

“ When we work with young people, we think about what we do – we use the Code to guide our thinking. ”

Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector

Youth Work Practice Responsibilities

To work ethically with young people, youth workers will adopt the following practice responsibilities:

Find the full Code and support tools at www.yacvic.org.au/code



Recognition of Indigenous peoples

Youth workers recognise that we live on the traditional lands and waters of the Indigenous peoples of Australia. They will be respectful of Indigenous culture, recognising that culture and connection to land is a right of Indigenous young people.

Youth workers will recognise the importance of culture to Indigenous young people's self-esteem and sense of identity.



Boundaries

The youth work relationship is strictly professional. Professional boundaries intentionally protect both the young person and the worker. Youth workers will maintain the integrity of these limits.



1 Young people as the primary consideration

The primary consideration and key responsibility of the youth worker is the young people with whom they engage.



Transparency, honesty and integrity

Youth workers will be open and honest with young people, enabling them to access information to make choices and decisions in their lives and in relation to their participation in youth work activities. Youth workers will act with integrity, adhering to the principles and practice responsibilities of their profession.



Duty of care

Youth workers will act in the best interests of young people, avoid exposing them to physical, psychological or emotional harm or injury, and always uphold the principle of 'do no harm'.



Social context

Youth workers will recognise the impact of social and structural forces on young people, so that their practice is responsive to young people's experiences and needs and to break down barriers that restrict young people's life opportunities.



Anti-oppressive practice: non-discrimination, equity and self-awareness

Youth workers will ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted and will enable and encourage young people to respect and celebrate their own and others' cultural backgrounds, identities and choices.



Cooperation and collaboration

Youth workers will cooperate and collaborate with others, including families, in order to secure the best possible outcomes for young people.



Knowledge, skills and self-care

Youth workers will keep abreast of the information, knowledge and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people.



Youth Affairs Council Victoria

As Victoria's youth peak body, Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) works across the state in the best interests of young people and the youth sector.

Level 3, 180 Flinders Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Tel: 03 9267 3799
info@yacvic.org.au
www.yacvic.org.au



YACVic acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

Youth work principles

Youth workers will work towards enabling and ensuring:

1. The empowerment of all young people
2. Young people's participation
3. Social justice for young people
4. The safety of young people
5. Respect for young people's human dignity and worth
6. Young people's connectedness to important people in their lives, such as family and community
7. Positive health and wellbeing outcomes for young people
8. The positive transitions and healthy development of young people.

Youth work practice responsibilities

To work ethically with young people, youth workers accept the following practice responsibilities:

Recognition of Indigenous peoples

Young people as the primary consideration

Duty of care

Privacy and confidentiality

Boundaries

Transparency, honesty and integrity

Social context

Anti-oppressive practice: non-discrimination, equity and self-awareness

Cooperation and collaboration

Knowledge, skills and self-care

Open this booklet to see the youth work practice responsibilities in detail. Read on to learn what they mean in practice.



Recognition of Indigenous peoples

This means you respect and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. For example, you could acknowledge traditional custodians at the start of meetings, display the Aboriginal flag, or celebrate events like Reconciliation Week.

It also means you understand the importance of culture to Aboriginal young people's wellbeing. If you need support with this, visit www.koorieheritagetrust.com or www.reconciliationvic.org.au.

Kyle, a young man who uses your service, says his friend Andrew, a young Koorie, doesn't feel comfortable there. How could you improve the situation?



Young people as the primary consideration

This means thinking about, then doing, what is best for the young person. So even if other people are involved in your work—like the young person's parents or another worker—you always make decisions in the best interest of the young person.

You work with Bea at her school. She's asked for confidential help with a relationship problem. The head teacher asks you for a report on Bea because her family is worried about her. What do you say?



Duty of care

A duty of care is a legal requirement to do your best to provide a safe environment for young people and protect them from possible risks of injury. For example, by carrying out risk assessments.

Emma wears a hijab to your centre. You see some young men who use the centre insult and intimidate her. What is your duty of care?



Do you know your legal responsibilities to disclose and protect against child abuse? Learn more about new legislation and Child Safe Standards at www.yacvic.org.au/code



Anti-oppressive practice: non-discrimination, equity and self-awareness

This means you value difference and challenge prejudice and discrimination, like racism, homophobia or sexism. It means you offer every young person the same opportunities, whatever their background. And it means you understand how your own privileges and prejudices affect your actions.

The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) states it is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of their race, age, disability or gender.

You overhear Thahn, a young member of your sports club, make a racist joke. Do you say anything?



