



YMCA of Pictou
County

YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy

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*Building healthy
communities*



YMCA CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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YMCA CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

The YMCA is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children in its care and children accessing YMCA programs and services. We all share a responsibility to protect children from harm. The YMCA recognizes its responsibility to promote safe environments and practices and to protect children from abuse and exploitation.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The YMCA of Pictou County recognizes its responsibility to promote safe practices and protect children from abuse and exploitation.

The YMCA will immediately refer any concerns that a child might be abused or at risk of harm to the appropriate child protection authority.

To fulfill the above policy statement, the YMCA is committed to:

- providing safe environments for children;
- identifying any child who is suffering, or likely to suffer harm;
- establishing a working child protection committee;
- reviewing and evaluating the implementation of this policy regularly for effectiveness.

The **YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy** applies to all YMCA staff, students and volunteers.

3. COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

We are committed to promoting equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in all aspects of our child safeguarding policy to ensure that every child is treated with respect and dignity.

We recognize and appreciate that children come from diverse families, including single-parent households, blended families, same-sex parents, adoptive families, foster families, and families with different cultural, linguistic, religious, and financial backgrounds. We acknowledge that family diversity is a strength and enriches children's lives therefore, we strive to create a safe and inclusive environment that celebrates family diversity and promotes positive relationships among children, families, and staff.

We recognize that children come from diverse backgrounds, with different experiences, cultures, beliefs, and abilities. We also acknowledge that some children may be at higher risk of harm due to various factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability therefore, we strive to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all children, regardless of their background.

We also recognize that our staff, volunteers, and partners play a critical role in ensuring the safety and well-being of children. We are committed to providing ongoing training and support to our staff and volunteers to ensure they have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to recognize and respond to child safeguarding concerns in an equitable, diverse, and inclusive manner.

4. TERMINOLOGY

The following terms are used in this policy:

Child under provincial child protection legislation is someone who is under the age of 16 years of age.

Child Abuse can be of a physical, emotional or sexual nature, or neglect. It may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. Vulnerable persons also may be at risk of abuse or neglect. See *Vulnerable Persons - Types of Abuse* below for more information.

A **child** can be subjected to more than one form of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** could result from a parent or person in charge causing physical injury to a child, or failing to adequately supervise a child or from a pattern of neglect of the child.

Examples of physical abuse include beating, slapping, hitting, pushing, throwing, shaking, burning. **A child who is physically abused** may have burns, bite marks, cuts, bruises, or welts in the shape of an object; not want to go home; be afraid of adults; wear inappropriate clothing (e.g. long sleeves on a very hot day).

- **Sexual abuse** happens when a parent or other person in charge sexually molests or uses a child for sexual purposes or knowingly fails to protect a child from sexual abuse.

Examples of sexual abuse include any sexual act between an adult and a child, including intercourse; fondling; exposing a child to adult sexual activity; sexual exploitation through child prostitution or child pornography. **A child who is sexually abused** may have an inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts; be very compliant or extremely aggressive; be afraid of a certain person or a family member; have difficulty walking or sitting.

- **Emotional abuse** occurs when a parent or other person in charge harms 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.

Examples of emotional abuse include yelling at, screaming at, threatening, frightening, or bullying a child; humiliating the child, name-calling, making negative comparisons to others; showing little to no physical affection (such as hugs) or words of affection or praise; saying that everything is the child's fault; withdrawing attention, giving the child the 'cold shoulder'; confining a child in a closet or a dark room, or tying the child to a chair for long periods of time; or exposing a child to domestic violence, allowing the child to be present during violent behaviour of others, including the physical abuse of others. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse. **A child who is emotionally abused** may show signs of serious anxiety, depression or withdrawal; show self-destructive or aggressive behavior; show delays in physical, emotional or mental development.

- **Neglect** happens when a child's parent or other person in charge fails to provide for basic needs.

Examples of neglect include failing to provide proper food, clothing suitable for the weather, supervision, a

home that is clean and safe, medical care as needed; failing to provide emotional support, love and affection. **A child who is neglected** may not wear clothing that's suitable for the weather; be dirty or unbathed; be very hungry; or not be properly supervised.

*Any of the above signs of child abuse noticed by a staff or volunteer must be reported immediately to a child protection authority. See **Appendix A** for child protection authority contact information.*

Duty of Care is a legal principle that identifies the obligations of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect their participants.

Duty to Report is defined under NS Children and Family Services Act. 23 (1) every person who has information, whether or not it is confidential or privileged, indicating that a child is in need of protective services shall forthwith report that information to an agency. **Duty to report** applies to the public, and includes special reporting responsibilities for professionals whose work involves children.

Child in need of protection – from section 22 of the Nova Scotia Children and Family Services Act.

22 (1) In this Section, "substantial risk" means a real chance of danger that is apparent on the evidence.

(2) A child is in need of protective services where:

(a) the child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by a parent or guardian of the child or caused by the failure of a parent or guardian to supervise and protect the child adequately;

(b) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted or caused as described in clause (a);

(c) the child has been sexually abused by a parent or guardian of the child, or by another person where a parent or guardian of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual abuse and fails to protect the child;

(d) there is a substantial risk that the child will be sexually abused as described in clause (c);

(e) a child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering, and the child's parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or is unable to consent to, the treatment;

(f) the child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive behaviour and the child's parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm;

(g) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer emotional harm of the kind described in clause (f), and the parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm;

(h) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development and the child's parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition;

(i) the child has suffered physical or emotional harm caused by being exposed to repeated domestic violence by or towards a parent or guardian of the child, and the child's parent or guardian fails or refuses to obtain services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the violence;

(j) the child has suffered physical harm caused by chronic and serious neglect by a parent or guardian of the child, and the parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm;

(ja) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted or caused as described in clause (j);

(k) the child has been abandoned, the child's only parent or guardian has died or is unavailable to exercise custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provisions for the child's care and custody, or the child is in the care of an agency or another person and the parent or guardian of the child refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody;

(l) the child is under twelve years of age and has killed or seriously injured another person or caused serious damage to another person's property, and services or treatment are necessary to prevent a recurrence and a parent or guardian of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the necessary services or treatment;

(m) the child is under twelve years of age and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of a parent or guardian of the child or because of the parent or guardian's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately. 1990, c. 5, s. 22; 1996, c. 10, s. 1.

- **Risk of harm** is the risk that a child is likely to be physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected.
- **Reasonable grounds** refers to the information that an average person, using normal and honest judgment, would need in order to decide to report. It is not the person's responsibility to prove or have proof of abuse; investigation is the role of child protection authorities.

Refer to section 6 for more information on 'duty to report' suspected child abuse.

