



CHILD SAFETY OFFICER HANDBOOK

2021
For WRFL Club Distribution

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INTRODUCTION

This Handbook has been created for the Child Safety Officer (CSO) at WRFL affiliated clubs, and other club personnel such as presidents and secretaries. It has been compiled to serve the purpose of a central reference point for any doubt over matters of child safety, and to assist CSO's with understanding their responsibilities, obligations and duties in their role.

BACKGROUND

In April 2012, the Victorian government initiated an inquiry into the handling of child abuse allegations within religious and other non-government organisations. The inquiry's final report, *Betrayal of Trust*, made a number of recommendations that have been acted on by the Victorian Government. The creation of Child Safe Standards (the Standards) was one of the key recommendations.

From 1 January 2017, the Child Safe Standards apply to sporting organisations that operate and provide sporting services to children within Victoria (including National Sporting Organisations). The Standards apply to organisations as a whole, not only the areas that work with children. The Standards are flexible and principle-based initiatives to increase the safety of all children within the organisation. The Standards apply to all personnel in an organisation. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Board of Management / Committee Members
- All paid staff (CEO, Executive, Employees)
- Volunteers (Coaches, officials, administrators)
- All students on placement
- Any contractors the organisation engages

In response to the introduction of these standards, the Western Region Football League and all of its affiliated clubs must implement a number of measures to ensure compliance and to instill a culture of child safety into the organisation. This handbook is designed to outline the Standards, what should be done to make your club a child safe organisation, and what the role of Child Safety Officer (CSO) will involve.

Child safety is not an add-on or one-off exercise.

It is a legal requirement that the organisations need to be compliant with as of 1 January 2017. Having policies and procedures in place is not enough – it's about creating a culture and environment within sport that is supportive and protective of children.



CHANGES TO WORKING WITH CHILDREN LEGISLATION - EFFECTIVE AUGUST 2017

As of the 1 August 2017, amendments based on The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made several recommendations aimed at strengthening the protection children receive through Working with Children Checks. The following amendments to the Act implement these recommendations;

- Expand the definition of 'direct contact' in the Act. The definition of direct contact now includes oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact.
- Remove reference to 'supervision' from the Act. This means that even if a person's contact with children as part of their child-related work is supervised by another person, they will still need to apply for a Working with Children Check.
- Create a new occupational category of 'child-related work', known as 'kinship care'. Family members or other persons of significance caring for a child placed by Child Protection under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 are required to obtain a Check.
- Ensure that non-conviction charges (charges that have been finally dealt with other than by a conviction or finding of guilt) for serious sexual, violent or drug offences are considered as part of Check assessments and re-assessments.
- Enable the Secretary to the Department of Justice and Regulation to compel the production of certain information for the purpose of compliance monitoring.



CLUB CHECKLIST - CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS

- Adopt a Child Safety Officer and ensure they have done the following:
 - Working With Children Check (WWCC) acquired
 - Online “Play By The Rules – Child Protection Course” module completed via Play By The Rules
 - Certification uploaded correctly to EverProof
 - Allocated to the Child Safety Officer role on EverProof
 - Contact details supplied to WRFL
- Adopt and communicate the League’s Mission Statement in relation to child safety
- Adopt and communicate the League’s Child Safety Policy
- Adopt and communicate the League’s Code of Conduct
- Adopt the League’s Minimum Standards for Recruitment and implement sound recruitment practices
- Educate your club in appropriate methods on their responsibilities, rights and risks, including;
 - Club Officials
 - Coaches
 - Trainers
 - Players
 - Parents
- Promote and communicate the WRFL Incident Reporting Procedure
- Conduct risk assessments regularly to identify potentially dangerous situations, address weaknesses before they are exploited, and form response plans for situations that may arise
- Find initiatives to “empower” kids and give them a voice in their team and their club
- Ensure your policies and information is accessible by all parties within the club, including parents
- Include Child Safety as an agenda item in all committee meetings
- Ensure all officials, coaches and trainers take ownership of EverProof accounts and upload their relevant qualifications and Working with Children Checks

MISSION STATEMENT

The Western Region Football League is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and well-being of children and young people in our care. We seek to promote and protect the rights of all children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring by fostering a child safe culture. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and the WRFL has a zero tolerance to child abuse. The affiliated clubs that provide football to children and young people will present environments and experiences that always consider and put measures in place to ensure the safety of children.

