

# Safeguarding Children & Young People Guideline

A Guide to the Safeguarding Children  
and Young People Program and the  
SLSA Member Protection Policy



# Contents

---

A Message from SLSA President .....	3
Definitions of Abuse .....	4
Purpose of the Member Protection Policy .....	6
How Will This Policy Apply? .....	6
Who Does the Policy Apply to?.....	6
SLS Commitment .....	6
Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People .....	7
<i>Adhering to Role Boundaries</i> .....	7
<i>Uniform and Identity Card/Pass/Badge/WWCC</i> .....	7
<i>Use of Language and Tone of Voice</i> .....	8
<i>Supervision of Children and Young People</i> .....	8
<i>Use of Electronic Communications</i> .....	9
<i>Giving Gifts to Children and Young People</i> .....	9
<i>Photographs of Children and Young People</i> .....	10
<i>Change Room Arrangements</i> .....	10
<i>Physical Contact with Children and Young People</i> .....	11
<i>Sexual Misconduct and Relationships</i> .....	12
<i>Overnight Stays and Sleeping Arrangements for Children and Young People</i> .....	13
<i>Positive Guidance</i> .....	14
<i>Transporting Children</i> .....	14
Indicators of Abuse .....	15
Safeguarding Vulnerable Children .....	17
How to Report Your Concerns about a Child’s Safety .....	18
Responding to Children and Young People’s Disclosure of Abuse .....	19
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).....	20
Further Information and Support Resources .....	23



# A Message From SLSA President



“ At Surf Life Saving we take our role in providing a safe environment for each and every child within the movement very seriously. ”

**S**urf Life Saving is firmly committed to the safeguarding of children and young people, under the age of 18, from any form of abuse or harm.

The very fabric and identity of our organisation at Surf Life Saving is ensure the protection and safety of all of those involved in our movement, including children and young people. Everyday staff and volunteers of Surf Life Saving are entrusted with the safety and care of thousands of children and young people across Australian beaches and the Safeguarding Children and Young People program has been developed to ensure all of our members and staff know their role, rights and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of our children and young people.

Surf Life Saving strives to be a leading child safe organisation and we know that being great is about more than having the right policies and procedures in place. It requires conscious action to protect children from harm. It means creating a culture of safety that extends from youth engagement, education right through to ensuring all members feel safe and secure in reporting inappropriate behaviour.

All members of Surf Life Saving are bound by the SLSA Member Protection Policy which was introduced in 1998 and are expected to do all they can to ensure every child or young person is safe. At a membership level nearly 80,000 children and young people are involved in Surf Life Saving and we have a legal, moral and mission-driven responsibility to protect them from harm. We encourage each and every one of you to play an active role in the program. You can begin today by starting the conversation, talking with your children and young people about their safety and challenging people's behaviour when something just does not feel right.

Don't delay! If it's not ok, tell us today!

**Graham Ford AM**  
President SLSA

# Definitions of Abuse

Term	Definition
<b>Bullying</b>	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying may take many forms that are often interrelated and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• verbal (name calling, put-downs, threats)</li><li>• physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting)</li><li>• social (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating)</li><li>• psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).</li></ul> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, Bullying includes Cyber Bullying, which can also have lasting and damaging consequences. Cyber bullying is usually done via the internet, social media, SMS, MMS or email.</p>
<b>Child Abuse</b>	<p>Child Abuse is the mistreatment by an adult of a Child or Young Person that has harmed, is harming or is likely to harm or endanger or put at risk that Child or Young Person's physical or emotional health, development or wellbeing. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes but is not limited to Emotional or Psychological Abuse, Bullying, Grooming, Sexual Exploitation, Neglect and Child Harassment.</p>
<b>Emotional or Psychological Abuse</b>	<p>Emotional or Psychological Abuse occurs when a Child or Young Person does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse can also apply to an adult. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a Child or Young Person. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. Specific to sport, overtraining can constitute Emotional or Psychological Abuse. These behaviours continue to an extent that results or has the potential to result in significant damage to the Child or Young Person's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.</p>
<b>Family Violence</b>	<p>Family Violence is conduct, whether actual or threatened, by a person towards a member of the person's family (or towards the property of a member of the person's family) that causes any other member of the person's family to fear for, or to be apprehensive about, his or her personal wellbeing or safety.</p>
<b>Grooming</b>	<p>Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a Child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the Grooming of a Child or Young Person. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The Child or Young Person may be given special attention and what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw Children or Young Persons in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom Children and Young People but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chat rooms, in social media or by other technological channels.</p>



