



Behaviour Guidance and Safe Practice Operating Policy

Purpose

The YMCA of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to providing safe regulated and unregulated child care and health, fitness and aquatics environment(s) for all our participants. We are committed to eliminating where possible, or otherwise, minimizing the hazard of bullying, or unsafe behaviors to ensure participants are able to participate fully in a safe, healthy and respectful programs and facilities.

Scope

This operating policy applies to child care programs as well as to any activity or communication arising from the child care programs. It also applies to any YMCA program or facility for ages 0-18 years that bullying or unsafe behaviors may occur.

Definitions

Regulated child care: child care must be regulated where a child care service meet definitions 2(f) and 2(g) of the [Child Care Act](#). All regulated child care must follow the Child Care Act and meet the minimum required standards to maintain their licence. The YMCA offers [regulated](#) Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Pre-K and School Age child care services. We must ensure we are compliant with these regulations at all times to maintain our child care licenses.

Unregulated child care: Activities and arrangements that are not considered to be a child care service can be found in section 2(f) of the *Child Care Act*. The YMCA offers unregulated day camps and recreational programs for ages 0-18 years (e.g., After Day Play).

Plan

Bullying in any form in our YMCA programs or arising from our YMCA programs is prohibited. The YMCA shall investigate complaints of bullying and unsafe behaviors.

For reasons that a child or youth and/or a parent/guardian enrolled in our program(s) demonstrates:

- A risk to others and/or a risk of non-compliance with the child care legislation or
- Behaviours that do not align with our etiquette statement and values;
 - YMCA values caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and diversity
 - Etiquette Statement- *the YMCA is a shared experience for everyone to enjoy. Each of us can make it better for all by being considerate to others. YMCA members, participants, clients, visitors, staff and volunteers all pledge to treat one another with respect and dignity.*



Common behavioral issues observed or reported:

1. Bullying
 - Physical – includes, but not limited to, hitting, pushing, any unwanted touching, body checking, causing nosebleeds, damage of others belongings.
 - Verbal – includes, but not limited to, using aggressive tones/language, words to assault, dominate, ridicule, aggressive cursing, and/or degrade another person.
2. Safety Concern
 - “Flight risk” – includes, but not limited to, leaving the designated area of the programming/supervision
 - Hiding from staff
 - Unresponsive to transitioning routines such as one space to another (homeroom to gymnasium, outside play space)
 - A pattern of inappropriate running, climbing, jumping on furniture such as tables, chairs and/or shelves that pose as a safety concern/risk.
 - Throwing objects not intended for the activities, such as but not limited to chairs, baskets, etc. and/or flipping tables or large objects.

Responsibilities

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Read, understand and cooperate with this operating policy
- To encourage their child(ren) and youth not to engage in bullying or unsafe behaviors
- Ask for help with behavior modification or increased supervision supports in their respective program(s)
- Not to engage in bullying or unsafe behaviors when interacting with YMCA staff/mgmt (e.g., Workplace Harassment Prevention)
- Report observations or experiences bullying and unsafe behaviors, in accordance with this Plan
- Cooperate in any investigation being conducted. This may include temporary suspension of participation in the program(s).
- Maintain confidentiality as required by this Plan.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible to:

- Comply with this operating Policy
- Not engage in unsafe behaviors
- Intervene with unsafe behaviors of participants
- Report observations or experiences of bullying and unsafe behaviors, in accordance with this Plan



- Participate in education and training with respect to bullying and unsafe behaviors prevention
- Cooperate in any investigation being conducted
- Maintain confidentiality as required by this Plan.

Supervisor Responsibilities

In addition to their responsibilities as employees, supervisors are responsible to:

- Ensure the safety of employees and participants, including the supervisor's obligation to apply and comply with this Plan
- Foster a culture of respect through leading by example
- Ensure that all employees, participants and parents/guardians that fall under their supervision have knowledge of and understand this Plan.
- Cooperate in any investigation being conducted
- Maintain confidentiality as required by this Plan.

Association Responsibilities

The YMCA is responsible to:

- Ensure training is being provided to employees with respect to reports of bullying or unsafe behaviors
- Ensure an investigation is being conducted with respect to reports of bullying or unsafe behaviors
- Report the findings of an investigation and follow up with all parties involved with respect to this plan
- Ensure compliance with child care legislation
- Protect employees and provide support to employees from Workplace Harassment
- Review this operating policy on an annual basis or as is required
- Maintain confidentiality as required by this Plan.

Informal Resolution

In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for a participant who believes they have experienced or observed bullying or unsafe behaviors to address the conduct directly (tell) with YMCA staff in the respective program, before the behavior becomes repetitive. The YMCA staff will educate the children involved that their behavior is unwelcome, asking them to stop immediately. The YMCA staff will report the incident to parents/guardians of the children involved and continue to monitor the situation for a pattern of behavior. A meeting between the parents/guardians and YMCA management may be required. This informal resolution approach may include temporary suspension of participation in a child care program to ensure the safety of all involved.



The YMCA may seek the assistance of the team at the Department of Education to help with behavior guidance and inclusion supports for children in regulated child care programs. Parents/guardians will be made aware of the department's help if they accept it, and help bridge the gap between not knowing where to turn, not knowing what to do and what determines whether or not the YMCA can safely provide care to a family/child going forward.

Formal Complaints

Whether or not the informal resolution approach has been taken, the YMCA employee should report the experiences or observations to their supervisor.

