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# ***Child Protection Policy & Risk Management Procedures***



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## POLICY POSITION STATEMENT

### CHILD PROTECTION

Every person bound by this policy must always place the safety and welfare of children above all other considerations.

Little Athletics Queensland (LAQ) acknowledges that committees, staff and volunteers provide a valuable contribution to the positive experiences of the athletes.

LAQ aims to protect the safety and welfare of the athletes. Several measures will be used to achieve this such as:

- Prohibiting any form of abuse against children
- Providing opportunities for our athletes to contribute to and provide feedback on our program development
- Carefully selecting and screening people whose role requires them to have regular contact with children
- Ensuring codes of conduct are promoted, enforced and reviewed
- Providing procedures for raising concerns or complaints and
- Providing education and/or information to those involved in the sport on child abuse and child protection.

If anyone bound by this policy reasonably suspects that a child is being abused should contact Child Safety Services on 1800 177 135 and immediately report it to their relevant grievance officer.

All allegations of child abuse will be dealt with promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially.

A person will not be victimised for reporting an allegation of child abuse and the privacy of all persons concerned will be respected.

## Child Abuse

Child abuse relates to children (under 18 years) at risk of harm (usually by adults, sometimes by other children) and often by those they know and trust. It can take many forms. Children may be harmed by both verbal and physical actions and by people failing to provide them with basic care. Child abuse may include:

- Physical abuse by hurting a child or a child's development (e.g. hitting, shaking or other physical harm; giving a child alcohol or drugs).
- Sexual abuse by adults or other children where a child is encouraged or forced to watch or engage in sexual activity or where a child is subject to any other inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature (e.g. sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, pornography including child pornography or inappropriate touching or conversations).
- Emotional abuse by ill-treating a child (e.g. humiliation, taunting, sarcasm, yelling, negative criticism, name calling, ignoring or placing unrealistic expectations on a child).
- Neglect (e.g. failing to give food, water, shelter or clothing or to protect a child from danger or foreseeable risk of harm or injury).

## Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to the following, whether they are in a paid or unpaid/voluntary capacity:

- LAQ and its affiliated Centres
- Individuals sitting on boards, committees and sub-committees
- Employees and volunteers
- Coaches and assistant coaches
- Athletes
- Officials
- Members, including life members
- Parents, guardians, spectators and sponsors to the full extent that is possible
- Support personnel (e.g. managers, physiotherapists, psychologists, masseurs, sport trainers)
- Any other person or organisation that is a member of or affiliated to LAQ.

This policy will continue to apply to a person even after they have stopped their association or employment with LAQ and its affiliated organisations if disciplinary action, relating to an allegation of child abuse against that person, has commenced.

## Code of Conduct

LAQ requires every individual and organisation bound by this policy to:

- Be ethical, fair and honest in all their dealings with other people associated with the organisation
- Treat all persons with respect and courtesy and have proper regard for their dignity, rights and obligations
- Always place the safety and welfare of children above other considerations
- Comply with LAQ constitutions, rules and policies including this child protection policy
- Operate within the rules and spirit of the sport
- Comply with all relevant Australian laws (Federal and State), particularly anti-discrimination and child protection laws
- Be responsible and accountable for their conduct and
- Abide by the relevant Role-Specific Codes of Conduct.

## Organisational Responsibilities

LAQ and its affiliated Centres must:

- Adopt, implement and comply with this policy
- Publish, distribute and otherwise promote this policy and the consequences for breaching it
- Promote appropriate standards of conduct at all times
- Promptly deal with any breaches of or complaints made under this policy in an impartial, sensitive, fair, timely and confidential manner
- Apply this policy consistently without fear or favour
- Recognise and enforce any penalty imposed under this policy
- Ensure that a copy of this policy is available or accessible to the persons to whom this policy applies
- Appoint or have access to appropriately trained people i.e. Member Protection Officers, to receive and handle complaints and allegations and display their names and contact details in a way that is readily accessible
- Continually conduct risk assessments specific to child protection on the Centre activities conducted and implement guidelines as appropriate. Such guidelines will be documented and included in the appendix to this Child Protection Risk Management Strategy and
- Monitor and review this policy at least annually.

## Individual Responsibilities

Individuals bound by this policy are responsible for:

- Making themselves aware of the policy and complying with the standards of conduct outlined in this policy
- Consenting to a working with children check if the individual holds or applies for a role that involves regular contact with people under the age of 18 years and in accordance with Blue Card Services policy
- Complying with all other requirements of this policy
- Co-operating in providing a discrimination, child abuse and harassment free sporting environment
- Understanding the possible consequences of breaching this policy.

