

NSW Department of Sport and Recreation

Child protection in sport and recreation

Guidelines for parents/guardians
and children



www.dsr.nsw.gov.au



Contents



What is meant by child protection?

What is meant by child protection?	1
How is sport responsible?	2
Who should be doing what?	3
What should your club be doing?	4
Your role as a parent or guardian	5
Your role as a player (child)	6
How to deal with child abuse	7
For parents and guardians	8
For children	9
Checklists	10
A checklist for parents and guardians	11
A checklist for children (players)	12
Other information and contacts	13

Child protection 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 bruises, burns, etc
- **Emotional abuse** (including verbal abuse) – negative messages in relationship to the child which, over time, affect the 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 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) 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). Refer to *Guidelines for Sport and Recreation Organisations – Working with Children Check and Child Protection* publication for definitions, or look at the website on www.dsr.nsw.gov.au
- Undertaking employment screening of preferred applicants for paid child related positions

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
- Investigate and respond to any incident of child abuse 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 and NSW Police Service.

For more information refer to NSW Department of Sport and Recreation publication, *Child Protection, A simple guide for sport and recreation organisations* and www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

Who should be doing what?

Key responsibilities
for sport and
recreation groups



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 (someone that people can trust and go to if there are any questions or problems)
- Promote the sport's policy on child protection to parents/guardians and the children
- Openly talk about the importance of child 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 indication of child abuse

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 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 to provide you with its policy on child 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
- 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
- Do not abuse your child or any other child while they are involved in the sport or recreation activity (or beyond the activity)
- Report any incident of child abuse to your club's child protection representative or another responsible member of the club
- Obtain further information from the web site 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:

1. Participate and enjoy the activity. This should happen if the activity is being conducted in an environment that is safe, and encourages positive behaviours
2. Talk with your parents/guardian if you are not happy with any aspect of your involvement with sport
3. 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

How to deal with child abuse

- As a parent or guardian
- As a child involved in a sport



How to deal with child abuse

For parents and guardians



If your child is experiencing 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 do not blame your child in any way
- Contact NSW Police and DoCS straight away if your child has been abused or you believe the abuse is a criminal matter (refer to definitions on page 1 and *Other Information and Contacts* on page 13)
- Advise the child protection representative or another trusted person in your club and expect them to respond appropriately by following the sport's established procedures

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 abuse, even if it is verbal or emotional 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.



How to deal with child abuse

For children

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

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

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, physical or emotional abuse.

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.



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

- Does your club have a policy on child 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?
- 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 child abuse?
- Do you know what action to take if you need to report an incident of child 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 child 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

In relation to your sport or recreation activity:

- 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 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?

Other information and contacts



For more information on child protection and the roles of your peak body or association, club, coaches and officials, you will find a comprehensive package of information on the web site www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

Contacts that you should be aware of include:

NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES (DoCS)

Helpline 132 111
www.community.nsw.gov.au

KIDS HELPLINE

Helpline 1800 55 1800

NSW POLICE

Police Assistance Line 131 444
7 days a week, 24 hours a day

NSW DEPARTMENT OF SPORT AND RECREATION

Child Protection Infoline: 1300 366 407
www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Phone: (02) 9286 7220
www.kids.nsw.gov.au

AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

Phone: (02) 9214 1111
www.ausport.gov.au

PLAY BY THE RULES

www.playbytherules.net.au

Child protection infoline
1300 366 407
www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

