

How do we keep our child fencers safe?

Child safety is everyone's responsibility

5 March 2023 4 pm

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#advancewithher



Introduction to workshop

- All sporting organisations in NSW must have child safe practices in place so we understand our responsibilities to young fencers. This is a legal requirement in NSW
- This means having a child safe culture that informs the way coaches, volunteers and other adults interact with fencers aged less than 18 years
- Our child safe commitments, policy and fact sheets are on the NSWFA [website](#)
- An important part of keeping young fencers safe is to ensure everyone involved in fencing understands the sorts of behaviour that is unsafe or inappropriate, and what to do if you have any concerns about the behaviour of any adult towards young participants
- This workshop will particularly focus on recognising *inappropriate professional conduct* and *grooming behaviour* and give you information about what to do if you observe or are told about such behaviour



Quick quiz.....

As a parent, you are unable to transport your child to a tournament. What should you do?

A. Ask my child's coach if they can take them

B. Arrange for my child to drive with a friend who has just got their driver's license

C. Arrange a lift from another set of parents

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A 13 year old fencer advises you their coach has been discussing personal issues with them on social media. What should you do?

A. Listen to them and advise a person in authority such as an MPIO, Director of NSWFA or NSWFA Head Coach...

B. Approach their coach and question why they are contacting a child on social media

C. Tell them to not worry about it, it really isn't all that serious and they may be overreacting

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A fencing coach asks a child fencer out to dinner to celebrate after a tournament. Is this OK?

A. Yes. The coach is known to the family and it is common practice for coaches to share a meal with fencers

B. No. Coaches should not be inviting young fencers out unless other adults and young fencers are attending

C. Yes, it is a celebration after all. The coach is well known to everyone

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My organisation is completely safe as all staff and key volunteers are required to have a Working With Children Check. Is this sufficient?

A. Yes. The WWCC ensures all checked adults will act responsibly

B. The WWCC is a valuable risk management mechanism but referee checks, training & observations of behaviour should also occur

C. No, the WWCC is simply a bureaucratic exercise and does not identify high risk adults

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What is involved in a WWCC?

- A requirement for anyone who works or volunteers in child-related work in NSW
- National Police check (Relevant criminal records)
- Reportable workplace misconduct i.e. *incidents of proven child abuse in the workplace*

What are the key elements of child abuse and neglect?

- Sexual abuse, including *grooming behaviour*
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse or psychological harm (generally a pattern of behaviour)
- Neglect

NB: *Inappropriate professional behaviour* within an organisation may constitute one or more forms of abusive behaviour

Child abuse in the workplace is referred to as *reportable conduct* in NSW

What does “inappropriate professional behaviour” look like?

May include a range of different behaviours that breach boundaries – for example:

- Belittling or humiliating a young fencer
- Shaming or embarrassing a young fencer
- Bullying or intimidating a young fencer
- Engaging in behaviour that may be unacceptable to fencers from a particular culture or family background
- Giving special treatment to an individual that is different to the treatment of others. May look like favouritism
- Coming into unnecessary physical contact e.g. when demonstrating a fencing technique
- Having inappropriate conversations such as making sexual jokes, engaging in banter or making personal comments

Examples may include:

Grooming is the process where an adult establishes a trusting relationship with a young person in order to make it easier to abuse them. How do you recognise it?

- Giving personal gifts unrelated to fencing
- Coming into physical contact with young fencers
- Contacting young fencers directly rather than through their parents
- Giving special treatment that is not offered to other fencers
- Arranging secret meetings
- Creating opportunities to meet alone i.e. coffee dates or movies or unsupervised meals together
- Chatting on social media including giving advice about personal issues or sharing personal information about themselves

What can coaches do to help create a child safe environment?

- Interact with all fencers in a professional manner. Avoid taking on the role of *friend* or *counsellor*
- Treat young fencers respectfully and model respectful behaviour
- Provide feedback in a manner that boosts confidence and helps develop the young fencer's skills
- Treat young fencers equitably and fairly and don't *play favourites*
- Make contact through parents or guardian/s
- Ensure other adult/s are present when training a young fencer and there is appropriate supervision
- Demonstration of technique should require minimal or no physical contact
- Make parents welcome and encourage them to observe training
- Uphold your organisation's Code of Conduct
- Encourage fair play and trying hard and having fun
- Don't turn a blind eye to inappropriate behaviour by other adults

What can parents do to help create a child safe environment?

