



Child Protection Policy

Introduction

At Wantirna South Netball Club, we believe that everyone who participates in any aspect of the club is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. We have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, committee, coaches and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care. While the safety and welfare of all our members and volunteers is of the utmost importance to us, this policy deals specifically with members and volunteers under the age of 18.

Wantirna South Netball Club is committed to devising and implementing policies which ensure everyone involved accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means they will be expected to be aware of and follow club procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote best practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of Wantirna South Netball Club and to allow committee and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

In Victoria, under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005, a child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

Policy Statement

Wantirna South Netball Club is committed to:

- the welfare of the child
- ensuring all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity are able to participate in netball in a fun and safe environment

- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings. Harm is defined as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing (section 9 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*).
- investigating all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse and responding swiftly and appropriately in line with our Complaints and Conflict Policy and state regulations.
- ensuring all Wantirna South Netball Club committee members, coaches, umpires and other volunteers over the age of 18 hold a current WWCC and provide the details to the club prior to commencing any activity with children
- working in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure the protection of children within the club.
- adhering to all state, national and international rules, regulations and recommendations in regards to Child Protection.

Defining Child Abuse

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Child abuse is any form of physical, verbal, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm of a child. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

The Department of Human Services provides the following; 'Child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time.'

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

Indicators of Abuse

Even for people experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Wantirna South Netball Club

committee, coaches and volunteers are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
- unexplained changes in a young person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- difficulty in making friends
- being prevented from socialising with others

Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

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It must be pointed out that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of the committee, coaches or volunteers of Wantirna South Netball Club to decide that child abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

They have a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within Wantirna South Netball Club and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere. Recent legislation relates directly to this responsibility.

From 27th October 2014, all adults (over 18) must report to police any reasonable belief that a sex offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, unless they have a reasonable excuse or another exemption applies. Failure to do so is a criminal offence punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment. (Department of Justice and Regulation)

Failure to Protect is another criminal offence introduced in 2015 to penalise those in positions of authority within organisations that provide care, supervision or authority for children who fail to protect children from the risk of sex abuse by others associated with the organisation. Sporting clubs fall into this category. The maximum penalty is 5 years imprisonment. (Department of Justice and Regulation)

Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

Wantirna South Netball Club committee, coaches or volunteers may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document or it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person
- **reassure** the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Only ask questions to clarify
- **inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing
- **safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to an executive committee member

In all cases, if you are not sure what to do, contact the appropriate authorities and ask for help.

Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. Stick to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you.

Information should include the following:

- the child's name, age and date of birth
- the child's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents

- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. We recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Wantirna South Netball Club expects its members, committee, coaches and volunteers to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the appropriate person (executive committee member) and to check that appropriate action has been taken.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by any volunteer within Wantirna South Netball Club should be reported **immediately** to an executive committee member who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

This may include the following:

- Wantirna South Netball Club will investigate the matter and if necessary will refer the matter to Police
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible
- the President of Wantirna South Netball Club will also notify any relevant sports governing body
- if an executive committee member is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report they may be stood down until the matter is resolved

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- the Club President
- the Club Disciplinary Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/police
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- Wantirna South Netball Club's Disciplinary Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police inquiries
- Irrespective of the findings of the police inquiries, the Disciplinary Officer, in consultation with the Executive Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a committee member, coach or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Monitoring and review of policies and procedures.

The implementation of all Wantirna South Netball Club policies and procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed. The disciplinary officer will regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements, gaps and areas where changes may be required to the committee of the day.

This policy should be reviewed at least every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

NB: This policy was written and implemented November 2016 and is due for review November 2019.

Sources:

Child Protection Act 1999

Children Youth and Families Act 2005

Department of Justice and Regulation

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au>

Declaration

On behalf of Wantirna South Netball Club we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Signed:

(n.b. One of the signatories should be the Disciplinary Officer)

Name:

Name:

Position within Wantirna South Netball Club:

Position within Wantirna South Netball Club:

Date:

Date:

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