



YKids Vulnerable Children's Policy

Reference: ECS Regulations 2008, Reg 46, HS31, HS32, GMA7A, Children's Act 2014

Reference: YMCA Child Protection Procedures, YKids Excursion Policy, YKids Supervision Policy, YKids Sleep Policy, YKids Nappy Changing and Toileting Policy, YKids Personal Policy, YMCA Social Networking Procedure and the YMCA Recruitment Policy.

Rationale:

At YKids we are committed to safeguarding the security and total well-being of children at their centres. Children have the right to develop physically, intellectually and socially in a safe environment, free from any form of abuse. Their welfare and interests are to be given paramount consideration. This policy is divided into two sections:

1. A process for prevention of child abuse; and
2. A procedure for responding to information or a complaint about child abuse.

Teachers play a critical role in detecting, reporting and preventing child abuse because of the unique nature of their role, the time they spend with children, access to families, their training and professional responsibilities.

Te Whāriki:

Mana Atua

- Children experience an environment where their emotional well-being is nurtured.
- Children experience an environment where they are kept safe from harm.

Objectives:

- To ensure that teachers are familiar with the contents of this policy.
- To protect children from abuse.
- To respond in ways that keep children safe when abuse is suspected or identified.
- To reduce stress on staff, by providing guidance and professional development, annually.
- To reassure parents by involving them in the development of child abuse prevention policies.

Procedures – Child Abuse Prevention

The prevention of child abuse requires staff to understand how to recognise and respond appropriately to indicators of child abuse. Staff need to be familiar with these policies and know their roles and implement appropriate procedures, especially about contacting and working with child abuse protection agencies. Staff must also be aware of the laws and regulations, rights and responsibilities of children, staff, parents and "agency" personnel, which relate to child abuse protection.

Where YMCA Management decide not to report suspected child abuse to Oranga Tamariki or the NZ Police and an individual staff member, *who has good reason to suspect that child abuse has occurred*, disagrees with this decision, then that individual may make a personal decision to continue regardless, and may be confident that no action will be taken against them for doing so.

1. Staff Training.

All Centre Staff will receive training to increase their awareness about and knowledge of child abuse:

- a. Staff are required to attend Child Protection Training annually. This will be done through one of the following recognised training providers; YMCA Nelson or Safe Guarding Children's Initiative.
- b. Certificates of completion are required and will be added to the staff's individual files.
- c. Information about child protection will be available in the Centre for staff and other adults to read. Centre staff are encouraged to read this information and accept the responsibility to implement this policy.
- d. The Centre Co-ordinator and Operations Manager are available to guide and support staff through the correct procedures when dealing with suspected cases of child abuse.
- e. Teachers new to the Centre will be made aware of this policy and procedures as part of their induction.

2. Keeping in touch with Professional Agencies.

YKids maintains a good working relationship with agencies that have statutory power in child protection. YKids and the YMCA Nelson are familiar with the laws and regulations which serve to protect children from abuse. YKids acknowledges that these agencies have specialist knowledge and expertise to respond effectively to child protection issues.

- a. YKids/YMCA staff and management do not assume responsibility beyond the level of their own expertise.
- b. When dealing with suspected child abuse; staff will contact either the Centre Co-ordinator or Operation's Manager in the first instance as to be guided in consultation with Oranga Tamariki and other appropriate agencies.
- c. Contact details for agencies that have expert knowledge in child abuse issues are available in the centre.

3. Employment.

YMCA Nelson ensures employment procedures include a thorough checking of applicants' suitability to be in contact with children.

- a. Applicants for positions within YKids are required to submit their employment history, including all professional training undertaken.
- b. Interviews and referee checks are undertaken prior to the offering of any position within YKids.
- c. All YKids employees require evidence of a clear police check as a condition of employment; and
- d. **NO PERSON** with a known history of sexual offending (whether with children or adults) will be employed by YKids.
- e. YKids is committed to employing teachers with necessary skills to contribute to children's safety – including their physical, emotional, intellectual, social and cultural well-being.
- f. All YKids employees are required to attend a Child Protection training held by the Safe Guarding Children's Initiative in the first instance.

4. Supervision.

YKids aims to ensure that all staff and other adults are well supervised while visiting or working at the centre. Supervision is important both to protect children and also to protect other adults from unfounded accusations of child abuse.

