



RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE REPORTS AND ALLEGATIONS POLICY

Reference	Date approved	Date Last amended	Date of next review	Status
SGRAP	3/12/2020	3/12/2020	December 2021	Approved by: Julian Baldey, CEO Approved by: Ken Durbin, BoD

1. Purpose

YMCA North is committed to protecting the children and young people to whom it delivers a service. Accordingly we have developed this policy on how to respond to child abuse reports and allegations as a guide to all our people in meeting their responsibilities in this area. Our personnel are required to identify, report, and respond to any concerns about, or incidents of, child abuse or neglect towards children or young people to whom we provide services. Our personnel are required to respond to abuse or neglect perpetrated by personnel within our organisation or by other persons.

YMCA is committed to equity and diversity and respecting the rights of all children to participate in decision making including those of Maori and Pacific Islander descent, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Intersex (LGBTI) children and those unable to live at home.

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver a service environment that is caring, nurturing and safe. Our board of directors and senior is committed to ensuring the safety of all children and young people to whom we provide services or who participate in our programs.

As part of that commitment YMCA has zero tolerance towards child abuse. We take seriously our responsibility to deliver services in caring, nurturing and safe environments. All young people have the right to develop physically, intellectually and socially in a safe environment, free from any form of abuse or neglect. Their welfare, interests and safety are paramount.



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2. Related Policies

- YMCA North Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- YMCA Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- YMCA Safeguarding Incident Management Policy

3. Related Legislation

Our guidelines comply with relevant legislation.

- Children’s Act 2014
- Privacy Act 1993

4. Scope

All personnel within our organisation are required to meet the requirements of our policy on responding to child abuse reports and allegations.

No one within our organisation is exempt from meeting the standards and requirements set out in this policy.

5. Definitions

Bullying	Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verbal (name calling, put downs, threats);• Physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting);• Social (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and/or• Psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).
Child or young person	A person under the age of eighteen years.
Emotional or psychological abuse	Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviors continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the child’s physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.
Family Violence	Family violence occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person’s life. Exposure to



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	<p>family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.</p>
Grooming	<p>Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.</p>
Harm	<p>Harm to a child, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; • sexual abuse or exploitation; • a single act, omission or circumstance; and • a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Neglect	<p>Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.</p>
Personnel	<p>All staff and volunteers who work for the organisation whether in a paid or unpaid capacity.</p>
Physical abuse	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child. Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child at risk of being hurt.</p>
Sexual abuse	<p>Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a child in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take</p>



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	<p>advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a child, engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child’s genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child. Encouraging a child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.</p>
Family Violence	<p>It may be a single act of violence, or a number of acts that form a pattern of abuse. It covers the range of abuse types – it can be physical, emotional and sexual – and victims suffer in all these ways. Family violence includes yelling and hitting, as well as threatening to harm people, pets or property</p>
Sexual exploitation	<p>Sexual exploitation occurs when children are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve children who are forced into prostitution.</p>

6. Responsibilities

Position	Responsibility
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement policies and procedures across the organisation • Ensure personnel have access to and understand this policy and related procedures • Ensure all managers/supervisors have access to support and advice to understand and implement policies and procedures
Safeguarding/ HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update this document and supporting resources in consultation with relevant stakeholders • Support the coordination of the SCYP framework and implementation • Provide training and advice in the application of policies and procedures
Managers / Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure policies and procedures are followed and implemented
Employees / Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with policy and procedure.



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7. Key

Requirements

Our personnel are required to report any instance of serious abuse or neglect (cases in which a child or young person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm from abuse or neglect) immediately, or if that is not possible, no later than before ending that person's shift or session of work with our organisation.

If a child or young person is at **imminent risk** of harm or in **immediate danger**, our personnel are required to report the situation directly to the NZ Police dial 111

Consequences of breaching policy

If our personnel fail to report instances, allegations, disclosures or concerns in relation to abuse or neglect of a child or young person – by personnel within our organisation or by others – we view such failure as a serious matter that, depending on the circumstances, may result in disciplinary action or be grounds for dismissal.