## **Breach of Policy**

It is a breach of this policy for any person or organisation to which this policy applies, to have been found to have:

- Done anything contrary to this policy
- Breached the Code of Conduct and Role-Specific Codes of Conduct
- Brought LAQ or one of its Centres into disrepute
- Failed to follow LAQ policies and procedures for the protection, safety and welfare of children
- Appointed or continued to appoint a person to a role that involves working with children and young people contrary to this policy
- Discriminated against or harassed any child
- Victimised another person for reporting a complaint
- Engaged in child abuse (as defined) with a child that the person supervises, or has influence, authority or power over
- Made a complaint they **know** to be untrue, vexatious, malicious or improper
- Failed to comply with a penalty imposed after a finding that the individual has breached this policy
- Failed to comply with a direction given to the individual during the discipline process.

## **Complaints**

LAQ aims to provide an easy to use, confidential and trustworthy procedure for complaints based on the principles of natural justice. Any person may report a complaint (complainant) about a person bound by this policy if they reasonably believe that a person has breached this policy. A complaint should be reported to the relevant grievance officer.

A complaint may be reported either in writing or verbally.

All complaints will be dealt with promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially. The investigation procedure for child abuse is outlined below.

## **Investigation Procedure**

An allegation of child abuse is a very serious matter and must be handled with a high degree of sensitivity. The initial response to a complaint that a child has allegedly been abused should be immediate if the incident/s are serious or criminal in nature while less serious/urgent allegations should be actioned as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours.

The following is a basic outline of the key processes to follow.

### Step 1 - Clarify basic details of the allegation

- Any complaints, concerns or allegations of child abuse should be made or referred to the relevant grievance officer. In the case of a non-Centre, LAQ activity (e.g. development program, camp, team) then the incident should be reported to the CEO.
- The initial response of the person that receives the complaint from the child (or person on behalf of the child) is crucial to the well-being of the child. It is important for the person receiving the information to:
  - Listen to, be supportive and do not dispute what the child says
  - Reassure the child that what has occurred is not the fault of the child
  - Ensure the child is safe
  - Be honest with the child and explain that other people may need to be told in order to stop what is happening and
  - Ensure that what the child says is quite clear but do not elicit detailed information about the abuse. You should avoid suggestive or leading questions.
- The person receiving the complaint should obtain and clarify basic details (if possible) such as:
  - Child's name, age and address
  - Person's reason for suspecting abuse (observation, injury or other) and
  - Names and contact details of all people involved, including witnesses.

### Step 2 - Protect the child

- The grievance officer should assess the risks and take interim action to ensure the child/children safety. Some options could include; redeployment of the alleged offender to a non-child related position, supervision of the alleged offender or removal/suspension from their duties until the allegations are finally determined.
- The grievance officer should also address the support needs of the person against whom the complaint is made. Supervision of the person should ideally occur with the knowledge of the person. If stood down, it should be made clear to all parties that are aware of the incident that this does not mean the person is guilty and a proper investigation still needs to be undertaken.

### Step 3 - Determine whether the allegation is of a less serious nature (e.g. verbal abuse) or is a serious or criminal allegation (e.g. sexual or physical abuse)

- Any allegation of a serious or criminal nature referred to the grievance officer must immediately be reported to the Police or the relevant Government Agency and the LAQ CEO.
- Allegations of a less serious nature are handled within the Centre under the leadership of the grievance officer.

## For Allegations of a Less Serious Nature (Centre Grievance Officer)

### Step 1 - Further clarify and investigate allegation

- Normally this is carried out by the grievance officer, to make contact and meet with each of the people involved to obtain details of the allegation.
- The investigation should follow the procedure set out below:
  - The complainant will be interviewed and the complaint documented in writing
  - The details of the complaint will be conveyed to the person/people complained about (respondent(s)) in full. The respondent(s) must be given sufficient information to enable them to properly respond to the complaint
  - The respondent(s) will be interviewed and given the opportunity to respond. The respondent(s) response to the complaint will be documented in writing
  - If there is a dispute over the facts, then statements from witnesses and other relevant evidence will be obtained to assist in a determination
  - The grievance officer will make a finding as to whether the complaint is:
    - substantiated (there is sufficient evidence to support the complaint);
    - inconclusive (there is insufficient evidence either way);
    - unsubstantiated (there is sufficient evidence to show that the complaint is unfounded); and/or
    - mischievous, vexatious or knowingly untrue.
  - A report documenting the complaint and summarising the investigation process and key points that were found to be substantiated, inconclusive, unsubstantiated and/or mischievous will be provided to the Management Committee along with recommendations for future actions
  - Strict confidentiality, impartiality, fairness and due process must be maintained at all times.

