

POLICY

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

Policy Owner	CE
Policy Reviewer	Child Protection Officer
Last Review Date: 31/03/2022	Next Review Date: 1/07/2025

Relevant Legislation

- South Australian *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*
- Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016
- Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016

Scope

This policy applies to the Youth Opportunities head office, venues and schools where programs are facilitated, and all persons working within Youth Opportunities inclusive of employees, contractors, Board members and other volunteers.

Purpose

This policy was created collaboratively to demonstrate the strong and ongoing commitment of Youth Opportunities (a single entity formed as a company and/or corporation) to promote child safety across the organisation to establish and maintain a child safe and child friendly environment. Youth Opportunities is committed in ensuring detail is provided in demonstrating how we communicate our approach, gather thoughts from the young people we support and their caregivers and seek advice from our volunteers and employees to ensure they have the requisite skills, knowledge and support to report and respond to the reasonable suspicion that a child or young people may be experiencing harm or at risk of harm.

This policy also reflects the organisations strong commitment to consult with young people and ensure their active participation is reflected in maintaining a child safe organisation. Volunteers, employees and key stakeholders are consulted to obtain their perspectives on how we can best provide a safe environment where every child and young person has the right to be treated with respect, feel safe, feel valued and protected from harm.

Youth Opportunities is embedding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations across the organisation to strengthen this commitment in demonstrating a child safe environment. Furthermore, the policy aligns with Youth Opportunities legislative obligations under the South Australian Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, specifically Sections 114 and 115 requiring organisations to engage in periodic review of policies and procedures to ensure that child safe environments are maintained throughout the organisation and reporting of risk or risk of harm is made under Section 30 of the Act. Youth Opportunities engages in child-related work as defined as any other service declared by the Minister to whom the administration of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 is committed, including:

- (a) Education
- (b) Sports
- (c) Recreational activities

(d) Cultural awareness or cultural activities

(e) Arts and crafts

Commitment to the safety of children and young people

All persons working within Youth Opportunities inclusive of Board members, will ensure the safeguarding of the fundamental rights of children and young people is endorsed and respected. A commitment to maintaining a child safe and child friendly environment is reflected in the practices, behaviours and principles endorsed by all persons within Youth Opportunities. In order to strengthen effective responding and application of legislative requirements, the policy will provide clear guidance and expectations for all volunteers, employees and placement students in ensuring the safety of children and young people.

Children and young people participating in Youth Opportunities programs have an inherent right to feel safe and protected from harm. Youth Opportunities is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all young people accessing our services and the welfare of young people within our care is always paramount and our first priority. This organisation's policy complies with the child safe environment's provisions of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017.

Youth Opportunities will not tolerate incidents of harm/child abuse and/or risk of harm, this includes:

- Physical harm – where a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person.
- Emotional harm – an attack on a child or young person's self-esteem, for example through bullying, name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person.
- Neglect – where a child or young person is harmed by the failure to provide the basic physical or emotional necessities.

This policy is developed, designed and contributed to through consultation with young people, volunteers and employees. We are committed to valuing diversity across our program delivery recognising, acknowledging and supporting children and young people of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and ensure that religious and cultural beliefs are respected, and equity is promoted and upheld.

Please see the Appendix for further information and guidance on the processes Youth Opportunities engages in to consult and participate with young people on being informed about the content of our organisational Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

Children and young people's participation

Youth Opportunities encourages the whole organisation to be participative in nature both internally and externally seeking the views of key stakeholders to better inform practice in all areas of the organisation. It is important to us that employees and volunteers encourage young people to express their views and make suggestions, especially on all policy matters that directly affect their future, their safety and their wellbeing.

We engage young people in a variety of settings both in the education system and in the community. In both environments we provide clear and transparent information both verbally and in written format that

informs young people of their rights and responsibilities as well as its importance to the organisation of building a safe environment for young people to experience when engaged in our programs.

Participation is a key component of our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy development and review. We collaborate with our young people, volunteers and employees to gather their views. Our processes allow us to empower young people to participate in matters which directly concern them and involves the collection of information from the perspectives of employees and volunteers to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy at the scheduled review date every year.

Youth Opportunities ensures that children, young people and their families/carers know their rights and how to access services, advice and the complaints processes available to them.

Youth Opportunities has a strong commitment to deliver its services in the spirit and consideration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The organisation has procedures to inform children of their rights:

- When there is contact with young people in State Care, accessibility to the Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care is provided, and is observed and upheld by all Youth Opportunities employees and volunteers.
- Children, young people and caregivers are aware of how they can access help and advice beyond the organisations roles to help a student flourish. These are outlined in our trainer packs, parent and care-giver information and available to service users.

