

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	2
1.1	Purpose .....	2
1.2	Scope .....	2
1.3	Definitions .....	2
1.4	Principles.....	3
2.	Policy Statement.....	4
3.	POLICY APPLICATION.....	5
3.1	YSAS' Commitment to Safeguarding Young People .....	5
3.2	YSAS' Expectations .....	5
3.3	Reportable Conduct Scheme.....	6
3.4	YSAS' Training and Workforce Development.....	6
4.	COMPLIANCE, MONITORING AND REVIEW .....	6
5.	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....	7
6.	ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS .....	9
7.	POLICY GOVERNANCE, VERSION CONTROL, CHANGE HISTORY .....	10
8.	Appendix.....	11
	Appendix A: Forms of abuse.....	11

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose

To outline YSAS' approach and commitment to creating and maintaining a safe environment for young people who come into contact with and/or access our services. This encompasses embedding an organisational culture that priorities the safety and wellbeing of young people.

### 1.2 Scope

This policy is mandatory and shall be implemented by all YSAS staff and anyone otherwise engaged in delivering services on YSAS' behalf.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Safeguarding Young People Reporting and Response Procedure.

### 1.3 Definitions

<i>Child</i>	A person under the age of 18 years.
<i>Child Abuse</i>	<p>Child abuse is any action or lack of action, that harms or has the potential to harm a child's physical, psychological and/or emotional development.</p> <p>This includes any non-accidental behaviour by parents, caregivers, other adults (including YSAS staff) or older adolescents that are outside of the norms of conduct.</p> <p>Child abuse can be a one-off event, or a series of events, can be multidimensional and have a cumulative effect.</p> <p>Child abuse is commonly divided into five main subtypes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical abuse</li> <li>• Emotional or psychological abuse</li> <li>• Neglect</li> <li>• Sexual abuse (including grooming)</li> <li>• Family violence.</li> </ul>
<i>Harm</i>	<p>Harm to a child or young person is any detrimental effect on the child or young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or</li> <li>• sexual abuse or exploitation;</li> <li>• a single act, omission or circumstance; or</li> <li>• a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances</li> <li>• Unintentional actions.</li> </ul>

<i>Reportable Conduct Scheme</i>	<p>A scheme designed to investigate specific types of abuse perpetrated by people who work or volunteer within organisations that provide services to children and young people. This includes YSAS.</p> <p>There are five types of behaviours that fall under reportable conduct, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sexual offences against, with, or in the presence of a child</li> <li>• sexual misconduct against, with, or in the presence of a child</li> <li>• physical violence against, with, or in the presence of a child</li> <li>• any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child</li> <li>• significant neglect of a child.</li> </ul>
<i>Staff</i>	YSAS paid employees, students, contractors and volunteers, including Board Directors and Board sub-Committee members
<i>Young person</i>	A person younger than 25 years.

### 1.4 Principles

<i>Child Safety</i>	All children and young people who come in contact with YSAS services have the right to be protected from harm and abuse and have their safety and wellbeing prioritised. Young people will be informed of processes, have their views heard and will be included in decision making where appropriate.
<i>Family and carer inclusion</i>	Where appropriate, family and carers will be informed of and included in decisions about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their care.
<i>National Principles for Child Safe organisations</i>	<p>The ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations guide the development and application of this policy. The ten principles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture;</li> <li>• Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously;</li> <li>• Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing;</li> <li>• Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice;</li> <li>• People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice;</li> <li>• Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training;</li> <li>• Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed;</li> <li>• Implementation of the national Child Safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved; and</li> <li>• Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Victorian Child Safe Standards</i></p>	<p>The Victorian Child Safe Standards are a set of mandatory requirements to protect children and young people from harm and abuse.</p> <p>The eleven Victorian Child Safe Standards are regulated and monitored by the Commission for Children and Young People. The Victorian Child Safe Standards are legislated under the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)</i>.</p> <p>The Victorian Child Safe Standards can be found here:  <a href="https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/">https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/</a></p> <p>The Victorian Child Safe Standards guide this policy's development and application.</p>
<p><i>YSAS Values</i></p>	<p>Honesty, empowerment, accountability and respect are the values underpinning our commitment to the safety of young people.</p>

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

At YSAS, we consider the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people to be one of our highest priorities. We are committed to ensuring that young people can feel safe and be safe whilst accessing our services. YSAS takes a zero tolerance approach to child abuse and considers any form of abuse, inclusive of emotional, physical, sexual abuse or neglect, intolerable under any circumstances.

