Child Safe Organisations:
governance, culture and the power of high expectations.

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Child Aware Approaches Conference 2015
Tuesday 19th May
YMCAs Expectations

- A nurturing environment
- A safe environment
- An environment where families and children’s rights are evident
- A learning environment
- A happy and playful environment
- An accessible environment
Context

- YMCA provides diverse services in over 750 communities across Australia
- We operate within a federated structure
- We have a common Mission:
  \[\text{“To provide opportunity for all people to grow in body, mind and spirit.”}\]
- Approximately 60% of all who participate are children and young people.
The journey so far

2006
- YMCA partnered with Australian Council of Children and Youth Organisation (ACCYO)
- Developed a national template for child protection policy
- Commenced a training and education program with ACCYO across the nation

2010 – Consulted, reviewed and rewrote national Template Safeguarding Children policy

2011 – Became aware of Johnathon Lord

2012
- ACF accreditation process commences

2013
- Royal Commission

2014
- A national Safeguarding Children and Young people policy endorsed by the members in general meeting.
- Standards must be complied with.

2015
- $2 million investment over 3 years in child protection training, external audit and policy development
Outcomes

- A national Safeguarding Children and Young people policy has been implemented.
- A framework is in place to ensure compliance
- The policy is the foundation for ongoing cultural change
- Ongoing audit, training, PD and Movement events assist in establishing culture.
- The rights of children and YP is integrated into policy and culture.
Elements of success

• A national Board prepared to support and lead the process where necessary.
• Champions at the national office.
• Champions within the YMCA Movement
• An extensive engagement strategy ensuring:
  – Clear understanding of the drivers of change
  – “Buy in” from all YMCAs
The journey continues

- Ongoing education and training required
- More work required around the rights of children and young people.
- Cultural factors require ongoing attention
- Continued development of the safeguarding framework
In summary:
Child Safety – a holistic risk framework

- Every child has the right to be safe and protected from harm
- Safeguarding children is a process of continuous improvement
- Child abuse in any form is intolerable and must never be ignored
- Child abuse is a reality of our society and all children are vulnerable
- Our governance structures must embed a child safe culture
- We must have effective controls in place
- Child protection is about extended guardianship

A process of CULTURAL CHANGE
In conclusion

- We invested in a partnership with the ACF
- Expertise, critical incident support, policy and practice, external accreditation and audit program

We recognised we required expert help and support

- Every YMCA has a commitment to child protection
- However, policies and standards varied, knowledge and understanding varied, people felt uncomfortable talking about child protection issues

We changed the way we did things

- Redeveloped and strengthen our Standards, particularly relating to child protection and governance
- Implemented a whole of organisation approach, child safe strategies, built knowledge and awareness

We implemented standards and education process
Safeguarding Children Program
Safeguarding Children Program

• Developed in 2001 by ACCYO
• ACF & YMCA accredited in 2006 pilot
• Taken over by ACF in 2009
• Continuing development in content and delivery
Why are children not protected in organisations?

- Lack of process and support
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of knowledge
A lack of awareness

- Includes, but not limited to:
  
  - the vulnerabilities of children to abuse and violation within organisations that then denies individual motivation for action
  
  - entrenches patterns of avoidance of risk by individuals at different levels within an organisation
  
  - a signal to perpetrators of abuse against children that an organisation is a good target
A lack of knowledge

Includes, but not limited to:

- the ways in which abuse occurs within organisations leads to complacency.
- the strategies used by perpetrators of abuse to target and violate children reduces the visibility of potentially risky behaviour.
- complicates and establishes barriers to individuals taking action to protect children when required.
Lack of processes and support

- Includes but not limited to:
  - does not create or maintain an organisational culture about protecting children
  - engenders a belief that individuals are not responsible for acting to protect children
  - equates to a lack of clarity about roles and conduct
  - leads to individuals concern about the consequences to them for taking action
A lack of confidence

- Includes but not limited to:
  - increases discomfort in individuals to tolerate the reality for the child
  - introduces uncertainty in decision making
  - increases the fear of making things worse or making a wrong decision
  - undermines individual and team performance
The culture of an organisation has been identified as a key factor affecting the safety of children within its care.

