

PROTECTING CHILDREN WHO PLAY SPORT

Children encounter many adults while playing sports, including other parents, coaches, and those they already know.

Unfortunately, however, certain adults have sometimes used sporting clubs and events to get to children for the wrong purposes.

It is important to minimise the risk of a child being exposed to abuse – particularly sexual abuse – and inappropriate conversations. By law, sporting organisations in Australia are responsible for protecting children from abuse, discrimination and harassment.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Parents and families are crucial in identifying early warning signs that something is wrong. In particular:

- Adults should not be unnecessarily physical with a child.
- Adults should not do personal things that children can do themselves, such as changing their clothes.
- Adults should not talk about ‘inappropriate’ topics in front of children.
- Staff and volunteers must not develop ‘special’ relationships with children that could be interpreted as favouritism.
- Adults involved in sporting organisations should not contact a child or their family outside the organisation or online.

TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO STAY SAFE

Talk to your children about safety from an early age. Help them understand the signals their body sends when something is wrong (sweaty palms, shaky legs or butterflies in the tummy).

Listen and respond to your child, especially if they are telling you they are worried about their safety or that of another child.

Let them know there is appropriate touching (for example, by a doctor during a medical appointment) and inappropriate touching. However, in a sporting context, no one is allowed to touch their private parts.

Make sure they understand boundaries, how to say ‘no’ if something isn’t right or if they feel at all uncomfortable, and that it’s important to tell an adult or other parent immediately if they think something is wrong.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How will my children get to and from sports?
- Will they be accompanied by a trusted adult?
- Who is supervising my children?
- How many other children will be in their care?
- Are they required to have Working with Children checks?
- Where will my children change/shower?
- Will my child be left alone with any adults I don’t know?
- Who do they – and I – go to if concerned?