

PDFNL Child Protection Policy

Children have a fundamental right to be safe from any form of abuse whilst involved in sport or activities . Child protection involves legal as well as moral obligations.

In practice, child protection requires a commitment from all levels, to ensure our environments and practices are safe for all children. This includes an awareness of the legislative and policy requirements for dealing with children, a commitment to practices that minimise the risks to children and processes for responding appropriately and expeditiously to alleged incidents of child abuse.

What is child protection?

Child protection is about keeping children safe from abuse and protecting them from people who are unsuitable to work with children. Under current child protection legislation, a child is generally defined as a person less than 18 years of age. Child protection is a responsibility of all PDFNL members, including those whose work involves a direct relationship with children. This includes, but is not limited to coaches, trainers, umpires and committee members.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse relates to children at risk of harm. This could be due to:

- physical abuse including non-accidental injury and/or harm to a child;
- sexual abuse/sexual misconduct comprises any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child, including suggestive behaviour and inappropriate touching;
- emotional abuse comprises behaviours that may psychologically harm a child, including severe verbal abuse, and threats of abuse or excessive and unreasonable demands; or
- neglect, including situations where a child is harmed by the failure to provide them with the basic physical and emotional necessities of life.

Child abuse can range from inappropriate touching when demonstrating techniques, inappropriate training methods that give extra physical loads to children as 'punishment' and physical aggression when disciplining a child, through to sexual assault and sexual intercourse with a minor.

Failure to treat children in accordance with the professional standards required of child care centre operations may also be regarded as child abuse.

The most common characteristics of all forms of abuse against children are an abuse of power or authority, or a breach of trust

Policy Statement

All PDFNL members are expected to commit to providing protection to children and this requires:

- awareness of the legislative and policy requirements for dealing with children;
- a commitment to practices that minimise the risks to children
- act with care and diligence and perform work duties in a manner that is conducive to the health and safety of both yourself and others;
- not engage in any forms of bullying or harassment; or physical, verbal or emotional abuse of others;
- not engage in physical contact with children except where absolutely necessary for the development, maintenance or recovery of a child's skill or health

- not make improper use of status, power or authority;
 - comply with applicable laws of Australia or other relevant jurisdictions
1. All members whose position involves or is likely to involve working with children, are required to obtain and maintain appropriate WWC clearance(s).
 2. In legislated jurisdictions, recognised screening authorities determine an applicant's suitability for WWC. These clearances must be maintained and renewed as required under the relevant jurisdictional legislation.

In jurisdictions not covered by specific WWC legislation or where no expiry period exists, employees are required to undergo a national criminal records history check (NCRHC) through a recognised reporting authority.

Any PDFNL member required to work with children are not permitted to have unsupervised involvement with children under any circumstances, until the clearance has been obtained.

3. All positions which are going to have people working with children within a PDFNL club should include a formal application and interview process where the following written details are received and maintained on record.
 - Contact details for two referees relevant to the role which is being applied for.
 - Why the person wishes to work with children.
 - The candidate's history of working with children and why they left previous positions.
 - How they will deal with a young participant whose behaviour is disruptive.
 - How will they use social media platforms within the role.
4. It is the responsibility of all Clubs to establish a register of each WWCC or NCRHC for all who will be working with children within your programs.
5. Each PDFNL club is required to appoint 1 x Football and 1 x Netball, Child Safety Officer (CSO) who shall be the initial point of contact for any report.

The positions of Child Safety Officer needs to be communicated to all members of the club, with a particular emphasis on children being made aware of what the person is there for i.e. someone to speak to if a child is feeling unsafe. The CSO must hold a current WCC or have undergone a national criminal records history check within the past 2 years.

6. The PDFNL shall appoint a League CSO who must hold a current WCC or have undergone a national criminal records history check within the past 2 years. The league appointed CSO shall be communicated to all clubs and be included within this policy including all contact details and position.

League Appointed CSO:

Mr Shane Railton
League Operation Manager
Po Box 2450
0438 880686
Email: picolaf1@bigpond.com

7. The PDFNL shall make this policy readily available to all members.
8. Where child abuse is alleged or suspected:
 - The matter must be reported to the PDFNL CSO. A detailed written report must be provided and stored, including Who, What, When, Where & Why the incident is of concern.
 - immediate steps must be taken to remove the real or potential threat to the child/children
 - Alleged perpetrator (if a member of staff or volunteer) to be reassigned to other duties until investigations completed.
 - Investigation proceedings will be initiated by PDFNL CSO, with appropriate confidentiality being maintained;
 - League CSO to report to higher level AFL Victoria Management if necessary.
 - the matter may be reported to the police or relevant State or Territory authority.
 - Any report of sexual or physical abuse of a child shall be reported to Police.
9. All PDFNL clubs should adopt the AFL Victoria Social Media Guidelines for all communication with children within the PDFNL. These guidelines are to be in addition not replace Cyber Safety Policies.
 - a) No adult in a role working with children in the PDFNL should engage in individual social friendships with children from the PDFNL on personal social media sites.
 - b) Multiple adults, including Club President, Club CSO, Committee members / Parents should be part of the contact list and included in any social media communication with children from, or on behalf of the Club, or regarding Club details.
 - c) When setting up a social media platform connected with any club or individual team within the club, an administrator should be appointed as someone who will check on the status of posts and comments.
 - d) Confidentiality is important, permission must be obtained from parents for any use of a child's name or photo to be used in any postings, this is particularly important in case of any custody issues or privacy required.

Tips for coaches to protect children (Australian Sports Commission)

There are several coaching practices that help to ensure children feel safe and protected when participating in sport:

- Use positive reinforcement and acceptable language when talking about or to a child.
- Develop a calm and non-confrontational behaviour management style.
- Make any physical contact with children (and adults) in a way that makes them feel comfortable (for example, shaking hands and a congratulatory pat on the back). If a coach must make physical contact with participants as part of an activity, then they should explain the activity and what they will do, and ask for the participant's permission.
- Avoid situations where an adult may be alone with a child (for example, dressing rooms or first aid rooms).
- When children need to be transported, ensure there is more than one child (and, if possible, more than one adult) in the vehicle.
- Manage allegations (disclosures) of child abuse through established processes and reporting lines to ensure there is due process and natural justice.
- Document all incidents involving physical restraint of children or violence involving children.
- Document all incidents that seem to be unusual or 'out of the ordinary'.
- Coach children to be 'good sports', to recognise that they have a right to feel safe, and to know what to do if they do not feel safe (if they are abused, harassed or discriminated against).

Definitions

Child – Any person under the age of 18

Child Abuse and Child Neglect –commonly involves the misuse of power or authority, or a breach of trust that results in physical, psychological or sexual abuse or neglect.

Examples of behaviours that could constitute abuse or neglect include inappropriate touching when demonstrating techniques, inappropriate training methods requiring children to take on extra physical loads as 'punishment', physical aggression when disciplining a child, through to sexual assault and sexual intercourse with a minor.

Child Protection – involves keeping children safe from abuse and neglect including protecting them from people who are deemed unsuitable to work with children.

Contact – Refers to any form of physical contact, oral communication (whether face to face, by telephone or otherwise) and any form of electronic communication

Unsupervised involvement – Refers to close, personal contact with children without the presence of an authorised supervisor.

Working with children - A role includes, or is likely to include:

- Providing services directed towards children, or;
- Conducting activities that involve contact with children