### Step 2 - Undertake disciplinary action

- If disciplinary action is to be taken, follow the procedures outlined later in this policy
- Implement any disciplinary decision recommended by the Management Committee. The action should be immediate.

### Step 3 - Right of Appeal

In the event that any member so disciplined, suspended or expelled wishes to appeal against the decision, such an appeal shall be lodged in accordance with the relevant constitution.

## For Allegations of a Serious or Criminal Nature

### Step 1 - If child at risk of harm (e.g. sexual or physical abuse), report it to the authorities

- If the allegation involves a child at risk of harm, the incident should immediately be reported to the police or other appropriate authority. You may need to report to both the police and the relevant government agency
- Child Safety Services should be contacted for advice if there is **any** doubt about whether the complaint should be reported
- The grievance officer must advise the CEO about the complaint and the actions taken
- The CEO will provide appropriate assistance as required.

### Step 2 -- Undertake disciplinary action

- For incidents of a serious or criminal nature, no disciplinary action should be taken until the Police investigation/ action is concluded
- If disciplinary action is to be taken, follow the procedures as outlined in the relevant Constitution.

## Disciplinary Measures

*It must be noted that allegations of a serious or criminal nature must be reported to the police or other Government agencies as appropriate.*

Any disciplinary measure imposed under this policy must:

- Observe any contractual and employment rules and requirements
- Conform to the principles of natural justice
- Be fair and reasonable
- Be based on the evidence and information presented
- Be within the powers of the disciplinary powers of the Centre Constitution.

Subject to contractual and employment requirements, if a finding is made that an individual has breached the Child Protection Policy (including the Codes of Conduct), one or more of the following forms of discipline may be imposed:

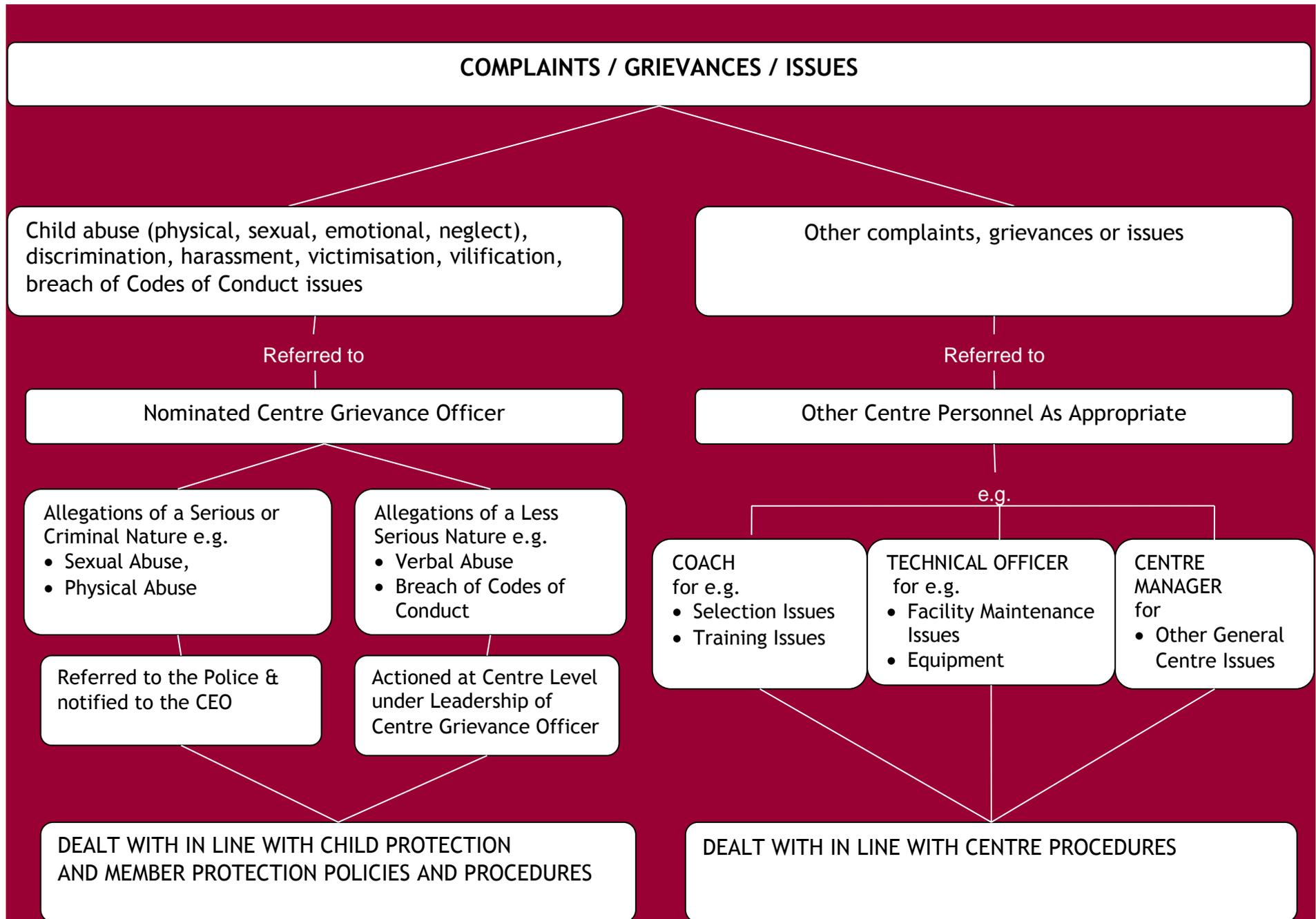
- A direction that the individual make a verbal and/ or written apology
- A written warning
- A direction that the individual attend counselling to address their behaviour
- A withdrawal of any awards or achievements bestowed upon the individual
- A demotion or transfer of the individual to another location, role or activity
- A suspension of the individual's membership or participation or engagement in a role or activity
- Recommend that the individual's membership be terminated, appointment or engagement
- In the case of a coach or official, a direction that the relevant organisation de-register the accreditation of the coach or official for a period of time or permanently
- Expulsion of the individual's membership or participation or engagement in a role or activity
- Any other form of discipline that the tribunal considers appropriate.