Youth Opportunities has a commitment to participate and work within the parameters of the Rodger A. Harts 'Ladder of Participation' as endorsed by UNICEF.

Young people participating in Youth Opportunities programs are regularly and actively invited to voice their perspectives on their experiences of the program and whether they felt involved in the feedback process. The mid-program and end of program evaluation forms for trainers and for experiences of program delivery are administered to young people as a survey either hard copy or online to obtain feedback. The information received is then evaluated and reviewed to improve service provision for young people based upon the feedback received.

Youth Opportunities facilitated the Woodville Leaders Child Safe Organisations Project in Western metro Adelaide exploring each of the principles outlined in the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations to review and obtain feedback on whether Youth Opportunities is meeting the principles to ensure child safety. The workshop involved discussing with young people the accessibility of the policy, young people's rights and areas of program delivery requiring more attention and improvements. Youth Opportunities obtained feedback from young people and are implementing relevant changes within the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy to ensure young people's voices are reflected in the process of development and action. Furthermore, Youth Opportunities intends to annually conduct a review process of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy involving a group of young people from the community to contribute to whether the policy is still applicable, any areas for improvement and an opportunity for concerns to be raised and addressed.

Confidentiality and privacy of children and young people

It is paramount that the privacy and confidentiality of children and young people participating in our services is ensured to meet their safety and wellbeing needs. Concerns raised in relation to suspicions or allegations of harm to children and young people is treated as highly sensitive and confidential within Youth Opportunities. All information recorded is obtained and stored securely in accordance with Youth Opportunities Confidentiality Policy.

Youth Opportunities demonstrates an understanding of the adverse impact on their wellbeing and safety that releasing images of a child or young person to the public can have, especially if it had the potential to disclose their location to a perpetrator. Youth Opportunities ensures to seek out consent from young people and their caregivers prior to taking an image of the young person.

Caregivers and young people are informed about the purpose of the photo being taken and its use, the process involved in how the image will be stored as well as, their rights to withdraw consent at any point in time. This is all conducted under the Confidentiality Policy. Furthermore, caregivers are able to access the image.

Code of Conduct

The organisation has a clear Code of Conduct as part of the induction process which all employees, volunteers and placement students are required to acknowledge and formally sign to demonstrate understanding. The conduct code for each group of students is developed with their full participation to facilitate ownership and adherence. A list of non-negotiable principles is generated by the group of students known as 'Group Agreements' and are clearly defined. Students and trainers are required to adhere to the Group Agreements when engaged in delivery activities and to demonstrate a commitment in maintaining a safe environment for all young people. Trainers assist the group to include any principles or norms that may have been overlooked and ensure that a copy of the Group Agreements is provided to all students and referred to when required.

Youth Opportunities employees and volunteers encourage young people to express their views and make suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect their safety and wellbeing. We actively encourage all young people who use our services to 'have a say' about what is important to them and provide a safe environment for students to express their perspectives openly, to be listened to and to be provided with timely feedback of any action required. We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practice as outlined in our Code of Conduct and in the Group Agreements.

The organisation seeks feedback on the service it provides through the use of program feedback forms. These forms are available on our website and in hard copy. The forms also allow young people and caregivers the opportunity to anonymously provide complaints and commentary to our organisation.

Youth Opportunities is working towards embedding a set of ethical principles and guidelines aligned to these two particular areas: community work and Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW).

Youth Opportunities hosts social work students on field education. These students are required to uphold and practice within the ethical responsibilities outlined in AASW Code of Ethics (2020) and Practice Standards (2013). All Social Work students must have a valid Working with Children Check issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services, SA.

