



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

What is child protection?

Child protection in sport and recreation starts with setting up an environment and administrative system that will allow children (anyone under 18) to remain safe from abuse, and protected from any individual who wishes to exploit or harm them.

Child abuse can occur through actions that harm or injure a child, or an environment that does not provide protection for them.

Child abuse can be intentional (such as physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse) or unintentional (such as an injury caused through poorly maintained facilities and equipment).

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse is the non-accidental injury and/or physical harm to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or other person. Another child can also cause this injury. Physically abusive behaviours can include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking.

Physical abuse may be intentional or may also be the inadvertent result of physical punishment that causes physical harm. Remember too that child abuse can be unintentional, such as an injury caused through poorly maintained or sub-standard facilities and equipment.

Emotional abuse involves behaviours that may psychologically harm a child, including verbal abuse, threats, bullying, harassment or excessive and unreasonable demands. Emotional abuse may take the form of:

- Rejection, where an adult refuses to acknowledge a child's worth, or continually belittles them maliciously
- Terrorizing a child with verbal 'assaults', creating a climate of fear, intentionally bullying or frightening a child
- Corrupting a child by deliberately encouraging anti-social, deviant and destructive behaviour

Sexual abuse is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child by an adult or another child, including suggestive behaviour and inappropriate touching. Sexual abuse may also involve an act that exposes a child to sexual processes or images.

Sexually abusive behaviours can include fondling, any form of sexual activity with a child, voyeurism, exhibitionism and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography.

Neglect is where a child is at risk of injury/harm or is harmed by the failure to provide them with the basic physical and emotional necessities of life. It is important to be aware that some children with a disability are at greater risk of child abuse due to mobility constraints and/or difficulties with communication. Extra care should be taken to reduce the risk of abuse.

Neglect also covers any injury or harm to a child due to poor maintenance or sub-standard facilities and equipment.

Your role

No matter what your position within a sporting club or organisation - coach, administrator, player, volunteer, parent, official – you have a vital role to play to ensure that children can enjoy their sport in a protected and safe environment. It's not somebody else's responsibility. It's yours.

The role of the Parent

As a parent who attends games, practice sessions or club functions, you are both a role model and a responsible adult when it comes to all children you encounter within the club or sporting organisation environment.

Your responsibilities are to:

- Treat all children respectfully, and within the child protection laws of Australia (free from any form of abuse).
- Act in accordance with your club and sport's code of conduct on how to interact with children of all ages (up to 18 years).
- Be aware of your club or organisation's policies and reporting processes and act accordingly if you witness or suspect any situations that may potentially lead to, or may constitute, child abuse.
- Be a positive influence in the creation of a child safe environment at the club or sporting organisation.

The role as an athlete

As an athlete in the club, you are responsible for treating your fellow players with respect. You will often see or hear things that might be hidden from the adults. Speaking up to an adult, or to a club official, about any situation that you feel is harmful to a fellow player will help make sure that all players can feel safe to enjoy their sport.

The role of the Administrator

As a sport administrator, club official or committee member, you play a vital role in making sure that your club or organisation has the right child protection policies and systems in place. Remember, courage and leadership shape a club or organisation's 'culture'. Speaking up about practices that are not child safe, being a voice for change, making sure that systems and policies are well communicated and followed, and taking the time to check in with other roles within the club about child protection will not only create a child safe environment, but will also keep your club free from the worry, stress and legal hassles of any complaints.

Your responsibilities are to:

- Treat all children respectfully, and within the child protection laws of Australia (free from any form of abuse).
- Act appropriately and responsibly with children of all ages (up to 18 years).
- Raise your 'child safe' awareness to be able to spot any problems or situations before they escalate.
- Ensure that club policies and systems regarding child protection are well placed, effective and well communicated.
- Be a positive influence, and/or voice for change, in the creation of a child safe environment in your club or sporting organisation.
- Make sure that your intentions, your actions and your efforts ensure a child safe environment.

The role as a coach

As a coach of young people, you are in a position of power and influence. Young people will look up to you, and be guided by your actions. You will likely have the most amount of interaction with young people at the club, so you will often be among the first to see or recognise a developing problem or situation.

You have a key role in any club or sporting organisation.

Your responsibilities are to:

- Treat all children respectfully, and within the child protection laws of Australia (free from any form of abuse).
- Refrain from any form of verbal abuse, or verbal communications that are harmful, spiteful or sexually suggestive.
- Act appropriately and responsibly with children of all ages (up to 18 years)
- Raise your 'child safe' awareness to be able to spot any problems or situations before they escalate.
- Inform the nominated club or organisational officer if you witness or suspect any situations that may potentially lead to, or may constitute, child abuse.

- Be a positive influence, and/or voice for change, in the creation of a child safe environment at the club or sporting organisation.
- Make sure that your intentions, your actions and your efforts ensure a child safe environment.

Victorian Legislation

Victorian legislation requires sport and recreation organisations to undertake extra strategies to provide a safe environment for children (e.g. risk management strategies). The introduction of the Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport also creates responsibilities for all community sport participants on and off the field, as well as associations and clubs, to ensure every person can participate in safe, welcoming and inclusive sport.

Vicarious liability

Vicarious liability describes the principle in law which says that, depending on the circumstances, an organisation can be held responsible for the behaviour of its employees (including staff, volunteers and contractors), unless:

1. It can be shown that all reasonable steps were taken to prevent the behaviour from happening in the first place; and
2. There were appropriate policies, and procedures in place for dealing with the behaviour when it occurred.

The same principle applies to governing bodies and clubs.

Mandatory Reporting

Sporting personnel need to be aware that because of the large number of children participating in sport and the closeness of relationships formed; they may come across children being abused or who disclose their abuse to them. This abuse may be occurring within or outside of sport.

Victoria has many professions that are mandatory reporters, but individuals who work in sporting or recreation organisations are not included in this category. Regardless, anyone who has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a child or young person is being neglected or abused should report it to Child Protection and Family Services, within the Victorian Department of Human Services. Should you feel that there is something to report, you are encouraged to seek help from your club's CPO (Child Protection Officer).

Cranbourne Little Athletics Centre Contacts:

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Please note: At registration every parent/guardian/carer signed our Cranbourne Little Athletics Centre Code of Conduct for both Parents and Players, as did our Coaches, Managers and Administrators.