

# Yoga for Children

## Fact Sheet 2 - Duty of Care



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## Introduction

Yoga Australia has been questioned by members at times on what to do when they have concerns for their own safety or that of a student. Students may make statements to the teacher that indicate they are a threat to themselves or another or that someone is a threat to them.

This article aims to give an overview on what duty of care is and how it applies to yoga teachers.

## What is “duty of care”?

Within different contexts, the statement “duty of care” has different interpretations, and is often poorly defined. In work health and safety, duty of care can relate to a duty holder’s obligations to ensure the health and safety of workers, who in turn have obligations to comply and cooperate.

More broadly the term is defined as an obligation to take responsible care to avoid injury to a person where it can be reasonably foreseen they may be injured by an act or omission.

What that means is that in a healthcare environment there is a responsibility for all workers to take reasonable steps to ensure clients or

consumers are:

- Safe
  - Unharmed
  - Protected from abuse
  - Receive a standard of care and treatment that is evidence-based
  - Receive a quality of care and treatment that complies with standards of practice in a healthcare environment
- a duty of care could also be related to legislative requirements, for example the legal obligation to report concerns such as child safety.

## Why?

Consumers have a right to expect that health professionals providing services do so in a competent manner meeting best practice standards. Provisions on competency and best practice are addressed within guidelines such as Codes of Conduct. Codes articulate the fundamental principles of ethical behaviour expected to be demonstrated. Below those principles Codes provide a set of values that enable us to demonstrate the ethical principles. Both principles and values are equally important.

Standards of conduct or practice help us to understand how we put these principles and values into practice:

- By providing a basis for the required standard

- Informing professionals of what the required standard is
- Informing the community of the standard
- Providing professionals with a basis for decision making regarding professional misconduct or unprofessional conduct
- Act to guide professionals in formal or informal resolution of ethical violations

## Application to Yoga

Some health professionals are regulated under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law. Yoga teachers are considered unregistered health professionals along with other modalities such as aromatherapists, naturopaths and ayurvedic, shiatsu and reiki practitioners. These unregistered health professions formulate their own Standards of Practice which are based on ethics and codes of conduct and are held as legal documents.

Yoga Australia has a Code of Professional Conduct based on yogic ethics, that informs Yoga students and the community of the level of professional behaviour required of YA members. Please take time to familiarise yourself with this document at [www.yogaaustralia.org.au](http://www.yogaaustralia.org.au) click “About Us” and follow the link to “Ethics and Guiding Principles”.

1.2.5. of the YA Code of Professional Conduct states, “On issues relating to duty of care, report any concerns they have for the safety and wellbeing of their student to the relevant

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emergency support.”

Important things to do.

Keep the below contacts in a convenient place for you. You may offer these contacts to the student or offer to phone for help on their behalf.

**www.lifeline.org.au ph: 13 11 14**

**www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au ph: 1300 65 9467**

**www.kidshelp.com.au ph: 1800 551 800**

**www.mensline.org.au ph: 1300 789 978**

For any physical or mental health crisis you may choose to call for an ambulance

If the situation is not an emergency please know that you can contact the Yoga Australia of ce **(1300 881 451)** and we will assist you on how to proceed with reporting.

## Risk Assessment

Your duty of care includes risk assessment - i.e. identifying any factors related to individual students that may create an increased risk of injury in your classes:

- Obtaining relevant background information to teach your students in an informed way, such as their previous yoga experience, physical capabilities and health.
- Observing students in class and modifying your

teaching according to what you observe.

- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure a safe practice environment (e.g. clearing furniture or other obstacles before class).
- Compiling a simple checklist to provide evidence of factors considered and where risk is identified making a note of steps you have taken to reduce it.

## Emergency Procedures, Reporting Incidents/Accidents:

If a student becomes unwell or suffers injury, you should make a record of it (at that time or immediately after the yoga class).

If you work for an organisation, they should have specific procedures for reporting accidents, and in the event of any emergency.

If you are self-employed then you should:

- put your own procedures in place for reporting incidents/accidents and make students aware of emergency exits from buildings and meeting points.
- have a simple checklist of what actions you would take in an emergency.
- keep a register of who attends your class – in the case of emergency the register will help ensure that everyone is accounted for.

## Summary of Records to Keep:

1. Checklist for risk assessment.
2. Records of yoga experience and physical capacity of students – (questionnaire document).
3. Records of accidents/incidents.
4. Lists of class attendance.
5. Checklist for emergency procedures.