



YMCA Calgary Child Protection Policy and Procedures

July 2013

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YMCA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1 GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

The YMCA is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people in its care. It recognizes its responsibility to promote safe practices and to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Throughout these policies and procedures, reference is made to “children and young people”. This term is used to mean “those under the age of 18 years old”. The YMCA also recognizes that some adults are also vulnerable to abuse, and therefore the procedures may be applied accordingly (with appropriate adaptations) to allegations of abuse and the protection of vulnerable adults.

The YMCA is committed to ensuring that it:

- provides a safe environment for children and young people;
- identifies children and young people who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- takes appropriate action to see that such children and young people are kept safe at the YMCA.

In pursuit of these aims, the YMCA will approve and annually review policies and procedures with the aim of:

- promoting and implementing appropriate procedures to safeguard the well being of children and young people and protecting them from abuse while participating in Y activities/programs;
- recruiting, training, supporting and supervising staff and volunteers to adopt best practices to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse and to reduce risk to themselves;
- requiring staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by this Child Protection Policy and these procedures;
- establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff or volunteers; and
- monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this Policy and these procedures and adapting them whenever there is a significant change in the association or if there are any legal changes.

The YMCA will refer concerns that a child or young person might be at risk of significant harm to Alberta Child and Youth Services.

There will be a senior member of the YMCA management team with special responsibility for child protection issues. Kelly Smith – Senior Vice President/ COO is designated as YMCA Calgary’s lead for child protection systems.



Helene Weir
CEO YMCA Calgary
2013

1. Terminology

The YMCA recognizes the following definitions:

A **child** or **young person** is someone under 18 years of age.

A **vulnerable adult** is a person aged 18 years or older who may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

A **child in need of protection** if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the survival, security or development of the child is endangered because of any of the following:

- the child has been abandoned or lost;
- the guardian of the child is dead and the child has no other guardian;
- the child is neglected by the guardian;
- the child has been or there is substantial risk that the child will be physically injured or sexually abused by the guardian of the child;
- the guardian of the child is unable or unwilling to protect the child from physical injury or sexual abuse;
- the child has been emotionally injured by the guardian of the child;
- the guardian of the child is unable or unwilling to protect the child from emotional injury;
- the guardian of the child has subjected the child to or is
- unable or unwilling to protect the child from cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

Child abuse involves a child or young person who has been placed at risk through something a person has done to them or something a person is failing to do for them. This includes any form of physical harm, emotional deprivation, sexual mistreatment or neglect which can result in injury or psychological damage to a child.

There are many different forms of abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form:

Physical abuse may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or young person including deliberately causing ill health to a child or young person.

Emotional abuse involves harming a child's sense of self. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands. It also includes

terrorizing a child, or exposing them to family violence. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child or young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. This may also include involving children and young people in prostitution or pornography.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or young person's basic needs for his or her physical, psychological or emotional development and well being such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or being responsive to a child's or young person's basic emotional needs.

2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

While the primary responsibility for the protection of children from abuse rests with the Alberta Child and Family Services Authority, all YMCA staff and volunteers who come into contact with children and young people have a duty to help protect them from abuse or risk of abuse.

The responsibility for managing this policy lies with the YMCA's senior management. Every association will appoint designated person(s) who will have responsibility for the implementation of the child protection guidelines and procedures in their association and office(s).

2.1 Management's Responsibility:

YMCA Management is responsible for ensuring that a safe environment is maintained in all facilities and programs by:

- implementing all procedures relating to child protection;
- establishing a reporting protocol that complies with provincial child protection legislation;
- ensuring that all staff and volunteers who have significant contact with children and young people are oriented to child protection policies and procedure;
- establishing guidelines that ensure programs are developmentally appropriate and well planned in advance; and
- ensuring that all staff and volunteers have read, understand and signed the "Child Protection Policy and Procedures Sign Off" form or master policy sign off form (see Appendix A).

2.2 Staff's Responsibility:

YMCA staff have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children and young people in their care by:

- reporting that a child is in need of protection as provided in **Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act**;
- notifying their supervisor that a report is being made;
- following guidelines that ensure programs are developmentally appropriate and well planned in advance; and
- creating a safe and caring environment for children and young people that will challenge their development in spirit, mind and body.

3 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The YMCA supports and requires all staff and volunteers to observe the following code of conduct, including verbal and non-verbal actions when involved in activities with children and young people. This code of conduct is a clear and concise guide of what is and is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working with children and young people.