Reporting Procedures

The following procedures are to assist employees or parents/guardians should they experience or observe bullying or unsafe procedures in violation of this operating policy:

- Employees, participants or parents/guardians should report instances of bullying or unsafe behaviors without fear of reprisal, so long as the report was made in good faith. Incidents should be reported as soon as possible. Reports can be made by:
 - YMCA Participant Incident/Accident Report Form;
 - Licensing incident/accident form as applicable;
 - Written/email to the YMCA; (info@nl.ymca.ca)
 - Verbally over the phone or in-person then transferred to a written format as per above.
- The report must include:
 - The date, time and location of the incident(s)
 - The name of the person(s) involved in the incident(s)
 - The name of any person(s) who witnessed the incident(s)
 - A full description of what occurred
 - Previous reports made
 - Responses or actions taken

Investigation

Investigation Process

- The investigation process will commence as early as reasonably possible following the receipt of a complaint/report
- The investigator will be a member of the YMCA management team
- All parties involved will be informed of next steps, final decision and advised (or consulted) about any action related to the complaint/report
- If YMCA Management conclude that corrective action is needed, this would be based on severity of incident, number of incidents and previous actions taken. Corrective action may include the temporary suspension or withdrawal of child care service.



The investigation process may include the following steps:

- Reviewing the complaint and any supporting documentation
- Separately interviewing those involved or who witnessed the incident
- Obtaining all relevant documents
- Consulting with and reporting to authorities as needed
- Such other actions deemed appropriate by the investigator (YMCA management) to complete the investigation

Information provided by individuals in the course of the investigation shall be handled with appropriate care and discretion and will be kept confidential, except where disclosure is necessary where required by law. Every effort will be made to ensure the investigation is carried out within a reasonable timeframe from receipt of the formal complaint/report.

Behaviour guidance policies are developed, implemented, and adhered to in accordance with Child Care regulations. This policy is provided to staff upon employment and reviewed annually.

The YMCA recognizes the developmental abilities of children. The policy on guiding children's (and youth) behaviour focuses on a preventative approach which builds healthy relationships with children. Through social interactions, the YMCA staff will set appropriate expectations based on each individual's values and attributes, which in turn fosters positive behaviours and patterns. It is a positive method for preventing inappropriate behaviour and ensuring that children/youth are always engaged in challenging, developmentally appropriate activities. The YMCA acknowledges and recognizes diversity of families as a strength and the potential for its influence on children's (and youth) behaviours. Relevant factors which can influence children's behaviours are taken into consideration, and used to set appropriate, realistic guidelines for children's safety and well-being.

Principles/Goals:

- To develop warm, caring and responsive relationships with each child/youth and group of children/youth
- To guide behaviour in an effective and appropriate manner
- To strengthen the child/youth self-concept, self-esteem and self-regulation
- To help children/youth develop caring, respectful relationships with others

A positive approach is used to guide children/youth and each situation and child/youth is dealt with individually. Methods used include: redirection, stating what is expected rather than posing questions, limit setting, encouraging children/youth to problem solve, ignoring minor incidents, modeling, using natural consequences, providing choices, and anticipating situations.



Emphasis is placed on creating a warm and positive atmosphere which promotes positive behavior.

Behaviour guidance principles:

- Prohibit the use of corporal punishment and time out
- Prohibit the use of harsh or humiliating treatment of children/youth
- Prohibit the children/youth from being deprived the basic necessities of life
- Prohibit behavior guidance that requires or forces children/youth to repeat physical movements while they are participating in a YMCA service/program

In YMCA regulated child care programs (Infant, Toddler, Preschool and Pre-K) the YMCA emergent curriculum (Playing to Learn- PTL) promotes observation as the key to understanding and responding to children's behaviours. Providing a developmentally appropriate program that focuses on activities and materials that are stimulating and challenging is the approach taken. The YMCA recognizes that successful observation techniques require an understanding of each child's developmental stage, knowledge of each child's personality, knowledge of each child's individual situation, a thorough understanding of the range of guiding children's techniques, and a knowledge of when to use these techniques with particular children. Prior to meeting with parents/guardians to discuss a child's behaviour, staff will observe the child systematically, document their findings, and determine if there is a pattern to the behaviour.

This guidance policy is provided to parents/guardians upon registration and will be posted in a prominent and visible location in or next to each program room.

Our staff are committed to help provide a safe environment and to manage, minimize or eliminate the bullying or unsafe behaviors by applying behavior management techniques:

- 1. Create clear, consistent and simple positive limits and provide explanations for them.**
Limits are statements of what behaviors are expected. Ensure that limits are explained to children so they are clearly understood. Limits should be related to safety, protection and rights of self, others and environment. Tell children/youth what behaviors are acceptable, instead of focusing on what is unacceptable.
- 2. Identify, re-direct, refer to and remind the child/youth of the program rules.**
- 3. Have opportunities for children/youth to make choices throughout the day.**
Give children/youth chances to practice their decision-making skills. Give them choices whenever possible. Provide choice in structured and unstructured activities.



4. **Focus on the behavior, not the child/youth.**

When talking about behaviours focus on the behavior not on the child/youth themselves, which will preserve their dignity. Always provide a child/youth with ways they could correct their behavior.

5. **Teach conflict resolution skills.**

As long as behavior is not compromising safety, children/youth will learn to resolve conflict.

6. **Prepare children/youth for transitions.**

Give children/youth advance notice and time before changing to another activity.

7. **Role model and encourage appropriate behavior.**

Children/youth learn their behaviors by watching others around them.

8. **Interact with children/youth.**

Interact (play partner) with children/youth during periods of free play as well as during scheduled activities.