THE SEVEN STANDARDS FOR CHILD SAFETY

The Standards as defined by VicSport:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements;
2. A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
3. A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
4. Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel;
5. Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse;
6. Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse; and
7. Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Each of these Standards must also be understood and applied in the context of:

- The cultural safety of Aboriginal children;
- The cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background; and
- The safety of children with a disability

DEFINING CHILD SAFETY

When considering the issue of child abuse, most will automatically think of the extreme cases – sexual abuse or physical violence. While these are the worst case, they are not the only actions that are counted under the term.

It is important to remember that child abuse can be present in other ways, such as bullying, inappropriate behaviour, or inappropriate communication. Negligence can also be counted as child abuse. For example, leaving one child alone after training while they wait for their parents, or poorly maintained facilities or equipment, can lead to the injury of a child under your care. Do not limit your awareness of this issue to the extreme cases. Remember to consider ALL forms of child abuse as you seek to make your club safer.



THE 7 STANDARDS - WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

STANDARDS 1, 2, 3 AND 4 - MISSION STATEMENT, CHILD SAFETY POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT AND RECRUITMENT

The Child Safe Standards require all sporting organisations to have a Mission Statement in regards to child safety, a Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct, and a Recruitment Policy that ensures you are taking proper steps to screen out anyone who should not be working around children. You may have documents in place that address these issues to some extent already. You won't have to create anything new to meet this requirement, because the WRFL has created these documents – clubs will only need to adopt them and communicate them to all within the club. The main thing you will need to do in regards to these aspects of the Standards is assess your current recruiting processes, and ensure that proper screening taking place.

STANDARD 4 - TRAINING

It is a requirement under the Standards that organisations, including clubs, seek to train and educate those within the club about the issue and the steps you are taking to address them. As such, you'll need to communicate with several groups of people – club personnel, parents and the players themselves – about what the club and the league are doing.

For key club members such as presidents, administrators and the board, it is a good idea to hold meetings to address the standards in depth, and explain the policies and requirements to them. Ensure that they understand these steps are in response to government legislation, and it is in their best interest to make child safety a central part of their club culture.

For parents, you should give a brief overview of what's being put in place. Explain that the club is taking steps to ensure the safety of their kids. This can be a simple letter handed out at training, for example. They don't necessarily need all the little details, but they should be aware of the changes you are making, and understand the outcomes the club is trying to achieve.

The difficult part is explaining to the kids, without scaring them or confusing them, that they should speak up if something is wrong, and who to speak to. Be careful how you approach this, but it is still important to let them know they have the right to a safe environment and to be able to enjoy themselves at football.

STANDARD 5 - INCIDENTS AND REPORTING

This section is one of the most crucial for you to understand in the role of CSO. Whilst the point of these Standards is to try and prevent any issues taking place, some may still occur and it is vital that they are handled properly. As a CSO, you should be the first point of contact within your club should something happen.

The WRFL reporting procedure has been provided and will be easily accessible. Your club needs to adopt this procedure and ensure it is communicated to all within the club, including parents. This will ensure that should an issue ever arise, there is no doubt as to how to respond, or who to go to.



It is important to note that if you, or any other adult at the club, have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is in immediate or serious danger, you have a legal obligation to report it to the police or to the relevant government authority. This is particularly important in the cases of sexual abuse:

- Failure to disclose: *Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.*
- Failure to protect: *People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.*

For more information on this, please refer to “Responding to a Report” later in this handbook.

