

Code of Ethical Practice for the Victorian Youth Sector – summary

Human rights

Upholding the human rights of young people is at the centre of the Code. This means protecting young people from discrimination of any kind and always putting their best interests first. The Code includes expectations that set apart the role of youth workers from others who work with young people.

Youth work principles

The Code's principles reflect values that inform youth work. In adopting the Code, youth workers will respect the following principles.

Empowerment. The Code acknowledges that young people under the age of 18 lack power because of their age. The Code advocates for and promotes the voices, experiences and agency of young people. It supports young people to achieve their rights and best interests.

Participation. The Code promotes opportunities for young people to take part in decisions that affect them.

Social justice. The Code highlights the role of youth workers as social justice educators and advocates. It prioritises young people's human rights, equity, participation, diversity and justice.

Climate justice. The Code promotes care for and connection with the environment that youth workers and young people live and work in. This includes waterways, air, land and ecosystems.

Respect for human dignity and worth. The Code advocates respect for young people's dignity and worth and their right to make their own choices.

Respect for diversity. The Code respects the intersecting identities, cultures, abilities and backgrounds of young people.

Connectedness to friends, family, community and culture. The Code highlights the importance of social and cultural connection for young people. This helps build their sense of belonging, identity, independence and wellbeing.


Positive health and wellbeing. The Code highlights the importance of supporting young people's abilities to thrive. It does this through caring for their physical, mental, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing.

Safety. The Code prioritises creating environments that are physically, psychologically and culturally safe. Cultural safety is particularly important for young people with specific religious and spiritual connections and beliefs.

Youth work practice responsibilities

The following practice responsibilities describe what youth workers do when guided by the youth work principles.

Young people as the primary consideration. Youth workers consider other people and stakeholders. However, a youth worker's primary responsibility is to young people.



Recognition of First Nations young people. Youth workers are respectful of First Nations cultures, histories and perspectives. Connection to culture and land is important for self-esteem, identity and wellbeing. Youth workers support access to cultural programs for First Nations young people.

Duty of care. Youth workers avoid exposing young people to physical, psychological, emotional or cultural harm. They do this while encouraging young people to take part in activities that challenge them. Youth workers must make sure activities, referrals and programs are safe for all young people. They must protect young people against abuse.

Privacy and confidentiality. Youth workers avoid unnecessary invasions of privacy when collecting information about a young person. They also protect confidentiality. Youth workers ensure young people understand their rights in giving and withdrawing consent.

Boundaries. Youth workers recognise the power imbalance built into the professional relationship. As such, youth workers must respect professional boundaries. These boundaries protect both the young person and the worker.

Transparency, honesty and integrity. Youth workers are clear about what they can offer from the start. Youth workers are transparent about confidentiality, disclosure and safety. They ensure young people understand which agency the youth worker represents and what the agency can provide.

Social and ecological context. Youth work extends to the social context in which the young person lives. Youth workers recognise the impacts of climate change on young people. They understand how overlapping identities and experiences can exclude young people.

Anti-oppressive practice, non-discrimination, equity and self-awareness. Youth workers encourage young people to respect and celebrate all cultural backgrounds, identities and choices. This includes their own. Youth workers advocate against and try to change unjust policies and practices affecting young people.

Cooperation and collaboration. With the young person's consent, youth workers collaborate with others towards the best outcomes for young people. This includes working with the young person's family, guardians and carers. Youth workers look for opportunities to work with professionals from other agencies and sectors to benefit young people.

Knowledge, skill and self-care. Youth workers keep up to date with changes to the law and the information, knowledge and practices needed to meet their responsibilities to young people. Youth workers prioritise self-care to help ensure a long career.

A strengths-based approach. Youth workers value young people's knowledge and life experiences. They highlight strengths that young people may not yet be aware of and support opportunities to develop and build on those strengths.



Read more about the Code at yacvic.org.au/code