Recruitment Practices

Youth Opportunities utilises a comprehensive procedure of best practice to recruit employees and volunteers to ensure suitability in working with young people. The organisation ensures a robust selection and checking process is enacted to ensure suitable persons are provided with employment to safeguard children and young people. Youth Opportunities procedure of recruitment is detailed within the Workforce Development Best Practice including the planning and application, selection and commencement of new staff. The recruitment process is as follows:

- Development of detailed Job & Person Specification
- Includes information on requirement to comply with child safety and wellbeing best practice.
- Shortlisting of appropriate candidates
- Interview including student participation and at least two professional reference checks to ensure candidates demonstrate that young people are valued and respected, are committed to child safe practices, understand the wellbeing and safety needs of young people and demonstrate culturally safe practices.
- Working with children check is required for people working with children and young people, as well as any other employee or volunteer associated with Youth Opportunities.
(Youth Opportunities considers this to be all workers, volunteers and contractors regardless of whether their role requires them to deliver services directly to children and young people.)
- Youth Opportunities will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening unit portal.
- Ensuring any new employee does not have access to working with young people or their personal information until their Working with children check is verified in the DHS Screening Unit portal.
- Comprehensive induction into Youth Opportunities is facilitated.
- An employee probation period is set to six months and during this time employees are required to acknowledge, understand and sign policies and agreements such as:
 - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
 - Code of Conduct
 - Confidentiality Policy
 - Whistleblower Policy
 - Data Breach Policy
- All signed policies and agreements are recorded within employee human resource files for record management purposes.
- Employees/volunteers/placement students who work directly with children and young people are required to undertake the Initial Training Course (ITC) which is conducted no later than the week prior to program delivery and includes an intensive training component on child safety facilitated by the organisational Child Safety Officer.

Youth Opportunities utilises the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 in ensuring that employees and volunteers maintain a valid Working with Children Check issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services, SA.

For any new staff that do not have a Working with Children's Check at time of appointment, Youth Opportunities are registered with the Screening Unit and login through <https://screening.sa.gov.au/> to apply on their behalf. If Youth Opportunities become aware of certain information that is required to be

shared with the Screening Unit, we contact the Screening Unit through email via DHS.screeningunit@sa.gov.au or contact via PH: 1300 321 592.

Youth Opportunities manages staff Working with Children Check clearances through a register that is updated as required to share with external stakeholders while having regard for the requirements of the Privacy Act.

Supervision, training and support for employees and volunteers

Youth Opportunities provides support, regular training and supervision of employees and volunteers to ensure understanding and compliance with mandatory reporting obligations and that staff are fulfilling their responsibilities in maintaining child safe environments. In order to meet 'Principle 5 and 7' of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, employees and volunteers working with young people are supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice by being equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. This is achieved through:

Mandatory Notification Compliance

All employees must complete mandatory notification training as per Department of Education requirements known as Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RRHAN-EC) training and Safe Environments for Children and Young People training, the current requirement is every 5 years. All employees in prescribed positions (those who work directly with children and young people) must maintain current RRHAN-EC Masterclass certification

Child Safety Officer role

Youth Opportunities have a nominated member of staff reporting to the senior management team to undertake the duties of Child Safety Officer. This role has specified duties in their job description to ensure that child safety and wellbeing is prioritized. Their primary role is to ensure that employees and volunteers are adequately trained, developed and to provide ongoing support to employees completing Mandatory Notifications. The nominated Child Safety Officer also provides a single contact for children, caregivers/parents, and employees/volunteers to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children when dealing with the organisation. This Child Safety Officer role also aligns with the site leader as described in RRHAN-EC training by acquiring responsibility for the welfare of children and young people present across sites.

Regular support and supervision of staff

All employees are allocated a direct-line manager and/or supervisor to ensure ongoing support and supervision is provided.

All new employees are supervised through a formal induction with employees being provided with relevant organisational policies and procedures including this document. New employees who work directly with children and young people are also supported to complete a detailed probation and onboarding plan which includes development activities and information on their responsibilities to young people such as; record-keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

Regular ongoing support and supervision meetings are conducted a minimum of six times per year (pro rata for part time staff). These meetings follow a standard format that includes areas of compliance

including child safety and wellbeing, providing a reflective space to analyse incidents, assess risk and provide an important check and balance on decision-making and ongoing practice. Employees working directly with young people are supervised in their practice by their supervisor and/or line manager as well as, by peers at regular intervals to ensure continuing child safety best practice.

Annual performance reviews are also undertaken to ensure continuing compliance and development of staff skills, knowledge and capabilities to support ongoing child safety and wellbeing.

Ongoing staff training

Youth Opportunities provides employees with regular training and opportunities for professional development which supports child safety and wellbeing. Employees who would directly with young people must complete First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid and Youth Opportunities Initial Training Course prior to any contact with young people. This training equips employees with program concepts, facilitation skills and develops staff ability to create environments that develop child safety and wellbeing.