Term	Definition
<b>Harm</b>	<p>Harm to a Child or Young Person or other person, is any detrimental or harmful effect of a significant nature to the Child or Young Person's or other person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It does not matter how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect</li> <li>• sexual abuse or exploitation</li> <li>• a single act, omission or circumstance</li> <li>• a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.</li> </ul>
<b>Neglect</b>	<p>Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate failure or denial to provide the Child with the basic necessities of life. Such Neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the Child or Young Person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of Neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of Neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.</p>
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	<p>Physical Abuse occurs when a person subjects a Child or Young Person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a Child or Young Person. Physically abusive behaviour includes, but is not limited to, shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful overtraining and kicking. It also includes giving Children or Young People harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, while not causing injury, can also be considered Physical Abuse if they place a Child or Young Person at risk of Harm.</p>
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	<p>Sexual Abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority involves a Child or Young Person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the CYP for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a Child, engaging Children and Young People to participate in sexual conversations face to face, over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching any intimate part of a Child's body including a Child's genitals, bottom or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a Child. Encouraging a Child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also Sexual Abuse. Engaging Children or Young People to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered Sexual Abuse.</p>



# Purpose of the Member Protection Policy

The purpose of this policy is to assist SLS to uphold its core values and create a safe, fair and inclusive environment for everyone associated within the movement. SLS is a movement committed to ensuring that every person involved is treated with respect and dignity and protected from discrimination, harassment and abuse. It also seeks to ensure that everyone involved is aware of their legal and ethical rights and responsibilities, as well as the standards of behaviour expected of them.

SLS has a legal, moral and mission-driven responsibility to

- protect Children and Young People from all forms of abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and exploitation
- create and maintain a child-safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer, govern or access SLS programs, products or services
- acknowledge that protecting Children is everyone's business

## How Will This Policy Apply?

This policy has been adopted nationally at the October 2016 SLSA Board meeting. It consists of a set of principles and procedural benchmarks in relation to the protection of Children or Young People, under the age of 18, that all SLS entities are required to have in place for everyone involved in SLS.

## Who Does the Policy Apply To?

This policy binds everyone who is involved in SLS including but not only:

- a. persons appointed or elected to boards, committees and sub-committees
- b. volunteers
- c. support personnel
- d. all members, including State Centres, Clubs, individual members, life members and members of Members (including Branches)
- e. any other person involved in SLS including but not limited to participants, parents, guardians, spectators, sponsors and licensees and other contracted parties to the full extent possible.

This policy will continue to apply to a person, even after they have stopped their association or employment (subject to this Policy's terms) with an SLS Entity, if disciplinary action against that person has commenced.

## SLS Commitment

All SLS Entities:

- are committed to the safety and wellbeing of Members and all Children and Young People (CYP) who access any SLS activities, programs, events or services
- are committed to providing CYP with positive and nurturing experiences
- will use their best endeavours to support families and communities to promote CYP's healthy development and wellbeing
- will strive to ensure that CYP are protected and not exploited, abused or harmed during their involvement with any SLS activities, programs, events or services
- will listen to CYP and address any concerns that they raise
- may ask for consent from CYP and their parents/carers before seeking out or providing information about them to any other individuals or organisations. SLS Entities are not however required to ask for consent to disclose information to police, regulatory authorities or relevant statutory child protection agencies if they have concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a specific CYP
- are committed to supporting parents and carers to protect their CYP
- are committed to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their CYP
- will promote and distribute information about this Child Protection Commitment Statement (CPCS) to CYP and parents/carers as part of an introduction to SLS activities, services and programs
- aim to be transparent in decision-making with parents and carers as long as doing so does not compromise the safety of CYP or breach any confidentiality obligations
- are committed to complying with relevant laws, standards in the recruitment, screening and employment of any Persons in Positions of Authority
- will work to create an environment in which CYP are safe and feel safe in any SLS programs, activities or events
- will strive to ensure that Persons in Positions of Authority do not harm, abuse or exploit CYP who are involved with SLS activities, programs or services.

# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

The Code of Conduct should be followed at all times and by all Members and all people involved in any way with SLS.

## Adhering to Role Boundaries

Persons in Positions of Authority should act within the confines of their duties at all times, subject to a direction by a relevant Senior Person.