## Factors to Consider When Imposing Discipline

The form of discipline to be imposed on an individual will depend on factors such as:

- Nature and seriousness of the behaviour or incidents
- In a case where action is taken concurrently with or in lieu of a resolution of a formal complaint, the wishes of the complainant
- If the individual concerned knew or should have known that the behaviour was a breach of the policy
- Level of remorse of the respondent(s)
- The effect of the proposed disciplinary measures on the respondent(s) including any personal, professional or financial consequences
- If there have been relevant prior warnings or disciplinary action
- If there are any mitigating circumstances such that the respondent(s) shouldn't be disciplined at all or not disciplined so seriously.

# COMPLAINTS FLOWCHART



# APPENDIX

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## QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

*This information is subject to change at any time. Refer to Blue Card Services at [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au) for further information.*

In Queensland the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000* requires people who work with children under 18 years of age in certain categories of paid or voluntary employment or those who operate child-related businesses, to undergo a Working with Children Check. The Working with Children Check is a comprehensive assessment of a person's suitability to work with children based on their criminal history and teacher registration, if any. Those found suitable to work with children and young people are issued a suitability card, otherwise known as a blue card. **The blue card must be renewed every two years.**

### Association/Centre requirements

Little Athletics Queensland and its affiliated Centres are responsible for applying to Blue Card Services for Working with Children Checks on employees and volunteers who work with children or young people. People carrying on a regulated business are responsible for applying for their own Working with Children Check.

Application forms to apply for a suitability notice for a paid employee, volunteer or person carrying on a regulated business can be downloaded from [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au). Screening for volunteers is free. Paid employees or a person carrying on a regulated business may be charged a fee.

The Act requires Little Athletics organisations to develop and implement a risk management strategy to promote the well-being of children in their care and protect them from harm. Advice on developing a specific risk management plan can be obtained from Blue Card Services.

## Blue Card Policy

### Background

The Children and Young People Act (2000) stipulates that all members of an organisation who are in contact with children should have a Blue Card.

All Centres are required to appoint a Volunteer Co-ordinator who is responsible for verifying details and signing off on their volunteer's applications.

The Blue Card, which is issued by the Queensland Government, is evidence that a "Working with Children" Suitability Check has been undertaken by Blue Card Services.

Any volunteers who do not have children registered and participating in the Centre activities must provide proof of their current Blue Card prior to, being allowed to volunteer their services to the Centre, Region and LAQ.

### Policy

LAQ and Blue Card Services advise that all Centre Management Committee members must have a Blue Card.