Criminal Record Check is a search of the records held in the information database of a police agency. It may include a check of national or local and regional police records. Basic types include a Police Criminal Record Check or Police Information Check or Police Vulnerable Sector Check. At the end of the process, a report is issued. *Refer to the Employee Personnel Policy and Volunteer Policy for more information.*

Position of Trust or authority is created when an individual's relationship with someone else has any of the following characteristics: decision-making power; unsupervised access; closeness inherent in the relationship; personal nature of the activity itself.

Staff means salaried, regular, hourly, seasonal, contract and supply staff.

Volunteers include program volunteers, policy (Board/Board Committees/Regional Council) volunteers, philanthropy/fundraising volunteers and student placements. Occasional and special event volunteers are defined as volunteers i) who have limited interaction and are not left alone with children; and ii) whose involvement with the YMCA is limited in duration and frequency and are not left alone with children.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The YMCA of Pictou County is committed to promoting safe practices to safeguard children from harm or abuse. While primary responsibility for the protection of children from abuse rests with the Department of

Community Services, all YMCA staff and volunteers who come into contact with children have a duty to safeguard children in our care.

The responsibility for managing this policy lies with YMCA management. The YMCA has appointed a designated person, Alisha Raniowski, who will have responsibility for the implementation of the child safeguarding policy and procedures in their association. The CEO, Tammy Goodwin, will ensure the designated person has the necessary resources and support within their official responsibilities to carry out their responsibility for child safeguarding. In addition to the Child Safeguarding Lead, a child safeguarding committee has been established to support all safeguarding initiatives.

5.1 YMCA Board of Directors and Management team is responsible for safeguarding children by:

- Providing oversight of a protection framework that includes establishing policies and procedures, and monitoring;
- Establishing a reporting protocol that complies with provincial child protection legislation;
- Establishing recruitment and screening procedures including police records check procedures;
- Ensuring systems are in place for regular review, reporting and evaluation of effectiveness of child safeguarding initiatives;
- Ensuring all serious incidents of child safety and protection and how they were resolved are reported to the Board;
- Appointing a member of YMCA management team having special responsibility for advancing the objectives of this Policy and child protection legislation.

5.2 YMCA Managers and Supervisors have additional responsibilities for maintaining safe environments in all facilities and program areas by:

- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers have read, understand and signed *the Child Safeguarding Policy Acknowledgement (Appendix F)* or master policy sign off form.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers receive onboarding training and mandatory annual re-fresher training in the safeguarding of children;
- Arranging training for staff and volunteers working directly with children;
- Ensuring recruitment and screening including police check/recheck procedures are implemented;
- Ensuring programs are developmentally appropriate and well planned in advance;
- Maintaining physical security and other safeguards to protect children accessing YMCA programs;
- Ensuring all contractors in the building have signed in, have clearance to be in the building, and are not left alone in areas where children and youth contact could be initiated.
- Responding promptly to any complaints, reports or allegations against staff or volunteers.

5.3 YMCA Staff and Volunteers are expected to abide by this Policy that includes:

- Following the Code of Conduct (section 6) for the safeguarding of children;
- Participating in mandatory and re-fresher training in safeguarding children and duty to report;
- Producing acceptable police records/re-check clearance letters specifically vulnerable sector checks;
- Reporting immediately any suspicion of abuse to the appropriate protection agency;
- Notifying their supervisor or staff contact that a report has been made to a child protection authority;
- Helping to maintain a safe environment for the safeguarding of children.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN

The YMCA is committed to supporting YMCA mission critical work where children and youth are safe, families are strong, and communities are supported.

As members of the YMCA employee community, we hold the morale and ethical responsibility to uphold YMCA policies and procedures to safeguard all children and youth attending YMCA programs and services.

Child safeguarding refers to the standards upon which each employee and volunteer accepts the responsibility to proactively exercise measures to ensure that they do no harm to children, they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the YMCA has about children's safety within the community, result in timely and appropriate actions that include proper reporting procedures that include, reporting to their local child protection agency.

Adherence to YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy will be demonstrated by:

- Respecting the dignity of all children and youth.
- Considering and respecting the cultural and socioeconomic differences that may give rise to concerns related to the adherence of this policy.
- Every employee and volunteer should strive to learn, understand, and follow the rules of the YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy that apply to their specific job responsibilities
- Seek assistance where clarity is needed, in a timely manner with the utmost respect for confidentiality of those involved.

The YMCA of Pictou County will seek to keep children and youth safe by:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them
- Appointing a designated Child Safeguarding Lead
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practices through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training, and quality assurance measures so that staff know about and follow our policies, procedures and code of conduct confidently and competently using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, youth, parents, families, and carers appropriately
- Using our procedures to manage allegations involving staff and volunteers appropriately
- Building a safeguarding culture where we all work in partnership, treat each other with respect and are comfortable sharing concerns
- Ensuring that programs and services geared towards children and youth are designed with consideration of the environment and context, taking into account the potential impact on the children and youth it is engaged with. Staff should be able to recognize and address potential safety issues in program locations and take action to mitigate risks to children and youth.

This means that YMCA employees and volunteers commit to:

- Promptly and without hesitation, report complaints from children, youth or their families or carers, all allegations or disclosures of grooming, child abuse or neglect, concerns about child safety, and any breaches of the YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy
- Have a duty of care to ensure that all who access the YMCA's programs, services and facilities are provided with a safe, open, and honest environment that protects children and youth and the employees/volunteers who work with them
- Not harm or exploit any child or young person

- Always supervise children and youth to ensure they engage positively with our programs, behave appropriately towards each other, and are in a safe environment
- For supervision of children using restrooms, always ensure: The restroom is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Children are with an adult staff member and proceed in groups of 3 or more when using the bathroom. Either line of sight or line of sound supervision is maintained when children are using the facilities. Ensure no child, regardless of age, enters a bathroom alone on a field trip. If staff are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
- Always conduct or supervise private activities in pairs- diapering, putting on bathing suits, taking showers, etc. When this is not feasible, staff should be positioned so that they are visible to others
- Not use inappropriate, discriminatory, racist, sexist, violent, profane, sexual, belittling or negative language in the presence of children and youth, for example- swearing, name-calling, threats, etc.
- Ensure that sign in and sign out procedures are followed for visitors to the site and children/youth attending programs. Employees are to be vigilant in witnessing the arrival and departure of all children and youth
- Only take photos or videos of children and youth on YMCA issued devices. All photos require appropriate consent, this refers to consent granted by parent or carers using a current YMCA signed image release form. Ensure photos and videos of children and youth are only uploaded to official YMCA sites once appropriate consent from the parent has been provided. Photos and videos must not to be uploaded or shared to any personal or unofficial YMCA social media platforms.
- Not discipline children and youth using emotional abuse, physical or corporate punishment, favoritism, physical abuse, verbal abuse, references to cultural or ethnic differences, swearing or the withdrawal of the necessities of care (including food, shelter, and emotional warmth)
- Not engage in sexual behavior between, with or in the presence of children and youth, including but not limited to engaging in open discussion of mature or adult nature.
- Not engage in physical contact with children or youth unless for the express purpose of the program or activity, or as based on the needs of the child or youth rather than on the needs of the YMCA employee or volunteer (eg. To assist or comfort a distressed child or youth)
- Not have a child or youth sit on their knee, in their lap, piggyback them, cuddle, kiss, tickle or touch them in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive manner. This includes rough physical games eg. Wrestling and tackling.
- Not use physical restraint, unless as a last resort to prevent injury to a child or young person or others; in this instance the level of force used must be appropriate to the specific circumstances and aimed solely at restraining the child or young person to prevent harm to themselves or others
- Promptly report concerns, issues, problems, suspected incidents and suspicious behavior by YMCA employees or volunteers that breach Child Safeguarding Policy standards
- Fully cooperate with the defined child safety and protection agencies or police in their investigations of suspected child abuse
- Not undertake a task of personal nature that the child or young person can do themselves (eg. Changing clothes, personal grooming, feeding)
- Not give personal gifts to children, unless under the banner of a gift from the YMCA (eg. A holiday or special celebration)