- Be a good role model for respectful behaviour
- Encourage fair play
- Be positive and supportive towards your child and do not criticise or scold them about their fencing skills
- Respect officials, coaches and opponents
- Keep your emotions in check, and do not coach from the sidelines
- Uphold your organisation or club's Code of Conduct
- Listen carefully to any disclosure or concern raised by your child
- Ensure you make proper arrangements for your child to be transported to and from venues
- Observe training as well as competitions, where feasible
- Don't ignore inappropriate behaviour – ensure you bring it to the attention of an authorised person
- Avoid minimising or rationalising poor behaviour by another adult
- Avoid talking to other children when conflict arises during the training. Instead, raise it to the coach or other authority on duty.

What should be reported and to whom?

- If a young person is at risk of immediate harm contact 000 for medical and/or police assistance
- If you suspect a child or young person is being abused report it to the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111
- If you believe a criminal act has occurred, make a police report
- If the suspected abuse is occurring in a NSWFA venue or affiliated club, report to a person in authority in NSWFA
- If you are unsure, seek advice from a person in authority such as an MPIO or any NSWFA Director

What do I do if a young fencer makes a disclosure to me?

- Respond to a disclosure by being calm and non-judgmental
- Reassure them they are doing the right thing by speaking to you
- Listen to what they have to say and if possible, take notes and try to capture their exact words
- Focus on the needs of the child or young person
- Make the appropriate report i.e. Child Protection Helpline or a person in authority in NSWFA if related to fencing
- If you are unsure, seek advice from a person in authority such as an MPIO or any NSWFA Director

Useful resources:

NEW SOUTH WALES
fencing

Child Safeguarding

Everyone is responsible

Parents
Volunteers
Fencers

Officials
Coaches
Spectators

Law
Policy
Training

Culture
Execution
Communication

See something?
Say Something!

SCAN ME

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK 2021
EVERY CHILD IN EVERY COMMUNITY NEEDS A FAIR GO

Caption

For Anyone under 18 years old

Not Ok today?

- Feel singled out, humiliated or bullied?
- Unnecessarily touched during training?
- Contacted personally via phone, text, message app, social media...?
- Given a gift not related to a fencing award?
- Invited to a social event outside of fencing context?
- Engaged in inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature?
- Asked to send any intimate image of a sexual nature?
- Touched intimately or any sort of sexual contact

TALK TO PARENTS

TALK TO MPIO

If any of things are happening to you, please let us know right away. You can talk in confidence to a Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO)
childprotection@nswfencing.org.au

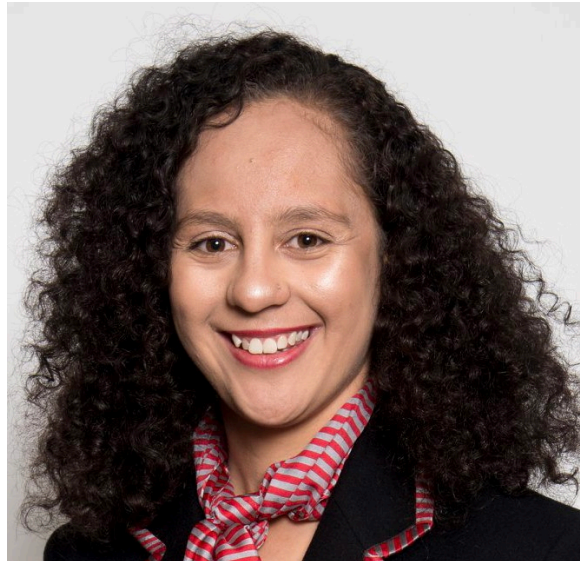
NEW SOUTH WALES
fencing

Caption

[NSWFA Child Safeguarding Policy](#)
[Government resources](#)

Contact numbers

- NSWFA MPIO



- Aleks 0401 157 096



- Arash 0401 519 851

childprotection@nswfencing.org.au

Any questions?