Our policy prohibits all personnel from:

- discussing any concerns or allegations with unauthorised personnel – within or outside our organisation – such prohibition not being designed to limit, in any way, their rights and responsibilities to report their concerns or allegations, but rather as part of our organisation's commitment to ensuring privacy, confidentiality and natural justice
- making deliberately false, misleading or vexatious allegations.

Our personnel are obliged to raise any concerns they might have in relation to:

- our organisational policies designed to safeguard children and young people – such as outlined in our 'Practice and behaviour guidelines' and in our 'Responding to child abuse reports and allegations' policy
- actions of other personnel within our organisation that contravene our policies, or that may otherwise have the potential to harm a child or young person.

Reporting of concerns or allegations regarding abuse or neglect by family or other external sources

As a policy, YMCA North requires all of its personnel to report any instance of child abuse or neglect that has resulted in, or is likely to result in, significant harm to a child or young person, to either

- New Zealand Police 111 and/or Oranga Tamariki 0508 FAMILY, immediately (i.e. before the end of the person's shift / session of work)
- YMCA Safeguarding Manager, Chris Laing 027 2681096 who will ensure that the incident is reported to New Zealand Police 111 and/or Oranga Tamariki 0508 FAMILY, immediately (i.e. before the end of the person's shift / session of work).



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- If Safeguarding Manager is unavailable (or they are the subject of the complaint), our personnel are required to report the matter to Jo Fahey, People and Culture Manager

We ask that our personnel also inform our Safeguarding Manager of any report they make to those authorities, to enable our organisation to best provide support to the child or young person, their family and our personnel, where appropriate.

All our personnel retain the right to report directly to relevant authorities, such as police or child protection, any concerns they may have in relation to the safety and welfare of a child or young person, regardless of whether or not they have also reported that matter internally.

ALL STAFF HAVE A MANDATORY REQUIREMENT TO REPORT ALL SUSPECTED AND/OR KNOWN SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Mandatory reporting obligations relate to all aspects of suspected or known abuse being identified. This includes, but is not exclusive to, whether concerns are in the context of the child or young person's family/home environment, in places/organisations outside of the family or YMCA, or specifically via the course of their involvement with YMCA. Reporting also relates to suspected abuse by a YMCA staff member, any other professional, any other adult, or through peer-to-peer interactions.

In taking a report of concern, or of an incident, from others within our organisation our personnel are:

- not to assess the validity of such allegations or concerns, but to report all allegations or concerns to the nominated person or persons within our organisation as described in this policy (the validity of an allegation will then be assessed in the manner described in this policy.)
- to disregard factors such as the authority or position of the persons involved and any pre-existing views about the good character, or otherwise, of any person involved or under investigation.

In situations where a child or young person is making an allegation, our personnel are required to:

- listen to the allegation or disclosure supportively, without dispute
- clarify the basic details, without seeking detailed information or asking suggestive or leading questions, using our organisation's 'Child abuse Incident Form'
- record on the Child abuse Incident Form what was said (where possible, noting the exact words used by the person making the allegation)
- date and sign the record
- explain to the child (if present) that other people may need to be told, in order to stop what is happening
- provide reassurance that our organisation will take immediate action in response to the allegation.
- Report the matter as per organisational policy requirements (as stated earlier), which are to:



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- If Safeguarding Manager is unavailable (or they are the subject of the complaint), our personnel are required to report the matter to Jo Fahey, People and Culture Manager

Additional requirements where concerns or allegations of abuse or neglect involve our employees or volunteers

All personnel must report, immediately, to their Centre Manager or Business unit Manager any breach of the Practice and Behaviour Guidelines / Code of Conduct arising from an action by an employee or volunteer within our organisation.

In response to any instance of 'serious' breaches which relate to abuse or neglect ('serious' being cases in which the abuse or neglect has resulted in, or is likely to result in, significant harm to a child or young person) our Safeguarding Manger will investigate and deal with allegations of inappropriate and unacceptable behavior towards a child in line with our organisation's general procedures for complaint resolution and disciplinary measures and in consultation with Police and other authorities.