This means that employees and volunteers must:

- Ensure they are never alone with a child or young person where they cannot be observed by at least one other adult
- Disclose to their supervisor where a friendship has developed prior to or during employment by the YMCA, between them and families and/or children or youth who currently participate or have previously participated in programs

- Not engage in activities with current or previous YMCA children or youth outside of the YMCA for example visiting their home, baby sitting, etc. unless permission has been granted by a senior YMCA manager with oversight for the program or branch
- Not engage with children or youth outside the YMCA, including via social media platforms as well as voice or video call, text or email, directly to a child or young person unless for the express purpose of conducting YMCA business or training sessions and with manager knowledge and approval. This contact must be made from a YMCA device only. Where practicable, all communication should be directed to the parents or carers of the child/youth.

Any violation of the above code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

7. DUTY TO REPORT PROCEDURE FOR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

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.

General Procedure:

- a) Staff and volunteers of the YMCA will take allegations of abuse seriously.
- b) The YMCA will ensure that staff and volunteers working with children are familiar with their duty to report and the procedure for reporting suspected abuse or neglect of a child.
- c) YMCA staff and volunteers shall follow duty to report suspected abuse procedures. Refer to **Appendix B** for protocol.
- d) The first priority will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk by taking measures as advised by Department of Community Services. Refer to **Appendix A** for child protection agency contact information.
- e) In the event the reported incident involves an allegation against a staff or volunteer, the procedure for responding to an allegation against the YMCA will be followed. See section 9 for more information. Refer to **Appendix C** for protocol.
- f) A report will be completed in accordance with relevant provincial child protection reporting requirements, and the Association will cooperate with any legal authority involved. Refer to **Appendix D** for a sample form to report suspected abuse.
- g) All information related to a disclosure or allegation of abuse will be treated confidentially. Documentation regarding a report to a child protection authority must not be circulated internally nor given to anyone, unless a warrant or subpoena is provided. **Appendix E** includes documentation guidelines.

8. RECRUITING, SCREENING AND TRAINING

The YMCA offers a range of programs to a variety of age groups of children and youth.

All visitors and hired contractors are required to sign in and provide acceptable government ID. Risks are managed according to their access to places where children and youth are present. When working in an area where children and youth are present, the individual(s) should always be observed by a designated staff member in the area in which they are working. When contractors are on-site in a designated area off limits to children and youth, site visits will be conducted periodically by an appropriate manager or supervisor.

Proper screening of potential employees and volunteers is essential for matching people and YMCA roles or positions, for ensuring the quality of YMCA programs, for maintaining safe YMCA environments, and for reducing or eliminating the risk of harm to children.

The YMCA maintains comprehensive, clearly communicated recruitment and screening processes that are consistently applied across the Association. A documented recruitment and selection process is in keeping with regulatory requirements relevant to screening including Employment Standards and Eligibility to Work in Canada, Child Protection, Human Rights, Information and Privacy, Youth Criminal Justice, and other legislated requirements.

The following general procedures shall apply when recruiting and screening potential YMCA staff and volunteers. Refer also to YMCA Employment Practices, Human Resources and Volunteer Management procedures for more information.

- a) **All forms of advertising** used to recruit and select staff and volunteers **will include a statement** that YMCA offers of employment (or volunteer assignment) are contingent upon the successful completion of a police records check.
- b) All applicants will be required to **complete an application form or provide a resume** to obtain relevant details for the position including prior work experience with children.
- c) **Formal interviews** in person or by telephone are conducted, with questions designed to determine suitability for working with children for all positions of trust.
- d) A minimum of **two professional reference checks** will be completed before a staff or volunteer position is offered. A minimum of **three professional reference checks** are required for supervisory positions. Reference checks are conducted to reveal more about the candidate's patterns of job performance, to predict success on the job or volunteer assignment, and to verify the accuracy of the information provided by the candidate through their application and interview responses. If a young candidate with little or no prior work experience, professional/personal references may include coaches, teachers, leadership facilitators, etc. References contacted should be asked to confirm the nature of their relationship to the candidate to indicate they meet the YMCA reference check requirement.
- e) Potential employees and volunteers will be offered positions conditional upon the production of an **acceptable police records check (PRC/CPIC/Vulnerable PRC)**, and acceptance of YMCA employment obligations including adhering to YMCA policies that include child safeguarding and duty to report requirements.
- f) An acceptable police records check (PRC) is obtained for all staff and volunteers before starting training or first day of work. Supervisors shall refer to any additional screening procedures established by the Association.
- g) **Vulnerable sector screening** (and where available, Child Abuse Registry Check) will be completed at a minimum for all staff and volunteers having regular contact with children and youth.
- h) Supervisors and managers follow a documented process when addressing situations where a positive record has been identified.
- i) **During on boarding**, new staff and volunteers will be made aware of policies regarding the safeguarding of children and youth and duty to report suspected abuse, and YMCA code of conduct/behaviour expectations. All staff and volunteers shall complete a Policy Acknowledgement Sign-off form (see **Appendix F**) **on or before** starting work.
- j) Supervisors shall ensure that **mandatory training** on the safeguarding of children is completed within the first three months (90 days) of employment or volunteer assignment. **Re-fresher training will also be completed annually.**
- k) All employee and volunteer records (including training records) will be maintained in keeping with information and records management processes, which will include appropriate safeguards to protect highly sensitive, personal information such as police records checks and references.

- l) An **ongoing police records re-check process (every three years)** for existing staff is implemented and followed consistently across the Association. Supervisors and managers shall follow police records check screening and re-checking procedures established by the YMCA for all staff and volunteers.

For more information about recruitment, screening and training, please refer to Employment Practices, Human Resources and Volunteer Management policies and procedures established by the YMCA.

9. MANAGING AN ALLEGATION, COMPLAINT OR CLAIM OF ABUSE AGAINST THE YMCA

In the event of an allegation, complaint or claim of abuse against a staff or volunteer of the YMCA, the following procedures shall apply.