YSAS recognises that:

- Safeguarding young people from harm is everyone's responsibility.
- All young people have the right to develop and reach their potential in environments that are caring, nurturing and safe.
- We are driven by ethical and legal requirements to protect young people from harm and to ensure we respond promptly and appropriately to all actual or suspected incidents of abuse.

## 3. POLICY APPLICATION

### 3.1 YSAS' Commitment to Safeguarding Young People

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We commit to:

- The safety and wellbeing of all young people who come into contact with and/or access our programs, services or facilities.
- Embedding the Child Safe Standards into our everyday practice at YSAS.
- Creating an environment for young people to be safe and to feel safe.
- Providing young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- Listening to young people and take their views seriously.
- Empower young people to know and understand their rights.
- Taking action to ensure children and young people are protected from exploitation, abuse or harm.
- Providing all YSAS staff with the support necessary to fulfil their roles. This includes regular and appropriate learning and development opportunities and supervision.
- Listening and responding to all concerns voiced by YSAS staff about keeping young people safe from harm.
- Providing opportunities for YSAS staff for support and counselling arising from incidents of child or young person abuse.
- Using thorough safeguarding practice standards for recruiting, screening and employing staff.

### 3.2 YSAS' Expectations

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We expect staff to:

- Not harm or exploit children who come into contact with and/or access our services.
  - Take seriously and act on any concerns raised by young people or others.
  - Understand young people's rights.
  - Be respectful of young people.
  - Abide by all policies, regulations and laws in relation to the safety and protection of young people. This includes understanding the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
  - Understand and acknowledge the significance of children and young people's family relationships.
  - Always follow the Code of Conduct.
  - Understand and respond to young people's individual needs.
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- Actively promote and advocate for the safety and wellbeing of young people.
- Understand their reporting obligations.
- Cooperate with police and/or other formal investigations.
- Recognise and respect the diverse and specific needs of the young people and communities who access our services.
- Respect the cultural and religious practices of families who access our services.
- Be aware of employment practices in relation to working or volunteering with young people, such as keeping their Working With Children's Check up to date and participating in annual national police checks.

### **3.3 Reportable Conduct Scheme**

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YSAS falls within scope for the reportable conduct scheme and therefore has reporting obligations to ensure the protection of children and young people.

YSAS will ensure that:

- The workforce is aware of the reportable conduct scheme and the processes in place for reporting allegations of reportable conduct.
- The CEO reports any allegation of reportable conduct to the Commission for Children and Young People within three business days.
- Any allegation of reportable conduct is investigated thoroughly and fairly.
- Relevant information is provided to the Commission for Children and Young people including investigation findings.
- Staff who are subject to allegations of reportable conduct are supported.

### **3.4 YSAS' Training and Workforce Development**

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YSAS recognises that staff training is essential for creating a culture which prioritises safeguarding children and young people. Training will certify YSAS has a culture which promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by ensuring that staff are provided with the necessary tools and knowledge to understand and identify abuse, raise and report safeguarding concerns, and understand relevant child safety legislation.

As such, YSAS requires all staff to complete Safeguarding Young People training as part of the YSAS induction program. YSAS also provides ongoing opportunities for tailored site specific workshops facilitated by the Child Safety Officer in collaboration with managers and team leaders.

## **4. COMPLIANCE, MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Review required annually by Child Safety Officer.

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### 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Safeguarding young people from harm is everybody's responsibility, however, there are specific organisational roles, responsibilities and accountabilities as outlined below.

#### **YSAS Board**

- Promote the principles and intent of this policy.
- Provide oversight and direction of all matters in relation to safeguarding young people.

#### **YSAS Executive**

- Ensuring the allocation of adequate resources to effectively develop and implement this policy's principles, including but not limited to: appointing a Child Safety Officer and ensuring staff training and supervision is made available.
- Providing leadership on child safety at YSAS by supporting a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability.
- Implementing governance which embeds the ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the Victorian Child Safe Standards across YSAS.
- Developing, monitoring and annually reviewing consortia/partner arrangements as part of a continuous improvement framework to support the protection of children and young people.
- Understand legislative requirements related to child safety and ensure YSAS meets all requirements.
- Ensuring all allegations of child abuse within YSAS are investigated thoroughly, and using any findings and subsequent learnings to improve YSAS' protection of young people.
- Ensuring compliance with policies and processes for safeguarding young people.
- Supporting managers to implement this policy.
- Advocating for, and promoting young people's rights within all levels of government.
- Reporting any issues of child safety within YSAS to the YSAS Board.

#### **Human Resources**

- Ensuring all YSAS staff have up-to-date Working with Children Checks (WWCC).
- Ensuring managers are notified when their staff's WWCC expire and providing guidance on what to do if staff are non-compliant.
- Ensuring systems/processes are in place to monitor staff compliance with the code of conduct.
- Providing robust recruitment, screening and assessment processes to ensure that only the most suitable people will be employed to work with children whilst deterring unsuitable applicants.

- In collaboration with Managers and Team Leaders ensuring that position descriptions clearly define responsibilities in relation to safeguarding young people.

### **Managers and Team Leaders**

- Fostering a welcoming environment where staff and young people feel safe and are supported to report concerns relating to the safety and wellbeing of young people.
- Promoting child safe practice across the organisation.
- Ensuring staff understand their obligations with this policy and its local implementation.
- Advocating for and promoting young people's rights at a local level.
- In collaboration with the Human Resources team, ensure that position descriptions clearly define responsibilities in relation to safeguarding young people.
- Supporting staff to report suspected child abuse to the relevant reporting body such as Victoria police, DHHS CP and CCYP.
- Supporting staff with opportunities to debrief if an incident of child abuse or harm occurs.
- Complying with all policies and processes for safeguarding young people.
- Ensuring their staff are compliant with WWCCs.
- Providing their team with opportunities to regularly discuss child safety to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for the protection of young people.

### **Staff**

- Contributing to the creation of an environment which promotes the inclusion, wellbeing and safety of young people.
- Ensuring young people are aware of the limitations to privacy and confidentiality regarding child safety and wellbeing when accessing YSAS programs.
- To share information, as permitted by legislation, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Reporting all concerns regarding a young person's safety to the Child Safety Officer and/or their manager and/or General Manager
- Reporting suspected abuse to the relevant body i.e., Victoria police or DFFH Child Protection as per our reporting obligations under the Child Youth and Families Act (2005) and the Crimes Act (1958).
- Taking all disclosures of abuse seriously and sensitively.
- Ensuring young people are aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding child safety when accessing YSAS programs.



- Empowering and engaging young people to report any concerns they have.
- Ensuring their Working with Children check remains current and providing their manager and People and Capability team with proof of currency if the card is renewed.
- Ensuring their compliance of the code of conduct.

### **Child Safety Officer**

- Understanding YSAS's obligations relating to reporting child abuse
- Contributing to a culture that promotes the safety and wellbeing of young people by engaging, participating, promoting and valuing child safe practices.
- Cooperating with investigations conducted by DHHS child protection, Commission for Children and Youth People, and/or Victoria Police.
- Ensuring YSAS' safeguarding young people policies, procedures and practices are regularly reviewed, and all staff have access to appropriate training and development.
- Responding promptly to changes in legislation and ensuring they are brought to the attention of all management levels, including the YSAS' Board.
- Being YSAS' key contact for young people and staff about any safeguarding young people matter.
- Ensuring a timely response to investigations of suspected child abuse that involves YSAS young people, staff or other involved parties.
- Managing any investigations of YSAS staff in relation to child safety matters.
- Ensuring findings of child abuse complaints/investigations inform continuous improvement projects that help protect young people.
- Providing oversight to activities within YSAS to ensure that activities occur in line with the ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisation and the seven Victorian Child Safe Standards.