Through defining what is and is not acceptable behavior, good practice can be promoted and opportunities for abuse minimized. This can also help prevent false allegations being made against staff and volunteers.

All concerns about breach of this Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and responded to in line with the association's performance management, disciplinary procedure and/or procedure for respond to concerns about child abuse.

3.1 Good Practice:

- 3.1.1** Treat all children and young people equally, with respect, dignity and fairness.
- 3.1.2** Give constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- 3.1.3** Involve parents wherever possible and reasonable.
- 3.1.4** Be vigilant and aware of how actions can be misinterpreted and always work in an open environment. Avoid private or unobserved situations with a child or young person unless personal assistance such as toileting or changing is required.
- 3.1.5** Ensure the number of adults is appropriate to safely supervise an activity.
- 3.1.6** Have two staff members present when in situations with children and young people where it is necessary for staff to change or undress (i.e., swimming) so this activity is not misconstrued.
- 3.1.7** Avoid taking a child or young person alone on journeys. Where this is unavoidable the child should sit in the back seat. Where possible parents should be advised before departure.
- 3.1.8** Get help from your colleagues when you are having difficulty dealing with a specific child and/or behavioural incident(s). Having another staff step in for you can often defuse the situation. [YMCA of Greater Vancouver]

3.2 Practice to be Avoided:

In the context of your role within the YMCA, the following practice should be avoided:

- 3.2.1** Spending excessive (i.e., unwarranted) amounts of time alone with children and young people away from others.
- 3.2.2** Relating to children and young people from programs in non-program activities, such as baby-sitting or weekend visits.
- 3.2.3** Having "favourites" - this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other children and young people and could be misinterpreted by others.
- 3.2.4** Where possible, doing things of a personal nature for children and young people that they can do for themselves.

3.3 Practice Never to be Sanctioned:

In the context of your role within the YMCA, the following practices will never be sanctioned and may also be prohibited by law:

- 3.3.1** Engaging in rough or physical contact except as permitted within the rules of the game or competition.
- 3.3.2** Forming intimate emotional, physical or sexual relationships with children and young people.
- 3.3.3** Allowing or engaging in touching a child or young person in a sexually suggestive manner.
- 3.3.4** Allowing children and young people to swear or use sexualized language unchallenged. Be cognizant of a child's age and stage of development as there is a difference when children use swearing as an attention seeking behavior and when used as a form of aggression. There are different strategies that can help a child use appropriate language. [YMCA of Greater Vancouver]
- 3.3.5** Making sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person, even in fun.
- 3.3.6** Reducing a child or young person to tears as a form of control.
- 3.3.7** Allowing allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- 3.3.8** Inviting or allowing children and young people to stay with you at your home.
- 3.3.9** Asking children and young people to keep any type of secret from other children and young people, staff or from their parents.

4 PROCEDURE FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The YMCA will take all reasonable steps to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working or volunteering, with children and young people.

This recruitment and selection procedure has two functions. It:

- provides the YMCA with an opportunity to assess the suitability of an individual to work/volunteer with children and young people; and
- provides the prospective employee or volunteer with an opportunity to assess the organization and the opportunities available.

Compliance with these policies and procedures will be audited periodically to ensure:

- recruitment guidelines are adhered to;
- staff/volunteer operating guidelines when caring for children and young people/vulnerable adults are adhered to; and
- training of new staff/volunteers on Child Protection Policy operating guidelines takes place.

4.1 Procedures for All Staff and Volunteers (excluding policy, fundraising and board members):

For all positions that require regular contact with children and young people the following procedures will apply (**refer to Human Resources Manual for detailed employment procedures**):

- 4.1.1 All forms of advertising used to recruit and select staff/volunteers to positions involving regular contact with children and young people will include a statement that a Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Search is a requirement for the position.
- 4.1.2 All applicants will be requested to complete an application (see Appendix B and C.) The purpose of this is to obtain from the applicant relevant details for the position including any previous youth work involvement.
- 4.1.3 Prior to appointment a Criminal Records Check will be requested for all adult volunteers/staff who will have regular contact with children and young people.
- 4.1.4 A Child Abuse Registry Check (where available) will be completed for all adult volunteers/staff who will have regular contact with children and young people.
- 4.1.5 For every position, a minimum of **three** reference checks (where practical and reasonable) will be completed before an offer is made (see Appendix D). At least two of these references will be at arm's length from the association. Where possible, at least one of the references will be from an employer or volunteer organization where the position required working with children and/or young people. References from relatives will not be accepted.
- 4.1.6 Formal interviews, either in person or by telephone, will be required for all positions of trust with questions designed to determine suitability for working with children and young people or vulnerable adults.

