

SAFEGUARDING AT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

For more comprehensive advice on safeguarding at youth engagement events, contact the Office for Youth. This guidance should be read in conjunction with your department's child safe obligations to ensure you comply with relevant legislation.



AT THE BEGINNING

- Begin with an Acknowledgement of Country.
- Provide housekeeping to point out quiet spaces that young people can go to if they need a break, bathrooms, fire doors, etc.
- Ensure that young people know who to talk to about any issue if they are feeling worried, stressed or unsure.
- If there is a risk that young people may feel uncomfortable or distressed, provide young people with details of a range of accessible and appropriate wellbeing support services, e.g. [ReachOut](#), [Kids Helpline](#), [13 YARN](#), [headspace](#).
- Remind young people about any topics that could be sensitive, and to think about things that they would and would not feel comfortable sharing with the group. Ask young people to complete a '[Wellbeing Plan](#)' and a '[Self Care Plan](#)' to think about strategies they can draw on.
- If there will be sensitive conversations, consider having a professional counsellor, psychologist, or professional who has experience working with young people on-site to support young people if needed.
- Remind young people that they do not have to share anything or take part in any activities if they don't want to, and they are free to stop taking part anytime.
- Be clear about any organisational and governmental safety and/or public health mandates and plans in place at the time of the event.

DURING

- Ensure there are at least two officials of different genders always present at events.
- Provide tools for young people to support them to feel more comfortable. For example, having pens and paper available for drawing, and fidget toys can help with focus, or reduce stress in a formal environment.
- In the event that a young person experiences distress, facilitators should:
 - » Pay attention for signs of distress (including rapid breathing, lack of engagement, red face or clenched fists, crying).
 - » Respond discreetly and compassionately by approaching the young person quietly during an activity or approaching them outside of the room.
 - » Identify the appropriate support based on the situation, while respecting the young person's agency. Encourage the young person to seek support and talk to a trusted person.
 - » Take steps to reinforce a safe environment for all participants.
 - » Follow your department's policy for reporting the incident so that it can be determined if there needs to be further follow up.
- If risk of disclosure of child abuse or neglect is to occur, facilitators should respond empathetically and follow organisational policy to report the incident.

AFTER EVENTS

- Facilitators should ensure that all participants aged 15 years or younger are collected from the venue by their parent/caregiver at the event finish time. In the event that a young person cannot be collected from the workshop, or the parent gives permission for the child to make their own way home without supervision, this must be communicated in writing to the facilitator, prior to the event.
- Collect feedback from young people to understand whether young people felt safe and supported, and what improvements could be made.