



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) FOR PARENTS

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Why does NSWFA need to have a Child Safeguarding Policy?

Sporting organisations are required to have Child Safeguarding Policies and child safe practices in place so that everyone understands their responsibilities towards participants under 18 years of age. In NSW the Office of the Children's Guardian also requires organisations to comply with child safe standards. When your child is participating in a fencing activity we have a duty of care to them and the Child Safeguarding framework helps us make sure we effectively maintain that duty of care. This is particularly important as about 80% of our fencers are below 18 years of age.

What is my responsibility as a parent or guardian?

We are all responsible for safeguarding all children who participate in our sport.

As a parent, you should be aware of the NSWFA's Code of Conduct, Member Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Policy. All can be found on our website – [here](#). These outline the expectations and standards of behaviour of all individuals participating in our sport. It is our expectation that parents will also comply with the Code of Conduct when attending fencing activities. This may include creating a positive sporting environment by being a good role model, following the instructions of Persons in Authority at fencing events, and respecting the decisions of officials even if you think they may have made a mistake.

There is useful guidance for parents attending sports events at [Play by the Rules](#)

Should you be informed about or observe any conduct towards children in fencing that causes you concern or may amount to child abuse, you must report your concerns to a Person in Authority. If you are unsure about making a report you may contact a Member Protection Information Officer for advice and support in making a report.

It is not your responsibility to investigate concerns but you should make a report even if you are unsure about whether you have sufficient information to do so.

Are coaches of particular concern when it comes to child abuse?

Coaches have a special relationship with a child as a teacher and mentor. Children can develop an emotional bond with coaches and rely on them for support. It's important to know that the Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safe Practices are not directed just towards coaches. All adults have a responsibility, legally and morally, to protect children and young people. This responsibility rests on every adult involved with fencing, whether a coach, official, volunteer or parent.

How can I check that the coach of my child has been cleared to work with children?

All adults (18+) working with children are required by law to have a valid Working With Children Check certificate, either as an Employee (paid for their work) or Volunteer (unpaid). “Working” means coming into contact with children and young people in the course of carrying out their role. All coaches working in NSW fencing venues must have a valid WWCC certificate. You can ask your child’s coach to produce a WWCC certificate, which they should carry on their phone. Alternatively, you can “*Check the Check*” with the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian here. <https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/information-for-parents/parents-check-the-check>

What sorts of behaviour may constitute child abuse and need to be reported?

The detailed definitions of child abuse are outlined in the Child Safeguarding Policy. However, as a parent you should be aware of the following:

Sexual abuse can include behaviours that range from inappropriate sexualised conversations with a child or young person, including conversations using social media, to inappropriate touching, to overt sexual contact including sexual intercourse.

Grooming behaviour may be the pre-cursor to sexual abuse. It is the process where an adult develops a personal, trusting relationship with a child or young person, to create an environment in which sexual abuse can occur. Behaviours may include persuading a child or young person they have a special relationship with the adult, giving personal gifts to the child or young person, inviting them to a social event that is not related to fencing, communicating with them outside the fencing relationship and by doing so, breaching professional boundaries.

Physical abuse is the application of physical force including physical punishment or physically harmful training methods.

Emotional or psychological abuse in the sporting environment may take the form of inappropriate training methods such as threatening a child fencer, exposing them to unnecessary criticism, ridiculing and humiliating them, scapegoating them or using bullying behaviour. Overtraining can sometimes result in emotional or physical abuse.

My child’s coach is a family friend. Do the child safe standards mean we can no longer socialise with the coach and their family?

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 your child’s coach and their family, you need to ensure your friendship does not impact on the professional coaching relationship.

The rules around social interactions are designed to limit the opportunities available to adults and Persons in Authority 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. Coaches must maintain professional relationships with the children and young people they are coaching and not engage in any preferential treatment.

Is it OK for our coach to contact my child on social media?

No, it is not OK. It could be a breach of the coach's professional boundaries and is high risk conduct.

Coaches should only be contacting children and young people for fencing related matters and should do so by contacting you as the parent. If they need to contact your child directly because they need to get a message to them at short notice, they should send a copy to you.

Can NSWFA publish photographs of my child without my permission?

When you register your child as a competitive fencer with NSWFA you agree to allow photographs of your child to be taken at fencing venues and activities and which may be published in an appropriate context.

NSWFA may use images of children and young people to promote the sport of fencing on social and other public media, on our website and in communicating to the fencing community, e.g. via newsletters.

NSWFA will only publish images that project a positive portrayal of the sport of fencing and which respect the self-esteem and personal dignity of anyone shown in the images.

Why shouldn't my child's coach be allowed to transport them to and from training and fencing events?

It is your responsibility to ensure your child is transported to and from training and other events including ensuring they are collected on time and not left waiting. If this happens, we require a responsible adult to wait with them and will not leave them alone at a venue.

It is not the coach's role to transport children and young people as it places them at risk should an accident occur or an allegation be made about their conduct. A young coach may also not be licensed to transport young passengers. In emergency, a coach or other responsible adult may transport a child if there is no-one available to take them home, but this should only be done with your knowledge and permission wherever possible.

What should I do if I notice another parent consistently speaking inappropriately to their child or other children and being negative and pushy?

You should report your observations to the appropriate Person in Authority. If you need advice, please contact the Member Protection Information Officer and seek advice and/or support.

A Person in Authority is:

A Member Protection Information Officer

A Director of the NSWFA

A Tournament Director (DT)

NSWFA Head Coach