If a 'serious' allegation has been made against a staff member of our organisation, our Safeguarding Manager will:

- fill in a 'Safeguarding Incident Form' form to ensure all relevant details are documented
- cooperate with the Police and other authorities and assist in their investigation of the allegation
- take any action necessary to safeguard the child or young person (or other children or young people in our care) from additional harm through options such as:
 - redeploying that staff member to a position where they do not work with children
 - additional supervision of that staff member
 - removing/suspending that staff member from duty until the validity of the allegations is determined
- assist in addressing the support needs of those impacted by the allegation including considerations of cultural safety for :
 - the child and their family (this includes any specific support needs for those from an Maori; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse; or person with a disability background);
 - the person against whom the complaint is made by, for example, offering professional counselling
 - other personnel impacted by the allegations



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- make clear to all other personnel who are aware of the allegation that:
- the allegation does not mean the person is guilty, and that the allegation will be properly investigated and will include the right to 'procedural fairness'
- they are not to discuss the matter with any person, except as directed by police, child protection authorities and/or our Safeguarding Manger and only in direct relation to investigation of the allegation.

All instances, allegations, disclosures or reasonable concerns of abuse or neglect of a child or young person arising from an action by an employee or volunteer within our organisation will be investigated and will be the subject of a critical incident review.

Reporting To Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF)

The Safeguarding Manager will inform Australian Childhood Foundation of:

- i. All critical incidents verbally to ACF within 24 hours of the incident ; and
- ii. Any allegations of child abuse or neglect to ACF that involve our personnel within 28 days of the incident.

In accordance with the requirements of the Safeguarding Children Program.

Confidentiality and privacy

Our organisation maintains the confidentiality and privacy of all concerned (including the alleged perpetrator), except if doing so would compromise the welfare of the child or young person and/or investigation of the allegation.

Documentation

As part of our policy for responding to reports or allegations of child abuse, we have developed a Child abuse Incident Form, which is to be used by any of our people to document any allegation, disclosure, incident or concern regarding child abuse. In situations where our personnel become aware of abuse whether through observation of potential indicators, such as bruises or cuts, or by directly observing potentially abusive behaviour towards a child or young person, they are required to use our Child abuse Incident Form to record their observations and concerns as accurately as possible.

Our Safeguarding Manager will oversee creation of a file to contain the completed Safeguarding Incident Form and any other documentation relating to the allegation and subsequent action.



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So as to prevent access by unauthorized persons, our organisation stores any documentation associated with an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child or young person by having:

- hard-copy documentation stored in a locked filing cabinet (or similar)
- electronic documentation stored in a password-protected folder (or similar).

We maintain and regularly monitor records of child abuse reports as part of our Incident Management processes to ensure that they are responded to effectively in accordance with this policy and that requirements for reporting to external authorities are complied with. These records will inform reviews of the policy as detailed in section 9.

8. Communication

We communicate our Safeguarding and child Protection Policy requirements to all our personnel involved with children and young people in our organisation. We involve our personnel in reviews of our Safeguarding and child Protection Policy requirements. We communicate any significant alterations to our Safeguarding and child Protection Policy requirements and resources to all personnel.

9. Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed at least every 3 years, in consultation with stakeholders. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the Board and/or Chief Executive Officer. We retain 'evidence' to document each review undertaken. Such evidence may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