### Do



- make it clear to the Child or Young Person what your role is within the Club and to them (i.e., As a coach my role is to train, instruct and guide you and not to be your best friend or counsellor)
- seek a Child or Young Person's permission to touch or interact when demonstrating an activity. At all times you are to avoid any intimate part of a Child or Young Person's body e.g., genitals, backside or breast area
- stick to contacting a Child or Young Person via their parents or guardians rather than contact the Child directly.

### Don't



- adopt an ongoing welfare role with a Child or Young Person that is beyond the scope of your role, or that is the responsibility of another member (e.g., a counsellor)
- engage in the massage/stretching of Children or Young People, if not your specified role within the Club. If authorised to conduct such activity you must first ask the Child or Young Person's permission and ensure it is always within line of sight of other adults. Massage/stretching can be done only with the prior authorisation of a parent or guardian and wherever possible in their presence
- try to engage in activities with Children and Young People outside your specified role, such as watching a Child's basketball game, playing virtual video games together or attending their birthday party
- use personal rather than Club approved equipment, unless authorised by the Club
- offer overnight/weekend/holiday care of Children and Young People as respite to parents or extra tuition or coaching.

## Uniform and Identity Card/Pass/Badge/Working with Children Check (WCC)

Persons in Positions of Authority other than parents/carers of Children and Young People or Participants should have available their uniform or identification tag/badge/pass (where issued and/or available) only while involved in delivering services, programs, events or activities or as required by their role, such as when representing an SLS Entity at designated events and functions, or to and from that work.

### Do



- try to be identifiable in your role when delivering services, programs, events or activities
- make it clear to a Child or Young Person if you are off-duty and refer them to someone who is on duty and representing SLS entity.

### Don't



- wear your uniform when not delivering services, events or activities as required by your role

# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

## Use of Language and Tone of Voice

Language and tone of voice used in the presence of Children and Young People should:

- provide clear direction, boost their confidence, encourage or affirm them
- not be harmful—therefore, avoid language that is intended to be, or is received or likely to be received by the individual it is directed at or any other person as:
  - discriminatory, racist or sexist
  - derogatory, belittling or negative, for example, by calling a Child or Young Person a ‘loser’ or telling them they are ‘too fat’
  - threatening or frightening
  - profane or sexual.

Similar language and tone of voice should be used in all Member-to-Member transactions.

### Do



- talk to the Child or Young Person in a professional manner and with respect
- use language that is encouraging and supportive and that supports a fun and inclusive environment
- pick up on and address a situation when negative language or tone is being used by a Child or Young Person, parent/guardian or other Member and reinforce that it is not appropriate and not right.

### Don't



- make inappropriate comments about a Child/Young Person's appearance, including excessive flattering comments
- have inappropriate conversation or enquiries of a sexual nature (e.g., questions about a Child or Young Person's sexuality or his/her sexual relationship with others)
- use pet names
- make jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature
- use obscene gestures and language
- discuss personal lifestyle details of self, other staff or Children and Young People
- single out a Child or Young Person or denigrate them in front of peers or other members.

## Supervision of Children and Young People

Persons in Positions of Authority responsible for supervising Children and Young People in relation to whom SLS Entities have a direct role in providing activities, events, programs and services must strive to ensure that those Participants:

- engage positively within the delivery of the service, program, event or facility
- behave appropriately towards one another
- are in a safe environment and are protected from external threats.

### Do



- try not to be alone with a Child. If you find yourself in a situation where you are alone with a Child you should wait with the Child in an area that is open and light until the parent arrives, and use your mobile to inform another Person in Position of Authority of the situation.

### Don't



- allow a Child to leave with an adult or Person in a Position of Authority without the prior authorisation of the Child's parent or guardian.



# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

## Use of Electronic Communications

Other than between Children and Young People, wherever possible, social media messages (such as text, email, Facebook or Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp) sent to a Child or Young Person by a Person in a Position of Authority should be copied to their parent or carer.

### Do



- try to communicate through the parent/guardian rather than the Child
- restrict communication, if communication with a Child is necessary, to issues directly associated with delivering services, activities or programs that are SLS related, such as advising that training is cancelled
- try to communicate in a group text rather than texting a Child individually
- inform the parent or guardian or Persons in Position of Authority within your club if a Child communicates with you outside your role, and kindly advise the Child that that behaviour is inappropriate.

