



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) FOR COACHES, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS IN NSWFA**

### **Safeguarding Children and Young People**

#### **Does the Child Safeguarding Policy add to our responsibilities and workload?**

It shouldn't because you already have a responsibility to protect children and young people. Sporting organisations are required to develop Child Safeguarding policies. The NSWFA Child Safeguarding Policy makes it clear what is expected of everyone and provides the framework for carrying out our responsibilities.

It is important to ensure the way we do things conforms with best practice and keeps young members safe.

#### **Who does it apply to?**

Safeguarding children and young people is everyone's responsibility. The Policy has been developed to clarify what is expected of any person involved in NSWFA. This covers officials of NSWFA and affiliated clubs, coaches engaged by NSWFA or practising within clubs, volunteers and athletes.

#### **Why does our sport need a Child Safeguarding Policy including a Child Safe Commitment and Practices?**

About eighty percent (80%) of our fencers are children and young people aged under 18 years. When they participate in our sport, we not only want them to enjoy themselves but we have a duty of care to them and therefore must be confident we are doing all we can to keep them safe.

Importantly, a child safe culture and child safeguarding practices not only protects children and young people but everyone involved in our sport, including coaches, officials, staff, volunteers and parents.

#### **Our Association is largely made up of volunteers. Is this too much to expect of volunteers?**

Volunteers have the same responsibility to safeguard children and young people as anyone else in the Association and should know what is expected of them.

#### **How do I explain the Child Safeguarding framework to parents if they ask?**

Emphasise that the Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safe Practices reflect our commitment to safeguarding their children. Encourage anyone with any sort of concern to raise it and ensure they understand the process and are supported to do so. Give them the name and contact of a Member Protection Information Officer if they want to seek some advice. The contact details for MPIOs are on our website – [here](#).

### **Does this mean we can't touch children and young people at all?**

On occasion there may be the need to have physical contact with a child or young person but any physical contact should be appropriate to the circumstances. For example, if a coach needs to demonstrate a technique to a child or young person, or adjust their stance, and this involves coming into physical contact, ask their permission before touching them with minimal necessary contact to demonstrate the correct position.

If a young child fencer is distressed and needs comforting, it is possible to show concern and support them without necessarily putting an arm around them. If a young child tries to hug you, gently disengage yourself from them and explain that it is OK to hug their parents, family and friends, but they should not hug you.

In any case, you need to follow COVID precautions on physical contact and distancing.

### **I am friendly with many of the families whose children I coach and we socialise outside my coaching role. Our children are friends. Can I no longer socialise with them?**

The child safe practices are not intended to limit appropriate social interactions between coaches and families where there may be a personal friendship. If you have an existing personal relationship with children and their families you need to be mindful of how this might impact on your professional relationship with the young fencer.

It is best to be open with your Club or employer about any existing relationships. The rules around social interactions are designed to limit the opportunities available to adults to use their position to create opportunities to spend time alone with children and young people and/or to develop inappropriate relationships with young fencers. As a coach, maintaining a professional boundary is most important.

### **Can I have a meal with my young fencers after a competition, to celebrate?**

It is not appropriate for a coach or other adult to engage in private social activities with children and young people. If on a fencing tour or attending a fencing camp there will be circumstances where coaches, young participants and other adults will share meals. However, a coach should not be arranging to go out for a meal with fencers aged under 18 years without other responsible adults or parents present. Otherwise, this can significantly blur the professional boundary.

### **If there are no separate facilities for coaches to change, what should I do?**

Speak with the facility provider to seek alternative arrangements. If this is not possible, try to change before everyone arrives and after they leave.

### **We have been advised not to transport young fencers in our motor vehicles. What do I do if a parent fails to arrive to collect their child and I have been unable to contact them?**

If you are unable to contact a parent, you may need to consider transporting the child or young person home. You must not leave them alone at a venue. If another suitable, responsible adult is present, ask them to accompany you. If not, contact a Person in Authority and advise them of the action you are taking and the estimated time it will take you to travel to the child or young person's

home. Arrange for the parent/s to be subsequently contacted so they are aware you transported their child.

**What should I do if I notice a parent consistently speaking inappropriately to their child and being negative and pushy?**

If you have a good relationship with the parent, it may be possible to find a private opportunity to gently raise your observations with them and suggest alternative ways of encouraging their child. If this is not feasible or the parent's behaviour persists, you have an obligation to report it to the appropriate Person in Authority.

**If I become aware of an allegation of child abuse, or observe inappropriate conduct towards a child or young person am I required to investigate it?**

No. You are not expected to investigate child protection concerns. You must be aware of what may constitute child abuse and/or inappropriate behaviour and to report your concerns as required by the policy. This should be done as soon as you become aware of a matter, even if you are unsure about whether you have sufficient information. Seek advice from a Member Protection Information Officer if you are unsure about what to do.

**Who is A Person in Authority?**

The NSWFA Director of Member and Child Protection  
A Member Protection Information Officer  
A Director of the NSWFA  
A Tournament Director (DT)  
NSWFA Head Coach