



Child Safety Policy

Purpose

All Football Victoria Football Associations are required to implement the Child Safe Standards and the mandatory reporting guidelines from the Victorian Government's amendment to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) ("CYFA") and the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) ("Crimes Act").

SWVFA (the "Association") is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone involved at the Association is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Policy Statements

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- 1) Work towards an Association culture of Child Safety
- 2) Ensure that all persons are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
- 3) Provide guidance on responding where a person suspects any child abuse within all Association environments.
- 4) Provide a clear statement to players, committee members, volunteers, employees, and contractors forbidding any such abuse; and
- 5) Provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be investigated.
- 6) The Football Victoria Child Protection Guidelines, available on the Football Victoria website, has more detailed information on each of these areas. The Association will use all reasonable endeavours to adopt and comply with those Guidelines in its recruitment practices.'

In addition to this Policy, Football Victoria has produced Child Protection Guidelines which are available on the Football Victoria website. The Association will comply with those Guidelines to aid and supplement this policy.

Scope

This Policy, and the attached Code of Conduct, applies to all players, committee members, volunteers, coaches,



team managers, assistants, employees and parents of players of the Association, whether registered via PlayFootball or otherwise registered with our Association. Non-registered individuals who otherwise participate in activities with or for our Association are also bound to this policy by virtue of their participation in our Association's activities.

Breaches of this Policy or the Code of Conduct may be investigated by the Association and/or Football Victoria, and may be processed by the Association as it sees fit, or in the alternative by Football Victoria/Local Association as Misconduct in accordance with Football Victoria/Local Association GDT.

Guiding Principles

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- 1) The Association has zero tolerance for child abuse.
- 2) The best interests of the child are paramount.
- 3) Child protection is a shared responsibility.
- 4) All children have a right to feel safe and be safe when they play football, and have equal rights to protection from abuse.
- 5) The Association will consider the opinions of players and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures.
- 6) The Association is committed to the diversity and cultural safety of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, minors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, minors with disabilities, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters; and
- 7) Everyone covered by the Policy must comply with, and is bound to, the Association's Child Safety Code of Conduct at all times.

Role of Child Protection Officers on the Committee

The Association's Committee is responsible for ensuring that policies are reviewed and updated, and that training exists for committee members, volunteers, coaches, team managers, assistants and employees on child protection matters. The Committee is also responsible for identifying and managing risk in relation to child safety.

Child Protection Officers (CPOs) are available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting individuals in our Association. Players, members, employees, volunteers, and committee members can all speak with a CPO if they



have concerns in relation to child abuse. The CPOs will make reports on behalf of the Association and ensure that adequate records are maintained. The Association CPOs will be listed on our Association website and identified to all children and parents at the Association.

Recognizing Child Abuse

Child abuse includes:

- 1) Any act committed against a child involving:
 - a. a sexual offence; or
 - b. an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act (grooming); or
- 2) The infliction, on a child, of:
 - a. physical violence; or
 - b. serious emotional or psychological harm; or
 - c. serious neglect of a child.

For the purposes of this policy “Child” (or minor) means a person who participates at the Association under the age of 18 years, unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child.

Reporting Obligations

Mandatory Reporting

- 1) Under the Crimes Act, all persons have a legal obligation to inform police as soon as practicable where they have a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (of or over the age of 18 years).
- 2) This legal obligation above is subject to a person having a reasonable excuse for not reporting. A person will have a “reasonable excuse” to not report if that person:
 - a. fears for the safety of any person (other than the alleged perpetrator of the offence) if they were to disclose the information to police, or
 - b. believes on reasonable grounds that the information has already been disclosed to police and they have no further information.
- 3) The Association supports and encourages committee members, employees or volunteers, coaches or team managers to make a report to the police if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is



in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child. Where a report is made to the police or DHHS, we ask the individual to also advise the Association.

- 4) Any committee member, employee or volunteer, coach or team manager that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations will be supported by the Association and will not be penalized.
- 5) If a committee member, employee or volunteer, coach or team manager is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they must speak to the CPO (or FV) for guidance and information. Ultimately, it is a personal decision of the committee member, employee or volunteer employee or coach or team manager whether they choose to make a report to an external authority or not.
- 6) If an allegation is made against a committee member, employee or volunteer, coach or team manager, the CPO will follow the reporting procedure and take all steps to ensure that safety of the child is paramount.

Voluntary Reporting

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, may disclose that information to the police. The Association encourages all persons to speak with the CPO (or FV) for guidance or support with addressing such concerns.

What are “Reasonable grounds for belief”?