### Don't



- befriend the Child or Young Person on social media
- ask a Child or Young Person to not tell their parents or carers when you have communicated with them
- send photos or videos to directly to a Child or to another person without the prior authority of their parent or guardian
- upload or publish still/moving images or audio recordings of Children or Young People without the prior authorisation of their parent or guardian.

## Giving Gifts to Children and Young People

Other than parents/carers of Children and Young People giving gifts to their own child or children, the giving of gifts by Persons in Positions of Authority to Children and Young People to whom services are provided is subject to:

- obtaining prior authorisation from a Senior Person permitted to authorise gift-giving from an SLS Entity
- parents or other responsible adults being made aware of any gift given.

### Do



- make sure, if giving a gift to a Child or Young Person, that all Children and Young People are receiving a gift, and it is done in the presence of their parents or guardians and with their prior authorisation.

### Don't



- give out personal gifts or special favours
- single out a Child with a gift or special favours
- give out personal gifts to a Child without the presence of another Person in a Position of Authority and without prior authorisation of their parent or guardian.

# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

## Photographs of Children and Young People

Subject to all relevant SLSA policies (including this Policy) Children and Young People to whom a service is delivered are to be photographed while involved in a relevant SLS service, activity, event or facility only if:

- prior approval has been granted by the relevant Child and Young Person or the parents/guardian of the relevant Child and Young Person and by the relevant SLS Entity
- the context is directly related to participation in SLS
- the Child or Young Person is appropriately dressed and posed
- the image is taken in the presence of other Persons in Positions of Authority.

### Do



- ask permission from the Child's parent or guardian before taking any photos or videos
- say something if you see someone acting suspiciously
- delete any photos as soon as they are no longer required
- ensure the context in which you are taking photos or videos is directly related to their participation in SLS.

### Don't



- use any camera/video device including phones in change rooms or bathrooms
- forward, share or send on any photos or videos of a Child or Young Person
- publish a photo or video on social media without the prior approval of the Child or Young Person's parent or guardian.

## Change Room Arrangements

Persons in Positions of Authority:

- should avoid one-on-one situations with Children and Young People in a change room area
- are not permitted to use the change room area to, for example, undress, while Children and Young People are present unless they are also competing in a SLS event or are participating in a SLS training environment
- need to ensure adequate supervision in public change rooms when they are used
- need to provide the level of supervision required for preventing Child Abuse by members of the public, adult service users, peer service users or general misbehaviour, while also respecting a Child's privacy.

In addition, females should avoid entering male change rooms and males should avoid entering female change rooms in any circumstance (other than an emergency). If a female has to enter a male change room or a male has to enter a female change room, adequate supervision is required.

### Do



- knock or announce yourself before entering change rooms
- try to have at least one other adult with you in a change room with Children
- try to get changed in an individual closed cubicle.

### Don't



- undress in the presence of Children and Young People
- isolate yourself and a Child from others in the change room.

# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

## Physical Contact with Children and Young People

Any physical contact with Children and Young People must be appropriate to the delivery of SLS services, events, programs or activities, such as when fitting sporting equipment like goggles, 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 Persons in Positions of Authority.

### Do



- seek a Child or Young Person's permission to touch or interact when demonstrating an activity. At all times you are to avoid any intimate part of a Child or Young Person's body e.g., genitals, backside or breast area
- check that physical contact is acceptable to a particular Child or Young Person. Even non-intrusive touch may be inappropriate if a Child or Young Person indicates he/she does not wish to be touched
- respect and respond to signs that a Child or Young Person is uncomfortable with touch
- try to use verbal directions rather than touch (e.g., ask a Child or Young Person to move in a particular way, rather than physically place the Child or Young Person in the required position)
- try to discourage younger Children from inappropriate expectations of hugs or cuddles. This should be done gently and without embarrassment or offence to the Child. For example, offer a high five as encouragement
- kindly and appropriately tell a Child or Young Person who is inappropriately or excessively touching another Child or Young Person to stop, and raise the concern with a Person in a Position of Authority
- use non-intrusive gestures to comfort a Child or Young Person who is experiencing grief and loss or distress, such as a hand on the upper arm or upper back
- use non-intrusive touch (e.g., congratulating a Child or Young Person by shaking hands or a pat on the upper arm or back). Try to accompany such touch with positive encouraging words.