STANDARD 6 - RISK

It is important to identify some of the risks that may be at your club, so you can begin to plan how you might deal with these situations should they arise. Examine a regular week at the club, and identify times or situations that might have higher risk of a potential issue. Think up scenarios that might occur, and try to work out how you would respond to them – you should address scenarios of varying likelihood and severity when doing this. As you go through this process, you may find areas of the club or its actions that you need to change in the interests of safety of better supervision. It is also important to run risk assessments on your facilities and equipment – injury caused through negligence in this regard can be considered as a form of child abuse.

Make sure you revisit these risk assessments regularly as new situations will arise or change regularly. It may be a good idea to create a risk assessment schedule, breaking down the areas of the club that need to be assessed into targeted sections and cycling through them every month or so. This way, the task of doing risk assessments is not one big, time-consuming challenge, and by addressing a different area regularly, you will be able to keep this part of child safety from being forgotten for long periods of time. Always try and be a step ahead, to see what might happen before it does, so you can know how to prevent it, or deal with it.

For example of some of the situations a club may face and how to deal with them, read the Case Studies section of this handbook.

STANDARD 7 - EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is about the emotional reaction each child has due to their time at the club. It is about building belief, confidence and identity through their sport, and much of this is reliant on how adult figures at the club interact with them.

Small gestures or comments can carry far more weight than intended, and this works in both positive and negative ways. For example, an offhand comment from a frustrated coach about a player's inability to perform a skill may cause the child to lose confidence, enjoy their footy less and even want to stop playing. It lowers a child's sense of self-worth, despite the coach not meaning anything by it. On the other hand, praise for a child's progress builds their confidence and makes them feel valued. These are simple moments that we may not consider as adults, but they can play a critical role in shaping the experience kids have in the sport and in your club.



Empowerment is also about helping the children find their voice. By building a culture in which the players have opportunities to speak up, give input and be involved in decisions, it not only allows them to grow and build their confidence further, but it also means that should an incident ever occur, they are more willing to speak up because they know their voice will be heard and their grievance will be taken seriously. As such, it is recommended that as well as ensuring the kids know how to speak up if something is wrong, clubs should also seek other ways for them to have a say in their experience. A simple example could be having kids nominate stretches at the end of training, or in higher age groups, have a few players run a drill each night. Don't limit this to the leadership group either – while that may be a good place to start, it is important that the rest of the team feel like they will receive the same level of respect when speaking up. Coaches are particularly important to this aspect of the standards, and can even bring empowerment through their feedback to kids by helping them think their way through a problem rather than directly telling them what to do.

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS (CSO'S)

As of April 2018, all WRFL clubs must have a nominated CSO. The role is intended to give players, clubs and parents a known point of contact for matters regarding child safety, and to give clubs a liaison for training and information regarding the issue. Essentially, having a CSO is intended to ensure that if an incident occurs, people know who to turn to, and that the person they turn to understands what to do.

It is hoped, however, that CSO's will be proactively seeking to make their club safer for the kids in as many ways as they can.

SO WHERE DO I START?

To begin with, make sure you understand the issue you will be dealing with. Take a look at the policies and templates used and provided by the WRFL, and spend some time with the training resources intended to help you. In particular, complete some of the online Australian Sports Commission training modules (more information on these can be found later in this document).

Once you have read this handbook, it is the CSO's responsibility to lead the way in getting your club up to standards that this new legislation has set. You won't be expected to do this alone, and you will have plenty of support from the WRFL and from other sources.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF BEING A CSO?

The WRFL will require you to undertake certain training, in the form of online modules and information sessions, the details of which will be provided to you when you nominate as CSO. This training will ensure you understand what to do if someone reports an incident to you, and what kind of problems to look out for. In order to be accepted as the CSO for your club, you must supply the certificate of completion for all requested online modules, and a valid Working with Children Check.

