**SOUTH AUSTRALIA ATHLETIC LEAGUE**

**CHILD PROTECTION & INTERVENTION POLICY**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

The South Australian Athletic League is committed to the protection of children and their right to feel safe at all times.

**CODE OF CONDUCT:**

* Members of the South Australian Athletic League (SAAL) are to respect the dignity of themselves and others.
* Members of the SAAL are to demonstrate a high degree of individual responsibility, recognising that at all times their words and actions are an example to both adult and child members of the League.
* Members of the SAAL should not use the League to promote their own beliefs, behaviour or practices, where these are not compatible with the League policies.
* Members of the SAAL are to act with consideration and good judgment in all interpersonal relationships.
* Members of the SAAL are to avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with child members, wherever possible.
* Members of the SAAL, for their own protection, should avoid potentially compromising situations by ensuring, where reasonably possible, that at least two adults are in attendance whilst supervising and /or accompanying child members. It is recognised that in certain circumstances it may be necessary for an adult, whilst acting responsibly and exercising their ‘duty of care’, to be alone with a child member.
* Members of the SAAL are to accept that bullying, physical or verbal abuse; neglect or any other type of abuse is unacceptable conduct by any member within the League.

**MEMBER RIGHTS:**

Members of SAAL have the right to:

* Ongoing information on all aspects of child protection.
* Support in the reporting of suspicions of child abuse
* Access to support agencies
* Fair and equitable treatment from the League.
* Be protected from abuse and or harassment by child members
* Be protected from abuse, harassment or unfavourable treatment by other adult members and parents.
* Be given a positive, enjoyable and safe environment whilst participating in all activities.
* Be listened to
* Be respected
* Be protected from abuse by other members
* Be referred to appropriate professional help if needed.

**MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES:**

* To ensure the safety of members in their care or under their control.
* Believing and responding to child member’s statements concerning alleged abuse.
* Ensuring the rights and responsibilities of members are enforced.
* Reporting suspicions of child abuse to the Executive Officer.
* Not to abuse child members physically, emotionally or sexually.
* Only disclosing sensitive information to appropriate personnel, on a ‘need to know’ basis
* Showing respect to other members
* Keeping themselves safe
* Accurately reporting inappropriate behaviour or at risk situations for members
* Keep within the bounds of general community standards of community behaviour.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ATHLETIC LEAGUE RIGHTS:**

The SAAL has the right to:

* Expect all members to comply with its Child Protection and Intervention Policy.
* Expect all members to keep within the bounds of accepted community standards of behaviour.
* Take appropriate action if members contravene its Child Protection and Intervention Policy.
* Expect that members will not abuse child members verbally, physically, emotionally or sexually.
* Take appropriate action in the event of malicious accusations.
* Executive Officer to view National Police Clearance for each Committee Member, Coach and Official to be renewed every three years.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ATHLETIC LEAGUE RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The SAAL is responsible for:

* Identifying risks so as to provide maximum safety to all members.
* Widely promoting the Child Protection and Intervention Policy which includes child protection measures to members and the wider community.
* Designating an Officer to co-ordinate and oversee all aspects of member protection and Code of Conduct within the League.
* Encouraging open discussion on child protection issues and encourage child members to speak up about any concerns or issues they may have to a responsible or trusted person.
* Providing support to members who report suspicions of child abuse.
* Treating the information of suspected child abuse with confidentiality and disclosing information only to those who need to know.
* Use a screening process so as to make every effort to ensure the suitability of members who work with children in our activities.
* Making every effort to identify potential abusers via police.
* Ensuring all SAAL members in positions of authority, whether paid staff, volunteers, officials, representative members or coaches are aware of the indicators of child abuse and neglect, their obligations to notify suspected child abuse and neglect and procedures for notification.

**CHILD ABUSE**: child abuse can be any of the following:

* Sexual Abuse: Any sexual act or sexual threat imposed upon a child. Pressure, either physical or psychological, is always present in child sexual assault.
* Neglect occurs when a child is harmed because a parent / guardian or caregiver fails to provide the basic physical and emotional necessities of life.
* Physical Abuse refers to non-emotional injury to a child, generally caused by an adult who is responsible for that child
* Emotional Abuse is behaviour by a parent / guardian or caregiver that can destroy the confidence of the child causing significant emotional distress or hurt.

All SAAL members in positions of authority, whether paid staff, volunteers, officials, representative members or coaches have a duty of care and responsibility to ensure the safety, welfare and well-being of child members is maintained. Failure to notify when there are concerns about child abuse and or neglect means that the child’s safety needs cannot be properly addressed and they may be left vulnerable to further abuse.

The SAAL is of the belief that by taking simple preventive measures during the conduct of SAAL events then the opportunity for any form of child abuse can be minimised.

**DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE:**

The term Physical Abuse refers to allegations of physical harm caused to a child be someone known to the child and who is in a position of power over the child. Some signs and symptoms may include:

* Bruising
* Lacerations or welts
* Burns or scald
* Fractures, sprains or dislocations.

The term Sexual Abuse refers to allegations of sexual behaviour towards a child by someone known to the child and who is in a position of power over the child. Some signs and symptoms may include:

* Age inappropriate behaviour and/or persistent sexual behaviour, promiscuity.
* Marked changes in behaviour or mood, tantrums, aggressiveness, withdrawal, self- destructive behaviour.
* Allusions to problems at home, not wanting to return home.
* Fear and loss of trust.
* Physical symptoms including bruising or bleeding in the vaginal or anal area.

