



Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons Policy

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1. Introduction / Objective

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

2. Policy Statement

YMCA Northumberland recognizes its responsibility to promote safe practices and to protect children and vulnerable persons from abuse and exploitation. YMCA Northumberland staff and volunteers encountering a situation they believe is one of concern will immediately respond according to section 125(1) of Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017 (CYFSA) "Duty to Report" and 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 and vulnerable persons;
- identifying any child who is suffering, or likely to suffer harm;
- reviewing and evaluating implementation of this policy regularly for effectiveness.

YMCA Northumberland is committed to an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where all Board Members, staff, volunteers, members, participants and stakeholders feel respected and valued regardless of gender; age; race; ethnicity; national origin; language differences; family or marital status; religion; socio-economic status; sexual orientation or identity; physical, mental or development abilities; and education. We are committed to being non-discriminatory and providing equal opportunities.

The YMCA Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons Policy applies to all YMCA staff. The YMCA Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons Policy applies to all YMCA volunteers 18 years of age and over and who volunteer for more than 10 hours per year.



3. Definitions

The following terms are used in this policy:

Child under provincial child protection legislation is someone who is or appears to be under 16 years of age, or someone who is 16 or 17 years old and a prescribed circumstance or condition exists.

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 (CAS). 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 section 125(1) of Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017 (CYFSA) and sets out what must be reported to a child protection authority (e.g. Children's Aid Society - CAS). A report must be made immediately if a child is or appears to be suffering from abuse or is at risk of harm. Duty to report applies to the public, and includes special reporting responsibilities for professionals whose work involves children.

Child in need of protection is defined under section 74(2) of Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017 (CYFSA) as a child who is or who appears to be suffering from abuse, neglect or risk of harm. Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion to a CAS.

- 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 7 for more information on 'duty to report' suspected child abuse.

Offense Declaration is a form that must be submitted by Child Care staff, on an annual basis and must be current within 15 days of the one-year anniversary of the previous declaration. This declaration states whether or not a Child Care staff has any criminal convictions under the Criminal Code of Canada for which a pardon has not been issued or granted.

Police Record Check (PRC) 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 Criminal Record Check or Criminal Record Check and Judicial Matters Check or Vulnerable Sector Check. At the end of the process, a report is issued.

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, hourly (full-time and part-time), seasonal, contract and on-call staff.

Volunteers include program volunteers, policy (Board/Board Committees) volunteers, philanthropy/fundraising volunteers and student placements.

Occasional and Special Event Volunteers are defined as volunteers who have limited interaction and are not left alone with children; and ii) whose involvement with the YMCA is limited in duration - less than 10 (ten) hours annually and are not left alone with children.

Vulnerable person for the purposes of this policy and reporting means an adult at risk. **An adult at risk** is a person aged 18 or over who is, or may be unable to protect themselves from abuse. The vulnerability of an adult is related to how able the adult is to make and exercise their own informed choices free from duress, pressure or undue influence of any sort, and to protect themselves from abuse. Refer to section 8 for examples.

Vulnerable persons may be at risk of one or more types of abuse including physical abuse or neglect (defined above), or emotional abuse, sexual abuse and financial abuse or exploitation.

- Emotional abuse of a vulnerable person is any act which may lessen the sense of identity, dignity or self-worth of a person, such as: confinement; physical and social isolation; verbal assault, harassment, humiliation, or intimidation; denial of information, privacy, visitors; coercion.
- Sexual abuse of a vulnerable person is any act involving unwanted touching/activity of a sexual nature, or a situation in which an adult consents or submits to sexual activity because a person in a position of trust or with authority has used that trust/authority to gain that consent. Such acts include: sexual assault, sexual harassment, any act designed to use the vulnerable person for the perpetrator's sexual gratification.
- Financial abuse or exploitation is any act involving the misuse or abuse of funds or assets belonging to a vulnerable person. Examples include obtaining property and funds without the person's knowledge or consent, or by using undue influence; or where a person is not mentally competent, or not acting in the person's best interest.

Alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse of a vulnerable person may constitute a criminal offence and the police should be informed. See section 8 for more information.

4. Legislative Context

Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017 (CYFSA)

We all share a responsibility to protect children from harm. We have a legal obligation to promptly report any suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection. Section 125 of Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017 (CYFSA) states that the public, including professionals who work with children, must promptly report any suspicions that a child is or may be in need of protection to a child protection agency (CAS). The Act recognizes that people working closely with children have a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and a particular responsibility to report their suspicions.



5. Roles and Responsibilities

YMCA Northumberland: The YMCA is committed to promoting safe practices to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or abuse.

YMCA Northumberland Board of Directors and Senior Management Team are responsible for protecting children and vulnerable persons by:

- Providing oversight of a protection framework that includes establishing policies and procedures, and monitoring;
- Ensuring systems are in place for regular review, reporting and evaluation of effectiveness of child and vulnerable persons protection initiatives;
- Appointing a member of YMCA management team (Manager, Administration, and HR) having special responsibility for advancing the objectives of this policy and child protection legislation. Appointing a member of YMCA Children Services or HFA Team as a secondary support for advancing the objectives of this policy and child protection legislation.

YMCA Northumberland Managers and Supervisors have additional responsibilities for maintaining a safe environment in all facilities and programs by:

- Ensuring all staff and volunteers receive training on this policy, and ensure re-fresher training in protecting children and vulnerable persons is provided annually;
- Arranging advanced training for staff and volunteers working directly with children;
- Ensuring recruitment, screening including police check/re-check 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;
- Responding promptly to any complaints, reports or allegations against staff or volunteers.
- YMCA Staff and Volunteers are expected to abide by this policy that includes:
- Following the Code of Conduct (section 6) for the protection of children and vulnerable persons;
- Participating in mandatory and re-fresher training in protecting children and vulnerable persons;
- Producing acceptable police records/re-check clearance letters;
- Reporting immediately any suspicions of child abuse directly to a child protection agency (CAS);
- Notifying their supervisor or staff contact that a report has been made to CAS;
- Contacting police services if a staff or volunteer suspects that a vulnerable person's safety is at risk.

YMCA Northumberland Staff and Volunteers also have responsibilities for maintaining a safe environment in all facilities and programs by:

- Ensuring they receive an orientation to child protection, training on this policy, as well as re-fresher training in protecting children and vulnerable persons annually;
- Receiving advanced training if working directly with children;
- Ensuring programs are developmentally appropriate and well planned in advance;
- Maintaining physical security and other safeguards to protect children accessing YMCA programs;
- Abiding by this policy that includes:





- Following the Code of Conduct (section 6) for the protection of children and vulnerable persons;
- Producing acceptable police records/re-check clearance letters;
- Reporting immediately any suspicions of child abuse directly to a child protection agency (CAS);
- Notifying their supervisor or staff contact that a report has been made to CAS;
- Contacting police services if a staff or volunteer suspects that a vulnerable person's safety is at risk.
- Active Supervision
 - Staff and Volunteers operate at the correct staff to child ratio
 - A sign in/sign out system in place to ensure effective transfer of care & real time tracking of all

6. Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons

In the course of staff or volunteer work at the YMCA, even if not working directly with children, there are times when staff or volunteers will encounter and interact with children and vulnerable persons or adults. The YMCA is committed to treating everyone with respect and dignity, and to helping children grow and develop to their full potential in a safe and caring environment.

Staff and volunteers are required to follow the **Code of Conduct** that describes good practices and includes practices to be avoided or never sanctioned. The practices outlined below clarify what is and is not acceptable behaviour when working with children and vulnerable persons. By defining what is and is not acceptable behaviour, good practice can be promoted, and the potential for abuse or allegations of abuse minimized.