- a. The building is designed so that children and adults are always visible to adults, through viewing windows and open spaces.
- b. There are clear expectations that no doors are to be locked (especially in the bathroom area) while children are in the rooms, this ensures that all adults are able to be accessed.
- c. It is expected that all teachers will take precautions to keep themselves and the children in care safe by alerting another staff member when it is necessary for them to perform a personal care moment (i.e nappy changes, soiled clothes, hair care etc).
- d. Rosters ensure that there are at least two staff members in the centre during all hours of operation.
- e. All parts of the outdoor area where children can go should be readily observed by staff supervising. The staff supervising should be able to be observed by one other staff member – as far as practicable.
- f. Centre routines are organised so that spaces for toileting, nappy changing and sleeping/resting are well supervised.
- g. Visitors to the centre are identified (required to complete visitors book at reception) and supervised to ensure they are not alone with children at any time.
- h. Students must be supervised at all times while working with children. Students are not permitted to perform caretaking tasks (toileting, nappy change, supervising sleep routines etc).
- i. Parents are not permitted to perform caretaking tasks for any child other than their own.
- j. Except in an emergency, children are not able to leave the centre without the permission of parents/guardians.
- k. All outings are conducted in accordance with the Excursion Policy.

5. Professionalism

YMCA aims to establish boundaries for staff roles and expects staff to maintain high levels of professionalism, high standards of adult behaviour and attitude.

- a. It is expected that staff will have high standards of ethical and professional behaviour at all times.
- b. Staff must ensure that their relationship with children in the centre are based on the following guidelines:
 - I. Staff will respond appropriately to children's need for affection, reassurance and comfort.
 - II. Physical contact with children should be guided by the child's physical or emotional needs.
 - III. Staff will not initiate contact with a child for their own gratification – it is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection or touching on a child.
 - IV. Physical contact during caretaking tasks should be limited to only what is necessary to complete the task.
 - V. Where children are able, staff will encourage children to complete caretaking tasks for themselves.
- c. Private babysitting arrangements made between centre staff and parents is discouraged. However, we acknowledge that some of our families do not have relatives or friends living close by to help them with the care of their children outside of centre hours. In these instances, a signed agreement by both staff and parents will be obtained prior to arrangements being made and our babysitting policy will be followed.

- d. Close personal relationships and socialising with families/whanau outside of the centre is discouraged.
- e. Fortnightly staff meetings allow teachers the opportunity to address professional issues on a regular basis – including review of care routines, acceptable touching and staff safety discussions.
- f. Centre staff are expected to take action to ensure their own safety with children.
- g. Any person that perpetrates or colludes with any sexual act on or with a child will be instantly suspended and banned from any contact with YMCA children pending an investigation.

6. Inappropriate Practice for Adults Working with children.

- a. Any form of verbal, physical and/or emotional ill treatment, corporal punishment.
- b. Isolating children either physically or visually, including time out. This does not include “quiet time” or “inclusionary time- out” (where in extreme cases a teacher will sit alongside the child until they are ready to engage).
- c. Immobilisation (meaning restraint by means other than the child being held by the teacher to ensure the well-being of the child and others).
- d. Deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection.
- e. Use of blame, harsh language, belittling or degrading responses, emotional manipulation.
- f. Shaming or comparing children.

7. Relationships with Parents.

YKids promotes parent's/guardian's involvement in the service as a means of protecting children from abuse.

- a. The centre operates an open-door policy. Parents are welcome to visit the centre whenever they wish; this includes arriving at the centre unannounced and observing their child's participation in programme activities.
- b. Parents are encouraged to participate in centre activities such as excursions, and social and educational events.
- c. Parents are provided with information about the service at the time of enrolment and on an ongoing basis through centre newsletters and notice boards. Centre policies, including this child protection policy are readily available to parents.
- d. Parents are encouraged to raise any concerns about the treatment of children with centre staff. A procedure for raising concerns is prominently displayed in the centre.

8. Preventative Education.

YKids believes that educating parents and children helps protect children from abuse.

- a. Centre staff will, from time to time provide parents with information about child protection issues and relevant community programmes.
- b. Centre staff will, from time to time, initiate programmes for children and adults that focus on child safety and abuse prevention.
- c. Resources about child protection are available for parents in the centre.
- d. Books about personal safety are available to children in the centre.
- e. Regular training ensures that centre staff are confident in responding to children's questions.

9. Protecting Children from Exposure to Inappropriate Material.

- a. Web Content Filtering.
- b. A YMCA Social Networking Policy
- c. Centre-based processes to ensure that magazine and other materials donated to the centre and used by children are checked for inappropriate images.