You will also need to upload these accreditations to your EverProof account (more details are in the supplied EverProof Guide), and supply your contact information to the WRFL.



WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

To ensure your club is compliant with the new legislation, you need to:

- Adopt the League's Child Safety mission statement
- Adopt the League's Child Safety Policy
- Adopt the League's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Adopt the League's Recruitment Policy
- Oversee training and educating your club personnel, players and parents about these issues and standards
- Run risk assessments on the club
- Implement some initiatives to empower children at your club

Each of these steps has been addressed within this Handbook. In addition, you should familiarise yourself with the process for applying for a WWCC, so you can assist others from your club in getting theirs (this is addressed below).

WHAT IF SOMEONE ELSE IS GOING TO TAKE OVER AS CSO?

If the CSO role is changing hands at your club, you must tell the WRFL at least a week before the new CSO begins their duties. This allows us time to confirm the new CSO is compliant with the requirements for the role, update our contacts sheets, and ensure that the new CSO has everything they need to perform their duties. You must also ensure that any online registries where you are listed as CSO (such as EverProof) are updated to reflect the change.

PLAY BY THE RULES - CHILD PROTECTION COURSE

As the CSO for your club, you are required to complete an online training module. This module is an educational resource from the Australian Sports Commission, and provide a great foundation of understanding for a child safety role. The module takes around 45 minutes to complete, but it can be completed in multiple sittings.

To access this module, you should:

- Go to www.learning.ausport.gov.au
- Create an account and sign in
- Click on Learnings Resources
- Enroll in the Child Protection Training module. You will find it on the second page of Learning Resources
- Enrolling should take you directly to the beginning of the module. If it doesn't, you can access it by the link that is immediately emailed to you, or by clicking the number next to your profile icon. Doing so will take you to an inbox, with a direct link waiting for you in a message.
- Complete the training module. Make sure you save your certificate of completion.
- Upload your certificate of completion to your EverProof account. Make sure you use the Document Title "Play By The Rules – Child Protection Course", and list the expiry as 2 years from the date of issue.

It is recommended that you go over the case studies that are part of this module with your club committee, to see how they respond to each situation. Doing so will allow you to consider situations that show the complicated nature of child safety issues before one actually arises.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

WHO NEEDS ONE?

The list of personnel requiring a WWCC includes;

- Coaches
- Assistant Coaches
- Trainers
- Runners
- Team Managers
- Child Safety Officer
- Committee Members

APPLYING FOR A CHECK

When a member of your club is applying for their WWCC, they need to complete the first part of the application online at www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au. They will need to complete the online application portion, after which an email will be sent to the applicant. They must then go to their nearest participating Australia Post outlet to finalise the application (not all locations do this, so check online before going), and at this point their photo will be taken for the card (at no cost). It is important to note that if the applicant is a paid staff member of your organisation, they must get an employee check, not a volunteer check. If this is the case, they must also pay a small fee at this point of the application process.

Applicants will need to verify their identity during the process. They can do this during the online portion, or they can present three valid identification documents at Australia Post (a list is available on the WWC website). If they verify online, they must still have a valid photo ID when finalising at Australia Post.

Once they have received a receipt to say that the process has started, they must return to the website and create a MyCheck Portal. Once they log in to this, they need to click "Change My Details" and align themselves with the club AND the league by clicking "add an organisation" and entering the following:

- To align with club: Enter club name in full – eg. "Altona Juniors Football Club"
- To align with league: Enter full league name plus shortened club name – eg. "Western Region Football League – Altona Juniors"

It is recommended that applicants complete this part during the initial online application, but it can be done at a later time by logging in again.

Note: applicants need to apply under organisational codes #42 and #70



EXPIRATION AND NON-COMPLIANCE

If a member of your club does not have a WWCC and are required by the WRFL to have one, they must not perform duties at the club until they do. In many cases, it will be illegal for them to do so, and both the club and the individual can be liable. This is why it is so important for these checks to be completed and properly monitored. For this reason, the WRFL uses the EverProof system, which allows us to monitor the status of checks for all personnel, verify that they are legitimate, and be notified when one expires.