### Don't



- initiate, permit or request inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact with a Child or Young Person (e.g., massage, kisses, tickling and wrestling games) or facilitating situations that unnecessarily result in close physical contact with a Child or Young Person
- single out the same Child or Young Person when performing demonstrations
- inflict corporal punishment (physical discipline, smacking, long runs in hot weather, no water breaks etc.).

# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

## Sexual Misconduct and Relationships

Under no circumstances is any form of sexual behaviour to occur between, with, or in the presence of, Children or Young People participating in any SLS environment. Engaging in sexual behaviour while participating in SLS services, events, programs or activities is prohibited even if the Children or Young Persons involved may be above the legal age of consent.

‘Sexual behaviour’ needs to be interpreted widely to encompass the entire range of actions that would reasonably be considered to be sexual in nature, including but not limited to:

- ‘contact behaviour’, such as sexual intercourse, kissing, fondling, sexual penetration or exploiting a Child through prostitution
- ‘non-contact behaviour’, such as flirting between adults and Children and Young People, sexual innuendo, inappropriate text messaging, inappropriate photography or exposure to pornography or nudity.

Consensual intimate relationships (whether or not of a sexual nature) between a Person in a Position of Authority and an adult Participant should, where possible, be avoided as they can have harmful effects on the Participant involved and on other Members and on our organisation’s public image.

### Do



- avoid at all costs any consensual intimate relationships between Persons in Positions of Authority and an adult Participant or Younger Person. This may be, for example, a 17-year-old coach and a 15-year-old Participant
- advise a Person in a Position of Authority if you are aware of, or are involved in, a relationship with a Person in a Position of Authority or you are a Person in a Position of Authority who is having a relationship with a fellow member.

### Don't



- undress in front of or expose yourself in any way to a Child or Young Person
- flirt with or make any innuendo or sexual connotations towards a Child or Young Person
- do any of the above-mentioned actions in person or online.

# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

## Overnight Stays and Sleeping Arrangements for Children and Young People

Standards of conduct that must be observed by Persons in Positions of Authority during an overnight stay include but are not limited to:

- providing Children and Young People with privacy when bathing and dressing
- observing appropriate dress standards when Children and Young People are present—such as no exposure to adult nudity
- not allowing Children and Young People to be exposed to pornographic material, for example, through movies, television, the internet or magazines
- not leaving Children and Young People under the supervision or protection of unauthorised persons, such as hotel staff or friends
- not involving sleeping arrangements that may compromise the safety of Children and Young People, such as unsupervised sleeping arrangements, or an adult sleeping in the same bed as a Child or Young Person unless authorised to do so by a relevant SLS Entity, as appropriate
- the right of Children and Young People to contact their parents, or others, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable or distressed during the stay must be respected. As a representative of SLS you are required to facilitate contact with parents whenever a Child feels distressed or unsafe.
- parents expecting that their Children and Young People can, if they wish, make contact.

### Do



- make sure there are appropriate levels of supervision. General rule is a minimum of two adults with a ratio of 1:8
- plan appropriate accommodation. If Children share a room they should be the same age and sex
- plan for emergencies. If you need to administer first aid, do so only if you are qualified and in the presence of others
- keep parents informed and let them know: aim of the trip; destinations and venues; competition details; supervision levels; roles and responsibilities of accompanying adults and the estimated time of arrival and departure
- keep Children informed and let them know: what's expected of them; roles and responsibilities of adults accompanying them; their rights and who to talk to if they have any concerns.

### Don't



- share rooms with Children. If an adult presence is required, there should always be more than one Child in the room with the adult
- be alone in a room with a Child
- remove a Child's clothing, even in an emergency, unless you have their permission and at least one other person is with you.

# Code of Conduct for People in Positions of Authority When Dealing with Children and Young People

## Transporting Children

Children and Young People are to be transported by Persons in Positions of Authority [other than by their parent(s)/carer(s)] only in circumstances that are directly related to the delivery of SLS services, events, programs or activities. For example, Children and Young People should not be given casual lifts unrelated to SLS services, events or activities by Persons in Positions of Authority.

Children and Young People are to be transported by Persons in Positions of Authority only with prior authorisation from a relevant SLS Entity Senior Person and from the Child or Young Person's parent/carer. Gaining approval involves providing information about the proposed journey.

### Do



- vary the order in which you drop the Children off if you regularly take Children home from practice, so that you're not always alone with the same Child
- have a Person in a Position of Authority ask the Child whether they feel comfortable travelling with you
- tell the Child's parents the route you'll be taking and the estimated time of arrival.