9.1 Reporting an Allegation of Abuse to a Protection Authority

- a) If a staff or volunteer suspects or receives an allegation or complaint of abuse about another YMCA staff, volunteer or student placement, he/she will follow the procedure for reporting an allegation or suspicion of abuse to the appropriate child protection authority. Refer to **Appendix C**.
- b) As soon as a call has been made to a child protection authority, the staff or volunteer will promptly notify their manager that a call has been made involving a suspicion of abuse against a YMCA staff or volunteer. The manager shall immediately notify the senior lead responsible for child safeguarding who will inform appropriate management team members in keeping with the YMCA's escalation protocol. Management will ensure any additional child safety concerns, human resources, insurance (see 9.3 below), and other mandatory reporting requirements are addressed, and that the appropriate follow up steps are implemented once child protection authorities have completed their investigation, in keeping with established YMCA procedures.

9.2 Information Management

- a) Staff and volunteers will follow the documentation and information handling procedures required under relevant child protection legislation.
- b) A report will be completed in accordance with relevant provincial child protection reporting requirements, and the YMCA will cooperate to the extent of the law with any legal authority involved. Refer to **Appendix D** for a sample report form.
- c) All information related to disclosure or an allegation of abuse will be treated confidentially. Documentation regarding a report to a child protection authority must not be circulated internally nor given to anyone, unless a warrant or subpoena is provided. **Appendix E** captures documentation guidelines from a YMCA.
- d) All records related to the allegation or complaint will be retained indefinitely by the YMCA, or until such time as determined by the authorities.
- e) All reporting envelopes, once completed, are kept sealed and maintained in one confidential location. The association's Child safeguarding lead will track all incidents in a timely matter so that information is readily available for both current and historical incidents and claims.
- f) Post incident reviews and follow ups are conducted for all child safeguarding incidents and documented. This includes referrals to appropriate support, action plans for correction/reintegration into programs, and procedure/policy change if needed.

9.3 Insurance

- a) Any allegation or complaint of abuse involving a YMCA staff or volunteer must be reported promptly to the insurer upon becoming aware of the allegation or complaint, in keeping with notice requirements under insurance policies. Providing the insurer with prompt notice protects the YMCA's ability to trigger abuse coverage under their insurance policies, in the event a legal demand or claim arises in the future.
- b) Liability insurance policies should be kept indefinitely by the YMCA, and stored in an accessible and secure location. Retention of insurance policies is important given the historical, long tail nature that characterizes abuse claims.

9.4 Crisis Communications

The YMCA shall follow its escalation protocols as part of its proactive emergency response and crisis communication procedures that ensure the following:

- a) Senior managers responsible for responding to escalated or critical incidents understand their role in managing major or crisis events.
- b) Supervisors and staff have easy access to escalation and crisis management policies or protocols.
- c) Orientation includes review of protocols so that new staff and volunteers understand their role in an emergency or crisis situation.
- d) Associations promptly notify YMCA Canada of incidents involving serious injury or death or escalated situations with (potential) media attention.
- e) Organizational learning is incorporated following recovery from an escalated or crisis situation, facilitated by a designated senior lead who also reviews at least annually the effectiveness of the YMCA's escalation and crisis management protocols, for any needed enhancements.

Refer also to YMCA Business Continuity Guidance for more information about crisis escalation for prompt notification, effective decision-making and management support during a major or crisis event.

10. PEER TO PEER INCIDENTS

When a child safeguarding incident involves one or more children behaving inappropriately towards another, a decision needs to be made about whether the behavior is age-appropriate, bullying or abuse.

10.1 Age Appropriate

- Staff and volunteers working with children should be aware of the stages of development of the age group they actively work with.
- As children get older, the likeliness that an incident that causes harm to another child would be considered bullying or abuse increases.
- Young children can cause an injury or harm to another child however based on age-appropriate development, the incident would not be considered bullying or abuse (ex. A toddler who is unable to communicate may bite another)

10.2 Bullying

- The behavior is intended by the child to have the effect of, or the child ought to know that the behavior would be likely to have the effect of causing harm, fear, intimidation or distress to another

individual, including physical psychological, social harm, harm to the individual's reputation or harm to the individual's property, or creating a negative environment in the YMCA for another child.

- The behavior occurs in a context where there is real or perceived imbalance of power between the children based on a wide variety of factors including size, strength, age, intelligence, economic status, peer group power, etc.
- Bullying behavior includes the use of physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.
- The behavior may, but not necessarily, be directed towards a group of children rather than an individual child.
- The behavior is perceived as bullying by the victim.

1.3 Abuse and Child Protection Concern

- The difference of power between the child who is abusing and the child being abused is significant and there is an age difference of more than two years, there is a significant difference in terms of size or level of ability, the abuse holds a power of power or the victim is significantly more vulnerable than the other child or young person.
- The behavior involves sexual assault or physical assault (other than the most minor physical assault).
- The child who is the victim of the behavior may have suffered significant harm.
- The behaviour may not necessarily be perceived by the victim as abusive, particularly if it is sexual in nature.
- The behaviour is not a one-off incident and is part of a pattern of concerning behaviour on the part of the child or young person who is abusing.
- The behaviour, if sexual, is not part of normal experimentation that takes place between children and young people.

10.4 Sexual Abuse VS Normal Experimentation

All children and young people develop an interest in their own sexuality from a young age and seek to learn more from their peers. It is important not to label normal, healthy behaviour as deviant or abusive. It is equally important not to allow sexually abusive behaviour perpetrated by one child or young person towards another to go unchecked.

There are ways of assessing whether sexual behaviour between children and young people is abusive or not. Indicators of abuse include:

- There is a significant difference in age, dominance or understanding between the children/young people;
- The behaviour was accompanied by the use of threats or bribes;
- The behaviour was carried out in secret.

If there is any question that a behaviour could be abusive, staff and volunteers are to contact local Child Protection Service and seek guidance.

10.5 Communication with Parents

A decision will need to be made about when and who should inform the families of both the child(ren) who has been harmed and the child(ren) who has allegedly perpetrated the harm.

Age Appropriate Incident- communication by the staff or volunteer, consultation with supervisor not required.

Bullying- Consultation between staff/volunteer and supervisor to determine next steps, timing and method of communication with family.

Abuse-Child Protection- Consultation between supervisor, Child Safeguarding Lead, and Child Protection Services to determine next steps, timing, method and responsibility of communication with family.

11. ONLINE SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES

The safety and protection of children and youth remain a top priority at the YMCA. Our commitment to online safeguarding practices extends to all YMCA digital communications, including email, social media, and texts. By setting these expectations, not only are we protecting children and teens in our care, we are also modeling good safety practices so they can protect themselves online. We can also protect ourselves from having our actions misinterpreted. Below are acceptable and unacceptable forms of digital communications with minors, defined as children and teens under the legal age of majority.