Cooperation and collaboration

This means you work together with other people to get the best results for young people. For example, you might involve another service or the young person's family if it's appropriate (and the young person agrees).

You think Jayden could get extra support from another service. Your manager asks you not to refer him, because the service is competing with your own for funding and clients. What do you do?



Knowledge, skills and self-care

This means you commit to ongoing learning. For example, you might read new research or take special training. Self-care means you're aware of and take responsibility for your own physical and emotional wellbeing. This is important because you help young people best when you feel well yourself. Your organisation also has a responsibility to support your professional development and self-care.

Your colleague appears tired and stressed from working overtime. They say they can't take the time off they've accrued because their project will suffer. What do you say?

- How to include the Code in staff and volunteer recruitment and induction
- How to include the Code in staff and volunteer supervision
- How to make the Code part of your organisation
- Legal responsibilities when working with young people
- How to include the Code in contracting, funding and partnership agreements
- How to get your organisation to commit to the Code
- How to challenge unethical behaviour
- How to make the Code relevant to young people.

Go to www.yacvic.org.au/code and download these free tools:

The Code helps organisations: it helps everyone in your organisation to think and talk about ethical work with young people.

The Code helps managers: it supports your recruitment and supervision of staff and volunteers, and your policies, procedures and agreements.

The Code helps youth workers: it shows the ethical principles and responsibilities of appropriate practice, including professional boundaries and duty of care.

The Code helps young people: it shows the ethical principles and responsibilities of appropriate practice, including professional boundaries and duty of care.

The Code is based on human rights: things that all Victorians— including young people—can expect to enjoy, such as your right to freedom of expression or right to take part in public life. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all work with young people should be in their best interests. This idea is a central part of Victorian law, including the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. For more information on human rights, visit www.humanrightsvic.gov.au.

Human rights and legal frameworks

How to raise concerns about unethical behaviour

If you see something at work you think is unethical, there are ways to challenge it: ask the person to explain their actions using the Code, or tell them you're uncomfortable with their behaviour because you feel it's not in keeping with the Code. Be prepared to explain your point of view in a supportive way.

Afterwards you should discuss your concerns with your supervisor or manager. If you feel the matter isn't addressed properly, follow your organisation's complaints or 'whistle-blowing' policy.

Learn more about how to challenge unethical behaviour at www.yacvic.org.au/code.

Preventing child abuse: Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Government has introduced Child Safe Standards to improve organisations' prevention of and responses to child abuse. The standards are compulsory for all organisations providing services to children and young people under 18. Child safety is everyone's responsibility, including leaders, staff and volunteers.

You can contact the Commission for Children and Young People for information about the Child Safe Standards and how to create safe environments for children at www.ccup.vic.gov.au, email childsafe@ccyp.vic.gov.au or phone 1300 78 29 78.

How to make a complaint

If you want to make a complaint about unethical behaviour, follow the relevant organisation's complaints process.

If you continue to have concerns, the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Complaints, Integrity and Privacy Unit supports people to make a complaint about projects or services that have received DHHS funding.

Complaints, Integrity and Privacy Unit
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001

1300 884 706
complaints.reception@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Get help to answer the questions at www.yacvic.org.au/code

The Code can apply to all work with young people, although other practice frameworks will also exist in some settings. The Code is especially important for qualified youth workers, who always make young people the focus of their work.

- local government services
- youth support or community agencies
- volunteer groups
- sports clubs
- not-for-profit organisations.

You can choose to use the Code if you work or volunteer with young people in:

Who is the Code for?

This booklet is a guide to the Code. You should read it together with the full Code, which you can download from www.yacvic.org.au/code.

Use of the Code means youth programs and services are safe for young people and of a high quality and standard. It supports, but does not replace your legal responsibilities.

The Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector (the Code) is a framework to help you think through those dilemmas. The Code won't tell you exactly what to do, because each situation is different. But it will help you work out why you think something is right or wrong, and what you ought to do.

If you work with young people (12-25 year olds), you will often face ethical dilemmas: situations where you have to decide the right thing to do. The Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector (the Code) is a framework to help you think through those dilemmas. The Code won't tell you exactly what to do, because each situation is different. But it will help you work out why you think something is right or wrong, and what you ought to do.

What is the Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector?

If you work with young people (12-25 year olds), you will often face ethical dilemmas: situations where you have to decide the right thing to do.

A guide to the Code of Ethical Practice

for the Victorian Youth Sector

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YACVIC
Youth Affairs
Council Victoria

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