You have “reasonable grounds” to notify when:

- a) A minor tells you that he/she has been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A minor states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the minor may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone else, such as a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the minor, tells you that a child has been abused;
- d) Your observations of the minor’s behaviour or knowledge of children lead you to believe that the child has been abused; or
- e) You observe physical signs or indicators of abuse (e.g. bruises, cuts etc.).

The Association encourages reporting where you hold a concern about the safety of a minor.



Prevention

Risk Management

The Association will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the Association will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls. The Association will ensure that appropriate training is conducted for:

- 1) Committee members
- 2) Coaches, team managers and volunteers; and
- 3) Employees.

Information will be provided to players (or for players such as Miniroos and Junior teams) to their parents/carers, about child safety.

The Association will also ensure that all committee members, volunteers, coaches, team managers, and employees are provided with ongoing supervision and support such that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child-safe environment.

Communication

The Association is pro-active in the area of prevention and will communicate the Child Protection Policy, Procedure and Code of Conduct in the manner below.

| PLAYERS | PARENTS, GUARDIANS, COMMUNITY, SPONSORS, PARTNERS | COMMITTEE MEMBERS, COACHES, MANAGERS, EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of becoming a member • Website • Association Facebook post | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of becoming a member (Parents will receive a hard and electronic copy) • Website • Association Facebook page | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Letters of appointment/ contracts/agreements • Annual requirement checks • Annual Training Session |



Recruitment

The Association is pro-active in its recruitment of individuals to the Association, including committee members, volunteers and employees, coaches and team managers, in the area of Child Safety. The Association will:

- 1) Implement a recruitment process for coaches, assistant coaches, team managers, etc, for all the teams of our Association.
- 2) Ensure all coaches, volunteers, etc read and understand the Associations' Code of Conduct and other policies.
- 3) Screen for inappropriate people and conduct interviews, reference checks and online background searches to satisfy ourselves about people coming into positions of responsibility at our Association.
- 4) Conduct all necessary Working with Children Checks (WWCC).
- 5) Include child safety issues in induction training.

The Football Victoria Child Protection Guidelines, available on the Football Victoria website, has more detailed information on each of these areas. The Association will use all reasonable endeavours to adopt and comply with those Guidelines in its recruitment practices.

Further steps we will take as a Association:

- 1) Unless unavoidable, no adult will have access to an unaccompanied minor without prior permission from the minor's parents or guardian.
- 2) We will ensure all new coaches, team managers, etc to our Association have a WWCC check.
- 3) We will ensure appropriate training and education sessions into child safety are available to all new coaches, team managers.
- 4) We will communicate our Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct to our stakeholders, and follow it.
- 5) We will set guidelines and rules for the appropriate levels of communication between coaches, team managers and players who are minors on social media.
- 6) We will take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
- 7) We value and empower minors to participate in decisions which affect them.
- 8) We will foster a culture of openness that supports disclosure of incidents.
- 9) We will respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount.
- 10) Ensure minors know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable to do so.



- 11) Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities; and
- 12) Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.

Responding to an Allegation

In the case of an allegation being made against a committee member, coach, team manager, employee, volunteer and/or contractor at the Association, the CPO will follow this Child Protection Procedure. At all times the safety of the child is paramount.

Withdraw the Individual

The first step is to consider withdrawal of the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated. During the investigation process, it may be necessary for a person to be stood down from their usual duties at the Association or suspended from all activities at the Association.

Investigations

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust it is essential that it is dealt with sensitively and professionally:

The Association will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the Association to conduct an investigation in addition to any investigation conducted by authorities (Eg. the police).

The CPO will conduct an independent investigation, or will appoint an appropriate person to do so, into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the police, and will co-operate with authorities as required. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the Association to engage a person from outside the Association to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.

All people covered by this Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct must co-operate fully with any investigation by DHHS, the police or the Association.



The CPO will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other committee members, employees, volunteers may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

An investigation conducted by the Association will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. The Association will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible.

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with children, increased supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecutions.

The Association shall notify Football Victoria of the outcome of any investigation that results in suspension of an individual from the Association for abuse related matters.

Record Keeping

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded by the CPO. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours, or evidence of harm are to be recorded. Reports must be to be securely stored by the CPO or Association administrator.

Privacy & Confidentiality

The Association will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Football Victoria's Privacy Policy.

There are two guiding principles in respect to a child's privacy:

- 1) First, the Association will operate on the best interest's principle. All committee members, employees, volunteers, and contractors will do what they believe to be in the best interest of the child. This principle supersedes all others.
- 2) Second, the Association will respect a child's confidentiality except in situations where it conflicts with the best interest's principle.



Those who make reports, and those about whom accusations are being made, are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, committee members, employees or volunteers must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with this Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct, and relevant statutory requirements.

At all times, the Child Safe Standards must be observed and acted upon.

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