

PARENT SUMMARY: Safeguarding Children and Young People at Bendigo Regional YMCA



Bendigo Regional YMCA is a not-for-profit organisation which is governed by a board made up of local residents who volunteer their time and expertise. We have provided a range of services to people of all ages including children and young people between the ages of 0 and 17 years since 1905. Our services include:

- Outside School Hours Care
- Long Day Care
- Recreation
- Swimming lessons

A significant number of children and young people take part in our programs at BRYMCA centres each year, from children enjoying learn to swim classes, school holiday programs, and youth development programs, to participating in volunteer projects.

We take our responsibility for keeping children and young people SAFE very seriously. We have a number of policies and practices that we follow, with the aim of keeping children and young people who participate in our services SAFE. Below is a **summary** of these policies and practices.

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

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

Definition: In Victoria, a child or young person is defined as a person less than eighteen years of age.

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

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

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.

Bendigo Regional YMCA Staff Code of Conduct

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

We have developed this Staff Code of Conduct to identify and prevent behavior that may be harmful to the children and young people in our care.

Transport

Children and young people are to be transported only with prior authorisation from a parent/guardian and a BRYMCA Business Unit manager. Staff are NEVER to give children or young people casual lifts.

To gain approval from a BRYMCA Business Unit manager, staff are required to submit details about the proposed journey including the form of transport, the reason, details of who will be present.

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.

Positive Guidance

We aim to make children and young people aware of the acceptable limits of their behavior. There are times when staff may be required to use appropriate behavior 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 behavior 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 misbehavior in a positive way.

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

Uniform

Our staff are to wear their Bendigo YMCA uniforms only while involved in delivering service, representing Bendigo YMCA at events, or when travelling to and from work.

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.

BRYMCA does not provide private services (e.g. babysitting). BRYMCA takes all reasonable steps to keep children safe while they are at the BRYMCA programs. However, any private arrangement is outside of our control. BRYMCA cannot ensure the safety of children if parents/guardians choose to enter into a private arrangement with BRYMCA staff and volunteers, such as baby-sitting and weekend trips.

Photographs of children and young people

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

- Prior written parental/guardian authorisation is obtained (with the exception of special events such as concerts, fairs, performances, open days and competitions)
- The Context is directly related to participation in our programs and services
- The child is appropriately dressed and posed

Use of electronic communication

Wherever possible, email and text messages sent to a child or young person is to be copied to their parent or guardian.

Any communication is to be restricted to issues directly associated with delivering our programs and services, such as advising that a scheduled event is cancelled

Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations

BRYMCA 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.

Serious abuse or neglect refers to situations in which a child or young person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm (Children, Youth and Families Act, 2005, VIC).

Staff are required to:

- Report suspected abuse to their direct supervisor/manager
- Report suspected abuse to the Department of Human Services or the police

Staff will be provided with support during this time.

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

Bendigo YMCA will co-operate with the Department of Human Services and police and other agencies as required by law. We will comply with any reasonable request in a timely manner.