11.1 ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Ensure the requirements are reviewed to safely use these forms of communications with minors.

- Emails – can be exchanged with minors ONLY when the minor’s parent/guardian or a YMCA supervisor is copied and ONLY regarding YMCA- related matters. These messages must be sent and received from an official YMCA email address.
- Text Messages – Texting is not a recommended form of communication with minors as there can be limited to no ability to maintain a record of communication, especially once deleted. If you decide to use texting, texts can be exchanged with minors ONLY when the minor’s parent/guardian or a YMCA supervisor is included and ONLY regarding YMCA- related matters. These messages must be sent and received from an official YMCA phone number and not a personal number.
- Online groups and meetings- set up a private group (eg. Facebook Group, Zoom call) that meets the following conditions:
 - All online groups and virtual meetings must be organized under an official YMCA account.
 - All online group members must meet the minimum age required by the platform to hold an account.
 - There must be at least two staff members over the age of majority designated as administrators for the page, online group, or virtual meeting.
 - You must follow your YMCA’s privacy policy.
 - Online groups and virtual meetings should exist only for the duration of the program. When the program ends, the group or meeting should be closed/deleted.
 - Do not publicly share virtual meeting invitation links or meeting recordings. Ensure entry into virtual meetings is password protected.

11.2 UNACCEPTABLE FORMS OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Connecting privately with minors on any online social media accounts or digital channels (other than online groups as indicated above), both personal and work-related, is strictly prohibited. Other unacceptable forms of communication with minors include:

- Private messages and emails
- Following or “friending” children and teens
- Sharing details of your social media accounts and asking a minor to follow you
- Commenting on photos or any other content shared on a social media site, blog, etc.
- In-app communications that do not include a parent/guardian or another YMCA staff member
- Exchanging cell phone numbers, email addresses, or physical mailing addresses

11.3 REPORTING COMMUNICATIONS, CONNECTIONS, OR CONTACT

If you become aware of another staff member or volunteer communicating inappropriately or trying to initiate outside contact with a minor, report this to your supervisor immediately. Additional steps may be required regarding reporting to the local child protection agency.

If you already have an outside connection with a child or teen within the organization, or a child or teen tries to initiate an outside connection, report this to your supervisor immediately and discuss appropriate next steps (e.g. block the request, parent communication, etc.)

Should a child or teen initiate a request to communicate or connect, explain that there are policies that prohibit you from being able to do so.

11.4 ALTERNATE WAYS TO COMMUNICATE

There are many other ways to communicate with children, youth, and families. Consider using one of following to share information:

- Public pages of your website or social media accounts
- Phone calls with parents/guardians. These calls must be made from a YMCA phone number and not a personal phone number.
- Apps that facilitate communications with adults, such as Weemarkable or Remind. There are many to choose from and they change frequently.

12. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE YMCA COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

The YMCA is committed to an ongoing strategy for the safeguarding of children and youth and maintaining safe environments, which includes:

- providing training and education that ensures staff and volunteers know their responsibilities and duty to report and this is communicated to families and caregivers;
- monitoring YMCA's effectiveness in its commitment to safeguarding children and youth;
- establishing a committee dedicated to the safeguarding of children and youth;
- providing mechanisms for feedback and appropriate response to complaints or disclosures.

12.1 Training and education increases knowledge and awareness of individual and organizational roles in safeguarding children and youth, and ensures the effectiveness of this Policy. Through education and training that includes new staff orientation, mandatory and **annual re-fresher training** with sign-off requirements, the YMCA fosters awareness among staff and volunteers of their responsibility 'to act' if abuse is suspected. To engage families and caregivers, the YMCA will ensure open communication is maintained by providing information on our commitment to child safety and protection, including sharing policies, procedures, and the expected conduct of staff and volunteers, as well as clear instructions on reporting any concerns or issues.

12.2 Monitoring: The YMCA has implemented a formal monitoring system that includes self-assessments, peer and third party assessments of compliance with policies and procedures for the safeguarding of children and youth. **Assessments are completed at least bi-annually** to identify where further enhancements may be needed to maintain the safety of YMCA program environments. In addition, a child protection committee has been established and will meet on a quarterly basis to assesses current practices and policies.

In addition, managers shall monitor programs regularly to identify any potential barriers and strategies for maintaining safe YMCA environments. Strategies include:

- fostering a culture of safety through safeguards including policies, training, education;
- A sign in and sign out procedure for all children in programs that tracks when they change from one program to another;
- providing children and youth with support and guidance on what to do, and who to contact if feeling uncomfortable or afraid at any time;
- adhering to established employment practices, human resources and volunteer management procedures for recruitment, screening, supervising and training staff and volunteers;
- conducting program area checks including regular building sweeps/tours to monitor bathrooms, locker rooms and any isolated areas;
- Enhancing inclusion efforts by providing the necessary supports and plans in a program so that all children can be safely included;
- maintaining building security through use of central point(s) of entry, sign in/out procedures, restricted access to child care or child minding areas, doors are locked that should be locked, etc.

12.3 Ongoing relevancy: The YMCA through its appointed child safeguarding lead or designate shall **review this policy annually** to ensure effectiveness and ongoing relevancy given also changing laws and public expectations.

Maintaining safe environments is a team approach. Supervisors and staff can speak with their program or facility manager, their senior manager, or contact the Association lead for child safeguarding for more information.

The YMCA of Cape Breton shall continue to instill a culture of shared accountability and responsibility across the Association for the safeguarding of children and youth.

13. CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES

For more information about this policy, staff may speak with the Association senior lead for child safeguarding (Lynn Webb).

The following sources also provide additional information about child protection:

- **YMCA Canada** - National Child Protection Standard Requirements, child protection training and audit tools;
- Resources available online through **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** at www.protectchildren.ca; and **Boost Child Abuse Prevention** at www.boostforkids.org

Appendix A: CHILD PROTECTION AGENCIES CONTACT INFORMATION

Child and Adult Protection Agency	Phone Number	Website
Child Welfare Department of Community Services of Nova Scotia	8:30 am – 4:30 pm 1-888-919-4236 4:30 pm – 8:30 am 1-866-922-2434	http://novascotia.ca/coms/department/contact/ChildWelfareServices.html
Nova Scotia Adult Protection Services	1-800-225-7225	http://novascotia.ca/dhw/ccs/protecting-vulnerable-adults.asp
First Nations Family & Children's Services	1-902-758-3553 1-800-263-8686	http://novascotia.ca/coms/department/contact/ChildWelfareServices.html

Police Services	Non-Emergency Phone Number
RCMP (Stellarton)	1-902-755-4141

APPENDIX B DUTY TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE PROCEDURE

In the event that a child or someone discloses, or a staff, volunteer or student placement suspects child abuse, the procedures outlined below must be followed. Supervisors shall ensure that staff, program volunteers and student placements are aware of their duty to report suspected child abuse to a Child Welfare Agency.