- 4.1.7** Potential employees and volunteers will be offered positions conditional upon the production of a satisfactory Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Search and acceptance of the employment obligations e.g., agreement to the child protection policies and procedures of the YMCA.
- 4.1.8** During orientation, new staff and volunteers will be made aware of policies on protecting children and young people, on staff conduct and, all legal requirements in reporting suspected abuse. This orientation will be completed within the **first week** of starting their position.
- 4.1.9** Until the orientation is complete and a satisfactory Criminal Records Check with Vulnerable Sector Search is received, the new staff/volunteer will not have unsupervised access to children, young people or vulnerable adults.

5 EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR KEEPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

Management and all staff working with children and young people will receive training adequate to familiarize them with child protection issues and responsibilities and the YMCA procedures and policies, with refresher training **at least** every 3 years. The initial training will be documented in the employee's personnel file or volunteer file, as appropriate, on commencement of employment or volunteering.

In the event of any change to the Child Protection Policy, all staff will receive an orientation to the new policy and be required to complete a *YMCA Child Protection Policy and Procedures Sign Off* form (see Appendix A).

5.1 Education and Training:

The learning opportunities for staff and volunteers to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to keep children and young people safe will include the following:

- 5.1.1** All members of staff and volunteers and other associates have training on child protection when they join the association which includes an introduction to the YMCA's child protection policy and procedures.
- 5.1.2** All members of staff and volunteers are provided with opportunities to learn about how to recognize and respond to concerns about child abuse.
- 5.1.3** Children and young people are provided with advice and support on keeping themselves safe.
- 5.1.4** Staff members and volunteers with special responsibilities for keeping children and young people safe have relevant training and regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.
- 5.1.5** Training is provided to those responsible for dealing with complaints and disciplinary procedures in relation to child abuse and inappropriate behavior towards children and young people.
- 5.1.6** Training and written guidance on safer recruitment practice is provided for those responsible for recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.
- 5.1.7** Opportunities exist for learning from practical case experience to be fed back into organizational training and development programs.

6 RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OR SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

In the event that a child discloses or there are grounds to suspect child abuse, the YMCA will take prompt and immediate action. The YMCA is mandated by provincial law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

6.1 General Procedure:

- 6.1.1** Staff and volunteers of the YMCA will take allegations of abuse seriously.
- 6.1.2** The YMCA will ensure staff working with children and young people are familiar with the procedure for handling a disclosure of abuse or neglect by a child. (Refer to Appendix E for the procedure.)
- 6.1.3** Staff will follow the prescribed procedure for handling a 'disclosure'.
- 6.1.4** The first priority will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk by taking any precautionary measures as advised by the Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority (Refer to Appendix F for child protection telephone numbers.)
- 6.1.5** In the event the reported incident(s) involve staff or a volunteer, the procedure for handling an allegation against a YMCA staff or volunteer will be followed. (Refer to Appendix G for the procedure.)
- 6.1.6** A report will be filed in accordance with relevant provincial child protection reporting requirements and the Association will cooperate to the extent of the law with any legal authority involved. (Refer to Appendix H for report form.)
- 6.1.7** All information related to disclosure or an allegation of abuse will be handled confidentially.

7 MANAGING AN ALLEGATION, COMPLAINT AND CLAIM OF ABUSE AGAINST THE YMCA

In event of an allegation, complaint or claim of abuse against a staff or volunteer of the YMCA will follow the following procedures:

7.1 Incident Reporting:

7.1.1 If a staff or volunteer suspects or receives an allegation or complaint of abuse about another YMCA staff, volunteer or student, he/she will follow the procedure for reporting an allegation or suspicion of abuse to the appropriate child protection authority. Refer to 6.1.5 and Appendix G for the procedure.

7.1.2 The staff or volunteer will notify their manager or the senior manager responsible for child protection as soon as a call to the child protection authority has been made. The manager or senior manager will notify management to ensure that the insurer is notified promptly of the allegation or complaint of abuse against the YMCA.

7.2 Information Management:

7.2.1 Staff and volunteers will follow the documentation and information handling procedures required under relevant child protection legislation. Refer to Appendix "I" which contains the documentation procedure.)

7.2.2 All records related to the allegation or complaint will be retained until such time as determined by the authorities, or by YMCA records retention requirements, or by the insurer, whichever is longer.