Good Practice when interacting with children:

- Treat all children with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Make requests in clear terms geared to the child's level. Offer choices if you can.
- Give encouragement, in words or as a smile.
- Be vigilant and aware of how actions can be misinterpreted and always work in an open environment. Avoid private or unobserved situations with a child or vulnerable person unless personal assistance such as toileting, changing or behavioural support (child needs time away from program) is required.
- Ensure the number of adult staff is appropriate to safely conduct and supervise program activity.
- Involve parents whenever possible and reasonable.
- Ensure that a child is not left alone. Contact the parent or guardian if a child is or appears to be under 10 years old and is without adult supervision.

Good Practice when interacting with vulnerable persons:

- Treat all people with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Give full consideration to the needs, interests and wishes of vulnerable persons.
- Presume mental capacity and participation in decision-making.
- Respect the privacy of persons.





Prohibited Practices:

- Corporal punishment;
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, care seat, stroller, or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;
- Depriving a child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing, bedding or participation in activities;
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will;
- Leaving children unsupervised;
- Deliberately using harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;
- Locking exits of a centre or home child care premises for the purposes of confining a child or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;
- Using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child when separating them from the other children;
- Any form of abuse – physical, sexual, emotional and/or neglect
- Where possible, doing things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves
- Taking photos or videos of children on your personal device
- Being alone or in a private or unobserved situation with a child or vulnerable person unless personal assistance such as toileting, changing or behavioural support (child needs time away from program) is required
- Exercise caution when interacting or relating to children or vulnerable persons outside of YMCA program activity (e.g. avoid weekend visits, calling or online chatting, etc.). If a child or teen tries to initiate an outside connection, report this immediately to your supervisor and discuss appropriate next steps (e.g. block the request, parent communication or privatizing account settings). ***See **Section 12 Protecting Children and Teens Online** for more information

Any reports involving breach of the above Code of Conduct is taken seriously and will be dealt with by management. Individuals who violate the Code of Conduct and this policy are subject to disciplinary or corrective action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer assignment.

7. Duty to Report Procedures for Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

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 Protection Agency (CAS).

7.1 If you (Supervisor, Coordinator, Manager, staff, volunteer, student placement) suspect child abuse:

- You are required to make the call immediately to a child protection agency (CAS).
- 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 CAS, 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 CAS.
- Once you have made the call, notify your onsite Supervisor/Coordinator/Manager or the General Manager, Membership Centre who will notify the Manager, Administration and HR that a call has been made to a child protection 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 a CAS.

7.2 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 protection agency (CAS).

7.3 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 CAS 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 CAS and if given permission by CAS official to notify the parent and/or guardian, a Supervisor/Coordinator/manager 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 CAS official will guide staff through this process if considered appropriate by CAS to speak with the parent or guardian. Do not inform the parent or guardian on your own, without first consulting with CAS.

7.4 Making the Call:

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

If reporting to CAS 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 protection agency:

Provide your full name, your position, our Association name (YMCA Northumberland) 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 (CAS) provides support. You can call to “consult” with CAS 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 follow-up for child care staff:

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

7.5 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/leak. Be factual, based on your observations.
- b) 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 available onsite in the Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Kit. 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 kit is unavailable or you are unable to access a child abuse reporting kit at any time, it is very important that you still make a report by calling CAS immediately. Then document the report by hand, using a blank sheet of paper and place the report in a sealed envelope as outlined in 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 and initial.



- 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 and securely delivered to the Manager, Administration, HR and OEYC for safeguarding and retention indefinitely.
- g) In addition to the original documentation, staff shall use the YMCA Northumberland **Incident Report** form to record very brief information, indicating the child's name, the program location, and date the call was made to CAS. In the description, record 'call made to a child protection agency'. If applicable, also record 'abuse allegation against a staff (or 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 the Chief Executive Officer and to the Manager, Administration and HR.

**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 for release of records is to be forwarded to the Manager, Administration and HR who will determine the action to be taken, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and legal counsel as needed.

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

If a staff/student/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 protection agency (CAS).

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 CAS. The supervisor also has a responsibility to call CAS. If the person suspected of abuse is the supervisor, the parent must make the call to a CAS and inform a YMCA Manager of his/her call to CAS. A staff/student/volunteer making the allegation will complete the required documentation as outlined in 7.5 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 CAS is the information to be disclosed with the alleged person.