### Don't



- allow a Child to sit in the front seat. Make sure the Children sit in the back seats.

## Positive Guidance

Children or Young Persons participating in SLS events, services, programs and activities should be made aware of the acceptable limits of their behaviour so that a positive experience can be provided for all Participants. There are times, however, when Persons in Positions of Authority will be required to use appropriate techniques and behaviour management strategies to ensure:

- an effective and positive environment
- the safety and/or wellbeing of Children, Young People or other SLS personnel.

Persons in Positions of Authority should use strategies that are fair, respectful and appropriate to the developmental stage of the Children and Young People involved. Children and Young People need to be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive manner.

# Indicators of Abuse

---

Often Children and Young People will not be able to speak about abuse and your concern for them will be based on observations of physical and behavioural signs or indicators of harm in the Children and those around them. These indicators will often reflect the impact abuse is having on the Child.

## Indicators of Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse/psychological abuse may cause delays, such as those below, in physical, emotional or cognitive development.

- Delays in physical development
- Failure to thrive
- Speech disorders

## Behavioural Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Stealing food
- Staying at school or other activities outside hours and not wanting to go home
- Lacking trust in other people
- Being reluctant to attend an activity at a particular club or organisation
- Being tired, lethargic, falling asleep at inappropriate times
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Exhibiting aggressive behaviour
- Having poor peer relationships
- Being indiscriminate with affection
- Lacking social skills
- Exhibiting distress, e.g., frequent crying or apathy
- Demonstrating fear of parent, caregiver or other adult
- Exhibiting attention-seeking or risk-taking behaviour

---

## Indicators of Neglect

When a Child has been neglected, you may notice the following signs.

- Frequent hunger or malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing
- Unsupervised for long periods of time
- Lack of proper medical attention
- Experience of abandonment by parents/carers
- Failure to thrive

## Behavioural Indicators of Neglect

- Stealing food
- Spending time at school or other external activities beyond the usual hours
- Being reluctant to attend an activity at a particular club or organisation
- Being tired or falling asleep at inappropriate times
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Exhibiting aggressive behaviour
- Having poor peer relationships
- Being indiscriminate with affection
- Desiring adult affection
- Exhibiting poor emotional response/lack of expression or enthusiasm
- Exhibiting anxiety about being left alone
- Exhibiting frequent rocking and sucking behaviour

# Indicators of Abuse

---

## Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Bruises, burns, sprains, bite marks, cuts, welts, scratches
- Fractured bones
- Poisoning
- Internal injuries
- Shaking injuries
- Strangulation marks
- Ingestion of alcohol and drugs
- Dislocations
- Head injuries

## Behavioural Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Expressing little or no emotion when hurt
- Offering unlikely explanations for injuries
- Wearing long-sleeved clothes on hot days (possibly to hide bruising or other injuries marking the body)
- Demonstrating fear of particular caregivers, other adults or children
- Demonstrating a fear of their parents or a fear of going home
- Being fearful when other children cry or shout
- Being excessively friendly to strangers
- Being passive and compliant
- Being nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive
- Telling someone that physical harm has occurred

---

## Indicators of Sexual Abuse

Many of the physical indicators of sexual abuse, such as those below, are identifiable only via a medical examination.

- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Semen in the vagina
- Vaginal or anal injury or scarring
- Injury to the penis or scrotum
- Abrasions, tears and bruises to the vagina or anus
- Chronic urinary tract infections or difficulty urinating
- Bleeding from the anus or vagina

Often the first indicator the Child gives is when they tell a person whom they trust that they have been sexually abused.

## Behavioural Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Exhibiting persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity
- Exhibiting sexual aggression towards younger more naïve children
- Offering sexual invitations or gestures to older people
- Exhibiting sexual interaction involving animals or toys
- Exhibiting sexual promiscuity or prostitution
- Exhibiting regressive behaviour, such as bedwetting and speech loss
- Exhibiting challenging and aggressive behaviour
- Being fearful of people of a particular type or gender
- Exhibiting suicidal and self-harm behaviour including self-mutilation, drug or alcohol abuse
- Exhibiting risk-taking behaviour such as lighting fires
- Exhibiting cruelty to animals
- Being involved in criminal activity
- Exhibiting frequent rocking, sucking and biting behaviour



# Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

Children with additional needs are more susceptible to experiencing violence and may require more information, help and support when implementing the safeguarding program.