Procedure – Child Abuse Response

Where any person reports to any staff member any suspicions of child abuse at the centre, the staff member should notify the Centre Co-ordinator and/or the Operation's Manager. Where appropriate the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

7. Responding to Child Abuse.

All cases of suspected child abuse will be responded to in a manner which will help to keep the child safe:

- a. Where a child discloses abuse, staff will respond in accordance with the following guidelines:
 - i. believe the child;
 - ii. reassure the child that they were right to tell and that they will get help;
 - iii. do not question the child, probe or pressure the child for further information;
- b. Where a staff member suspects that a child is being abused, the following guidelines apply:
 - i. believe what you see;
 - ii. ask the child what is wrong; but
 - iii. do not pressure the child or ask again
- c. Any staff member who suspects child abuse **should not**:
 - i. investigate; or
 - ii. raise the issue with the suspected abuser.
- d. A staff member who is told in confidence by another adult about a situation of child abuse **should not** promise to keep it a secret but should state that the child's safety is the first priority.
- e. Staff will keep written records of concerns and observations. Any disclosure of abuse from a child will be recorded immediately;
- f. Where there are concerns about possible abuse, but staff are unsure, they may, in the first instance, seek guidance from Oranga Tamariki or any other specialist agency without giving identifying information. **see 'when to call in what agency'**
- g. A staff member who suspects abuse should not act alone, and should consult with a more senior staff member (i.e. the Centre Co-ordinator or Operation's Manager)
- h. All discussions and documentation of suspected child abuse will be kept confidential; and
- i. Documentation relating to suspected child abuse will be kept in a locked cabinet or cupboard.

8. When to call in what agency?

If it is clear from information or investigation that there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe of an instance of child abuse having taken place the Centre Co-ordinator or Children's Service Manger shall notify an appropriate outside support agency i.e. Oranga Tamariki or NZ Police.

However, you and the Centre Manager are able to contact the Oranga Tamariki National Contact Centre on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326459) and discuss your concerns anonymously if you are unsure your observations constitute abuse.

9. When a staff member is suspected.

- a. Initial report of any incident must be written down in full as soon as possible.
- b. Where appropriate the Operation's Manager and YMCA CEO will discuss the incident as soon as practical with the staff member and other possible witnesses.
- c. The staff member's version of the incident(s) will be investigated before any decision is made.
- d. Where the investigation takes more than one day, the staff member may be asked to carry out alternative duties or suspended until a full investigation can be completed. Appropriate support will be accessed for the staff member.
- e. Where there is some substantive evidence that an instance of child abuse may have taken place then Oranga Tamariki should be contacted by the Operation's Manager. Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that an instance of child abuse has taken place, that staff member shall be suspended whilst an investigation occurs.
- f. The Operation's Manager or YMCA CEO will take into account the advice of Oranga Tamariki and then refer to the NZ Police for investigation.
- g. The parent of the child(ren) affected will be advised as soon as possible.

10. Obligations to staff.

The protection of children is paramount. The next obligation of the Operation's Manager shall be a full and fair investigation; it shall not be forgotten the impact to staff members this can have. Care will be taken to ensure that presumption of innocence of those accused or implicated will be maintained until investigations are complete. Counselling time off will be offered to staff who have been accused wrongly. Where YMCA Management decide not to report suspected child abuse to Oranga Tamariki or the NZ Police and an individual staff member, *who has good reason to suspect that child abuse has occurred*, disagrees with this decision, then that individual may make a personal decision to continue regardless, and may be confident that no action will be taken against them for doing so.

11. What a parent should do if abuse in the Centre is suspected.

The parent has the right to report allegations to Oranga Tamariki and/or NZ Police at any time.

- a. All suspicions or observed incident or reports should be reported directly to the Centre Manager as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and institute an investigation and notify the Group Manager ECE.
- b. The parent who has made the allegation or report must not discuss this with other staff, nor the person(s) or parents involved in the alleged abuse, nor other parents, or persons outside the Centre until after a full and fair investigation has taken place.
- c. this policy will be displayed in full on the notice board.
- d. The parent of the child (or children) affected will be advised as soon as possible after investigations are reasonably complete.

12. When abuse by someone outside the Centre is suspected.

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been or is subject to abuse, (but not in immediate danger) the Centre Co-ordinator and/or Operation's Manager will be advised and will arrange for the child to be observed and a confidential record initiated.