The Manager, Administration and HR will be notified by the appropriate departmental Manager that a call has been placed to CAS. The Manager, Administration and HR will promptly notify the Chief Executive Officer, who will inform designated members of management. Management will determine further action steps described in section 9 below.

7.7 Additional reporting requirements:

An allegation of abuse made against a child care staff, volunteer or student placement is considered a Serious Occurrence under the Child Care and Early Years Act. The centre Supervisor must contact the



Manager, Program Integrity - Child Care immediately and the Ministry of Education within 24 hours, and follow the Serious Occurrence procedure outlined in YMCA Child Care Procedures Manual.

For staff working in other program areas serving children or vulnerable persons, there may be additional reporting requirements and staff shall speak with their manager for more information.

7.8 Confidentiality

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

8. Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Vulnerable Person

Anyone who has a reduced capacity to look after their own interests, needs and well-being can be at risk of abuse. For example, an adult with a physical disability or mental health or developmental or intellectual disability, as well as some seniors may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Refer to section 3 (definitions) for more information about vulnerable persons and types of abuse.

Alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse of a vulnerable person may constitute a criminal offence under the Canadian Criminal Code and the police should be informed. As all adults are presumed to have mental capacity to make informed choices about their own safety and how they live their lives, all interventions in respect of vulnerable persons need to take into account their ability to make informed choices about the way they want to live and the risks they want to take.

If a staff or volunteer suspects that a vulnerable person's safety is at risk or in immediate danger, contact the local police services (see contact information in Appendix A), or dial 911 immediately. The police have the ability to check on the person's wellbeing.

Staff shall use the YMCA Incident Report form to record brief information, indicating the vulnerable person's name, the date the call was made to police services, and program location. In the description, record 'call made to the police regarding suspected abuse of a vulnerable person', then sign and date the incident report form. Forward a copy of the incident report to your departmental Manager who will forward it to the Manager, Administration and HR.

9. Responding to an Allegation or Complaint of Abuse against the YMCA

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

9.1 Reporting an Allegation or Complaint of Abuse against a staff or volunteer

Any complaint or allegation of abuse made against the YMCA is taken seriously and shall be dealt with by management.

If a staff or volunteer or student suspects, or receives an allegation or complaint of abuse against another YMCA staff, volunteer or student, he/she must follow the procedures for reporting an allegation or suspicion of child abuse to a child protection agency (CAS) as outlined in 7 above.



Once the call has been made, the staff or volunteer or student shall immediately notify the appropriate departmental Manager that a call has been made to a child protection authority involving an allegation or suspicion of child abuse against a YMCA staff or volunteer.

The appropriate departmental Manager will immediately notify the Chief Executive Officer, and the Manager, Administration and HR who will respond in keeping with the YMCA's escalation protocol. Consequences of this escalation may include, but not be limited to, suspension of the employee (with pay) or volunteer from their duties while the allegation is being investigated.

In keeping with established YMCA procedures, senior management will ensure any additional child safety concerns, HR, insurance 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 the event of an allegation of abuse of a vulnerable person against a staff, volunteer or student placement, report the suspicion immediately to the appropriate departmental Manager, who will notify senior management. If the vulnerable person's safety is at risk or in immediate danger, call the police as outlined in section 8 above.

9.2 Information Management

All information related to an allegation or disclosure of abuse will be treated confidentially to the extent possible. Supervisors shall ensure that all records including investigation related to allegations or complaints of abuse against a YMCA staff, student or volunteer shall be promptly delivered to the Manager, Administration and HR for safeguarding (secure storage) and retention indefinitely.

10. Recruiting, Screening and Training Staff and Volunteers

YMCA Northumberland offers a range of programs to a variety of age groups including children and vulnerable persons.

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 and vulnerable persons.

