



Child protection in sport and recreation

Guidelines for parents/guardians and children



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What is meant by child protection?

Child protection for sport and recreation organisations is about keeping children safe from abuse and protecting them from people who are unsuitable to work with children.

A child is a person under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse includes:

- Sexual abuse – any sexual behaviour imposed on a child, including inappropriate physical contact
- Physical abuse – any non-accidental injury including physically punishing a child by hitting, throwing an object or pushing or shoving
- Emotional abuse (including verbal abuse) – negative messages in relationship to a child which, over time, affect a child's self concept and ability to function
- Neglect – of proper nourishment, of shelter/hygiene, of clothing/medication etc.

Sport and recreation organisations have a moral and legal responsibility to create a positive and encouraging environment to ensure that children participating in these activities are safe and free from abuse.

Positive child protection practices enable children to participate in activities that are an integral part of their culture without being exposed to individuals who can damage their development and, in some instances, take away their ability to enjoy their future.

How is sport responsible?

Sport and recreation groups are legally and morally responsible for protecting children from abuse while those children are involved in the sport or recreation activity (or related activities).

A key responsibility for sport and recreation groups is to protect children from people who are unsuitable to work with children. This involves complying with the Working with Children Check, which is a legal requirement and includes:

- Requiring all employees (including volunteers) who will be working in identified child related positions to declare whether or not they are a Prohibited Person (eg. a person prohibited from working with children due to convictions for certain serious offences). It is an offence for a prohibited person to apply for or remain in child related employment.
- Undertake background checking of preferred applicants for paid child related positions and other mandatory categories.

All levels in your chosen sport or recreation activity have responsibilities for child protection. This includes the peak body, associations, clubs, coaches and officials. The main responsibilities are to:

- Undertake and comply with the Working with Children Check
- Develop and adopt policies and good practices to reduce the risks of child abuse
- Investigate and respond to any incident of reportable conduct or risk of harm related to the sport or recreation activity. Where necessary, this includes the peak body or association making a report to the relevant authorities eg. NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS), Commission for Children and Young People or NSW Police.

For more information refer to www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/children

What should your club be doing?

Your sport or recreation club should be adopting a positive role in dealing with child protection issues.

Some things that your club can do include:

- Nominate a person in the club to be responsible for child protection/member protection (someone that people can trust and go to if there are any questions or problems)
- Promote the sport's policy on child protection/member protection to parents/guardians and children
- Openly talk about the importance of child protection/member protection and explain how this can be achieved
- Put practices in place that minimise the risk of child abuse and clearly state what is acceptable behaviour
- Promptly respond to any allegation of child abuse or reportable conduct.

There should be a high level of awareness about child protection and the risk of child abuse in your club. This level of commitment will help to deter people who may be inclined to abuse children from being part of your club.

Your role as a parent or guardian

As a concerned parent or guardian you have an important role to play in creating a safer environment for your child.

Some things that you can do include:

- Ask your club if they are Working with Children Check compliant
- Ask your club to provide you with its policy on child protection/member protection
- Maintain open lines of communication with your child to ensure that they are aware that they can talk to you about anything
- Support the club in implementing its policy and practices relating to child protection/member protection
- Be aware of your club's guidelines for coaches and officials regarding appropriate practices and adopt these practices yourself as a person involved in the club
- Report any incident of child abuse to your club's child protection/member protection representative or another responsible member of the club
- Adopt positive behaviours when involved with the sport and as a spectator
- Obtain further information on sport rage, child protection/member protection and harassment and discrimination from the websites www.dsr.nsw.gov.au and www.playbytherules.net.au

Your responsibilities as a child

As a child participating in a sport and recreation activity, you should remember that it is important to:

- Participate and enjoy the activity. This will happen if the activity is being conducted in an environment that is safe, and encourages positive behaviours
- Talk with your parents/guardian if you are not happy with any aspect of your involvement with sport
- Treat others involved in the sport with respect. As a player you should be aware of your sport's code of conduct and that breaches of this code may result in disciplinary action
- Obtain further information on sport rage, child protection/member protection and harassment and discrimination from the websites www.dsr.nsw.gov.au and www.playbytherules.net.au

How to deal with reportable
conduct/incidents

As a parent or guardian

As a child involved
in sport



For parents and guardians – how to deal with reportable conduct and abuse

What is reportable conduct

- Reportable conduct – any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child, including a child pornography offence
- Any child related personal violence offence
- Any assault, ill treatment or neglect of a child
- Any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child, or
- An act of violence committed by an employee in the course of employment and in the presence of a child.

If your child is experiencing harassment, discrimination or abuse as part of their involvement in a sport or recreation activity, you should:

- Be caring and understanding towards your child. Believe what they are saying and take action to address their concerns
- Advise the child protection representative, member protection information officer or another trusted person in your club and expect them to respond appropriately by following the sport's established procedures
- Contact NSW Police and DoCS if your child is at risk of harm or you believe the incident is a criminal matter (refer to definitions on page 1 and Other information and contacts on page 13).

Your club should inform its peak body or association, who will investigate the matter and liaise with NSW Police and DoCS if appropriate. You should be kept informed throughout the investigation.

Ensure your child does not remain in a situation where they could continue to be abused or where they may be at risk of harm.

Feel comfortable about reporting any form of harassment, discrimination or abuse. Your child should not be expected to tolerate any abuse and it is your right as a parent or guardian to take action and to expect your sport to deal with the situation appropriately and confidentially.

