



Shine On



YMCA Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford
Safeguarding Children and Youth

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A PURPLE Safeguarding Children and Youth Binder are located at each physical YMCA location. This binder contains the policy; protocol on how to make a report; report forms and envelopes; tips on writing documentation; facility access protocols and Crisis Communication Procedure.

1. INTRODUCTION

YMCA of Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford (“YMCA HBB”) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and youth in its care, as well as accessing its programs and services. We all share a responsibility to protect children and youth from harm. YMCA HBB recognizes its responsibility to promote safe environments and practices and to protect children and youth from abuse and exploitation.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Our employees and volunteers play an essential role in protecting and promoting the well-being of children. To support this responsibility, the YMCA provides ongoing annual training and resources that strengthen our collective ability to recognize and respond to concerns about a child’s well-being through an equitable and inclusive lens.

The Safeguarding Children and Youth policy applies to all YMCA HBB employees, volunteers, and interns (student placements). We are all responsible for creating safe environments and acting appropriately toward children and youth.

Everyone has a Duty to Report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse; investigation is handled by child safeguarding agencies.

YMCA HBB is committed to:

- Protecting children and youth from harm while in YMCA HBB programs.
- Recruiting, training, and supporting employees and volunteers in child safeguarding best practices.
- Ensure everyone follows the YMCA HBB Child Safeguarding Policy, procedures and protocols
- Providing clear procedures for reporting and responding to allegations of abuse.
- Monitoring and updating policies regularly to reflect organizational and legal changes.
- Conduct annual self-assessments to ensure ongoing risk mitigation.

3. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND CHILD WELL-BEING

YMCA HBB is committed to fostering an environment grounded in the principles of anti-oppression, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and human rights. We strive to create a just and inclusive community where every individual is valued and respected.

Safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people in our care is a core responsibility of YMCA HBB. Our programs are rooted in the promotion of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging, and are designed to ensure that every child is treated with dignity and respect and feels safe expressing their authentic self.

We recognize and celebrate the diversity of the children and families we serve. We are committed to creating inclusive environments that honour family diversity, support positive relationships among children, families, and employees, and respect each individual’s unique experiences, abilities, cultures, and beliefs. We also acknowledge that systemic barriers and biases can result in disproportionate outcomes for certain groups, and we are dedicated to addressing these inequities within our practices.

4. DEFINITIONS

YMCA HBB recognizes the following definitions in compliance with Ontario regulations:

- **Abuse:** Includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation which results in actual or potential harm to the child/youth’s health, survival, development, or the dignity in the context of a relationship responsibility, trust, or

power.

- **Children and Youth:** For the purposes of this policy, a child or youth means a person under 18 years of age, consistent with the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*.
- **Child in Need of Protection:** Defined under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* as a child who is or who appears to be suffering from abuse, neglect or risk of harm. This includes any form of physical harm, emotional deprivation, sexual mistreatment, or neglect which can result in injury or psychological damage to a child.
- **Child Protection Agency (CPA):** Any agency that provides services to protect infants, children, and youth who are experiencing abuse or are at risk of experiencing abuse physically, sexually, emotionally, or through neglect or abandonment.
- **Duty to Report the Child in Need of Protection:** Defined under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* that sets out what must be reported to a child safeguarding authority or agency. Duty to Report applies to the public and includes special reporting responsibilities for professionals whose work involves children.
- **Emotional Abuse:** A pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's/youth's emotional development and sense of self-worth. It can include excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child/youth beyond their capacity. Emotional abuse can also include constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring, or isolating a child/youth. It may also include exposure to family violence.
- **Exploitation:** Using a child/youth for financial gain, sexual gratification, labour, or personal advantage.
- **Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet a child's or youth's basic needs for their physical or emotional development.
- **Physical Abuse:** Any deliberate physical force or action by a parent or caregiver which results, or could result, in injury to a child/youth. It can include bruising, cuts, punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting, or throwing a child/youth. Using belts, sticks, or other objects to punish a child/youth can cause serious harm and is considered abuse.
- **Safeguarding:** Proactively protecting children/youth from emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural, and mental harm using harm reduction practices where appropriate.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Occurs when a child/youth is used for sexual gratification, even if the child/youth appear to cooperate. Sexual abuse does not need to include physical contact between the perpetrator and the child/youth. It may include activities such as sexual intercourse, exposing a child's/youth's genitals, obscene phone calls, text messages or digital interaction, fondling, watching a child/youth undress for sexual pleasure, encouraging/forcing a child/youth to look at or perform in pornographic pictures or videos, and child/youth sex trafficking.
- **Vulnerable Person:** For the purposes of this policy and reporting, a vulnerable person means a person aged 18 years or older who, because of age, disability, illness, or other circumstances, is or may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- **Wise Practices:** An intercultural approach to standards of practice that are inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing and non-Western values/knowledge.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

YMCA HBB is committed to promoting safe practices to protect children and youth from harm or abuse. While the primary responsibility for child protection rests with Child Protection Agencies under Ontario legislation, all YMCA HBB employees and volunteers who interact with children and youth share a duty to protect them from abuse or risk of harm.