(Erooga, 2009; Beyer, Higgins, & Bromfield, 2005).
Unsafe organisational cultures

• operate without accountability / accountability only to themselves
• understand themselves to be above scrutiny because of their spiritual, recreational or charitable purpose
• respond by conducting internal investigations

‘Child safe governance involves not just leadership but also management styles that are child friendly open and egalitarian.’
Too much focus on child-focused interventions

• Programmes can increase children’s knowledge of self-protection strategies but little evidence of transfer to real-life situations and reduce abuse
• Criticism of appropriateness of shifting the burden of prevention onto children
• Children must feel safe to disclose abuse. Children reported:
  o Received little emotional support
  o Initial disclosure ignored
  o Disclosures poorly handled and not linked
  o Accusations of lying, poor communication

NSPCC No One Noticed No One Heard
An organisational culture of safeguarding

- Establishing a perimeter of safety
- Children are the heart of decision making
- Ways of acting, thinking and relating
- Accountable, open and transparent
Safe Organisational Cultures

Provide:
• Encouragement to raise low level concerns and breaches of policy rather than just identify abusers
• Procedures for capturing lower level concerns to be linked to breach of behaviour code not child protection or grievance processes
• Explicit permission for ‘whistle blowers’
• Responses to allegation of abuse including support and services to affected people
• Reviews of incidents
What is the Safeguarding Children Program?

• The Safeguarding Children Program is a unique voluntary accreditation scheme for organisations who have a duty of care to children and young people whilst delivering a service or activity to them and/or their families.

• It systematically builds the capacity of organisations to keep children and young people safe from abuse and exploitation by staff, volunteers or other relevant related individuals.
What is the Safeguarding Children Program?

- Organisations make a commitment at the highest governance level
- Develop a set of policies and procedures
- Board, Staff and Volunteers complete online training
- Undergo an external audit to verify that all personnel understand what Safeguarding means and what their responsibilities are
- Are assessed to have a Safeguarding culture throughout the organisation
- Are interviewed and recommended by our SCP Panel
7 Safeguarding Standards

- Commitment to safeguarding children
- Personnel roles and conduct
- Recruitment and screening practices
- Personnel induction and training
- Involving children and parents
- Child abuse reports and allegations
- Supporting a child safe culture
Seven Standards

1. Commitment to safeguarding children
   - Through its ‘safeguarding children’ statement, our organisation documents its clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

2. Personnel roles and conduct
   - Our organisation ensures that each person involved in our delivery of services to children and young people understands their role, and the behaviour we expect in safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

3. Recruitment and screening practices
   - Our organisation has appropriate measures in place to minimise the likelihood that we will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work with children or young people.

4. Personnel induction and training
   - Our organisation’s induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.

5. Involving children and parents
   - In developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment, our organisation involves, and communicates with, children and young people, and their parents. We encourage parental involvement and behaviour that helps to protect children and young people.

6. Child abuse reports and allegations
   - Our organisation has measures in place to ensure that our ‘involved’ personnel understand their responsibility to report possible abuse or neglect of children or young people, and understand our reporting procedures.

7. Supporting a child-safe culture
   - Our organisation is committed to maintaining and improving its policies, procedures and practices to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect.
Safeguarding Children Accreditation Audit

Policy submitted
Policy Compliance Review
Proposal submitted
Remedial Action Request
Proposal submitted
Remedial Action Request
Policy Review
Audit Request
Including submission of final policies
Implementation Audit
Human Resources Systems Check
Audit Report
Panel
Accreditation Panel Report
Accreditation

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(CEO, YMCA of Canberra)

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Timeline

- November 2006 – Board of Directors endorsed the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy (formally known as the Child Protection Policy)

- Accreditation review 26 - 27th September 2007 by ACCYO (Australian Council for Children and Youth Organisation)

- Accreditation review 16 -17th November 2011 by ACF (Australian Childhood Foundation)

- November 30th 2014 – adopted by the National Council of YMCA's YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People – Our Movements Child Protection Policy

January 28th 2015

- It was resolved “That the YMCA Canberra Board of Directors adopt the National YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy as endorsed by the Council of YMCA's of Australia at the Annual General Meeting in November 2014”

