



Defence Youth Safety Code of Conduct Guide

This guide outlines the purpose of a youth safety code of conduct, things to consider when developing a code of conduct, and lists specific behavioural expectations. This information can be used either to develop a new, or review an extant, code of conduct and should be read in conjunction with the Defence Youth Safety Framework policies, procedures and protocols.

What is the aim of a youth safety code of conduct?

A youth safety code of conduct aims to influence behaviour by setting acceptable standards of behaviour and practices expected of all adults and young people. A code of conduct should use plain, positive language that is clear, precise and widely accessible. It should be actively monitored and reviewed.

A code of conduct is used to:

- set standards of behaviour for both adults and young people
- influence an individual's decision making and behaviour
- encourage behaviours that the organisation wants to uphold
- maintain consistency with the Defence Youth Safety strategies, policies and procedures.

Youth safety codes of conduct are a critical part of Defence youth safety risk management and are an important step in keeping the young people we interact with safe. In addition to outlining expected standards of behaviour between adults and young people, and between young people and other young people, a youth safety code of conduct can be used:

- to inform potential workers, volunteers and young people about the youth program's objectives and culture
- as a key element in youth safety training
- to emphasise to parents/guardians and family members the importance that the organisation's leadership places on acceptable behaviour
- to provide good practice guidance that supports organisational management and reporting procedures, should breaches occur.

Why is there a different code of conduct for adults and young people?

Defence's expectations of an adult interacting with young people is different from its expectations of a young person interacting with their peers. For example, an adult is expected to take all reasonable steps to protect a young person from harm; a young person is expected to refrain from engaging in potentially harmful behaviour. For this reason, specific codes of conduct are required for adults and young people.

An important tool in enabling individuals to understand and apply the relevant code of conduct is the provision of learning and development opportunities that support individuals to uphold the values and behaviours contained in the code.

Is there a minimum mandatory requirement for the Code of Conduct?

Yes, although codes should be tailored to meet the particular needs and circumstances of an organisation, each youth safety code of conduct **must**:

- have two parts:
 - Part A – Behaviour Statement
 - Part B – Individual Declaration, and
- be reviewed for usability and application at least annually.



Adult Code of Conduct – Minimum Mandatory Requirement

Part A – Behaviour Statement

All adult codes of conduct must include a requirement for the adult to:

- comply with all applicable Commonwealth, state and territory laws; relevant Defence youth safety policies; and all lawful and reasonable directions
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that young people participating in the program are protected from any form of harm or abuse
- report promptly all incidents, allegations or suspicions of any form of misconduct or abuse towards young people in accordance with relevant Defence youth safety policies
- ensure, whenever possible, that young people are not left alone with an adult
- ensure all adult interactions with young people are appropriate
- ensure that all interactions with young people are for the sole purpose of executing authorised activities or training outcomes both on and off duty
- treat everyone with respect regardless of their age, gender, ability, race, cultural background, religious beliefs or sexual identity
- use or disclose personal information concerning a young person only in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and relevant mandatory reporting obligations
- obtain the informed consent of a young person and their parent/guardian in connection with the taking of imagery of the young person by photograph or film, and create only imagery that depicts the young person in an appropriate manner.

Part B - Acknowledgement

All adult codes of conduct acknowledgments must include the minimum statements below and must be signed by both the individual and an authorised adult witness:

1. I (insert name) have read and acknowledge my understanding of the Defence Youth Safety Framework and (insert title) Code of Conduct. In signing this acknowledgment, I:
 - a. understand my personal responsibilities to abide by the Code of Conduct at all times.
 - b. agree to uphold and demonstrate the highest standards of moral and ethical behaviour.
 - c. acknowledge that failure to comply with the Code of Conduct may result in, where applicable:
 - administrative or disciplinary action under the *Defence Force Discipline Act 1982* for Defence members;
 - administrative or disciplinary action under the *Public Service Act 1999* for Defence APS employees;
 - cancellation of my acceptance or status as a volunteer, or the imposition of a sanction as a volunteer;
 - a report being made to the police and/or relevant child protection authority; and/or
 - criminal or civil action being taken against me.



Youth Code of Conduct – Minimum Mandatory Requirements

Part A – Behaviour Statement

All youth codes of conduct must include a requirement for the young person to:

- treat everyone with respect regardless of their age, gender, ability, race, cultural background, religious beliefs or sexual identity
- behave appropriately and follow all reasonable instructions from commanders/ managers/ supervisors/ instructors
- refrain from involvement in any form of inappropriate, indecent or harmful behaviour, either in person or through the use of technologies like chat rooms, texting and social media. This includes, for example:
 - sexual relationships
 - grooming behaviours
 - bullying (physical, emotional, or verbal or sexual abuse, including bad language, name calling, and racist or hurtful remarks)
 - peer pressure
 - forcing others to do something they do not want to do

report inappropriate behaviour or unsafe situations as soon as practicable

Part B - Acknowledgement

All youth codes of conduct declarations must include the minimum statements below and must be signed by both the young person and their parent/guardian (unless prior parental/guardian consent has been provided e.g. parental consent to enlist in the ADF):

- I have read the (insert title) Code of Conduct and understand my personal responsibilities to follow the Code at all times.
- In signing the declaration, I understand that:
 - any breach of the Code or other misbehaviour will be addressed by the immediate supervising staff and will be reported to the lead supervising staff.
 - my parent/guardian may be notified of any incident or supervisor concerns, especially if my personal safety and wellbeing is at risk. Misbehaviour may result in my removal from current Defence youth activity and possible exclusion from future Defence youth activities.