Oversight and accountability for the Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy are mandated by the **Board of Directors** and delegated to **senior management** for implementation across the association. Board reporting

reflects the critical importance of child safeguarding within YMCA HBB.

5.1 YMCA HBB Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for governance and oversight related to safeguarding children and youth, including:

- Reviewing the Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy annually.
- Commit to having robust governance processes that keep children and youth on the forefront.
- Reviewing liability insurance, including coverage for child abuse and sexual abuse, with signed acknowledgement by the Board Chair that coverage meets required standards on an annual basis.
- Maintaining governance processes that ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth remain a primary organizational focus.

5.2 YMCA HBB President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The President and CEO is responsible for executive leadership and accountability related to safeguarding, including:

- Appointing a Safeguarding Children and Youth Lead.
- Ensuring the Safeguarding Lead has the necessary authority, resources, and support to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Embedding Safeguarding Children and Youth principles into the association's annual planning and operational priorities.

5.3 YMCA HBB Safeguarding Children and Youth Lead

The role of Safeguarding Children and Youth Lead is assigned to the Senior Vice President, People, Leadership & Culture (PLC) as outlined in their job description. The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for association-wide oversight and coordination, including:

- Advancing the objectives of the Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy and applicable child protection legislation across the association.
- Providing oversight of the implementation and ongoing adherence to Safeguarding Children and Youth protocols and practices.
- Working in collaboration with the Chief Operating Officer to provide organizational oversight related to safeguarding responsibilities.

5.4 YMCA HBB Safeguarding Children and Youth Committee

The Safeguarding Children and Youth Committee supports the implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of safeguarding practices across the association. Responsibilities include:

- Promoting awareness of safeguarding children and youth and ensuring clear, accessible processes are in place for reporting and responding to concerns, consistent with the association's communication plan.
- Coordinating and sharing wise practices, data, and learnings to continuously evolve the association's approach to safeguarding.
- Conducting self-assessments and developing action plans to address identified gaps.
- Completing annual assessments and internal reviews in compliance with YMCA Canada's National Safeguarding Standards.
- Reviewing the Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy annually and supporting training to maintain standards and best practices.
- Supporting the analysis of data related to confirmed allegations to identify trends and inform training and prevention strategies.

5.5 YMCA HBB People Leaders (Management/Supervisors/Program Leads)

People Leaders are responsible for maintaining safe environments within all YMCA HBB facilities and programs. This includes:

- Ensuring all employees and volunteers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Ensuring employees and volunteers with significant contact with children and youth receive orientation and training on the Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy, including annual refresher training.
- Maintaining physical security and other protective measures within facilities and programs.
- Ensuring compliance with the associations [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#).
- Establishing guidelines to ensure programs are developmentally appropriate and well planned.
- Providing direct guidance on Duty to Report documentation and promptly responding to complaints, reports, and allegations.
- Ensure that Annual Offence Declarations are completed as required.

5.6 Employee and Volunteer Responsibilities

All employees and volunteers share a responsibility to safeguard children and youth and are expected to comply with this policy by:

- Following the Code of Conduct for the protection of children and youth.
- Completing annual review and acknowledgement of the Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy.
- Following program guidelines that ensure activities are developmentally appropriate and well planned and contributing to a safe and caring environment.
- Actively monitoring the whereabouts of children and youth and always remaining aware of their location.
- Assessing risks and removing hazards within their control to promote safety.
- Ensuring all visitors and contractors follow sign-in procedures and provide valid identification.
- Report any concerns that a child's or youth's well-being may be at risk as per our duty to report.
- Reporting concerns in accordance with the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* (Duty to Report).
- Informing their supervisor if assistance or clarification is required related to reporting obligations.
- Avoid one-on-one situations with a child or youth unless there is a clear program-related need, and appropriate safeguards are in place.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Leadership teams (management), employees, and volunteers who work with children and youth will receive training appropriate to their roles to ensure awareness of child and youth safeguarding issues, legal responsibilities, and YMCA HBB policies, procedures, and protocols. Training is aligned with hiring and onboarding practices and is provided upon commencement of placement, with mandatory annual refresher training thereafter.

All training is documented in the employee's or volunteer's digital file at the start of placement with YMCA HBB and updated annually. These education and training requirements ensure that employees and volunteers clearly understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities and are equipped to support environments where children and youth feel physically, emotionally, and socially safe within YMCA HBB programs.