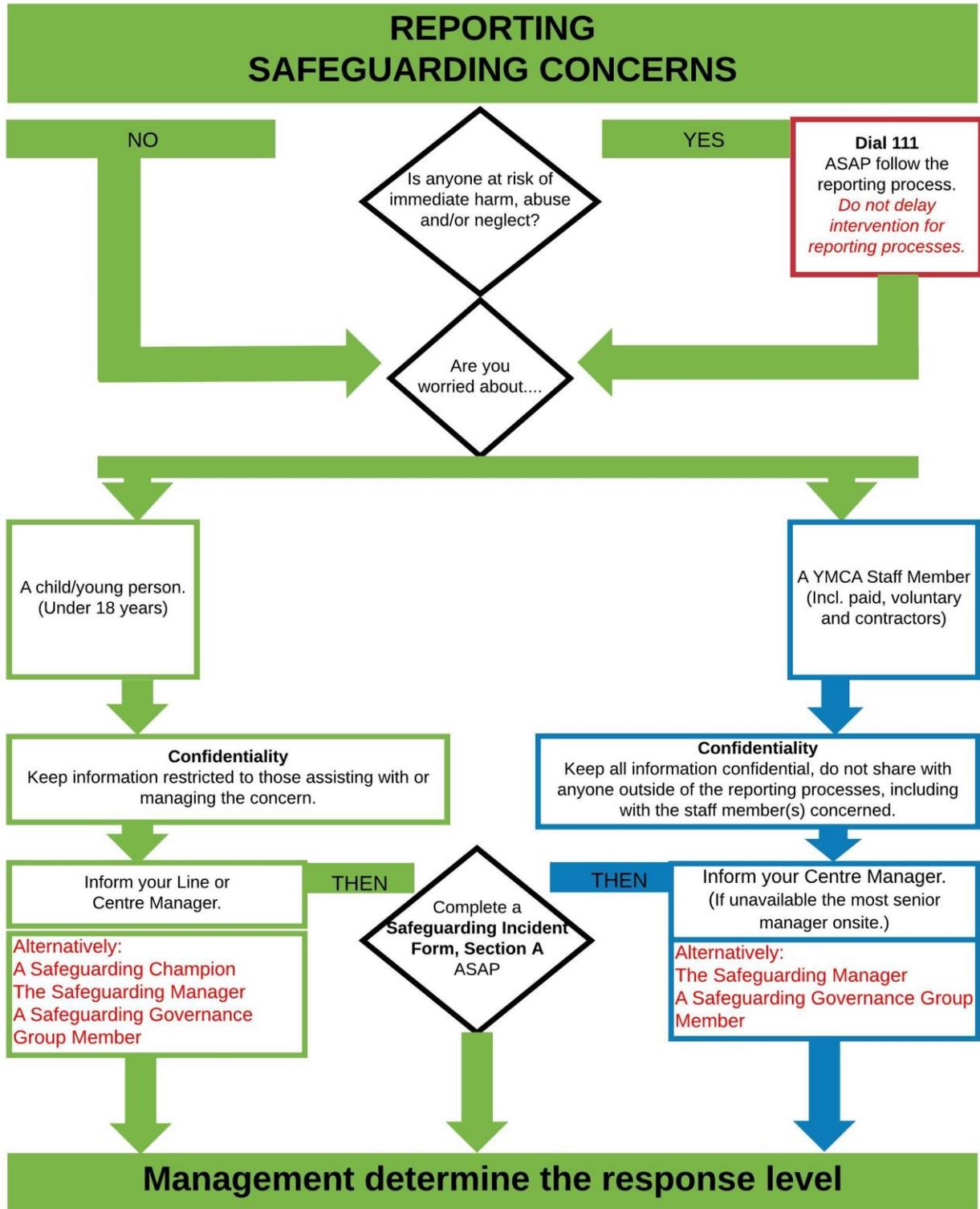
External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at 3 yearly intervals.

10. Supporting Resources

Safeguarding Incident Form
Reporting Flowchart
Report to Australian Childhood Foundation