APPENDIX A
YMCA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES SIGN OFF

As a staff member of YMCA Calgary:

- I have read the YMCA Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- I understand my legal duty to report under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act of Alberta ; and
- I understand my responsibility and the actions required by me

Name: _____
(Please print)

Branch: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____
(Day/Month/Year)

Note: This form is to be submitted to YMCA Calgary Association Services HR Department

APPENDIX B
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION FORM
[see Yconnect]

APPENDIX C
VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM
[see *YConnect*]

APPENDIX D
REFERENCE CHECKING FORM
[see *YConnect*]

APPENDIX E PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING DISCLOSURE BY A CHILD

Disclosure

How should you talk with a child who discloses abuse?

Even if you have read widely about child abuse or attended various training seminars, it will most likely be a shock every time a child comes forward to talk about abuse or sexual abuse. These disclosures are to be handled in the utmost professional manner and the safety and security of the child is paramount and must not be taken lightly. Therefore please follow these guidelines:

1. Believe the child
2. Listen openly and calmly
3. Reassure the child
4. Write down the facts
5. Report IMMEDIATELY to your supervisor, who will continue the reporting process

1. Believe the Child

There will always be cynics who say that children have terrific imaginations and that stories about sexual abuse are just part of their fantasy world. Most children that disclose sexual abuse often do not attach the same moral values of right and wrong to the sexual event in the adult world. They may be describing something that is confusing to them, such as a promise they had to make to the adult “never to tell”.

2. Listen Openly and Calmly

As the child speaks, you may be overwhelmed with your own feelings of anger, pain or perhaps fear. At the time of disclosure, put your feelings aside, you will have an opportunity to debrief with your supervisor at a later time and assistance will be provided if required by YMCA Calgary. Be emotionally available to the child, and listen. Provide your full attention to the child.

Do not be judgmental, you are not the investigator. Do not make comments that might lead the child’s responses. To ensure that others do not overhear the child’s message, it is suggested that you find a place that will offer some privacy, but not totally secluded. Notify your staff where you will be in order that the other participants are taken care of.

3. Reassure the Child

Let the child know that you believe them. Be honest with the child by saying that you cannot keep this a secret, that there are other people that need to know. Explain that you are going to do your best to help. All that you can do is promise that you will do your best to get the right help for them.

Try not to ask questions. Do not suggest interpretations or solutions that might cause problems in further investigations by Child Welfare Services or other authorities. You are not required to determine the immediacy or the danger to the child; Child Welfare Services will determine this.

What if the Child asks you not to tell anyone else?

Being an empathic listener does not mean that you can abandon your own beliefs or that you can ignore your responsibilities. Children who tell you about abuse sometimes ask that you keep the information a secret. The first thing to do is explore the reasons why the child wants you to keep the information a

secret. You may reveal fears about other family members who may be at risk. You need to reassure the child that you understand why you are being asked not to tell. However, you must also let the child know about your responsibilities.

Remember, as an empathic listener you lend yourself for a while to another to try to see the world as the other sees it, but you must always return to your own frame of reference. It is when you return to your own perspective that you are able to turn this new understanding you have gained into helpful action.

4. Write Down the Facts

Record the Child's name, address, telephone number, date and place of your conversation. Write down the Child's words, do not try and interpret what the Child has reported in your own words. If the child has named an individual; record the identity of that individual as described by the Child. It is important to understand that children often recant or deny having been abused, even after disclosing the abuse. They do so because they feel guilty about causing trouble for the offender or because they have been threatened and are afraid of the consequences. Sometimes children recant to protect others in the family. This kind of reversal can lead to anger and confusion on the part of those who have tried to assist the Child. As an individual who has to make considerable effort to assist the Child, you should explore your own feelings and convictions about abuse. Understand that you cannot control the events that will occur. Nevertheless, your recording of the information at the time of disclosure will be very important in the investigative process; it must be well done.

5. Report Immediately to Your Supervisor

You must report the disclosure **IMMEDIATELY** to your supervisor. Your supervisor will then follow the **Reporting Procedures for Incidents Section**.