Learning from practical case experience will be incorporated into ongoing organizational training and development to support continuous improvement in safeguarding practices.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, VULNERABLE PERSONS, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

YMCA HBB is committed to the safety and well-being of children, vulnerable persons and young people accessing its programs and services and providing spaces where children, vulnerable persons and young people are safe, families are strong, and communities are supported.

Employees and volunteers are required to follow the **Safeguarding Children and Youth Code of Conduct** that describes good practices and includes practices to be avoided or never sanctioned. The practices outlined in YMCA HBB's Code of Conduct clarify what is and is not acceptable behaviour when working with children, youth 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.

8. ELECTRONIC AND SITE SAFETY

YMCA HBB is committed to maintaining safe and secure electronic and physical environments for children and youth.

8.1 Digital Communications and Electronic Monitoring

Employees and volunteers must comply with the [Digital Communications Policy](#) which includes requirements that:

- All electronic communication and engagement with children and youth occurs only through YMCA-issued devices and approved platforms.
- Photos or recordings of children or youth are not taken for personal use.
- Any photos or recordings authorized for YMCA HBB purposes may only be taken using YMCA-issued devices and with appropriate consent, in accordance with applicable policies and procedures.
- Employees must comply with the [Electronic Monitoring Policy](#) where applicable.
- YMCA HBB will regularly assess the safety and security of facilities through site checks and facility access plans to ensure alignment with Facility Access and Program controls.

8.2 Visitor Log and Identification Process

- All individuals entering a YMCA HBB facility who are not YMCA HBB employees or members are required to sign the visitor log and always wear a YMCA HBB visitor lanyard while on site.
- YMCA HBB employees visiting a location other than their regular branch must sign the visitor log and always wear their YMCA HBB name tag or lanyard.
- When a YMCA HBB employee is accompanied by a guest, including vendors or contractors, the guest must sign the visitor log, and the employee is responsible for vouching for the guest while on site.
- Valid government-issued photo identification is required for any individual unknown to employees who is entering YMCA HBB program spaces or attempting to pick up a child or youth from a YMCA HBB program.

These requirements operate in conjunction with **Appendix H: Facility Access Protocols**, which outlines broader access control and monitoring expectations for secured program areas.

9. DUTY TO REPORT AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

In the event that a child or youth discloses or there are grounds to suspect child abuse, YMCA HBB will take prompt and immediate action. YMCA HBB is mandated by Provincial law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

9.1 Individual Duty to Report

If you suspect child abuse, you are required to:

- Treat allegations seriously and confidentially.
- Make the call immediately to a Child Protection Agency (CPA).
- The decision to make the call to CPA needs to be made by you directly, and you are expected to make the call yourself.
- Inform your supervisor or manager of the intention to call a CPA, if you need their support to ensure that you have the privacy and staffing coverage required to immediately make the call.
- If your supervisor or manager is not available, you must proceed with the report to the CPA.
- Complete the **Suspected Abuse Reporting Form** and ensure that all fields in the form have been completed.
- The Suspected Abuse Reporting Forms are available on YMCA sanctioned computers/iPad for digital submission, or a printed copy can be completed and sealed in an envelope addressed to the Director of People, Leadership & Culture (PLC).
- Ensure that all requirements under Duty to Report are followed.

9.2 Allegations Against Employees or Volunteers

In addition to the above, where an incident may involve an allegation, complaint or claim of abuse against an employee or volunteer the procedures below will be followed:

- The employee or volunteer will notify their immediate supervisor/manager that a call will be made to the CPA. If the immediate supervisor/manager is not available, the employee or volunteer will notify the manager once removed.
- Manager will notify their General Manager and Vice President/COO of the allegation. The Vice President/COO will notify the President & CEO and the Senior Vice President People, Leadership & Culture (association Lead responsible for Safeguarding Children and Youth) <https://www.ymcahbb.ca/about-us/leadership>
- Where an allegation involves an employee or volunteer in a licensed Child Care program, the supervisor/manager must also report the allegation to the Ministry of Education, in accordance with the Serious Occurrence reporting requirements under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) and its regulations.

All individuals have a legal duty to report reasonable suspicions that a child may be in need of protection.

Under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, individuals who obtain such information in the course of their professional or official duties, including employees, volunteers, and interns working with children and youth, are subject to specific penalties for failing to report. A person who fails to report a reasonable suspicion obtained through their professional or official duties may, upon conviction, be liable to a fine of up to \$5,000.