1. If you (supervisor, staff, volunteer, student placement) suspect child abuse:

- You are required to make the call immediately to a child welfare agency.
- You are not to ask anyone for help in making the decision; you must call.
- You may inform your supervisor or manager of the intention to call the child welfare agency, if you need their support to ensure that you have the privacy and staff coverage required to immediately make the call. You may name the child, but no details of the suspicion or disclosure should be discussed with your supervisor or manager.
- If your supervisor or manager is not available, you must proceed with the report to child welfare agency.
- Once you have made the call, notify your onsite or senior manager who will notify (senior YMCA lead for child protection) that a call has been made to a child welfare agency.

*** No staff, student, volunteer or member of the Board of Directors shall advise someone not to report suspicions of child abuse, nor try to stop the person from reporting or consulting with the child welfare agency.*

2. Seeking Medical Attention:

If the child has sustained injuries, seek immediate medical attention.

If injury is suspected to have been caused by child abuse or family violence, **do not** inform the parent of the intention to seek medical care for the child until you have spoken with a child protection worker and have been given clear direction to do so.

If you think the child is in immediate danger, **call the Police**. Immediately after calling the police, contact a child welfare agency.

3. Avoid Discussing with a Parent or Guardian

A staff, volunteer or student placement who suspects abuse or family violence is **not** to disclose their suspicion or intention to call a child welfare agency with the parent and/or guardian. Disclosing with the parent or guardian could jeopardize the child or contaminate the investigation. Therefore, **do not** talk with the parent or guardian unless you have been directed to do so by a child protection worker.

After consulting with a child welfare agency and if given permission by the child welfare agency official to notify the parent and/or guardian, a supervisor or his/her designate will emphasize to the parent both the concern for the child and legal obligation to Report Suspicion of Abuse.

Remember: A child welfare agency official will guide staff through this process if considered appropriate by the child welfare agency to speak with the parent or guardian. *Do not inform the parent or guardian on your own, without first consulting with the child welfare agency.*

4. Making the Call:

If the child's cultural or religious affiliation is known, the report can be made directly to the child protection agency of that child's religious or cultural affiliation. If the child's religious or cultural affiliation is not known, the

call should be made to the child welfare agency for the municipality in which the program is located. See contact information for child protection authorities in *Appendix A*.

If reporting to child welfare agency *after* regular business hours, you will likely be required to leave a message, your name and phone number with an answering service. Indicate if your call is urgent. You will then need to wait to hear back from an after-hours protection worker.

***Leaving a message is not considered a report. You must speak directly to a child protection agency worker. If you think the child is in immediate danger, do not wait to be called back – Phone the police.*

When placing a call to a child welfare agency:

Provide your Full name, your position, our Association name and a number where they can reach you, along with the full details to the best of your knowledge of your suspicion(s). Ask for the name and phone number of the caseworker or manager you spoke with at the child protection agency.

If any further suspicion of abuse or new information with respect to a child occurs, then you must make another report to the child protection agency, regardless of any previous reports.

- **Remember:** The child protection agency provides support. You can call to “consult” for guidance and agency staff will support you through the process. The goal of the YMCA and a child protection agency is to protect all children whose safety must be considered first.

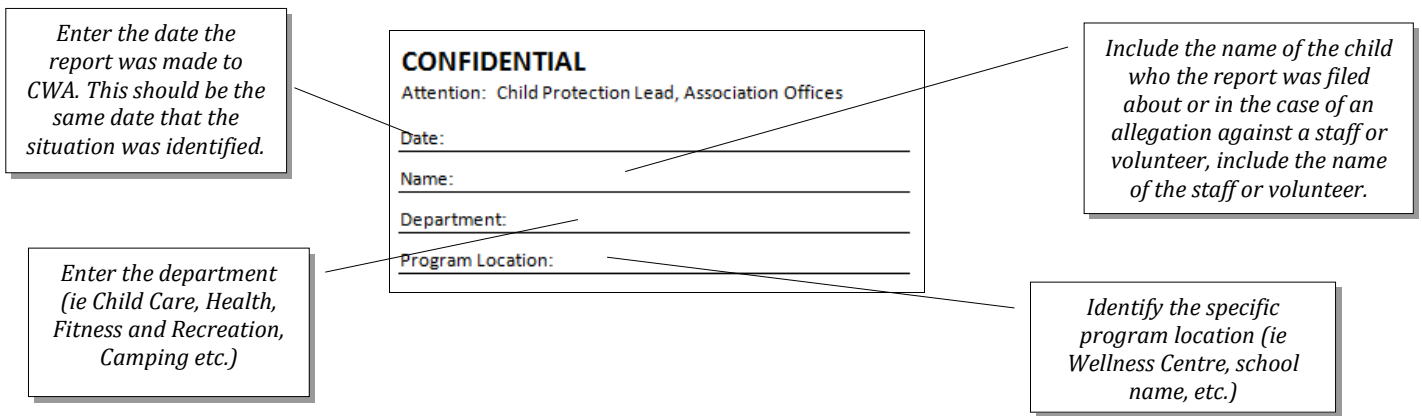
Additional reporting for staff delivering programs to children:

If a child care program is located in a school, child care staff shall inform the principal that a call has been made to the child welfare agency. In addition, suspected or witnessed abuse at a child care centre is a **Serious Occurrence** reportable within 24 hours to the Ministry. YMCA child care staff shall refer to *YMCA Child and Family Development Procedures* for more information about Serious Occurrence reporting.

(Other provincial reporting requirements may apply. Staff shall speak with their manager or refer to additional reporting requirements established by the YMCA to meet any other government or funding requirements that apply to staff delivering programs to children or vulnerable persons.)

5. Documentation Guidelines

- a) Documentation must be legible and written by hand by the person who reported the suspected abuse - do not type on a computer. Write with a ballpoint pen, not a marker or felt tip that might smudge or leak.
- b) Be factual, based on your observations. Do not include or document your personal thoughts about how it might have happened. Include direct observations and indicators to support your statements. You may include what someone else has told you, as long as it is relevant and you have recorded who told you the information.
- c) **Description Details** – Use the *Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form* (Appendix C). The child abuse reporting form outlines what you need to include when documenting suspected child abuse and your call to a child protection authority.
***If a reporting form is unavailable or you are unable to access a child abuse reporting form at any time, it is very important that you still make a report by calling the child welfare agency immediately. Then document the report by hand, using a blank sheet of paper and place the report in a sealed envelope per e) and f) below.*
- d) Do not make a rough copy and then re-write ‘in good’. Your original document is required. If you make a mistake, don’t use whiteout. Simply cross it out with a single line.
- e) Make sure documentation is complete. Sign and date the report. Place the report in a sealed envelope marked CONFIDENTIAL. Write the child’s name on the front, and sign and date the envelope.