The term Emotional Abuse refers to harm caused to the child by excessive or unreasonable demands as well as failing to provide the psychological nurturing necessary for development. Some signs and symptoms may include:

* Severe verbal abuse or threats of abuse.
* Being physically or socially isolated as punishment.
* Feelings of worthlessness about life and self.
* Extreme attention seeking behaviour.
* Behavioural disorders such as disruptiveness, bullying, aggressiveness.

The term Neglect refers to the failure to provide the basic necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, emotional security, medical care and adequate supervision of the child’s growth and development. Some signs and symptoms may include:

* Poor standard of hygiene, inadequate clothing for the weather conditions.
* Malnutrition, complaints of hunger, hiding food.
* Untreated medical or dental problems.
* Lack of appropriate supervision – either supervised or under supervised when engaging in certain activities.
* Extreme longing for adult affection.

**RECOGNITION OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT:**

When considering the likelihood that an injury, behaviour or disclosure of a child may be related to or caused by abuse or neglect, it is very important to remember that one sign in isolation may not necessarily indicate abuse or neglect.

Recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect means forming a genuine concern or well-founded suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred or may occur in the future.

**BEING ALERT TO ABUSE OR NEGLECT:**

Concerns about abuse or neglect can be raised in a number of ways, such as:

* A child, a parent, a work colleague, a sibling or another adult may tell about something that has happened, their fears, or how they feel about being placed in certain situations.
* Marked changes in a child’s physical appearance or condition, their behaviour or family circumstances may arouse suspicion.
* Observations in the interactions between an adult (Parent / Carer / other adult) and a child may raise concerns.

It is recommended that a record be kept of events which give rise to concern, including conversations and observations. A notebook or a diary, that is kept in a secure place, preferably under lock and key, is an appropriate place to record any concerns.

If a member has a genuine concern that a child in their care has been, or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, then the situation must be dealt with quickly, carefully ad with an open mind.

If there is uncertainty about whether to notify or not, concerns should be discussed with the Executive Officer.

**LISTEN AND CLARIFY:**

If a child tells you about abuse listen attentively and later record the child’s exact words (as well as you can recall), the time and place the allegation was made and who, if anyone, was present. Do not prompt the child for further details or ask questions as this may lead to contamination of evidence.

As the child talks to you:

* Observe the demeanour of the child.
* React calmly to the information the child provides.
* Listen actively and be non-judgmental.
* Do not ask questions, for example, “*did they/she/he do….to you*”.
* Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you, for example, *“ I am pleased you told me about these* *worries….”.*
* Do not make promises you cannot keep, particularly about telling others (for example: Police, Parents etc.) about the information, or about what will happen next.
* Reassure and support any colleagues who are present.

You should:

* Provide comfort and care to the child, recognise that they may be fearful about the consequences of their action and confused about the situation.
* Reassure the child that this is not their fault and they have not done anything wrong.
* Not confront the Parents or other Family members.

**CHILD ABUSE NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES:**

Verbal notification must be reported by telephoning:

* Child Abuse Report Line 13 14 78

The following information is to be reported:

* Name and description of child.
* Address or description of their whereabouts.
* When the child was last seen.
* If known, approximate age, name of Club / School and if any siblings.
* If known, whether a language or sign interpreter may be required or an Aboriginal Agency should be involved.
* All available information relevant for the safety and welfare of child.
* Details of events, conversations or observations that led to the report.
* Your contact name and telephone number.

**GUIDE TO PROTECTIVE PRACTICES:**

All SAAL members in positions of authority, whether paid staff, volunteers, officials, representative members or coaches are encouraged to adopt protective practices to maximise their protection from a misconstrued act. The following is only a guide:

* Encourage the parent / guardian of children be present at the event at all times.
* In a situation when a parent / guardian of a child cannot attend the event, the child should attend the event in the company of another trusted person.
* One on one Coaching activities should be avoided, unless a parent / guardian or other athletes / officials are in the near vicinity.
* Encourage, don’t pressure.
* Be sensitive to an individual athlete’s capacity for physical activity and protect them from any unwarranted pressure to participate.
* Discipline and mange behaviour – do not abuse.
* Don’t exaggerate or trivialize child abuse issues.
* Do not let children involve you in excessive attention seeking behaviour that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.

**IMPROPER ADULT CONDUCT OF A SEXUAL NATURE:**

This is misconduct, which does not fit into the definition of ‘sexual abuse’. It is unwanted, unsolicited and unreciprocated behaviour such as:

* Sexual or smutty jokes.
* Personally offensive verbal comments, hand or body gestures.
* Physical contact such as patting, pinching or putting an arm around a child’s body.
* Requests / demands for sexual activity.
* General inappropriate behaviour when children are present.

NOTE:

* Improper conduct may be unintentional.
* Similar distress can be caused by either intentional or unintentional improper conduct
* If not addressed may escalate to sexual assault.

**ALLEGED CONTACT MANAGEMENT:**

If you suspect improper conduct inform the Executive Officer or an appointed representative of the SAAL immediately.

**MEDIA CONTACT MANAGEMENT:**

In the event of contact by the media as a result of any incident / activity other than competition / promotion, the media is to be referred to the League Office.

It needs to be clearly understood that if a member of the SAAL is facing criminal proceedings for inappropriate behaviour and the case has not yet been heard or a judgment made, then opinions of such a person’s character or actions should not be generally discussed.

If such person is found to be not guilty by the legal system they could possibly seek damages for defamation.

When there is any doubt whatsoever concerning media contact in any particular situation then do not offer any comment without prior referral to the League Office.

For further information please refer to the Booklet “Keeping Children Safe in Recreation & Sport, other information can be found on the website www.playbytherules.net.au & www.ausport.gov.au