

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Safeguarding Children and Young People

FAQs About Safeguarding Children and Young People

Is a Safeguarding Children and Young People program adding more to our responsibilities?

No. This is already an integral part of your work. The program has been developed to align with best practice in safeguarding Children today and aims to ensure that the ways in which we do things are more effective.

Who is it applicable to?

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and the framework has been developed to support any individual involved in SLS.

Why the change? Are we doing something wrong?

There is more information about child abuse available than ever before and it is being used to develop best practice.

We are in a very privileged position. Every day, parents around the nation entrust the safety of their children to SLS. We play a very important role in the movement and in the greater community and we are leading the way to safeguard Children.

Importantly, a Safeguarding Children and Young People program not only safeguards Children and Young People but everyone involved in our movement, for example, staff, volunteers, coaches, officials, parents and families as well as our organisation and our brand. The program makes clear what is expected of everyone and provides the tools and support needed to do so.

What if we lose volunteers because it is too much for them to do?

A Safeguarding Children and Young People program does not add more responsibility or workload; rather it strengthens policies and systems to safeguard Children. Volunteers have the same responsibility to safeguard Children as paid staff and any other person involved in our activities. If individuals determine that they do not want to adhere to the Safeguarding Children and Young People program rules then it potentially undermines the organisation's commitment to safeguarding Children.

How do I raise awareness with parents without generating mistrust?

Emphasise the commitment to safeguarding their children. Keep the focus on the facts—the policy and code of conduct. Encourage anyone with any sort of concern to raise it. It will all hopefully reassure parents and explain the steps being taken in a more positive context.

FAQs About the Code of Conduct

Will this mean that we can't touch Children at all?

On occasions there will be the need to have appropriate physical contact with a Child or Young Person. Any physical contact with Children and Young People must be appropriate to the delivery of services, events, programs or activities, such as when fitting sporting equipment and appropriately correcting technique and based on the needs of the Child or Young Person (such as to assist or comfort a distressed Young Person) rather than on the needs of the adult. Asking the Child/Young Person before making physical contact with them and explaining what you will do and why you are doing it is important.

Can I physically comfort a Young Person who is upset or can I congratulate a member who has done well by shaking their hand?

The answer to all the above is yes, but always in a reasonable and appropriate manner. Be mindful that to comfort a Young Person who is upset, it is not always necessary or appropriate to place an arm around them. You can show concern for their situation by sitting down and listening to them. Often Young People do get distressed if they compete and feel they haven't done well. Sometimes you can assist just by being positive. You can certainly shake the hand of a member who has done well. This is often seen by a Young Person as high praise from a person they respect.



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What should I do if an athlete is injured and clothing must be removed to treat the injury?

Only people who are qualified in administering first aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury. You should avoid treating injuries out of sight of others. Other things to consider include:

- the comfort level and dignity of the athlete/Participant should always be the priority
- uncover only the injured area or drape a covering over the athlete's/Participant's private parts
- always report injuries and treatment to parents and document an incident fully.

I am friends with many of the families whose children I coach and we all socialise together outside my role of coaching. Our children have grown up together. Can I no longer socialise with them?

You can socialise with your friends and their children. The rules are not intended to limit appropriate social interactions between coaches and Children and their families. They are intended to limit the opportunities available to Persons in Authority to use their position to create opportunities to spend time alone with Children and to develop inappropriate relationships with Children. If you have an existing personal relationship with Children and their families you do need to be mindful of how this might impact on your professional relationship with the Child as their coach. It is best to be open with your club about any existing relationships.

What do I do if I find I am inadvertently left alone with a Child?

You are now the only person available who can ensure the wellbeing of that Child, so although the guidance says 'do not place yourself in a situation where you are alone with a Child in this scenario, to absent yourself could potentially put that Child at risk. You should therefore ensure the wellbeing of the Child, as that should always be the first and foremost consideration. In this case, that means you should wait with that Child until the parent arrives. If you cannot contact the parent, use your mobile to inform another Person of Authority of the situation, for example, your manager, another coach or committee member. Take sensible precautions while waiting with the Child. Talk only about matters that are acceptable between coach and Participant and if you are in a place with other users,

for example a leisure centre, wait for the parent in a public area. If you are at a venue that has no other users, wait in an area that is open and light and where the parent can clearly see you when they arrive.

We use public facilities for some activities and have no control over the change room arrangement. There are no separate spaces for coaches to change—what should I do?

Speak with the council or facility provider to seek alternative arrangements. Should this not be possible, a protective strategy would be to change before everyone arrives and after they leave.

FAQs About Reporting Breaches

If a parent fails to arrive, it is getting late and I cannot contact them by phone what should I do?

In such circumstances, it may be necessary for you to consider transporting that Child home. If other suitable adults are present, ask one to accompany you and the Child in the car to their home. If not, ensure you tell another Person of Authority of the action you are taking by phone, letting them know the route and estimated arrival time. Sit the Child in the back of the car and make sure you know where you are going before you set off to return the Child safely home. Inform the Member Protection Information Office or appropriate person of authority and ask that they speak to the parent the following day.

I and other parents have noticed that another parent is speaking inappropriately to their child, being negative, aggressive and pushy. The child does not seem bothered by this and others confirm this is normal for them as a family. What should I do?

If the behaviour is in breach of the Code of Conduct, you have an obligation to report it. Given that other parents have also noticed, it is affecting others within the community and must be reported.

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Does talking about abuse mean that people are more likely to make allegations?

What comes with raising awareness is a responsibility to do something about what you're aware of. This doesn't automatically mean that people are more likely to make allegations but where there is a concern we expect people to report any concerns they have and to take the allegations seriously.

Will I be expected to investigate an allegation?

No. You are not expected to become a child protection expert. You are expected to have an awareness of the issue of child abuse and exploitation, understand what is expected of you with regards to your own behaviour and to understand your responsibility to report your concerns.

What if I don't have enough information to prove the allegation?

It is not your job to investigate child abuse. You do not have to prove that the abuse or breach of code of conduct is happening. You must report a child protection concern if you form a reasonable belief that it is occurring or is at risk of occurring.

What if the Child involved won't share information with me as they are afraid?

It is not your responsibility to investigate. However, sensitively record as much information as they will share, trying to capture their name, age, who was involved and their age, what happened, where it happened and what they would like to happen next. Reassure them that you are there to help them and the information will be handled confidentially.

I've received a report and I know the person whom the report has been made against, what should I do?

This would be classed as a conflict of interest and you must declare this and remove yourself from the conflict. Seek out another appropriate Person in a Position of Authority to take over managing the report.

We are a small club where everyone knows each other and so there isn't anyone else to ask to manage the report.

In Australia, every sport has designated Member Protection Information Officers. If appropriate, consider finding another MPIO from another sport in the local area. If you do not know of any, contact the Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO) in your state.

How should you initially approach someone in a position of power in a Club whom you feel may be operating outside the Policy?

The key is to reaffirm the policies and code of conduct and check that they understand them. It may be that in this situation you require the support of someone outside of the immediate Club, for example, the state body. Be clear about the nature of your concerns, and specific about the way someone may be in breach of the rules. Make a record of your concern and discussions.