Policy protocols regarding the hiring, and training of staff and volunteers reduce the likelihood of an abuse situation, accusations of abuse hold the same damage potential to the YMCA as does actual abuse.

The best way to limit the likelihood of an accusation, or dismiss an erroneous accusation, is through witnesses (participants, staff, or volunteers). There are however instances where the YMCA staff and volunteers are left alone with children or vulnerable adults in our programs. In such situations, should an accusation of abuse follow, it can only be disputed through a) the reliability of the accuser in contrast with the reliability of the accused, and b) the likelihood of the accusation being accurate given concurrent facts of the situation. However, even if the accusation is proven to be false, the accusation can have a lasting and significant negative impact.

Due to the nature of the services of the YMCA, accusations of abuse can be controlled, but not limited.

Identification

This policy is intended to cover all full and part time employees and volunteers. All senior staff for each branch are responsible for implementing and reviewing the policy.

The following locations and scenarios represent situations that hold the greatest potential for a YMCA staff person or volunteer to be alone with a child or a vulnerable adult, and therefore, placed at risk for an accusation of abuse:

1. Change rooms in all Health and Fitness facilities
2. Bathrooms in all facilities
3. General use areas at low volume times (i.e., the last child picked up at a child care centre or school age site)
4. Miscellaneous locations separate from YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford property where program/care is being provided and circumstances dictate that a staff/volunteer is left alone with a child i.e., field trips, camping trips
5. Children or vulnerable adults in transit with a YMCA employee i.e., Wanakita or Day Camp employee driving a camper to the hospital for medical treatment
6. YMCA Wanakita

Protocols

1. All program delivery/care/regular maintenance/regular housekeeping in all areas must be planned out as part of a written schedule and overt deviations from the plan must be documented. This will help account for the location of staff in the event of an accusation of abuse. If at any time, an employee or volunteer enters a situation where they are alone with a child or vulnerable adult participant, they will remove themselves from the situation immediately (or bring another staff/volunteer/participant into the situation), unless by leaving, the child or vulnerable adult is placed at risk.

2. All activities that are typical but not part of routine duties, such as escorted trips to the bathroom or change room, unplanned transit with a YMCA staff or volunteer, discipline, and private discussion, must always be in plain view of at least one other staff/volunteer/participant.
3. Some routine program delivery/care requires time spent alone with a participant, such as one on one support with a person with special needs, or care of younger children. In such cases, every effort will be made to ensure that their interactions are in plain view of least one other employee/volunteer/participant whenever reasonable and possible.
4. Application forms will be completed for all staff and volunteers that are to be hired/placed (see minimum requirements attached).
5. Reference checks for all staff and volunteers will be completed with a specific question being asked about suitability to work with children and/or vulnerable adults.
6. Training will include, but is not limited to, YMCA Child Safety and Protection Policy.
7. Documentation of Child Safety and Protection Policy training and employee/volunteer sign off annually as part of the annual performance appraisal.
8. Audit review of programs and documentation of training and employee sign off.
9. Legal counsel review of Child Safety & Protection Policy.
10. Incident reporting system implemented.
11. Staff records including application form, annual sign off Child Safety & Protection Policy, annual performance appraisals, all to be kept indefinitely by the Human Resource Department.
12. General Managers/Senior Regional Managers/Vice Presidents from all branches will ensure that the Child Safety and Protection Policy, including all documentation, is being met.