- f) Give the sealed envelope to your manager who will ensure the envelope is promptly delivered to the Risk Management Department for safeguarding (secure storage) and retention indefinitely.
- g) In addition to the original documentation, staff shall use the YMCA Incident Report form to record **very brief** information, indicating the child’s name, the program location, and date the call was made to the child welfare agency. In the description, record ‘*call made to a child welfare agency*’. If applicable, also record ‘*abuse allegation against a staff/volunteer*’ in the event of an allegation of abuse against a staff or volunteer. Then sign and date the incident report form. Forward a copy of the incident report to your program manager and to Risk Management in keeping with YMCA incident reporting procedures.

***Documentation with respect to suspected child abuse is not to be released to anyone unless there is a warrant, subpoena or court order to submit records or attend court. Any request to release of records is to be forwarded to (senior lead for child protection) who will determine appropriate action in consultation with legal counsel as needed.*

6. If a staff, student placement or volunteer is suspected of abuse

If a staff/student placement/volunteer suspects another staff/student/volunteer of abusing a child or children who participate in the program, he/she will inform their onsite manager or general manager of the intention to immediately call a child welfare agency.

If it is a parent who is making the allegation against a staff/student/volunteer, staff shall inform the parent of his/her Duty to Report suspected child abuse to a child welfare agency. The supervisor also has a responsibility to call the children welfare agency. If the person suspected of abuse is the supervisor, the parent should make the call to a child welfare agency.

A staff/student/volunteer making the allegation will complete required documentation as outlined in 5 above.

The person who is suspected of abusing a child will not be told by anyone about the suspicion, or the intention to report. Only under the direction and consultation with a child protection worker is the information to be disclosed by a manager with the alleged person.

The manager will notify their senior manager or VP that a call has been placed to a child welfare agency. The manager will notify the senior lead for child protection who will notify designated members of management of the allegation. Management will determine further action steps for appropriate handling and response.

7. Confidentiality

All information related to disclosure or an allegation of abuse will be treated confidentially to the extent possible.



APPENDIX D
YMCA SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORTING FORM - SAMPLE

YMCA CHILD ABUSE REPORTING FORM

(Forms to be completed by hand in pen by the staff who suspected and reported. Completed forms to be forwarded to the attention of the Association Child Protection Lead in a sealed envelope marked confidential with the date, child's name and program location)

CONFIDENTIAL

Date Form Completed: _____

Name of YMCA Facility: _____

YMCA Program Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

Child's Age: _____

Birthdate (m/d/y): _____

Gender: Male Female

Child's Address (street, city, postal code): _____

Child's Phone Number: _____

Name of Parent 1: _____

Name of Parent 2: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Parent 1 Street Address: _____

Parent 2 Street Address: _____

Parent 1 City, Postal Code: _____

Parent 2 City, Postal Code: _____

Parent 1 Home Phone: _____

Parent 2 Home Phone: _____

Parent 1 Work Phone: _____

Parent 2 Work Phone: _____

Reason for this report:

Suspicion of abuse

Child disclosure

Allegation of abuse against a YMCA staff or volunteer

Describe incident, situation, statement or behavioural and/or physical indications of abuse:

If child's explanation was offered, give details, including what was said and when:



Area(s) on child's body showing indicators of abuse (or insert body chart)

Reporting Information

Child Welfare Agency Location contacted:

Name of Child Protection Social Worker:

Date of Call:

Time of Call:

Action the child protection social worker said will occur:

Follow up required: Other comments or observations

Name of Staff Completing Report:

Staff Name:

Position:

Staff Signature:

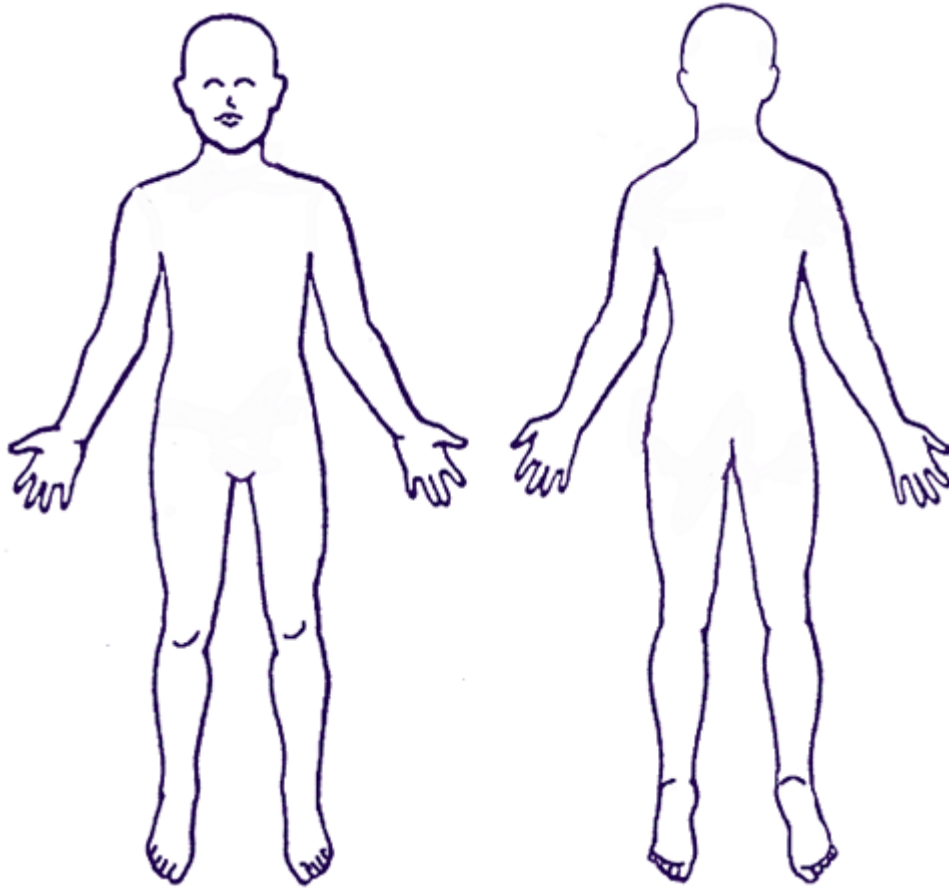
Date:

Date & Time

Completed: _____

Child Abuse Reporting Form Body Chart

When completing the YMCA Child Abuse Reporting Form, the body chart below can be used as an attachment to show the area(s) on the child's body showing indicators of abuse.





YMCA Code of Conduct in service to safeguarding children and youth.

The YMCA is committed to support YMCA mission critical work where children and youth are safe, families are strong, and communities are supported.

As members of the YMCA employee community, we each hold the morale and ethical responsibility to uphold YMCA policies and procedures, both formal and informal, in service to safeguard all children and youth attending YMCA programs and services.

