

APPENDIX 4: Responding to Suspicions and Allegations of Child Abuse Procedure

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation, contact the Police immediately on 000.

We will treat any allegation of child abuse or neglect promptly, seriously and with a high degree of sensitivity.

All people working with the MSBC in a paid or unpaid capacity have a duty to report any concerns to the appropriate authorities, following the steps outlined below.

What is to be reported:

The following types of behaviours, including observed or suspected abuse, in relation to any Child or Young Person involved in Club activities, programs or services must be reported in a manner described in this Procedure:

- Child abuse, harm, neglect, or any other form of inappropriate behaviour such as grooming or bullying to a child or Young Person (emotional, psychological, physical or sexual).
- Refer to definitions below.

Step 1: Receive the allegation suspicion

If anyone raises with you an allegation or concern of child abuse or neglect that relates to them or to another child, it is important that you listen, stay calm and be supportive.

Do	Don't
Make sure you are clear about what the child has told you	Do not challenge or undermine the child
Reassure the child that what has occurred is not his or her fault	Do not seek detailed information, ask leading questions or offer an opinion.
Explain that other people may need to be told in order to stop what is happening.	Do not discuss the details with any person other than those detailed in these procedures.
Promptly and accurately record the discussion in writing.	Do not contact the alleged offender.

Step 2: Report the allegation

- Immediately report any allegation of child abuse or neglect, or any situation involving a child at risk of harm, to the MPIO or Child Protection Officer (CPO), who will discuss the reporting options – the police and/or the relevant child protection agency listed below. You may need to make a report to both.

New South Wales	
New South Wales Police Non-urgent police assistance Ph: 131 444 www.police.nsw.gov.au	Department of Communities and Justice – will provide guidance on the matter. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/reporting-child-at-risk Ph: 132 111

- Contact the relevant child protection agency or police for advice if there is any doubt about whether the allegation should be reported.

- If the allegation involves a person to whom this policy applies, then also report the allegation to the *MPIO, CPO and/or the President* so that he or she can manage the situation.
- Complete the Reporting a Suspicion or Allegation of Child Abuse Form below.

Step 3: Protect the child and manage the situation

- The *MPIO, CPO or President* will assess the immediate risks to the child and take interim steps to ensure the child's safety and the safety of any other children. This may include redeploying the alleged offender to a position where there is no unsupervised contact with children, supervising the alleged offender or removing/suspending him or her until any investigations have been concluded. Legal advice should be sought before any interim steps are made if the person is an employee of *Club*.
- The *MPIO, CPO or President* will consider what services may be most appropriate to support the child and his or her parent/s.
- The *MPIO, CPO or President* will consider what support services may be appropriate for the alleged offender.
- The *MPIO, CPO or President* will seek to put in place measures to protect the child and the alleged offender from possible victimisation and gossip.

Step 4: Take internal action

At least three different investigations could be undertaken to examine allegations that are made against a person to whom this policy applies, including:

- a criminal investigation (conducted by the police)
- a child protection investigation (conducted by the relevant child protection agency)
- a disciplinary or misconduct inquiry/investigation (conducted by *the Club*). *The Club* will assess the allegations and determine what action should be taken in the circumstances. Depending on the situation, action may include considering whether the alleged offender should return to his or her position, be dismissed, banned or suspended or face other disciplinary action in accordance with section 11 of the Club Constitution (click [here](#) for Club Constitution).

Where required we will provide the relevant government agency with a report of any disciplinary action we take.

Definitions¹

There are different forms of child abuse: neglect, sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Neglect – Neglect is when a parent or caregiver cannot regularly give a child the basic things needed for his or her growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, adequate supervision, and enough parenting and care.

Sexual abuse – Sexual abuse is when someone involves a child or young person in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust. Often children or young people are bribed or threatened physically and psychologically to make them participate in the activity. Sexual abuse is a crime.

Physical abuse – Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child or young person caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person. It includes but is not limited to injuries which are caused by excessive discipline, severe beatings or shakings, cigarette burns, attempted strangulation and female genital mutilation.

Injuries include bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation of joints. The application of any unreasonable physical force to a child is a crime in NSW. For example, hitting a child or young person around the head or neck, or using a stick, belt or other object to discipline or punish a child or young person (in a manner that is not trivial or negligible) may be considered a crime

Emotional abuse or psychological harm – Serious psychological harm can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma.

Although it is possible for 'one off' incidents to cause serious harm, in general it is the frequency, persistence and duration of the parental or carer behaviour that is instrumental in defining the consequences for the child or young person.

This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.

Grooming - Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a Child or Young Person, with a view to abusing them. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of Children or Young People. 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 a Child or Young Person in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom Children or 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, in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.

¹ <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/reporting-child-at-risk/harm-and-neglect>

Reporting a Suspicion or Allegation of Child Abuse Form – Confidential

Form to be completed by person who has concern/suspicion or has been informed/witness to the abuse.

Before completing, ensure the procedures outlined in *Responding to Suspicions and Allegations of Child Abuse Procedure (Appendix 4)* have been followed and advice has been sought from the relevant government agency and/or police.

Complainant's Name (if other than the child)		Date Formal Complaint Received: / /
Role/status in sport		
Child's name		Age:
Child's address		
Person's reason for suspecting abuse (e.g. observation, injury, disclosure)		
Name of person complained about		
Role/status in sport	<input type="checkbox"/> Administrator (volunteer) <input type="checkbox"/> Athlete/player <input type="checkbox"/> Coach/Assistant Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Employee (paid) <input type="checkbox"/> Official	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Spectator <input type="checkbox"/> Support Personnel <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Witnesses (if more than 3 witnesses, attach details to this form)	Name (1): Contact details: Name (2): Contact details: Name (3): Contact details:	
Interim action (if any) taken (to ensure child's safety and/or to support needs of person complained about)		
Police contacted	Who: When: Advice provided:	



Government agency contacted	Who: When: Advice provided:
President and/or MPIO contacted	Who: When:
Police and/or government agency investigation	Finding:
Internal investigation (if any)	Finding:
Action taken	
Completed by	Name: Position: Signature: / /
Signed by	Complainant (if not a child)

Submit form to any or all of these people:

- Member Protection Information Officer: feedback@seasiders.com.au
- President: president@seasiders.com.au

This record and any notes must be kept in a confidential and safe place and provided to the relevant authorities (police and government) should they require them.