For children – how to deal with reportable conduct and abuse

If you are experiencing harassment, discrimination or abuse as part of your involvement in a sport or recreation activity you should:

- Tell your parent, guardian or another person you trust, like your teacher, straight away. Tell them exactly what is happening
- With your trusted person you should advise the club's child protection representative, member protection information officer or another trusted person in the club. They will then follow the sport's established procedures which should include advising the peak body or association who will deal with the matter
- You or your trusted person can make contact with NSW Police or DoCS if appropriate (refer to Other information and contacts on page 13).

You have the right to feel safe while involved in your sport or recreation activity. You do not deserve to be abused in any way. This includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

Just remember it is important for you to tell someone if you are being abused so that they can help to stop the abuse from happening to you and others.

You can also call Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800 or visit www.kidshelp.com.au They will:

- Listen to you
- Believe you
- Help you come up with possible solutions.

Checklists

These checklists will help you to contribute to achieving child protection in your sport or recreation activity.

Ideally you will answer yes to each question.

Parents If you do not answer YES, you should take action so that you can.

Children If you do not answer YES, ask your parent or guardian or another trusted person to take action so that you can.



Checklist for parents and guardians

- Is your club compliant with their Working with Children Check responsibilities?
- Does your club have a policy on child protection/member protection?
- If your club has a policy, do you have a copy or at least know what the policy is?
- Does your club have a person responsible for child protection/member protection?
- Does your club have codes of conduct for coaches, officials, players and parents?
- Are there guidelines on how coaches and officials should behave around children?
- Would you report an incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse?
- Do you know what action to take if you need to report an incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse?
- Are you comfortable that your child is safe from abuse in their sport or recreation activity?
- Are you comfortable that your sport or recreation group is doing all they can to reduce the risk of harassment, discrimination or abuse?
- Do people in your club talk about the importance of child protection?
- Have you talked to your child recently to ensure that they are aware that they can talk to you about anything?

Checklist for children

- Do you feel safe in your sport or recreation activity?
- Does your club talk to you and other children about child protection and what to do if you have any problems?
- Do you have a person responsible for child protection/member protection in your club that you feel you can talk to?
- Has your parent or guardian read this booklet and/or other child protection material?
- Are you aware of codes of conduct for coaches, officials and others in your club?
- Would you tell your parent, guardian or another trusted person if you were concerned or unhappy about anything that is happening in your sport or recreation activity?
- Would you tell someone if you knew your friend was being abused as part of your sport or recreation activity?
- Would you contact the police or ask your parent or guardian to do so, if you were abused?

Important terms

Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) – with regard to the *Commission for Children and Young People Amendment Act 2005* an AVO is defined as an order made by a Court on the application of a police officer/public official or interstate restraint order made for the protection of a child.

Approved Screening Agency – designated agencies that undertake requests for background checking on behalf of employers.

Allegation – an assertion made without absolute evidence.

Background checking – checks for offences including child assault, child pornography, sexual activity, acts of indecency, relevant AVO and employment proceedings. It must be conducted on all preferred applicants for paid child related positions as well as other mandatory categories by an Approved Screening Agency.

Child related employment – employment (including volunteers) that primarily involves direct, unsupervised contact with children. (A child is defined as a person under 18 years of age). This means that one of the essential duties of the position involves direct unsupervised contact with children.

Child related personal violence offence – in NSW, a child-related personal offence is specifically the offence of:

- Maliciously wounding or inflicting grievous bodily harm to a child; or
- Maliciously shooting at, or discharging any kind of loaded arms at a child.

Employment proceedings – employment related proceedings completed in NSW or elsewhere, where an employer (including sport and recreation organisations), has found:

- Reportable conduct; or
- That an act of violence has been committed by an employee in the course of employment and in the presence of a child.

Prohibited person – a person convicted of a serious sex offence, the murder of a child, a child related personal violence offence or a registrable person. A prohibited person is not allowed to work or continue to work in child related employment. It is an offence for a prohibited person to apply for a position working with children. A person on the sex register is also a prohibited person.

Reportable Conduct – refer to page 7.

Prohibited Employment Declaration – a form to be completed by all paid and unpaid employees (including volunteers) prior to employment in child related positions.

Risk of harm – current concerns about a child over basic physical or psychological needs not being met, medical care not being arranged, the child being at risk of serious physical or psychological harm or at risk of physical or sexual abuse.

Serious sex offence – an offence (involving sexual activity, acts of indecency and other offences included in legislation) that is punishable by a prison sentence of 12 months or more.

Working with Children Check – the overall process used to help determine whether a person is suitable to work with children.

Working with Children Background Check Consent Form – a form completed by preferred applicants for child related positions and other mandatory categories. Used by employers to get permission to conduct background checking. Kept on file by the employer.

Other information and contacts

NSW Sport and Recreation

Child Protection Infoline: 1300 366 407

Email:

workingwithchildrencheck@dsr.nsw.gov.au

www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/children

Offers a range of child protection brochures

Commission for Children and Young People

Office hours: 9am–5pm

Phone: (02) 9286 7220

Fax: (02) 9286 7201

Email: kids@kids.nsw.gov.au

www.kids.nsw.gov.au

WWCC Employers Guidelines

Australian Sports Commission

Phone: (02) 6214 1111

www.ausport.gov.au

Policy and Code templates

Play By The Rules

www.playbytherules.net.au

Free online training programs on child protection, discrimination and harassment.

NSW Police

Emergency: 000

Police Assistance Line: 131 444

7 days a week, 24 hours a day

NSW Department of Community Services

DoCS Helpline: 132 111

www.community.nsw.gov.au

Kids Helpline

Phone: 1800 551 800

Email: admin@kidshelp.com.au

www.kidshelp.com.au

Lifeline

Phone: 13 11 14

www.lifeline.com.au



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1300 366 407
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