

CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION FOR OFFICIALS

Officials who work with or have contact with children have some extra responsibilities and requirements to ensure that the children they work with are kept safe and protected from harm. Officials should have an understanding of child protection, what to do if child abuse is suspected, appropriate behaviour for officials, and how to create an environment where children feel safe and protected.

WHAT IS CHILD PROTECTION?

- Child protection is a complex subject with a number of strategies involved. It includes policies and practices put in place to keep children safe from harm – from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect
- Child protection legislation sets out how child abuse should be reported and investigated, and imposes obligations on people dealing with children. This includes a requirement in most states and territories for people working with children, such as officials, to undergo a national criminal history check (in other words, be screened) to determine their suitability for working with children
- Most state and territory legislation also requires specific persons to report reasonable suspicions of children being abused or neglected.

TIPS FOR OFFICIALS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

There are actions an official can take to ensure children feel safe and protected when participating in sport. These include:

- Use positive 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 (or adults for that matter) in a way that makes them feel comfortable, for example, shaking hands, or a congratulatory pat on the back.
- 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'.
- Encourage children to: be a 'good sport', recognise that they have a right to feel safe, and know what they can do if they do not feel safe (if they are abused, harassed or discriminated against).

A summary of child protection information relevant to the sport industry is available on the *Australian Sports Commission* website at www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/legischild.asp and the *Play by the Rules* website www.playbytherules.net.au

Note: Child protection requirements vary for different states and territories. Officials should seek out information about the child protection requirements in their state or territory.