- April 27th 28th 29th 2015 – Accreditation Review by ACF
a snapshot

YMCA Canberra

Programs and Services
- 5 Early Learning Centres
- Before School Care
- After School Care
- Vacation Care
- Early Intervention Programs (Physi-Kids, take Off)
• Opened March, 2006
• “Banksia” and “Wattle” Lodges
• Group accommodation for 197
• Focus is on school & sporting groups visiting Canberra
• Fully catered
Health and Fitness

- Gym at Chifley – Les Mills Classes
- Swimming Pool at Googong
- Inclusive of all abilities – free membership permanent staff
- Popular Community Health and Fitness – Fit Ball, Weight Loss For Men and Women
- Staff benefits – Chifley Gym, Googong Pool (Gunghalin)
Disability Programs

- Recreational and Fitness Programs for people of most ages with a disability (RAID Basketball)
YMCA Auxiliary - volunteers serving the community for over 30 + years

Funds support access and inclusion for people otherwise unable to attend YMCA programs
YMCA Canberra Sailing Club (YMCASC) is a family orientated sailing club situated on Yarralumla Bay, Lake Burley Griffin.

The club runs sailing races for dinghies, catamarans and trailable yachts as well as sailing courses for children and adults.
Volunteer Clubs

YMCA Canberra Runners Club (YCRC)

Running with the YMCA is a great way to get fit and meet new people. The Club is family friendly and membership is open to all ages and abilities.

The club conducts over 90 races during the year ranging from 2 kms to a half marathon.
What has the Safeguarding Children and Young People journey meant for the culture and governance of YMCA Canberra?
The culture of an organisation has been identified as a key factor affecting the safety of children within its care.

( Erooga, 2009 Beyer, Higgins, & Bromfield, 2005 )
“YMCA Canberra is to be commended overall for its leadership, which:

- demonstrates a clear commitment to the safeguarding of children and young people
- facilitates processes for managers, staff, Board of Directors and parents to contribute to policy development
- facilitates a process for all to participate in relevant training.

This was well documented and was expressed by those interviewed during the audit.
2011

Standard 7: Supporting a child-safe culture

Our organisation is committed to maintaining and improving its policies, procedures and practices to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect.

Accreditation requirement

7.1 Appointing a program coordinator
7.2 Monitoring service delivery by personnel
7.3 Communicating with personnel
7.4 Disclosing convictions or charges
7.5 Undertaking periodic external checks
7.6 Undertaking reviews
7.7 Undertaking periodic self-assessments
Key Strengths

• Personnel interviewed consistently showed good awareness of child abuse prevention and response approaches. They were able to locate these functionally within the formal requirements of safeguarding children as they applied to their employment, training and the Duty of Care owed by YMCA and themselves to their service users.

• Personnel showed good insight to certain risks relating to their activity, site or user groups, and were willing to identify these and present to their managers-coordinators. Many also offered relevant suggestions to manage these risks.

• CEO, senior staff and Board members attend program activities from time to time for the purpose of speaking with staff, children and parents. These senior personnel offer that they welcome feedback from staff and the service users.

• Across the YMCA Canberra staffing structure are clearly identified personnel responsible for various components of Canberra’s safeguarding children approaches. These responsibilities are included within the respective job descriptions and personnel interviewed at audit were aware of those staff and their respective roles in safeguarding.

Overall, a pervasive YMCA culture of safeguarding children.
Continuous Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement

• Staff appreciated site visits from senior staff-management but some felt this could be more frequent.

• Utilizing staff suggestions around risk management. E.g., staff mentioned that a consistent concern for them was confirming identification of the adults picking children up from programs.

• Certain vulnerabilities were identified by senior personnel, one example being the dual responsibilities between YMCA and the various schools accessing the Bush Capital Lodge

• The updated National Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is due for ratification in February 2012.

Recommendations

• Consider regular, as well as spot-surprise visits to sites.

• Seek regular input from staff around suggestions to improve safeguarding approaches. Ensure that casual staff understand the need, and are supported, to confirm the identity of all adults picking children up from programs.

