



Working together to increase participation in ice sports

Ice Sports Victoria's Child Safe Complaint Handling Guidelines V3

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Ice Sports Victoria's Child Safe Complaint Handling Guidelines

Ice Sports Victoria's Child Safe Complaint Handling Guidelines highlight a potential plan of action that anyone, seeking to make any complaint relating to child abuse in ice sports governed by Ice Sports Victoria and/or its Affiliates, can follow; it seeks to empower and inform the complainant as well as protecting children and young people without victimising the alleged perpetrator. These guidelines are framed by those offered by Vicsport¹

Ice Sports Victoria, and/or its Affiliate, advises that upon receiving any complaint relating to child abuse, the complainant needs to know that²:

- all allegations of child abuse should be referred to either, the Ice Sports Victoria board, and/or the relevant club administrator, Child Safe Officer, complaints handler or a Member Protection Information Officer (if available through the relevant facility, club or state organisation).
- an allegation of serious or criminal abuse requires urgent action – contact your child protection authority or the police immediately
- less serious/urgent allegations should be actioned within 24 hours.
- although incidents may seem minor, they may represent 'the tip of the iceberg' and must be reported
- appropriate record keeping is very important in these matters. Requirements vary across Australia, make sure you are familiar with the requirements in Victoria (most member protection policies have a template for recording an allegation)
- neither Ice Sports Victoria's, its Affiliates', nor a club (governed by an Affiliate) responsibilities' end with the reporting of a suspicion of harm.

When there is a suspicion of harm against a child different procedures, in how a complaint is received, are required. The procedures have to meet mandatory reporting requirements of (which differ in each State and Territory) to ensure that any investigation by the police or child protection authority is not compromised.

The following steps will help you respond to an allegation of child abuse.

¹ <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/complaints-handling/suspicion-of-harm-against-a-child> 3/7/22

² Where a complaint, incident or matter arises which may be dealt with under Ice Sports Victoria's Child Safe and Well Being Policy (Policy), then it is to be resolved in accordance with the processes in the Policy, to the exclusion of all other Ice Sports Victoria disciplinary or grievance policies or processes.

For the avoidance of doubt, this means that where a complaint relates to Child Safety and falls within the scope of the Ice Sports Victoria Child Safe and Well Being Policy Policy, this Policy will prevail and any such complaint shall be dealt with in accordance with this Policy and not the Ice Sports Victoria, and/or its Affiliates' Member Protection Policy (or any other Ice Sports Victoria Policy).

Step 1: Clarify basic details of the allegation

Listen and be supportive.

- Reassure the child that what has occurred is not their fault
- Be honest and explain that other people may need to be told in order to stop what is happening
- Avoid suggestive or leading questions – ask the child “What happened?” and, “Then what happened?”
- If another person makes the complaint ask the person to:
 1. Explain their reasons for suspecting abuse (observation, injury or other)
 2. Provide the names and contact details of all people involved, including witnesses.

Step 2: Report allegations of a serious or criminal nature

- Report any incident of a serious or a criminal nature to the police or child protection authority immediately.
- If the child’s parent/s are suspected of committing the abuse, report the allegation to the relevant government agency.

Step 3: Protect the child and make sure the alleged offender is not victimized

- Take action to ensure the child’s/children’s safety (e.g., move the alleged offender to a non-child related position, supervise the alleged offender or remove/suspend them from their duties while the matter is being investigated).
- Make sure the individual accused of the offence is not victimised. If they are stood down make it clear that this does not mean the person is guilty and that a proper investigation will be undertaken before decisions are made.

Step 4: Follow the child protection authority or police requirements

Further clarify but do not investigate the allegation unless requested to do so by the authorities. Provide information and assist in investigations as appropriate.

- The police or child protection agency may undertake an investigation. They may also request that the state sporting organisation undertake their own investigation

(this should be done by an independent person with appropriate investigative expertise).

- The club should provide information and assist with the investigation as appropriate.
- Individuals/clubs should not try to investigate the incident themselves

Step 5: Manage the situation

You must manage the situation while an investigation is being conducted (internal or external)

Support should be provided to the victim and their family. This may include seeking professional counselling support if appropriate;

- If an investigation is being conducted it is recommended that you do not talk to the alleged victim, their family or the alleged perpetrator about the complaint. If you are asked for information, your response should be confined to the complaint process and timeline;
- Take action to ensure the ongoing safety of members, particularly children, until the authorities and /or the state sport or recreation organisation have completed the investigation and any court or tribunal hearings. This may involve providing extra supervision or removal of a person from their position pending the outcome of the investigation. If the person is in a paid position, seek advice from your state sporting organisation or a lawyer;
- Consider carefully what other members and their families are told about the situation. If there are enquiries, they should be handled by one person such as the club president. Discussion should focus on the process rather than the people.
- If an alleged perpetrator has been removed from their position it is important that those impacted are provided appropriate information to minimise gossip and concern. This may also be important if there is a risk that other children may have been harmed. (For example an email/letter that states that a coach in the club has been suspended pending an investigation into an alleged breach of the member protection policy. If they have been charged by the police you may be able to provide information regarding the charge and the contact details of the police officer, dealing with the case, who can be contacted if they have further information. (check with the police regarding this)

- In all cases they should be asked to not speak about or post any information on social media. Do not name the alleged perpetrator unless the police have agreed to the name being released.

Step 6: Implement disciplinary action as required

- Implement any disciplinary action recommended by the police, child protection authority or state sporting organisation. The action should be immediate.
- Check with the relevant state government authority to see if you need to forward a report³. Please check Ice Sports Victoria's Child Safe and Well Being Policy for further information in relation to implementing disciplinary action with the relevant authorities, and/of contact the Child Safe Officer at Ice Sports Victoria and/or a relevant organisation e.g., the organising authority for an event or program or facility management (if the incident took place at a public venue during a recreational session).

For further information on complaints procedures and Child Safe Standards, practices, policies and procedures in Victoria please visit the following sites:

<https://www.playbytherules.net.au/complaints-handling/understanding-complaint-handling>

<https://www.playbytherules.net.au/complaints-handling/suspicion-of-harm-against-a-child>

<https://vicsport.com.au/strengthening-human-resource-practices-leagues>

<https://vicsport.com.au/mpio-network>

Please note, contact the Police 000 if you think a child is in immediate danger.

³ Please note, State and Territory guidelines, standards and legislation in relation to Child Safe Complaint Handling may differ. E.g., NSW Office of the Children's Guardian requires notification of relevant employment proceedings as does the SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion
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