Procedures established by the YMCA also ensure we meet regulatory requirements relevant to screening including Employment Standards and Eligibility to Work in Canada, Child Protection, Human Rights, Privacy, Youth Criminal Justice, and other legislated requirements.

All Supervisors, Coordinators, and Managers must follow YMCA Northumberland's Employee Relations Policy for recruiting, screening and selecting staff and volunteers. Screening procedures include conducting formal interviews with questions to determine suitability for working with children or in positions of trust and conducting a minimum of **two professional** reference checks. One reference must be the candidate's last known employer prior to their current employer if still employed. 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.



Assurance that police records checks procedures are followed, arranging orientation and mandatory child protection training, as well as maintaining records in keeping with established records retention procedures are conducted.

*Note: Occasional and special event volunteers are not required to have a police information check or police vulnerable sector check.

11. Strategies to Enhance our Commitment to Protecting Children and Vulnerable Persons

YMCA Northumberland is committed to an ongoing strategy for the protection of children and vulnerable persons and maintaining safe environments, which includes:

- Providing training that ensures staff and volunteers know their responsibilities and duty to report; monitoring YMCA's effectiveness in its commitment to protecting children and vulnerable persons;
- Providing mechanisms for feedback and appropriate response to complaints or disclosures.
- Training and education increases knowledge and awareness of individual and organizational roles in protecting children and vulnerable persons, and ensures the effectiveness of this Policy. Through education tools and training that includes new staff orientation, mandatory and annual re-fresher training with sign-off requirements, the YMCA fosters awareness raising of staff and volunteers of their responsibilities 'to act' if abuse is suspected. Tools and resources are available on the YMCA Canada's intranet, or contact the Manager, Administration and HR for more information about tools and training resources available.

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 protection of children and vulnerable persons. Assessments are completed at least annually to identify where further enhancements may be needed to maintain the safety of our program environments.

- In addition, Supervisors/Coordinators/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;
- Providing children and vulnerable persons with support and guidance on what to do, and who to contact if feeling uncomfortable or afraid at any time;
- Adhering to HR and volunteer management procedures for recruiting, 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;
- 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.

Maintaining safe environments is a team approach. Supervisors and staff can speak with the appropriate departmental Manager or contact the Manager, Administration and HR for more information.





12. Protecting Children and Teens On-line

The safety and protection of children and teens is a top priority at YMCA Northumberland and this commitment 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 modelling 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 communication with minors, defined as children and teens under the age of majority. Age of majority in Ontario is 18 years old.

Acceptable forms of digital communication

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.

Online Groups – Set up a private group (e.g. Facebook group) that meets the following conditions:

- All groups must be organized under an official YMCA account
- All group members must meet the minimum age required by the platform to hold and account (i.e. need to be at least 13 to set up a Facebook account)
- There must be at least 2 staff members over the age of majority designated as administrators for the page or on-line group
- Must follow YMCA Northumberland *Privacy Policy* and *Internet Communication, Cell Phone and Acceptable Use Policy*

Text Messages – As a general practice, texting is not a recommended form of communication with minors as there can be limited to no ability to maintain a record of the communication, especially once deleted. If the decision is made 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.

Unacceptable forms of digital communication

Connecting privately with minors on any online social media accounts or digital channels (other than as indicated above), both personal and work related, strictly prohibited.

Other unacceptable forms of communication with minors include:

- Private messaging and emails
 - Following or “friending” children and teens
 - Sharing details of your social media accounts and asking a minor to follow you
 - App communications that do not include a parent/guardian or a YMCA staff member
 - Exchanging personal cell phone numbers, email addresses or physical mailing addresses
- ***Should a child or teen initiate a request to communicate or connect, explain that there are policies that prohibit from this action occurring



Alternative ways to communicate

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

- Public pages of our 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

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 immediately to your supervisor. Additional steps may be required regarding reporting to the local child protection authority.

Ongoing relevancy:

The YMCA's child protection lead or designate shall review this policy annually to ensure effectiveness and ongoing relevancy in keeping with changing laws, evolving processes and public expectations.