Additional barriers can exist when detecting the abuse or neglect of Children with a disability or those with additional needs. This can create extra safeguarding challenges. It is important to be mindful:

- not to make any assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury to a child relate to the Child's disability. Further exploration and questions should be asked
- that children with a disability or additional needs can be disproportionately impacted by bullying without outwardly showing any signs
- that there may be communication barriers that are difficult to overcome in order to determine if action under the Member Protection Policy is required.

Children may be more susceptible to harm than other participants because they may:

- lack the mutual support and protection of a peer group
- require higher degrees of physical care and support
- have limited communication skills
- find it difficult to resist inappropriate interventions
- have a history of having limited or no choice
- have a degree of dependency on a carer conflicting with the need to report harm or raise concerns.

Strategies to protect vulnerable Children and Young People include:

- providing information and education about safeguarding, especially what is and what is not safe touching to be learnt and practised by all members
- recognising the importance of listening to children, using basic language and, where possible, using visual cues to assist
- embracing the safeguarding program throughout the entire Club.



# How to Report Your Concerns About a Child's Safety

---



## What to Report

You have a responsibility to report any child safety concerns, including:

- Abuse or harm
- Potential abuse or potential harm
- Observation, allegation, and/or suspicion of abuse or harm
- Breaches of SLSA Code of Conduct
- Gut feeling when something does not feel right

## Making a Report

**Step 1: If the child or young person is in immediate threat of harm or danger: CALL 000**

**Step 2:** If your report is in relation to the allegation and/or suspicion of abuse or harm of a child or young person, call the Police Assistance Line on 13 14 44. They will be able to assist you with your concerns and advise if your concerns are of a criminal nature and whether they will investigate or not.

**Step 3:** Regardless whether the police advise you if they will investigate or not, it is imperative that you report your concerns to Surf Life Saving either online or face-to-face:



[sls.com.au/safeguarding](https://sls.com.au/safeguarding)



**Make a report or disclosure to your Club's Member Protection Officer or Club Child Protection Officer.**

## What Will Happen Next?

The relevant State/Territory Child Protection Representative will:

1. Make contact with you to confirm receipt of your report (if contact details are received).
2. Support will be offered to the child, the parents, the alleged perpetrator and any other members if required.
3. If Police or External Agency do not deem it to be a criminal offence and do not wish to proceed with an enquiry an internal investigation will be undertaken.
4. The alleged perpetrator may be temporarily suspended by the State/Territory CEO should the alleged offence be deemed above reasonable risk.
5. The internal investigation process will clarify the breach of policy and nature of the report and disciplinary process will commence (if required).

# Responding to Children and Young People’s Disclosure of Abuse



- Move to a suitable environment, free of distractions.
- Be calm and patient—allow for the Child or Young Person to be heard.
- Let the Child or Young Person use their own words—avoid asking leading questions.
- Avoid ‘quizzing’ the Child or Young Person about details of the abuse.
- Don’t be afraid of saying the ‘wrong’ thing. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.



- Reassure the Child or Young Person that it is okay that they have told you what’s been happening.
- Address any concerns about the Child or Young Person’s safety.
- Reassure the Child or Young Person that he or she is not at fault, and not the cause of any distress they may feel.



- Respect that the Child or Young Person may reveal only some details.
- Acknowledge the Child or Young Person’s bravery and strength.
- Avoid making promises you can’t keep—manage the Child or Young Person’s expectations.
- Explain to the Child or Young Person that in order for them to be safe you will need to report their experience to someone else.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

---

## 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.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

---

---

## **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.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

---

---

## **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.

## Further Information and Support Resources?

---

A full suite of Safeguarding Children and Young People resources, guidelines, educational modules, tips and link to report can be found at

Surf Life Saving Australia Website: [sls.com.au/safeguarding](https://sls.com.au/safeguarding)

### Play by the Rules

Play by the Rules is a unique collaboration between the Australian Sports Commission that provides information, resources, tools and free online training to increase the capacity and capability of clubs across Australia.

- **Child Protection Information:** <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/child-protection>
- **Child Protection Online Course:** <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/online-courses/child-protection-online-course>
- **Complaint Handling Training:** <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/online-courses/complaint-handling-online-course>
- **Harassment & Discrimination Online Course:** <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/online-courses/harassment-and-discrimination-online-course>
- **Member Protection Information Officer Course:** <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/online-courses/mpio-online-course>