Employees who work directly with young people have regular collaborative team meetings with standing agenda items which includes child safety and a space for ongoing professional development both formal and as organisational knowledge sharing from individuals with specialised skills, knowledge or interests. Furthermore, this explores topics such as; cultural safety, the rights of children and young people and recognizing indicators of harm to young people.

More information on support, supervision and training of staff can be found in our Workforce Development Best Practice document.

Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

Youth Opportunities ensures that employees and volunteers who are mandated notifiers in accordance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 and the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 2021 s.64A and s.65 must understand their legislative obligations in notifying the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as possibly practicable if there is reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed as outlined in the Mandatory Reporting Children and Young People Safety Organisational Standard. Reasonable grounds of suspicion may include:

- When observations of a particular young person's behaviour and/or injuries lead you to suspect a young person is being harmed or neglected.
- When a young person discloses that they have been or are being harmed.
- A young person disclosing that they know of someone who has been harmed (they may possibly be referring to themselves).
- When observations about the behaviour of a young person or their adult caregiver(s) elicits suspicions that a young person is being or is at risk of being harmed or neglected.
- When it is heard from someone who is in a position to provide reliable information, perhaps a relative or a friend, neighbour or sibling of a child who is at risk.
- NOTE: The online reporting on <https://my.families.sa.gov.au/IDMProv/landing.html> should only be utilised if the matter has been deemed as minor by the designated Youth Opportunities Child Safety Officer, in all other cases the Child Abuse Reporting Line must be used.

Employees and volunteers in prescribed positions must also report any form of harm or risk of harm to the Head of Training and the Child Safety Officer for further support and to ensure Youth Opportunities takes all reasonable steps to keep the child/young person and others safe.

For the purpose of best practice, employees and volunteers are required to follow the incident reporting process flow chart to guide the steps involved in generating a report and subsequent information sharing to specific persons such as; school, caregivers or social workers/case managers. The incident reporting process outlines the following:

- Assessment of severity of incident; minor, significant or critical.
 - Significant incident involves verbal abuse, threats of violence, physical contact concern and a disclosure by a young person requiring significant support.
 - Critical incident involves acts of violence, serious threats of violence, criminal activity, significant risk of suicide or self-harm, disclosure or suspicion of child harm and neglect.
- Within 12 hours of the incident, employees/volunteers are required to report the incident directly to the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78. After making a mandatory notification you are required to report to your line manager, contact school and if after contact with school it is determined safe to contact caregivers in alignment with school policy, Youth Opportunities employees/volunteers are required to do so. The same applies if information is required to be reported to social workers, case managers or Board Chair.
- All significant or critical incidents require a mandatory notification to the Department for Child Protection via the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL on 13 14 78).
- After debriefing and support is obtained from Child Safety Officer and/or Line Manager, employees/volunteers are required to complete an Incident Report Form and include the mandatory report number.
- Management is required to review all incidents at regular intervals or following critical incidents to identify corrective action/future planning.
- Management ensures that new practice guidelines are communicated to employees/staff.

The incident report form is filed in a secure location to ensure confidentiality and privacy requirements are maintained. Please see Appendix for a detailed flow chart of the Incident Reporting Process.

Youth Opportunities ensures that employees/volunteers are trained and supporting to safeguard the young person when a disclosure of harm or risk of harm is made by:

- Ensuring a relationship of trust is established.
- The trauma experienced by the child is minimised in the disclosure of harm.
- The incident is reported with the greatest possible factual accuracy.
- The child understands that the issue may need to be taken further.

Youth Opportunities acknowledges that following a mandatory notification the duty of care does not cease but rather that the young person may require additional support to safeguard their psychological and physical wellbeing once a notification has been lodged. Employees/volunteers are provided with a comprehensive list of appropriate services to which the young person and/or their family can be referred to.

When mandated reporters within Youth Opportunities fail to generate a mandatory notification where there is a reasonable suspicion that a young person has been, is being or is at risk of harm by others or themselves, disciplinary action may be taken as it is a breach of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. Furthermore, failure to report is an offence under the South Australian Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 to which persons can be penalized with a \$10,000 fine.

Protection and support for mandated reporters

The South Australian Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 outlines that mandated reporters who make a mandatory notification about the suspected harm or risk of harm to young people are not legally liable for any action to either lodge the report or following investigations of the report if allegations are unsubstantiated.

Under the Whistleblower Policy, Youth Opportunities employees/volunteers are able to communicate and report their concerns without fear of retribution or intimidation. Youth Opportunities has a strict no tolerance for work place harassment, discrimination or bullying and if employees/volunteers have witnessed or are experiencing harassment the issue can be raised with Management. This process can be found in our Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Policy.