9.3 Privacy and Disclosure of Information

- All records related to the allegation or complaint will be retained in compliance with the [YMCA Privacy Policy](#) until such time as determined by the authorities, or by YMCA HBB records of retention requirements, or by the insurer, whichever is longer.
- 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 to release records is to be forwarded to the Safeguarding Children and Youth Lead, who will determine appropriate action in consultation with legal counsel, when deemed necessary.
- The Safeguarding Children and Youth Lead will refer to the Crisis Communication Plan when deemed necessary.

9.4 Cooperation with Child Protection Investigations

In accordance with the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, authorized Child Protection Agencies (CPA) have the legal mandate to investigate concerns that a child may be in need of protection. As part of that mandate, child protection workers may require access to a child or youth for the purpose of conducting an interview.

All YMCA HBB employees, volunteers, and interns must fully cooperate with authorized child protection workers and/or law enforcement officials acting within their legal authority.

Where a CPA or law enforcement official attends a YMCA HBB site to interview a child or youth, employees must:

- Immediately notify their supervisor or designated site lead.
- Not obstruct, delay, deny, or interfere with authorized access to the child or youth.
- Provide reasonable access to a private space where the interview may occur, if requested.
- Not notify a parent/guardian of the interview unless directed to do so by the CPA or law enforcement official.
- Maintain confidentiality and refrain from discussing the matter with unauthorized individuals.

Failure to cooperate with a child protection investigation may place a child at further risk and may constitute a breach of YMCA HBB policy and legal obligations under provincial legislation.

9.5 Confidentiality

If you are involved in making, or have knowledge of, a report of suspected child abuse to a CPA, you must keep all information relating to that situation strictly confidential. The suspicions, the information upon which it is based and the report itself must not be discussed with any person (including any other staff, placement student or volunteer) not specifically authorized in these procedures.

9.6 Protection from Liability

If a person reports suspected child abuse, they cannot be sued if it is proven that the report was made in good faith and not to cause trouble for anyone.

10. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION MATERIAL

Child sexual exploitation materials, including child pornography, are criminal offences under the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The creation, possession, distribution, access, or transmission of such material is prohibited and may result in criminal charges. Concerns related to child sexual exploitation must be taken seriously and acted upon immediately.

10.1 Reporting Requirements

In Ontario, all individuals have a duty to report concerns that a child or youth may be in need of protection, including concerns related to sexual abuse or exploitation, in accordance with the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*. Such concerns must be reported immediately to a child protection agency.

If an employee or volunteer becomes aware of suspected child or youth sexual exploitation material in the course of their work:

- The material must not be copied, shared, or retained beyond what is necessary to preserve evidence.
- The concern must be reported immediately in accordance with the association's Duty to Report Procedures, which includes notification to:
 - The appropriate child protection agency
 - Local police

10.2 Preservation of Evidence

YMCA HBB employees, including those in Information Technology (IT) and related roles, may become aware of potential child sexual exploitation material in the course of their work. While there is no obligation to actively search for such material, any suspected discovery must be reported immediately in accordance with applicable law and YMCA HBB policies and procedures. Failure to report concerns related to child sexual abuse or exploitation may result in legal consequences under applicable legislation.

11. RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Resources	Contact Information
Hamilton Child & Family Supports (Children's Aid Society of Hamilton)	Main phone: 905-522-1121 (24/7 reporting)
Halton Children's Aid Society	Main phone: 905-333-4441
Child & Family Services of Grand Erie	Phone: 519-753-8681 (Brantford / Townsend) Toll-free: 1-888-753-8681
Catholic Children's Aid Society	Main phone: 905-525-2012
Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society (Haliburton Office)	Main phone: 705-457-1661

12. APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Safeguarding Children, Youth and Vulnerable Persons Code of Conduct
- Appendix B: Example of Completed Suspected Abuse Reporting Form
- Appendix C: Printable Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form
- Appendix D: Guidelines for Documenting and Reporting
- Appendix E: Screening Procedures for "Other Persons"
- Appendix F: Abusive or Harmful Behaviour Between Children
- Appendix G: Supervision and Visibility Protocols
- Appendix H: Facility Access Protocols

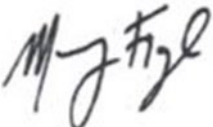

13. VERSION HISTORY

Date	Revision No.	Revision Type	Reference Section(s)
03/01/2026	2.0	Updated Policy	Full policy rewrite and modernization
Unknown	1.0	New Policy	N/A

14. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Printed materials contained in the binder are considered uncontrolled copies and may not reflect the most current version. The electronic version of this policy, available on [MyHBB Policies](#), is the official and most current version and should always be referenced for accuracy.

15.APPROVALS

Reviewed and Approved: The signatures below confirm that the YMCAHBB Board of Directors have approved the Safeguarding Children and Youth Policy and confirm that there is adequate liability insurance.	
	
Manny Figueiredo President & CEO	Paul Gibbel Chair, Board of Directors