



Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Workers Associations

Commonwealth Youth Programme Code of Ethical Practice for Youth Work

The following is a summary of the Commonwealth Youth Programme International Code of Ethical Practice for Youth Work (for background to the development of the code, please refer to the original consultation document at the following link:

https://youthworkalliance.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/draft-international-code-of-ethical-practice-2014_v1.pdf).

The Code has been developed to provide an agreed framework and set of values for professional youth work. It provides a frame of reference in which to develop ethical and safe practice. In this 'summary' document the Code has been summarised and simplified for ease of use and communication. Following the Introduction on human rights the document is divided into two parts - the first part is titled 'Youth Work Principles' and the second part 'Youth Work Practice Responsibilities'.

A Code Based on Human Rights

This Code of Ethical Practice is based on a human rights framework. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has particular relevance to youth work practice. Its four core principles are 'non-discrimination', 'the best interests of the child', 'the right to life, survival and development', and 'respect for the views of the child'.

Article 3.1 of the Convention prescribes that 'in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'. Other United Nations declarations of particular relevance to the content of this Code are the Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Who does it apply to?

This Code of Ethical Practice is relevant to all qualified youth workers and to others working with young people without a youth work qualification. The principles and practice responsibilities outlined will support and guide the work that youth workers do with all young people. For the purposes of this document the term 'young people' applies to those aged between 12 and 29 years (based on the Commonwealth Youth Programme definition). However, some organisations work with young people in a broader age bracket and this Code may still apply.

Youth Work Principles -

Youth workers will work towards enabling and ensuring:

1. The empowerment of 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 within a human rights framework with young people, youth workers will adopt the following practice responsibilities.

Young People as the Primary Consideration

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

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'.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Youth workers respect young people's rights to privacy and confidentiality.

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.

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.

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.

Recognition of Indigenous Peoples

Youth workers recognise the traditional lands and waters of Indigenous peoples. They will be respectful of Indigenous culture recognising the importance of culture to Indigenous young people's self-esteem and sense of identity.

(Dr Tim Corney, Commonwealth Youth Program June 2017)

The author gratefully acknowledges the following youth work codes YACVIC 2007; YACWA 2003; and NYA 2005.