LAQ strongly recommends that Canteen Convenors, Chief Officials and Team Managers should hold a Blue Card. The Association requires that all Region Committees, Competition Referees, Chiefs, Key Officials, Coaches, Course Presenters, CAPS Coordinators and State Team Personnel must provide evidence of their current Blue Card when applying for a position. No person will be appointed to such a position if this evidence is not provided.



What they want to happen to fix issue	
What information I provided	
What they are going to do now	

This record and any notes must be kept in a confidential place.



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

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

## RISK MANAGEMENT

### Coaches and Officials

Coaches and officials need to be aware that not all children will understand an action or request in the same manner. One child may see an action as usual or acceptable behaviour while another may find it unacceptable. A child's interpretation of an action may also be influenced by cultural and religious differences, gender and prior experiences. It is important therefore to be aware of your communication style.

The following principles or actions may help coaches provide a safe environment:

- Ensure your actions at all times are unambiguously professional. Give a verbal explanation, in front of all athletes (and preferably parents as well) of how, where, when and why you may need to touch athletes
- Remember that the welfare of the child or children is always of paramount importance
- Know the policies, complaint processes and guidelines under the Child Protection Policy and how they apply to you
- Understand and commit to the coaches and officials codes of conduct
- Understand how the child protection legislation in Queensland may affect you
- Ensure that any physical contact with children is appropriate to the development of skills required for Little Athletics (e.g. it would be appropriate to teach a child to throw a discus by putting your hands on the upper torso, but it would not be appropriate to make contact around other parts of the body as this is not essential to the development of technique). Generally physical contact with athletes should be to develop skills, to give sports massage, to treat an injury or to prevent or respond to an injury
- Be careful about which part of your body is and how much of it is in contact with a child's body
- Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with children. Try not to separate yourself and a child from the line of sight of other people. If you need to have a private talk with a child about their ability or behaviour, do this in an open place near others. Invite another coach or support person to join the conversation or talk to more than one child at a time
- Have sufficient coaches/assistants for effective supervision based on the age and number of children involved. Provide for disability considerations in regard to supervision
- Use positive and age-appropriate language when talking to and in the presence of children. Avoid bad or aggressive language that could intimidate a child or set a bad example
- Before entering change rooms knock or announce that you will be coming in and try to have at least one other adult with you. Do not isolate yourself and a child from others in the change room
- Have a policy that if a parent is late picking up their child that the second to last child and their parent or guardian will wait with you and the child. This will also enable you to concentrate on making contact with the parent
- Avoid the risk of being left alone with a child by having a parent, guardian or support person assist you with the training. Require that person to wait with you until all children have left
- Do not engage in or let others engage in any of the following:
  - Abusive initiation or bonding activities
  - Forcing children into 'macho type' activities
  - Rough, physical hurtful or sexually provocative games
  - Regular scapegoating, ridiculing, rejecting, isolating or taking the 'mickey' out of a child
- Maintain control - avoid losing your temper (verbally or physically). If you find you regularly lose your temper with children you should seek support or consider whether you have the patience to work with children. Some ideas to assist with maintaining control include:
  - Set up basic rules; at the beginning of the season, such as follow instructions, have a go, no put-downs. Make sure children are aware of these rules
  - Give positive messages
  - Have a time out area for children that are not behaving
  - Adopt a card system to express concerns with a child's behaviour rather than becoming verbally agitated e.g. a yellow card is a warning, two yellow cards means time out for 2 minutes, a red card could mean the child misses out on next weeks competition.

## Parents

Parents often turn to sport as a safe place for children to build character, develop skills, and learn valuable lessons and to have fun. While involvement in sport remains a positive experience for most participants, parents are now aware that children can face the risk of being harassed and abused in sport. In addition to Centres, parents can also play a key role in creating a safe environment for children in sport.

The following actions will help parents contribute to providing a safe environment:

- Get involved and get to know your child's coach. Maintain open and frank communication. If things occur that disturb you, talk to the coach about them
- Speak out when you hear language or attitudes that contribute to a negative or unsafe environment. You may wish to pursue your issues with the Centre Management Committee
- Be careful not to put coaches on pedestals. Tell your children its okay to say 'no' if the coach is doing something that makes them feel uncomfortable
- Make an effort to attend training and games whenever you can
- Be wary of private, closed training sessions. If they occur on a regular basis ask the coach for an explanation
- Be wary of any increases of the amount of time the coach spends with your children beyond the training session
- If you volunteer in sport and are asked to take part in screening, accept this as a positive step to keep children safe
- Make sure you are not part of the problem. Don't sling verbal abuse at officials, coaches or others
- Know and abide by the Parents Code of Conduct and encourage others to do the same
- Encourage your child to play by the rules
- Never ridicule your child for making a mistake.

