

PARENT VERSION: Safeguarding Children and Young People at the YMCA

The YMCA of Brisbane is a not-for-profit organisation which is governed by a volunteer board. The YMCA of Brisbane has provided a wide range of services to people of all ages, including children and young people, since 1864.

Currently our programs and services include:

- Childcare facilities including long day care, outside school hours care, vacation care, limited hours care, crèche, family day care and in-home care
- Health and Fitness including gyms, group exercise, personal training
- Sport and Recreation including camping, gymnastics, swimming, judo, aquatic education, squash, indoor sport
- Youth services including mentoring, vocational school, vocational training, youth space and Queensland Youth Parliament
- Hospitality including a hotel, restaurants and function centres
- Benevolent programs including affordable housing, school breakfast program, specialist OSHC for young people with a disability and Siblings Reconnect

Thousands of children and young people take part in YMCA programs each year; including being in one of our child care programs, to enjoying swimming, competing in gymnastics competitions, or participating in outdoor education camps.

We take our responsibility for keeping children and young people safe very seriously. We follow clear policies and practices that aim to keep children and young people who participate in our programs and services safe. Below is a summary of these policies and practices.

To see the full Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, please request a copy at your nearest YMCA centre. We also have child and young people-friendly versions available at <http://www.brisbaneymca.org/about/safeguarding-children>

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

The YMCA recognizes that all children and young people have the right to develop and reach their potential in environments that are caring, nurturing and safe.

The YMCA works to safeguard children and young people in our care from:

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Grooming

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

All of our staff, volunteers and Board Members have clear roles and responsibilities with respect to safeguarding children and young people.

YMCA Staff Code of Conduct Summary

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers are required to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct towards customers, children and young people.

We have developed a Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to the children and young people in our care.

Transport

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers must not:

- Travel, or be accommodated, alone with a child participant before, during or after a YMCA program, excursion or camp (with the exception of FDC and IHC).
- Transport an individual child or a group of children to or from YMCA programs in private vehicles without the written consent of the YMCA CEO (with the exception of FDC and IHC). This is only an option when all other avenues of transport have been excluded. A management plan for travelling in cars needs to be adhered to at all times.

Supervision

All children need to be supervised and accompanied by an adult at all times while in a YMCA service or program.

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers must ensure young children are appropriately supervised in bathrooms, showers and locker rooms.

Staff and volunteers are never to be alone with a young person where they cannot be observed by other YMCA staff members, volunteers or adults.

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers must not under any circumstances, release a child from a YMCA program or service to anyone other than a parent or guardian, or to an individual authorised by the parent/guardian. Where such authorisation is made, it must be done so in writing.

Physical Contact with Children and Young People

Any physical contact with children and young people must be appropriate to the delivery of the programs and services and based on the needs of the child or young person (such as to assist or comfort a distressed young person) rather than on the needs of our personnel.

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers must not have a child sit in their lap, cuddle, kiss, and hug or touch children in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive manner.

Uniform

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers must be identified by a YMCA name badge and, where practicable, a branded uniform that is familiar to the children and is the same or similar as that of their co-workers.

Positive Guidance

We aim to make children and young people aware of the acceptable limits of their behaviour. There are times when staff may be required to use appropriate behaviour management strategies to ensure:

- An effective and positive environment
- The safety and/or wellbeing of children, young people or personnel participating on our programs and services

Any behaviour management strategy used must be:

- Fair
- Respectful
- Appropriate to the developmental stage of the children or young people involved

The child or young person is to be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive way.

Under no circumstances are YMCA staff to take disciplinary action involving physical punishment or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating.

Adhering to role boundaries

Our staff and volunteers are not to act outside the confines of their duties, as specified in their position description, when helping to deliver our programs and services.

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers must not engage children (other than direct family relations) from YMCA programs in non-YMCA activities such as baby-sitting, tutoring and weekend trips. All staff/volunteers are obliged to immediately report knowledge of such activities to their Manager or Supervisor. Parents are asked not to place YMCA staff in a position where refusal to babysit may offend.

Photographs of children and young people

Children and young people may only be photographed by staff while involved in our programs and services, if:

- Prior written parental/guardian authorisation is obtained
- The context is directly related to participation in our programs and services
- The child is appropriately dressed and posed

Use of electronic communication

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers must not:

- Take and retain photos on personal mobile phones
- Provide use of their mobile phones to a child or young person in their care
- Text or email information directly to a child or young person's mobile or email address, unless for the express purpose of conducting YMCA business. All communication made should be directed to the parents/guardians
- Use personal social media accounts (such as Facebook or Twitter), to contact or converse with children. Any contact should be directed to parent/guardians using official YMCA sites
- Place on social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram) or any other medium photos of children in care

Parent Responsibilities

In order to support the YMCA in keeping all children safe, parents are asked to bring their children into the YMCA facility, and not drop them outside.

The YMCA's policy does not allow staff to engage children enrolled in a YMCA program, in non-YMCA activities, such as babysitting or tutoring, unless there is a direct family relationship. Parents are asked to adhere to this policy at all times.

We encourage parents/guardians to report any concerns relating to the safety or wellbeing of their own or other child(ren) or young person in a YMCA facility. This can be done:

(a) by speaking to our staff in person or by or

(b) by contacting the YMCA's Child Protection Officer on 3253 1706 or child.protection@ymcabrisbane.org or

(c) by writing to YMCA Child Protection Officer, PO Box 669, Spring Hill Qld 4004

Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations

YMCA of Brisbane staff and volunteers play an important role in protecting children and young people who may be at risk of harm due to abuse or neglect. Staff and volunteers often have daily or weekly contact with children, young people and their families, and so are well placed to observe when a child or young person appears to be at risk of harm.

Our staff and volunteers are required to identify, report and respond to any concerns about, or incidents of, serious abuse or neglect towards children or young people to whom we provide services.

Staff are required to:

- Report suspected abuse to their direct supervisor/manager
- Report suspected abuse to the Department of Child Safety (or other relevant Department) or the Police

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance to fair and effective reporting processes. Only authorised YMCA staff, Australian Childhood Foundation staff and YMCA legal representatives will have access to documentation regarding a report.

The YMCA will cooperate and comply with any reasonable request from the Department of Child Safety (or other relevant Department) and Police as required by law.