At club level, it is vital that you ensure all required personnel get their WWCC prior to working, that they take ownership of an EverProof account linked to the club, and that they upload their check (and other relevant qualifications for their role) to EverProof as soon as possible. This is in the best interests of clubs, personnel, players and the WRFL as it allows a proper level of accountability.

Once a qualification expires, they cannot continue to perform their duties until they are re-accredited and proof of this is uploaded to EverProof. Personnel with qualifications close to their expiry date will be notified by EverProof via email, and it is their duty to ensure they renew those qualifications before expiry. To help you stay on top of this, it is recommended you ask to have administration access to the clubs EverProof account, allowing you to monitor the qualifications of all personnel and ensure they renew on time. It will also allow you to upload qualification for those who are unable to.

Personnel are not considered compliant until they have a valid WWCC and have uploaded it to their EverProof account along with any other qualifications they require. They cannot perform the duties of their role without both parts of this requirement being fulfilled. The WRFL is able to see that the check is verified via EverProof, which is why this step is mandatory.

EXEMPTIONS

There are three main reasons a person may be exempt from requiring a Working With Children Check where they would otherwise normally have to obtain one. VIT registered teachers and Victorian Police or Australian Federal Police officers are not required to hold a WWCC, unless they are suspended or dismissed (or VIT registration is cancelled), in which case the individual must notify their club and the WRFL within 7 days. If this occurs, they must also cease any duties that would require a WWCC until they obtain one of their suspension is lifted.

The third exemption is for volunteers who are under the age of 18 themselves. Please note that all three of these exemptions can be reflected in EverProof.

NEGATIVE NOTICE

If a person applies for a Working With Children Check, they will either pass all background checks and receive their card, or the checks may find something that prevents them from being issued a WWCC. In such cases, they are issued either a Negative Notice or an Interim Negative Notice. If this occurs the process below should be followed (by you, the Secretary or whoever is in charge of such notices). Note that this process is different from our Reporting Procedure – this is because a Negative Notice does not necessarily mean an offence.

- Important things to remember if your club receives a notice from the Department of Justice and Regulation:
- The letter you receive is confidential and should only be read by yourself and not be shared with others. Sharing personal information with others is an offence against the Department of Justice and Regulation.
- The letter you receive will also be received by the WRFL. This will only occur if the person has nominated the WRFL as an employer, which is why it is crucial for them to align with the club and league correctly.
- The letter you receive may be an interim negative notice, negative notice or withdrawal notice.
- Ensure the letter is filed or stored away in a secure area where no one else can gain access
- It is not your responsibility to question or assume guilt of the person. There are several reasons this notice may be triggered.
- The ruling given when checking status in step 1 below is non-negotiable, and is not our decision our yours – do not answer questions as to why they must stop, beyond stating that it is due to the negative or interim negative notice that has been received
- If you are unsure what to do – contact the WRFL CSO or the Department of Justice for assistance.

Step 1: Check status of application

- Go to WWCC site and perform a check on the negative notice received application. Once you enter the required details (card number and surname, both of which will be on the letter), the system will tell you whether or not the person must be removed from work in the meantime.
- If you are not confident or have questions, call the Department of Justice at this point, BEFORE contacting anyone else
- If the information you received from the Departments site tells you that the person in question cannot work with children, you must ensure this person cannot work with children at your club. Please follow the steps below if the Departments website informs you the person in question cannot work with children.