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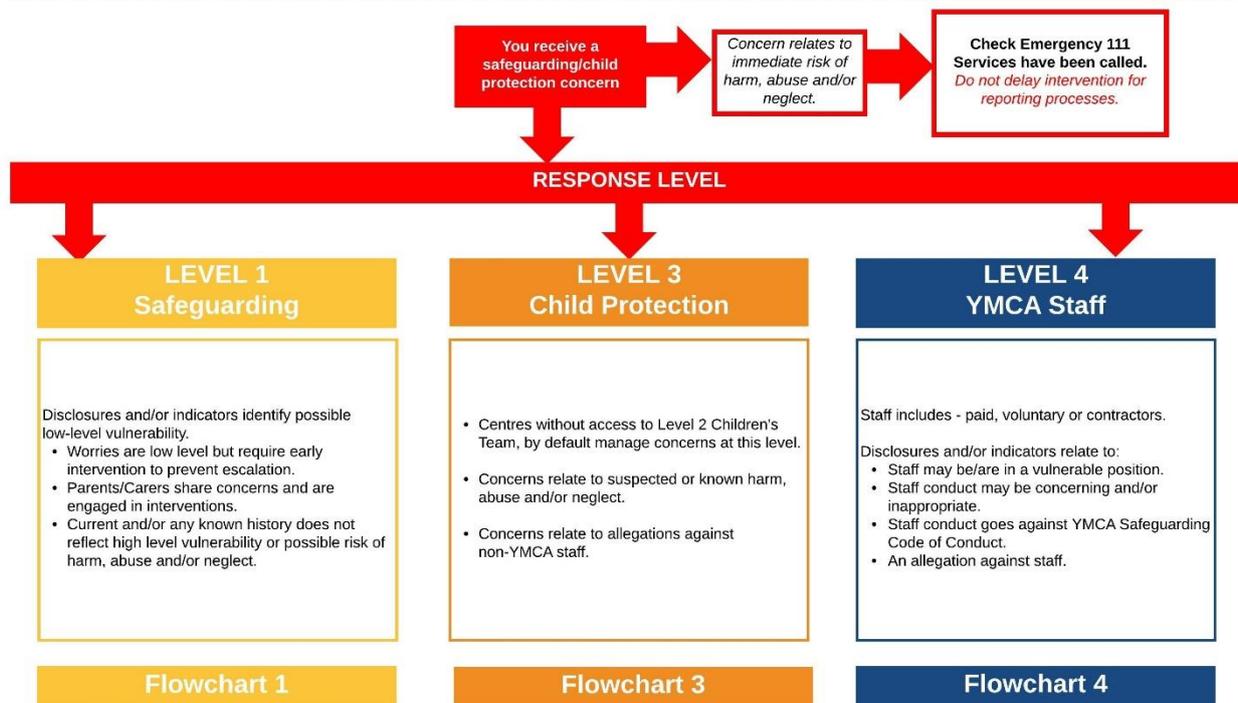
YMCA would appreciate being informed of all reports made to external services. However, staff do have the right to report concerns directly to Oranga Tamariki (0508 326 459) or Police (111) at anytime. This is particularly encouraged by YMCA should staff be unsatisfied with decisions/actions taken, who believe a child/young person to be at risk of harm, abuse and/or neglect.

YMCA Whistleblowing Policy is available to any staff who believe reporting processes to be unsuitable and/or have significant doubt in YMCA.



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RESPONDING TO SAFEGUARDING/CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

