



CHILD PROTECTION FOR COACHES

What is child protection?

Child protection is a complex subject with a number of strategies involved. These include policies and practices put in place to keep children safe from harm – from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or neglect.

Child protection legislation sets out how child abuse should be reported and investigated, and imposes obligations on people dealing with children. This legislation includes a requirement in most states and territories for people working with children, such as coaches, to undergo a national criminal history check (in other words, to be screened) to determine their suitability for the role.

Most state and territory legislation also requires specific persons to report reasonable suspicions of children being abused or neglected. Individuals working with children, including teachers (and in some states and territories, coaches), are required by law to report any suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment, including neglect.

Tips for coaches to protect children

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).

Coaches should seek out information on the child protection requirements specific to their state or territory by visiting playbytherules.com.au