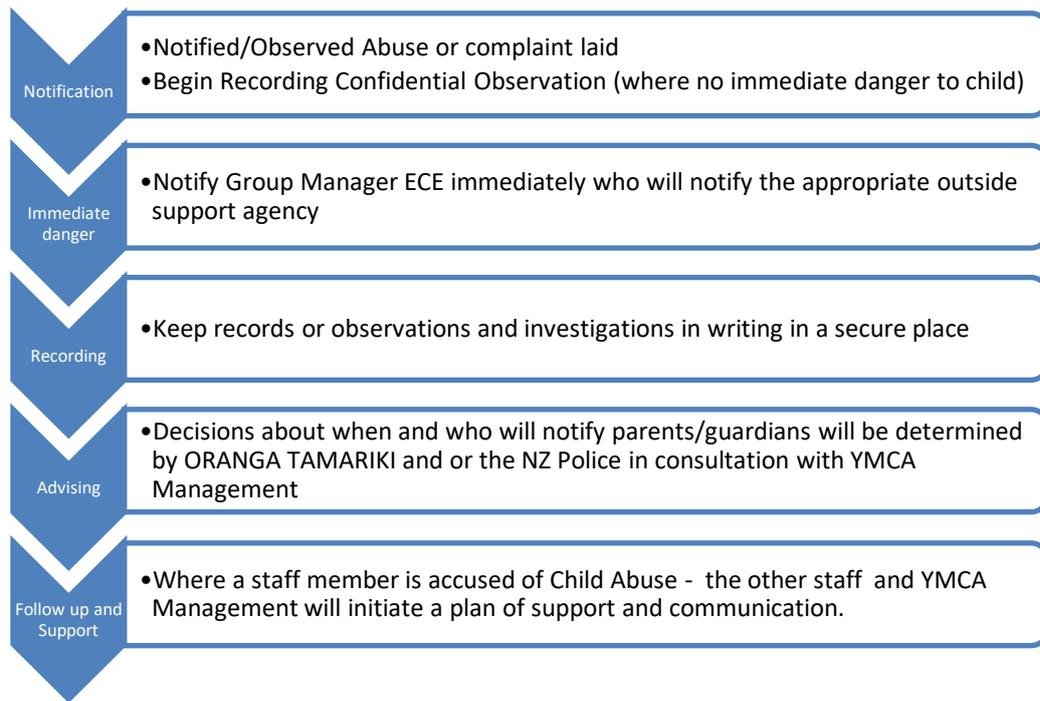
Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in immediate danger of abuse when they leave the centre or when an investigation or observation reveal evidence of abuse the Centre Co-ordinator in consultation with the Operation's Manager shall notify the appropriate outside support agency or professional as soon as possible.

Where there is some doubt that an instance of child abuse has taken place the Centre Co-ordinator in consultation with the Operation's Manager may determine that an independent 'mediator' should be called in to ensure that the policy has been followed and investigated is seen to have been done fairly and fully.

- a. the ultimate responsibility for reporting suspected child abuse lies with YMCA Management personnel
- b. a staff member who has reason to suspect child abuse will report the matter to a more senior staff member (Centre Co-ordinator or Operation's Manager).
- c. The decision to report suspected child abuse to Oranga Tamariki or the NZ Police will be made by the Operation's Manager in consultation with Centre Co-ordinator and staff.
- d. Where there appears to be an immediate risk of further abuse YMCA will act without delay to contact Oranga Tamariki or the NZ Police.
- e. Where suspicions of child abuse are not confirmed, centre staff will continue to monitor the situation in consultation with the Centre Co-ordinator and Operation's Manager.
- f. The Operation's Manager will report any notification of suspected child abuse to the YMCA Management Team.
- g. Where the centre is certain that the suspected abuse has occurred outside of the family or by a person not known closely to the family, YMCA may tell the family prior to reporting;
 - i. the decision to discuss possible child abuse with the family will be made by the Operation's Manager in consultation with the YMCA Management Team and centre staff.
 - ii. the Operation's Manager will ensure that centre staff have the appropriate skills, help and support to present the information to parents.
- h. Where centre staff suspect that abuse may have been perpetrated by a family member or someone close to the family, YMCA will not initially inform the family of the decision to report. The YMCA Management Team/Operation's Manager will ensure that they are informed by the appropriate person at the appropriate time;
- i. Where there is good reason to suspect that child abuse has been perpetrated by a YMCA employee, Centre Co-ordinator will immediately inform the Operation's Manager/YMCA Management Team;
 - i. staff members under suspicion of abuse will be suspended while the matter is investigated and they will be fully informed of their rights; and
 - ii. YMCA Management will report the matter to the statutory authorities as required;

Where YMCA Management decide not to report suspected child abuse to Oranga Tamariki or the NZ Police and an individual staff member, *who has good reason to suspect that child abuse has occurred*, disagrees with this decision, then that individual may make a personal decision to continue regardless, and may be confident that no action will be taken against them for doing so.

Step by step process:



Review and Evaluation

YMCA Management will review this policy and procedure annually or earlier as required. However, staff will be encouraged to discuss child protection issues at Monthly staff meetings. In the event of an incident or occasion where this policy has to be implemented a review of the policy will take place after investigation into that incident has been concluded.

Contact Details

Oranga Tamariki 0508 Family (0508 326 459)

REMEMBER - you are not experts in child protection and as such when in doubt consult with the Licensee/Group Manager ECE who can call Oranga Tamariki and advise you of the next steps- this can be done confidentially and anonymously by contacting the call centre and asking to speak with a duty social worker.

NB: Any person at any time can contact Oranga Tamariki or NZ Police for support and guidance.

Approved: _____

Date: _____

Review Date: _____

Signed: _____