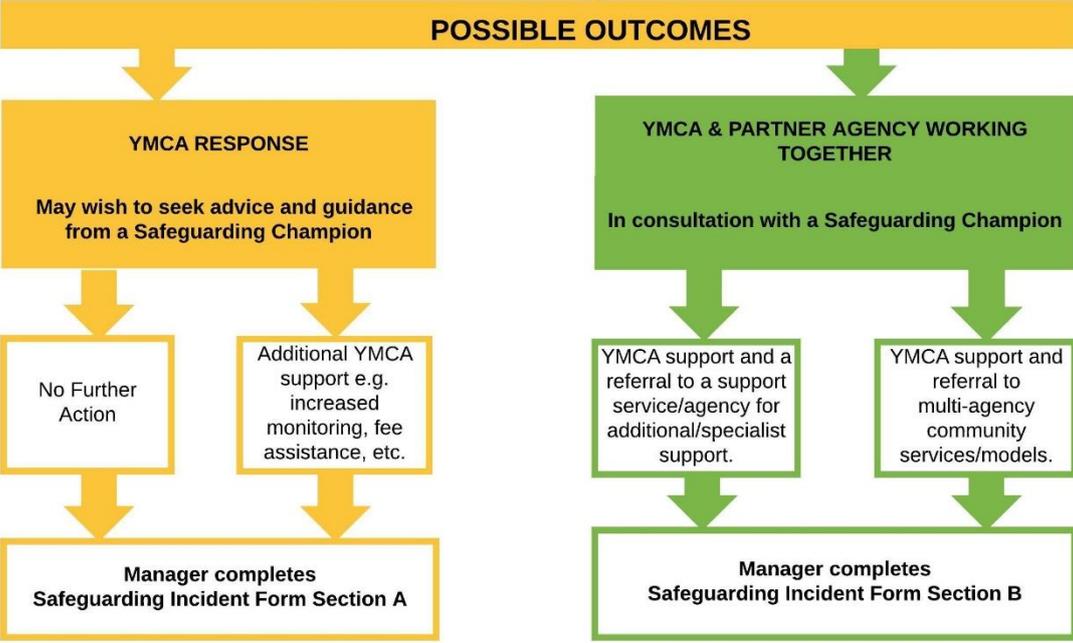
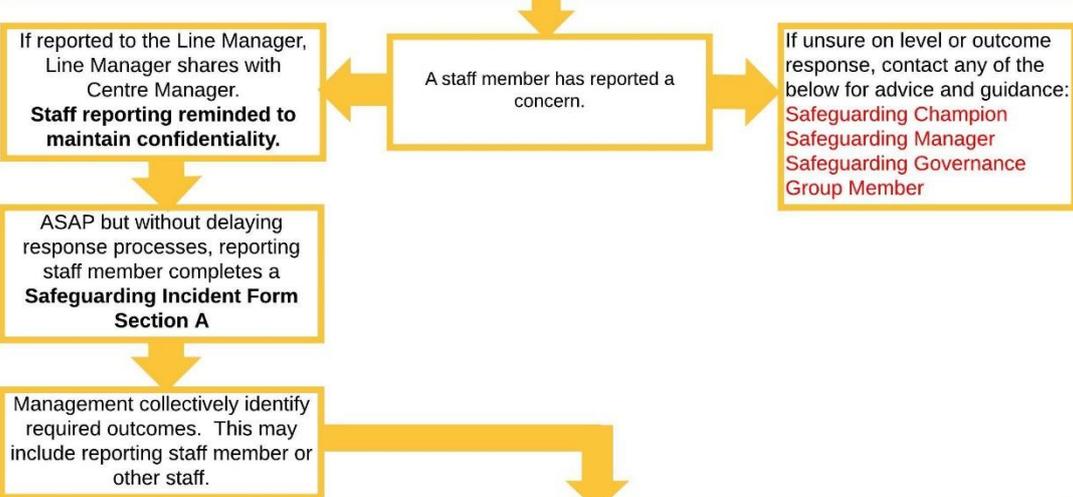




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RESPONDING TO LEVEL 1 SAFEGUARDING FLOWCHART 1

Disclosures and/or indicators identify possible low-level vulnerability:
 > Worries are low level but require early intervention to prevent escalation.
 > Parents/Carers share concerns and are engaged in interventions.
 > Current and/or any known history, do not reflect high level vulnerability or possible risk of harm, abuse and/or neglect.