## Drop off and pick up of participants by parents/guardians

Children may be dropped off before an activity and picked up afterwards by their parents or guardians. In other instances, children may make their own way to and from an activity. On their way to and from children may be exposed to potential risk. Procedures should be put in place to minimise these risks.

Whilst Centres may have different strategies to meet specific circumstances, the following considerations provide a guideline:

- Agree with parents a set procedure for drop off and pick up arrangements, including whether a child makes their own way to and from an activity, or will be dropped off and picked up. Let children and their parents/guardians know the times of training and competitions and when they can expect to collect their children. Advise them that it is not your responsibility to transport children home if parents are delayed
- Ensure there is a buffer period where a coach or official arrives a certain period of time before an activity starts and stays a certain period of time after it ends
- Have a policy that the second to last child and their parent/guardian will wait with the coach/official and the child. This will also enable the coach/official to concentrate on making contact with the parent/ guardian
- If there is a Clubhouse where there will be other people, have a policy that latecomers are to collect their children from the Clubhouse. Wait with the child if possible (in the presence of others) and make contact with the parent/guardian if necessary
- If there are other people at the ground or facility, wait for the parent/guardian closer to those people. In the meantime attempt to make contact with the parent/guardian
- Avoid the risk of being alone with a child by having a parent/guardian or support person assist you with the training. Require that person to wait until all children have left
- Have a policy that there is a register of parent/guardian emergency contact numbers and make sure coaches/officials have access to a phone.

### **Transport of Athletes/Participants**

Ideally all athletes/participants should have their own transportation to and from sporting events. You should only provide transportation when:

- The driver is properly licenced
- Other athletes/ participants/parents/guardians are in the vehicle
- The ride has been approved by parents/guardians
- The ride is directly to or from sport or recreation facilities
- You should also call the parent/guardian and tell them what you are doing, the exact time you are leaving so that you are accountable for your time.

### **Overnight Trips**

- Always have more than one adult with children on an overnight trip/camp
- There should always be more than one adult with a group of children, even if the number of children is small
- Do not separate yourself and children from other adults
- Obtain separate sleeping accommodation from the children for adults
- Ensure that adults are within hearing distance of the children to be able to respond to any alarm raised by a child
- If an alarm is raised by a child more than one adult should respond.

## The Use of Images of Children

There have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on sports web sites, social media and other publications. Evidence in Australia indicates that information posted on social media, website or published in a magazine or newspaper can be used to target children, to locate them, and then to condition or groom them. Additionally images can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. The end result is that in spite of the best intentions on the part of the publisher, children can end up being victims of abuse. Little Athletics need to be aware of these potential risks and take appropriate steps to address them.

### Acquiring Images

- Permission needs to be obtained from the athlete's parent/guardian prior to taking the image. Ensure that they are aware of the way in which the image may be used
- Request that professional photographers and or spectators taking photographic/video images register with the organisation and gain permission
- Clearly outline and publicise what is considered appropriate behaviour and content to those taking photographic/video images
- Do not allow unsupervised or individual access to athletes
- Do not approve photo/video sessions outside the event venue or at an athlete's home
- Provide details of who to contact if concerns or complaints of inappropriate photographic behaviour or content are raised.

### Displaying Images

- Consider using models or illustrations for promotional/advertising purposes
- Permission needs to be obtained from the athlete's parent/guardian prior to using their image. Ensure that they are aware of the way in which the image is to be used and how long the image will be displayed when used on social media or a website
- If the athlete is named, avoid using their image
- If an image is used, avoid naming the athlete. If this is not possible avoid using both a first name and surname
- Do not display personal information such as residential address, Email address, social media contact information or telephone numbers without gaining consent from a parent/guardian first.
- Do not display information about hobbies, likes/dislikes, school etc. as these can be used as grooming tools
- Only use appropriate images of the athlete, relevant to the sport or activity, and suitably clothed. Images of athletes in an activity that involves minimal clothing or unusual body positions/poses, which could potentially be misused, should focus on the activity not on a particular child and avoid full face and body shots
- Reduce the ability for the direct copying of pictures from a website to another source (i.e. disable the 'right mouse click' function)
- Provide details of who to contact if concerns or complaints of inappropriate image use are raised.