## **6. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

### **Legislation and Standards**

- *Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Cth)*
- *Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*

### **YSAS Governance Documents**

- Code of Conduct
- Recruitment Selection Onboarding Probation Policy
- Safeguarding Young People Reporting and Response Procedure

- Client Rights and Responsibilities Statement

## 7. POLICY GOVERNANCE, VERSION CONTROL, CHANGE HISTORY

Document category	Client Care	First adopted	21 November 2016
Document Owner	Deputy CEO	Date most recent version approved	12 December 2022
Document Contact	Child Safety Officer	Date most recent version published	15 December 2022
Document Recommending Committee	Health & Clinical Governance Committee	Next review	Annual reviews required as per contract agreements
Document Approver	Board	Version	3
Summary of changes	<p>Changes in version 3 (December 2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated the Child Safe Standards reflective of legislation update (pp. 4)</li> <li>• Amended language and grammar for readability</li> <li>• Changed 'People and Culture' to 'Human Resources' to reflect organisation practice</li> <li>• Updated 'Forms of abuse' appendix for currency (pp.11)</li> </ul> <p>Changes in version 2 (May 2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content transferred into 31.12.2020 policy template</li> <li>• Replaced 'Child Safety Reporting and Response Policy and Procedure' with 'Safeguarding Young People Reporting and Response Procedure' (pp. 2)</li> <li>• Redundant information removed from 'Scope' (pp. 2)</li> <li>• Inclusion of child safety principles (pp. 2&amp;3).</li> <li>• Removal of 'types of abuse' from definitions (pp. 3).</li> <li>• Inclusion of child abuse definition (pp. 3).</li> <li>• Inclusion of YSAS' training and workforce development under 'Policy Application' (pp. 6)</li> <li>• Inclusion of compliance, monitoring and review section (pp. 6)</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities updated to reflect current expectations (pp. 6-9)</li> <li>• Inclusion of responsibilities for People &amp; Culture (pp. 7)</li> <li>• Inclusion of responsibilities for Team Leaders (pp. 7)</li> <li>• Inclusion of types of abuse in Appendix A (pp 10-11).</li> <li>• Types of abuse updated for currency (pp 10-11)</li> </ul>		

## 8. APPENDIX

### Appendix A: Forms of abuse

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#### Physical abuse

- Any non-accidental injury or serious physical harm inflicted on a child by another person.
- Physical abuse could also be the result of excessive or inappropriate physical discipline.

#### Emotional abuse

- Occurs when a child is treated in a way that negatively impacts their social, physical, emotional or intellectual development
- This includes, but is not limited to, hostility, rejection, isolation, frightening by threats, put downs and/or constant coldness to the extent where the child's development is impaired.

#### Neglect

- Is the failure to provide for the child or young persons basic needs for life such as
  - food,
  - clothing,
  - shelter,
  - medical attention,
  - supervision or care

to the extent that the child's wellbeing is, or is likely to be placed at risk.

#### Sexual abuse/assault

- Occurs when a person uses power, force or authority to involve a child or young person in any form of sexual activity.
- Is the actual or attempted unwanted sexual actions, that are forced upon a young person against their will, without their consent, or that they cannot consent to.

#### Grooming:

- Is the process that an offender goes through to plan the sexual abuse of a child or young person.
- Involves establishing a relationship with a person or group of people to enable the sexual abuse of a child
- Grooming could look like inappropriately:
  - Spending special time with a young person
  - Giving gifts to a young person

- Showing special favours to one young person but not others
- Allowing a young person to step out of boundaries or rules
- Touching the young person
- Testing and breaking professional boundaries

### **Family Violence**

- Family violence is defined in the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* as behaviour that is:
  - Physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive, threatening, coercive, or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of themselves or another family member; or
  - Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the behaviour.