APPENDIX F
TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority

#300, 1240 Kensington Road NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3P7

Reception: **403-297-6100**

Child Abuse Hotline: **1-800-387-KIDS (5437)**

APPENDIX G

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING AN ALLEGATION AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE OR VOLUNTEER

In event of an allegation, complaint or claim of abuse against a staff or volunteer of the YMCA will follow the following procedures:

1. Incident Reporting:

- If a staff or volunteer suspects or receives an allegation or complaint of abuse about another YMCA staff, volunteer or student, he/she will follow the procedure for reporting an allegation or suspicion of abuse to the appropriate child protection authority.
- The staff or volunteer will notify their manager or the senior manager responsible for child protection as soon as a call to the child protection authority has been made. The manager or senior manager will notify management to ensure that the insurer is notified promptly of the allegation or complaint of abuse against the YMCA.

2. Information Management:

- Staff and volunteers will follow the documentation and information handling procedures required under relevant child protection legislation.
- All records related to the allegation or complaint will be retained until such time as determined by the authorities, or by YMCA records retention requirements, or by the insurer, whichever is longer.

**APPENDIX H
YMCA CHILD ABUSE REPORTING FORM**

CONFIDENTIAL

Date Form completed: _____

Name of YMCA Facility/Division: _____

YMCA Program Name/Course: _____

Child's Name: _____ Male Female

Child's Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____
(month/day/year)

Child's Address: _____
(street) (city/province) (postal code)

Child's Phone Number: _____

Name of Parent(s)/Guardian: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Address: _____
(street) (city/province) (postal code)

Phone Numbers: _____
(home) (work)

_____ (home) (work)

Reason for this Report:

- suspicion of abuse
- child disclosure
- allegation of abuse against a YMCA staff

Describe incident, situation, statement or behavioural and/or physical indications of abuse:

If child's explanation was sought or offered, give details, including what was said and when:

If other staff were consulted, give details, including what was said or when:

Area(s) on child's body showing indicators of abuse:

Report made to:

- Alberta Children's Services **1 (800) 387-KIDS (5437)**
- (Licensed Child Care only) Alberta Children's Services Licensing Officer **297-6100**
- Incident Report completed and submitted to Supervisor

Date of call: _____

Time of call: _____ am/pm

Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) location contacted: _____

Name of: child protection social worker at [authority] _____

licensing officer at CFSA _____

Action the child protection social worker/licensing officer said will occur:

Follow up required: Other comments or observations?

YMCA Internal Reporting

	Contacted	Name	Date	Time
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supervisor	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Management	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	GM, H&S	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sr. VP/COO	_____	_____	_____

.....

Name of Staff making report: _____

Position: _____

Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Management Signature: _____ Date: _____

GM, H&S Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sr. VP/COO Signature: _____ Date: _____

.....

To be completed by manager/program director when investigation has been completed.

Outcome/Conclusion of Investigation:

APPENDIX I
YMCA CHILD ABUSE DOCUMENTATION PROCEDURE

Guidelines for Writing Documentation

All documentation must be:

- Legible and hand written by the person who suspected and reported the suspected abuse (never to be typed on a computer);
- Written with a ball point pen, not a marker or felt tip, which might smudge/leak;
- Factual, based on your observations. Do not document your personal thoughts about how it might have happened or include second or third party information;
- Submitted as the original document. Do not re-write your documentation;
- Free of white-out, if you make a mistake, simply cross it out and initial any errors/changes;
- Complete with the name(s) and phone number(s) of the individual(s) you spoke with at the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) and/or Police Division;
- Complete with any directions you were given by a CAS and/or Police Division;
- Signed, dated, and placed in a sealed envelope;
- Write the child’s name and CONFIDENTIAL on the front of the envelope, the director will sign his/her name to the back seal;
- The center director will put the envelope in a locked, fire proof cabinet, separate from the children’s files.

Written documentation should include the following information:

- Child’s name and address;
- Observation date and time;
- Description of the full incident(s), and/or situation(s) of suspected abuse (FACTS ONLY). Ensure to include dates, times, behaviours, specific words and interactions between the individuals involved;
- Description of the physical condition of the child, including any injuries or signs of illness. Where appropriate, circle the attached Body Chart to indicate location of injury(s);
Body Chart is attached: Yes No
- Description of the emotional condition of the child, including any behavioural concerns, as well as the child’s response upon disclosure (if applicable). Are there any noticeable changes in the child’s behaviour?
- If known, a description of any further risks of abuse to the child, including the access of the alleged abuser to the child;
- Describe fully the “action taken” on behalf of the child. Include all instructions and/or advice from a Children’s Aid Society or Police Official.

Documentation regarding a CAS record is never to be given to anyone including Police or a CAS unless a warrant or subpoena is provided.

Source: City of Toronto, “Making a Difference: The Community Responds to Child Abuse, Fourth Edition 2003”
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