Step 2: Contact the club Child Safety Officer at the WRFL

- You must contact the CSO of the WRFL to ensure they are aware of this notice, in case they have not received a letter. You must not divulge any information to other staff members besides the CSO.
- Inform the CSO if the individual is required to stand down from duties or reassigned
- Inform them that you will contact the individual to inform them of the situation

NEGATIVE NOTICE

Step 3: Contact the individual to notify them

- Do not issue a “Please Explain” or similar – you are required to notify, not investigate
- Do not make accusations or inference about the individual – there can be a range of reasons that may trigger this notice
- Direct them to contact the Department of Justice regarding the issue
- Do not give extra information to the individual – anything beyond “we have received this notice and you are unable to continue your duties at this time” is not your place to say

Step 4: Follow up with the club to ensure the individual has ceased work, if required

- Confirm, prior to next training/game, that the individual will not be present

RESPONDING TO A REPORT

If a child comes to confide in you regarding an incident, it is vital you handle the situation appropriately. Make sure you:

- DO:
 - Remain calm. While hearing of an incident will likely invoke strong emotional reactions, getting angry or distressed will make this harder for the child.
 - Listen carefully to what they tell you
 - Reassure the child you believe them
 - Reassure the child it was not their fault
 - Reassure them they did the right thing by speaking up
 - Let them know you will report this so that the abuse can stop
 - Record the incident in the child’s own words as soon as possible after the disclosure
 - Report the incident
 - Ensure disclosure is properly and accurately recorded and stored.
- DO NOT:
 - Make promises you can’t keep, such as that you will not tell anyone
 - Push the child for details – your job is to listen, not investigate
 - Ask leading questions – instead use phrases like “Then what happened?”
 - Discuss what you have been told with others who are not directly involved with helping the child
 - Leave the child alone in a distressed state – if they are comfortable in your case, stay with them

Remember that there are both mandatory and voluntary reporting obligations for child abuse incidents. Below is a basic guide to these obligations – these should be reviewed should any incident arise to ensure your legal obligations are met.

LEGISLATION	Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)	
REPORTING OBLIGATION	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
WHAT IS OBLIGATED?	Any person 18 years or older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered medical practitioners, nurses, midwives; Teachers and principals; Police 	Any person
WHEN MUST A REPORT BE MADE?	A mandated reporter must make a report if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child by another person of or over the age of 18 years. (NB: exemptions may apply)	<p>A mandated reporter must make a report if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse; The parents cannot or will not protect the child; AND The belief is formed in the course of practising his/her position of employment 	A voluntary reporter may make a report if the person has a significant concern for the well being of a child
WHO COUNTS AS A CHILD IN THIS RULING?	A person under 16 years	A person under 17 years	A person under 17 years
WHO MUST THE REPORT BE MADE TO?	Police	Department of Health and Human Services	DHHS or Police

You also need to remember that the person about whom a report is made still holds certain rights in the ensuing process, including the rights to privacy, not be defamed, not be discriminated against and not be dismissed unfairly or without proper inquiry into the matter. They must be allowed to share their side of the story. An allegation of child abuse, whether true or false, will have sincere and lasting impact on a person and their standing in the eyes of others. An unfound allegation handled poorly can ruin the reputation and career of an innocent person. As such, handle the situation discreetly and fairly.

CASE STUDIES

TEXTING PLAYERS

A Club discovered that a coach was sending players from his U15 Girls team texts asking them to the movies. The behaviour was only uncovered because one of the players asked their parents if it was okay to go to the movies with the coach.

A Club must clearly communicate what is, and what is not, appropriate between adults and minors at the club, particularly when the adult is in a position of trust and power such as the coach.

GROOMING

Grooming refers to actions to befriend and influence a child (and in some cases, members of the child's family) with the intention of achieving a criminal objective. Grooming can occur in person or online (eg. via Facebook, Twitter or texting) and is designed to help the perpetrator establish an emotional connection in order to lower the child's inhibitions. Ensuring your Club's members, employees and volunteers understand the warning signs of grooming will make it more likely that the Club will be able to detect and respond to potential child abuse. In Victoria, grooming a child for unlawful sexual activity is a sexual offence and must be reported to the police.