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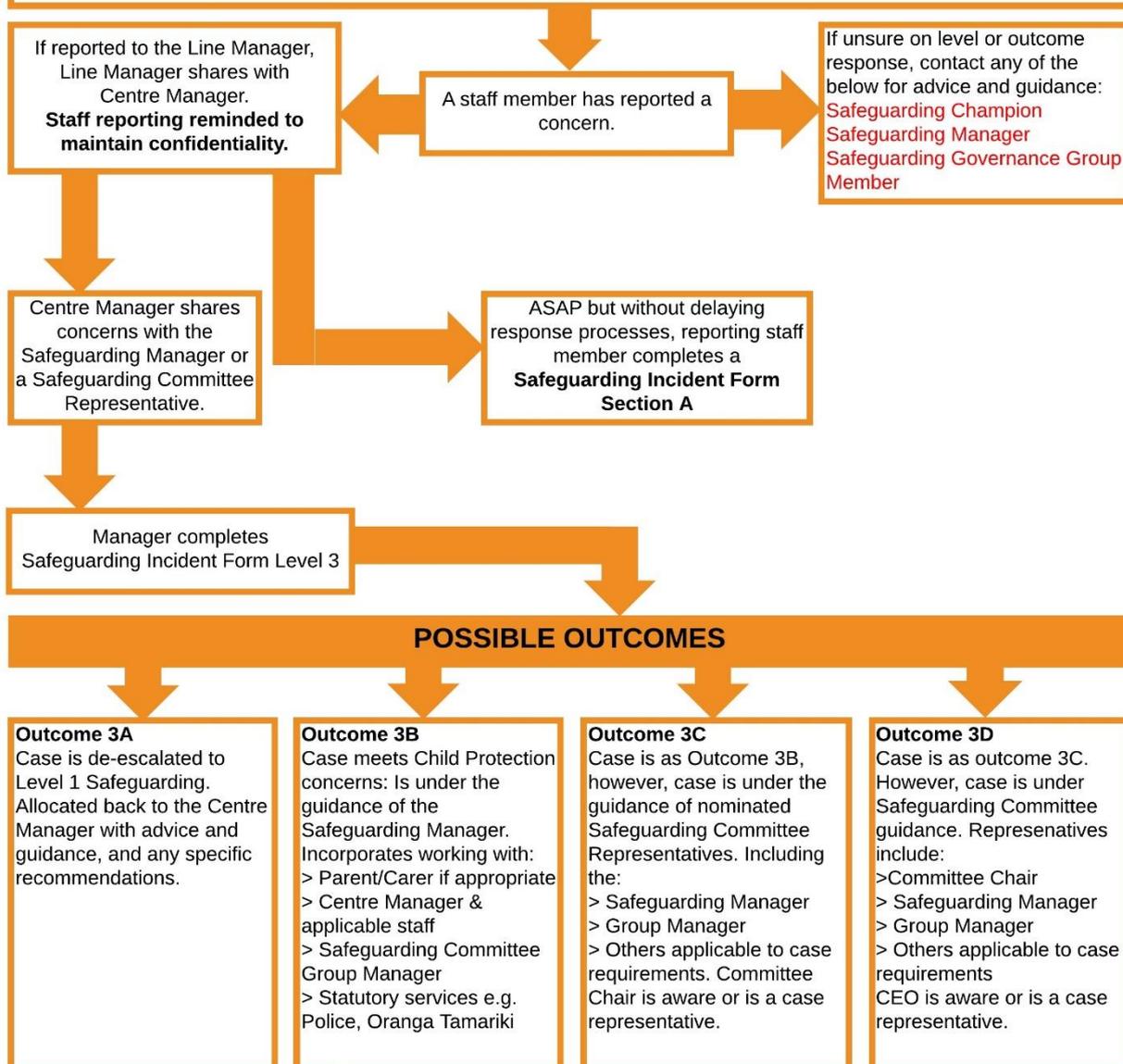
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RESPONDING TO LEVEL 3 CHILD PROTECTION FLOWCHART 3

- Centres without access to Level 2 Children's Team, by default manage concerns at this level.
- Concerns relate to suspected or known harm, abuse and/or neglect.
- Concerns relate to allegations against non-YMCA staff.



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RESPONDING TO LEVEL 4 YMCA STAFF FLOWCHART 4

Staff includes - paid, voluntary or contractors.

Disclosures and/or indicators relate to:

- Staff may be/are in a vulnerable position
- Staff conduct may be concerning and/or inappropriate
- Staff conduct goes against YMCA Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- An allegation against staff.

Allegations relating to a non-YMCA staff member are managed as Level 3 Child Protection Concerns (Flowchart 3)

Person reports concerns directly to the Centre Manager. **Person reporting is reminded to maintain confidentiality, including from the person to whom the concern relates.**

A staff member has reported a concern.

If unsure on level or outcome response, contact any of the below for advice and guidance:
Safeguarding Champion
Safeguarding Manager
Safeguarding Governance Group Member

Centre Manager checks if any other staff are aware of the concerns/allegation.
If so, all are to be made aware to keep information strictly confidential, including from the person to whom the concerns/allegations relates.

ASAP but without delaying response processes, reporting staff member completes a **Safeguarding Incident Form Section A**

Centre Manager shares concerns with the Safeguarding Manager or a Safeguarding Committee Representative.

Manager completes **Safeguarding Incident Form Level 4**

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

- Outcome 4A**
No further action.
- Outcome 4B**
Requires internal actions only e.g. Training and/or development; increased safeguards.
- Outcome 4C**
Concerns are significant and managed under Safeguarding and/or HR disciplinary processes.
- Outcome 4D**
Concerns are significant and are managed under YMCA processes with external statutory services e.g. Police, Oranga Tamariki.

All outcomes will be managed in conjunction with YMCA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which requires from outcome 4C and above, C.E.O and/or B.O.D awareness and/or involvement.

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