YMCA Northumberland shall continue to instill a culture of shared accountability and responsibility across the Association for the protection of children and vulnerable persons.

13. YMCA Related Policies/Procedures and Reference Documents

- **Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Kit** – describes steps to follow when reporting suspected abuse or neglect of a child, available onsite
- **Screening Procedures of Potential Staff and Volunteers** in YMCA Northumberland's Employee Relations Policy Management Practices – relates to our obligation to conduct proper screening of potential employees and program volunteers to ensure appropriate matching of people with YMCA roles or positions, for improving quality and safety of YMCA programs, and reducing the risk of harm to children and vulnerable persons accessing YMCA programs and services.
- **Police Records Check Procedures** in YMCA Northumberland's Employee Relations Policy – relates to our obligation to confirm that a police records check (PRC) has been provided before starting work or volunteer service at the YMCA, and that the Manager, Administration, and HR ensure PRC re-checks are conducted in keeping with established procedures consistent with legislated requirements.

For employees and volunteers under 18 years of age, an Employee Statement/Declaration will be signed by the following parties: Employee, Parent/Guardian, Employee's Supervisor, Manager – Administration and HR and/or Coordinator – Membership and Volunteers. Upon turning 18, the employee/volunteer will be provided with the required letter of written consent for the request of a Police Record Check with the Vulnerable Sector. With wait times for securing renewal Police Vulnerable Sector Checks, an Exception Statement will continue to be signed by each Employee, the Employee's Supervisor, and the Manager- Administration and HR until the applicable Police Vulnerable Sector Document can be obtained and provided to the Association. Where possible every effort will be made to allocate 1 employee who will be at least 18 years of age to work within a program in order to mitigate risk to the employees and program participants.





- **Offence Declaration Procedures** in YMCA Child Care Policy Manual – relates to the obligation of Child Care Supervisors to ensure the form is submitted by Child Care staff on an annual basis and is current within 15 days of the one-year anniversary of the previous declaration. This declaration states whether or not a Child Care staff has any criminal convictions under the Criminal Code of Canada for which a pardon has not been issued or granted.
- **Reference Checks Procedures** in YMCA Northumberland’s Employee Relations Policy - relates to the obligation of supervisors to ensure a minimum of two **professional** references have been checked, as a final step in the recruiting process for all full and part time employment and for volunteer positions before a position is offered at the YMCA.
- **YMCA Crisis Framework** – relates to the YMCA’s Crisis Framework process and roles within local Association as well as the RDC and Y Canada when dealing with a critical incident (allegation of abuse; cyber breach) or crisis event (pandemic), to ensure appropriate situation assessment, decision-making and response by management.
- **YMCA Child Care Policy Manual** – outlines procedures and guidelines for YMCA Child Care staff.

14. Contacts and Other Resources

For more information about this policy, staff may speak with the Executive Director or Manager, Administration and HR for more information.

The following sources provide additional information about child protection:

- To view Ontario’s Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017 (CYFSA), visit www.e-laws.gov.on.ca
- More information about child protection is available at www.ontario.ca/children, and at www.torontocas.ca/Publications for ‘child in need of protection’ and ‘duty to report’ information.
- Other online sources of information include: Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies at www.oacas.org; Boost Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention at www.boostforkids.org; Canadian Centre for Child Protection at www.protectchildren.ca

Appendix A: Child Protection Agencies Contact Information

Police Services Non-Emergency Phone Number and Website

Cobourg Municipality	905-372-6821	www.cobourgpolicy.com
Port Hope Municipality	905-885-8123	www.phps.on.ca
Northumberland Ontario Provincial Police		www.opp.ca
Brighton Detachment	613-475-1313	
Cobourg Detachment	905-372-5421	
Quinte West Detachment	613-392-3561	
Campbellford Detachment	705-653-3300	

Child Protection Agency Phone Number and Website

Highland Shores Children’s Aid Society	905-372-1821	highlandshorescas.com
Durham Children’s Aid Society	905-433-1551	www.durhamcas.ca