John is a 30 year old team manager of the U15 Girls team, and sometimes acts as coach. He has a young son in the clubs U9 team.

Sarah is a player in the U15 Girls team. She is new to the club and John is keen to ensure she fits in. He picks her up and drops her home, and often goes inside with her to talk to her parents, and occasionally stays for dinner. Over time, John starts dropping in after work and on non-game or training days. He offers to babysit Sarah when the parents are away, and he also starts bringing presents over for Sarah and her parents. John and Sarah become friends on Facebook and other social media sites, and spend a lot of time together.

Sarah's parents think John is harmless enough at first, but over time they start to wonder why an adult man would spend so much time at their house.

This may be an example of grooming. John's actions go beyond his role as team manager or coach. He has delved into trying to develop a personal friendship with a minor and her family, and established an emotional connection. Although each act may be harmless, it is the cumulative effect of these acts overtime that raises concerns. Sarah's parents should discuss their concerns with the club's Child Safety Officer. There is no need to wait until something physical actually occurs.

The club should also have a policy and Code of Conduct in place that establishes the proper boundaries between players and officials.

REPORTS

Bill is an U15 coach. One afternoon a player tells Bill that he cannot train, as his dad beat him with a belt and it hurts to run. Bill reports this information to the Child Safety Officer within the Club and also makes a report to the Department of Health and Human Services because he has a significant concern about the player's wellbeing.

The police contact the parent of the player to discuss the report. They are furious with Bill for making the report without their knowledge. The Club is embarrassed and concerned that the parents will withdraw their children from the Club and stop providing large donations to the club. The committee wants to discipline Bill for the report.

So who is right?

Bill had a right to report his concerns, and his actions in making the report are legally protected. The club cannot discipline Bill for his actions. The club should work cooperatively with Bill in following up on this report, as well as cooperating with Police or DHHS inquiries into the matter. It will also help if the club has policies and documented procedures to follow in advance on a situation like this occurring, so there is no confusion.

RESISTANCE TO CHILD SAFETY MEASURES

Tim has been a coach of the current U17 team at his club since they began U12's. They are a successful team and always do well. Before the new season starts, the club administrator asks Tim to sign the Code of Conduct and Child Safety Policy, and attend a child safety training session, or he won't be able to continue as coach.

Tim is offended. He has never had a single complaint against him, and he is shocked that he is being forced to sign these documents. He believes that this is a ploy to move him on from his role.

What is next?

The club should clearly communicate to all officials that the new documents is a club-wide requirement and not a reflection of the esteem in which any individual person is held. Explain that this is not an attack on Tim's integrity and explain to him the new Child Safety laws and why the club is responding in this way. Ultimately, if Tim is not willing to accept the new Child Safe culture of the club, the club may well be within its rights to cease using him as a coach.

CONTACT LIST



WRFL - 9315 5400

VICSPORT

(03) 9698 8109
www.vicsport.com.au/child-safe-standards

THE COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

(03) 8601 5281
Email: childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au
www.ccyp.vig.gov.au

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Email: childsafestandards@dhhs.vic.gov.au
www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Business Hours:

Northern and
Western suburbs
1300 664 977

Eastern suburbs
1300 360 391

Southern suburbs
1300 655 795

South-Western Rural & Regional
1800 075 599

Western Rural & Regional
1800 000 551

North-Western Rural & Regional
1800 675 598

North-Eastern Rural & Regional
1800 650 227

Eastern, S/E Rural & Regional
1800 020 202

After Hours:

Child Protection Crisis Line (24 Hours)
13 12 78

Victorian Police – Sexual Offences and Child Abuse
Investigation Team (SOCIT) Contact the appropriate
local office:

North-West Metropolitan
(03) 8690 4056

Southern Metropolitan
(03) 9556 6128

Western Victoria
(03) 5448 1420

Eastern Victoria
(03) 5820 5878

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