• YMCA explore the shared responsibility YMCA explore the shared responsibility obligations and develop guidelines and agreements with schools utilizing the facility agreements with schools utilizing the facility.

• Implement this policy as soon as practical.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.1 Appointing a program coordinator</th>
<th>My organisation has defined and documented the role and responsibilities of its 'safeguarding children program coordinator'.</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>HR Manager Position Description for Accreditation but mapped through the organisational Management team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7.2 Monitoring service delivery by personnel | **7.2.1** My organisation has developed, documented and implemented procedures for monitoring service delivery by 'involved' personnel, to ensure appropriate practice and behaviour.  
**7.2.2** My organisation has procedures to monitor and supervise all external personnel involved in our delivery of service to children and young people. | Yes | Operational reviews by Managers  
Performance breaches addressed with Disciplinary action (examples available)  
SCYP National Policy Acceptance of Code of Conduct, Facility Hire, Memberships Policy and other policies and procedures |
| 7.3 Communicating with personnel | My organisation has procedures for two-way communication with 'involved' personnel in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. | Yes | Canberra SCYP Web Portal (internal and external) under development – with Reporting/communication line to CEO (anonymous) |
| 7.4 Disclosing convictions or charges | All 'involved' personnel within my organisation are advised that they must report, to a nominated person within our organisation, any criminal conviction/charge that indicates that they present a potential risk to the children or young people to whom they help deliver service. | Yes | Letters of Appointment  
WWVP, WWCC, NPC Policy and Procedure must report to CEO |
| 7.5 Undertaking periodic external checks | My organisation undertakes, as required by legislation, 'working with children' or 'national criminal history record' checks periodically for all our 'involved' personnel.  
My organisation has a formal system for recording and monitoring such information.  
Where my organisation does not subject 'involved' personnel to such external checks, a document outlining the reasons is attached.  
My organisation has systems for ensuring that 'working with children' or 'national criminal history record' checks are revalidated, as required, to remain current. | Yes | Central databases of character screening information kept in Administration  
ACT government – external audit of Working With Vulnerable People Checks (renewed 3 yearly)  
NSW WWCCs recorded  
NPCs are renewed as required and adhoc screening processes are undertaken as required  
ACF External Audit  
Annual SCYP/Child Protection Self-Audit Report to YMCA Australia |
2006
Focus inward accreditation against two standards Police Check Policy and Child protection Policy

2011
Accreditation against 7 standards, identified areas of improvement starting to look external

2015
National policy - Significant focus change for example
YMCA Child Safety Strategy
YMCA Child Safety Strategy

The YMCA Child Safety Strategy has been developed so that:

- all YMCA People share the responsibility for the protection of children and young people.
- the protection practices for children and young people within all YMCAs is strengthened.

This strategy incorporates the following main three pieces of work for the Movement:

1. The development of a Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.
2. The development of associated YMCA Licensing Standards.
3. An agreement with an independent child protection specialist organisation for the provision of an accreditation and audit program.
Governance

1. Responsibility
2. Individual Association
3. Movement
• Strengthening of YMCA licensing standards – ensure compliance and accreditation by an external authority.

• The principles and intent of this (national) policy are to be implemented locally to protect children and young people from any form of abuse, bullying and exploitation by Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and other services users.

• Concept of extended guardianship

• Volunteers responsibility
e.g. Canberra YMCA Runners Club (1100 members) when does a member of a club become a volunteer under the policy?
BAZINGA!

Everyone who works here does their best to make sure you are protected from any harm!

It is OK for you to say no to an adult if they ask you to do something that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

KA-BOOM!

If you ever feel unsafe or uncomfortable we will listen to you and act to help you.

It is always OK to tell someone if you are not feeling comfortable or safe or if you have been hurt.

If you are unhappy with the way you are being treated, please tell a staff member or a parent or someone you can trust.

YMCA Canberra believe children and young people who come here should:

Feel Comfortable
Be Cared For
Feel Safe And Be Safe

You can also tell us by: emailing cscanberra@ymca.org.au or calling (02) 6242 4040 or Austan Services on 1300 287 526
Your feedback will be taken seriously and given to someone who can help or make a change.
Cadar Saxon – Y Canberra After School Care

NB: All views expressed are strictly Cadar’s own!