Child Safeguarding in the YMCA

Child safeguarding refers to the standards upon which each YMCA employee and volunteer accepts the responsibility to proactively exercise measures to ensure that they do no harm to children, such that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the YMCA has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, result in timely and appropriate actions that include, reporting to their local Child Protection agency.

Adherence to YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy will be demonstrated by:

- Respecting the dignity of all children and youth.
- Considering and respecting the cultural and socioeconomic differences that may give rise to concerns related to adherence of the YMCA policy.
- Every YMCA employee or volunteer, regardless of their position or level, should strive to learn, understand, and follow the rules of the YMCA Child Safeguarding policy that apply to their specific job responsibilities.
- Seek assistance where clarity is needed, in a timely manner with the utmost respect for confidentiality of those involved.

The YMCA will seek to keep children and youth safe by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting them
- appointing a designated Child Safeguarding Lead
- adopting child protection and safeguarding best practices through our policies, procedures, and code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures that include computer network safety practices on YMCA devices
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training, and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and code of conduct confidently and competently using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families, and carers appropriately.
- using our procedures to manage any allegations involving staff and volunteers appropriately
- building a safeguarding culture where we work in partnership with employees and volunteers, children, youth, and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.
- ensuring that YMCA programs and services geared to children and youth are designed with consideration of the environment and context, taking into account the potential impact on the children and youth it is engaged with. This includes selecting suitable spaces that support child safety, such as locations with adequate exits, proximity



to washrooms, windows, and line of sight. Staff should be able to recognize and address potential safety issues in program locations and take appropriate measures to mitigate risks to children and youth.

This means that members of the YMCA employee and volunteer community commit to:

- Promptly and without hesitation, report complaints from children, youth or their families or carers, all allegations or disclosures of grooming child abuse or neglect, concerns about child safety, and any breaches of the YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy
- Have a duty of care to ensure that all who access the YMCA's programs, services and facilities are provided with a safe, open and honest environment that protects children and youth and the YMCA employee and volunteer community who work with them.
- Not harm or exploit any child or young person, including but not limited to those who access YMCA programs and services.
- Always supervise children and youth to ensure they engage positively with our programs, behave appropriately towards each other, and are in a safe environment protected from internal and external threats.
- For supervision of children using a restroom, always ensure: The restroom is not occupied by suspicious or unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. Children are with an adult staff member and proceed in groups of three or more (e.g. 1 staff and 2 children or 2 staff and 1 child) when using the bathroom. Either 'line of sight' or 'line of sound' supervision is maintained while children are using the facilities. Ensure no child, regardless of age, enters a bathroom alone on a field trip. If staff are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
- Always conduct or supervise private activities in pairs – diapering, putting on bathing suits, taking showers, etc. When this is not feasible, staff should be positioned so that they are visible to others
- Not use inappropriate, discriminatory, racist, sexist, violent, profane, sexual, belittling or negative language in the presence of children and youth, for example, swearing, derogatory terms, sexual jokes or innuendos, threats, name-calling, etc.
- Ensure that sign-in and sign-out procedures are followed for visitors to the site and, where applicable for children and youth attending program. YMCA employee and volunteers are required to be vigilant in witnessing the arrival and departure of all children and youth.
- Only take photos or videos of children and youth on YMCA issued devices. All photos require appropriate consent. This refers to consent granted by parent or carers using a current signed YMCA Image Release form.
- Ensure photos and videos of children and youth are only uploaded to official YMCA sites once appropriate consent from the parent or carer has been provided. Photos and videos must not be uploaded to any personal or unofficial YMCA social media platforms.
- Not discipline children and youth using emotional abuse, physical, or corporal punishment, favouritism, physical abuse, verbal abuse, reference to cultural or ethnic differences, swearing or the withdrawal of the necessities of care (including food, shelter and emotional warmth).
- Not engage in sexual behaviour between, with or in the presence of children and youth, including but not limited to engaging in open discussion of a mature or adult nature.
- Not engage in physical contact with children or youth unless for the express purpose of the program or activity, or as based on the needs of the child or youth rather than on the needs of the YMCA employee or volunteer, eg. To assist or comfort a distressed child or youth.



- Not have a child or youth sit on their knee, in their lap, piggyback them, cuddle, kiss, hug, tickle or touch them in an inappropriate and or culturally insensitive manner. This also includes rough physical games e.g. tackling, wrestling.
- Not use physical restraint, unless as a last resort to prevent injury to a child or young person or others; in this instance the level of force used must be appropriate to the specific circumstances and aimed solely at restraining the child or young person to prevent harm to themselves or others.
- Ensure that parents or carers be informed of travel and sleeping arrangements prior to the commencement of any excursion or camp and that a full documented risk assessment is completed, signed by the staff conducting the assessment and approved for the excursion or camp.
- Promptly report concerns, issues, problems, suspected incidents and suspicious behaviour to their manager or supervisor (or most appropriate senior staff with authority) and to local Child Protection Services.
- Report to their supervisor, any suspicion, observation or knowledge of inappropriate behaviour by YMCA employees or volunteers that breaches YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy standards.
- Fully cooperate with the defined relevant local police or child safety and protection agencies in their investigations of suspected child abuse.
- Not undertake a task of a personal nature that the child or young person can do for themselves, e.g. changing clothes, personal grooming, feeding and toileting.
- Not give personal gifts to children, unless under the banner of a gift from the YMCA (e.g. gifts from the YMCA service to the child or youth in recognition of a designated holiday or celebration).

This means that YMCA employees and volunteers must:

- Ensure they are never alone with a child or young person where they cannot be observed by at least one other YMCA employee or volunteer, or other adult.
- Disclose to their supervisor where a friendship has developed prior to or during employment by the YMCA, between them and families and/or children or youth who currently participate or have previously participated in YMCA programs.
- Not engage in unauthorized travel, e.g. transport an individual child or youth or a group of children or young people to or from YMCA programs in a private vehicle, without the written consent of the senior YMCA staff with oversight for the program or branch area. All transport requires a minimum of two YMCA employees to be present at all material times.
- Not engage in activities with current or previous YMCA children or youth outside of the YMCA for example visiting their home, babysitting, social engagements, etc. , unless permission has been granted by a senior YMCA manager with oversight for the program or branch,
- Not engage with children or youth (current or former) outside the YMCA, including via social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc as well as voice or video call, text or email, directly to a child or young person unless for the express purpose of conducting YMCA business, counselling or training sessions and with manager knowledge and approval. This contact must be from a YMCA supplied device only. Where practicable all communication made should be directed to the parents or carers of the child or youth.

I, hereby acknowledge that I have received and read the Code of Conduct. I understand that as an employee or volunteer of the YMCA, it is my responsibility to comply with the principles and standards outlined in this code.



I confirm that I have received a copy of the code of conduct and understand that as an ongoing condition of employment, I am required to participate in regular training, as determined by the YMCA, on the YMCA Child Safeguarding Policy requirements and practices.

I understand that any violation of this code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Employee Signature: _____

YMCA Position: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____