Reporting and responding to complaints or feedback about the organisation

Youth Opportunities have an accessible link on the website in which other organisations, schools, caregivers and other key stakeholders are able to lodge complaints, commentary, concerns or compliments in which are responded to within two working days. Feedback is also sought by the organisation through the use of written feedback forms. The forms are available on the Youth Opportunities website and in hard copy which provides young people/parents/guardians the opportunity to anonymously provide feedback or complaints.

The responding to complaints/feedback process is:

- Receive feedback from either Youth Opportunities website or from program feedback evaluation forms.
- Recording feedback as an incident report requiring action.
- Respond to the feedback obtained and implement relevant changes to improve service quality.

Young people participating in the programs delivered by Youth Opportunities employees/volunteers are provided with clear direction and instructions on the process required to raise a concern if they do not feel safe, heard or included within the program, at home or in any other areas of their lives. Trainers offer one-on-one interviews where more confidential conversations take place and allow for young people to express their concerns in a safe environment. Youth Opportunities also provides young people a direct line of complaints, concerns, comments and compliments to the allocated Child Safety Officer (Site Leader).

Risk management

Youth Opportunities has a detailed Risk Management (Operations) Policy and risk assessment process to ensure that the program and each venue has any hazards and risks identified and quantified with clear risk mitigation activities to reduce the risk of harm. As outlined in the Risk Management (Operations) Policy, the Youth Opportunities Training Guide and Program Outline Day 1 highlights general venue housekeeping for students in relation to risks and hazards of the physical environment within each venue. Youth

Opportunities employees maintain a safe environment for young people by all employees being trained in applying First Aid and record keeping of any physical injuries that may occur whilst young people are under the supervision of Trainers. Furthermore, caregiver/parental consent is to be provided for young people to be permitted in leaving venue grounds during allocated break times. If a young person is not provided with consent to leave venue grounds, the young person we remain under supervision of Trainers for the duration of the allocated break time.

The Training Guide for Trainers Handbook details guidelines around the safe transportation of young people which is only to occur if there are two Trainers in the vehicle to maintain the safety of the young person and the designated driver must have a full license without restrictions. Consent is to be obtained from a parent/guardian for any transportation of the young person, video/photography of the young person, and emergency contacts are updated and made available to relevant employees.

Youth Opportunities ensures the safety of young people across online programs such as Thrive Online and Thrive @ Life. The Personal Leadership Program Trainers Guide: Working Online and Engaging Learners Online and Student Guide manual provides detailed guideline and policies on ensuring cyber safety is adhered to at all times to safeguard young people online. The Confidentiality Policy and responding to disclosures of harm or risk of harm through online platforms will follow the same guidelines in documenting confidential information and reporting concerns in accordance with the Incident Reporting Process.

Communication

Youth Opportunities has an updated copy of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy on their website which is publicly accessible to all employees, volunteers, young people and families. This is to ensure young people and caregivers are accurately informed on the safeguarding culture and processes at Youth Opportunities.

All employees, volunteers and placement students are required to read, understand and sign to demonstrate acknowledgement and a commitment to abide by Youth Opportunities Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and the legislative obligations on mandatory reporting enshrined in the Children and Young Person (Safety) Act 2017. This is recorded and documented by Human Resources.

Related policies and procedures (supporting guiding documents for our practice)

Youth Opportunities has implemented the following (internal and external) policies and procedures to ensure the management of risk and safeguarding of children and young people is paramount across the organisation:

- Incident Report Form: Includes instances of child abuse and neglect and risk of harm.
- Incident Reporting Process Flow Chart and Procedure
- Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy Statement
- Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Policy Statement
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Confidentiality Policy Statement

- Equal Opportunity Policy Statement
- Mobile Phone Policy Statement
- Privacy Policy Statement
- Recruitment and Selection of Employees Policy Statement
- Social Media Use Policy Statement
- Whistleblower Policy Statement
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy Statement
- Best Practice Guide for Workplace Development

Policy review

Youth Opportunities reviews its Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy every 2 years considering:

- Statutory changes.
- New or added risk identified by young people impacting on present policy.
- A critical incident where a young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation.
- Any concerns raised by anyone about child safety or child welfare.
- Awareness that the compliance to the child safety policy is inconsistent and inadequate.

Youth Opportunities will lodge a new statement in the DHS Child Safe Environment Compliance System if there is any change to the principles of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures.