

Child Protection

MPIO Training



Why has Child Protection become such an issue?

- Child abuse is not a new problem
- There has been a dramatic increase in disclosures and the reporting of child abuse due to:
 1. New legislation
 2. Better reporting systems and structures, better education and awareness
 3. Better support systems
 4. Media coverage



It doesn't happen where I work

-Stages in Denial

- **Step 1....Existence** (denial, disbelief, rejection of basic premise)
"It's not a problem here...I've never seen it....I've never heard of it happening"
- **Step 2....Significance** (playing it down, importance??)
"It's a storm in a teacup....yes it happens, but some kids lead people on....it's a minor matter"
- **Step 3....Solvability** (change the problem, apportion blame)
"There's nothing you can do about it....men have urges..it's human nature"
- **Step 4....Self** (taking responsibility, acceptance)
"I'll get the Child Protection rep to do it versus I will take responsibility, personally and professionally , for the establishment and maintenance of child protection in whatever way I can"



Why is this needed??

- Child Abuse is present in our society
- Being aware of the current social environment is important
 1. 1:3 girls and 1:6 boys under age 16 will be sexually abused
 2. Only 10% of abusers appear in court
 3. 1 abuser can effect 70 - 100 children
 4. 98% of reported abuse is committed by men
 5. Only 4% of abuse is attributed to strangers
- Physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect are not included in these figures





Is this really a problem in sport??

Research into club and elite level athletes (ASC Trish Leahy)

1. Sexual Abuse?

- 21% of men
- 31% of women

2. Sporting environment?

- 46% of elite athletes
- 25% of club athletes

3. Common pattern

- Victims thought they were the only one, whereas the perpetrator was likely to be abusing several athletes at once





What has this got to do with me??

- Why sporting organisations??
- Does the culture in your club support child protection principles?
- What is acceptable behaviour?
- What constitutes appropriate personal and professional boundaries (communication, physical, environmental, knowledge and leadership)?
- What would your club do if there was an allegation?

We need to know how to deal with
Child Protection issues.



What steps do we need to take?

Sport and Recreation organisations are encouraged to adopt a 5 step process to help in creating a safer environment for children



Step 1: Undertake the Working with Children Check

The Working with Children Check involves an employer

1. Prohibited Employment Declarations
2. Employment screening
3. Probity checks (eg. Referee checks etc)

Help??

Approved Screening Agency for sport

NSW Sport & Recreation website www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

Child Protection Infoline 1300 366 407

Information and training resources at

www.ausport.gov.au and www.playbytherules.net.au



Do we have to do this??

- Yes
- Implementing the Working with Children Check is compulsory for those involved in child related employment. It is law (Handout 17). It is free for paid employees. Volunteers?? ... “overnight camps”
- The following legislation underpins this process :
 - Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998
 - Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
 - Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000
 - Child Protection Legislation Amendment Act 2003
 - Commission for Children and Young People Amendment Act 2005



What is child related employment??

- Employment can mean:
 - work under a contract of employment
 - work as a subcontractor
 - work as a volunteer
 - undertaking practical training as part of an educational or vocational course
 - work as a minister of religion or other member of a religious organisation
- Child related employment is any employment (paid or unpaid) where one of the essential elements of the position involves direct unsupervised contact with children.
- For someone to be supervised a person with authority from the “employing body” must be able to observe and direct the contact with the child/ children at all times.



Step 2: Appoint a member protection information officer

- Coordinates your organisation or clubs child protection activities.
- This includes:
 1. Working with Children Check responsibilities
 2. Record keeping
 3. Awareness raising activities (eg Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct)
 4. Contact person in your organisation if people have a concern or need information
 5. Liaising with the peak body when responding to any incident





Step 3: Establish a member protection policy

[Organisation Name] is committed to ensuring that the safety, welfare and well being of children and young people is maintained at all times during their participation in activities run by [Organisation Name]

A sample template policy is available at www.ausport.gov.au or www.dsr.nsw.gov.au



Step 4: Manage allegations of child abuse

- An allegation of child abuse is serious (sensitivity and confidentiality)
- The following steps should be followed:
 1. Clarify the allegation and assess the risks (protect the child!!)
 2. Report to the relevant authorities where necessary
 3. Gather information and document all details
 4. Ensure procedural fairness and natural justice
 5. Make a determination
 6. Take action



Step 5: Report incidents

- The DoCS Helpline (Ph: 132 111) should be contacted if you suspect that a child is at risk of harm. Reports to DoCS are strictly confidential
- Completed relevant employment proceedings - CCYP
- Allegations proven to be false, vexatious or misconceived?
- Communicate, communicate, communicate



What is child abuse?

- **Physical**
 - non accidental injury
 - includes bruises, burns, welts, broken bones
- **Neglect**
 - proper nourishment
 - clothing, medication etc
 - shelter, hygiene etc
- **Emotional**
 - negative messages in relation to the child which over time, affect the child's self concept and ability to function
- **Sexual**
 - any unwanted sexual behaviour



Who is abusing our kids??

- Recent research (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003) indicates that
 - recorded persons of interest by age for *sexual abuse* of victims <18yrs cluster in the 11-18 year and 27-35 year age brackets
 - recorded persons of interest by age for *physical abuse* of victims <18yrs cluster in the 11-18 year bracket with a smaller peak in the 30-35 year age brackets
- Analysis of locations indicate that the majority of physical assaults occur in a residential or street/footpath setting while the majority of sexual assaults occur in a residential environment.
- Outcomes of physical and sexual assaults indicate that the great majority of cases are not finalised 30 days after the incident



Why kids don't tell

- What do children have to lose by disclosing abuse??
- Grooming
 - Patterns of behaviour that aim to engage a child as a precursor to sexual abuse
 - This behaviour includes:
 1. Persuading a child that a special relationship exists (inappropriate “special gifts”, spending inappropriate “special time” with the child, “special relationship” with them and not other children, allowing the child to overstep the rules.)
 2. Testing of boundaries (undressing in front of children, allowing a child to sit on the lap, talking about sex, “accidental” touching of genitals)
- After the abuse, guilt/ secrecy/ fear/ pretending things are “normal” (both perpetrator and victim)





Why Kids Don' Tell

Secrecy

Helplessness

Entrapment & Accommodation

Delayed, Conflicted & Unconvincing Disclosure

Retraction



How do I recognise abuse?

You have suspicion on reasonable grounds when:

- A child tells you they have been abused
- Someone else tells you that a child has been abused
- A child tells you they know of someone who has been abused (often referring to themselves)
- You observe a child's behaviour and/or injuries and your knowledge leads you to suspect abuse
- You observe another persons abuse of a child

Am I a mandatory reporter??



What do I do?

- Validate their feelings...it is not their fault!
- Maintain the safety of all children..follow policy
- Document details
- Make direct and confidential contact with the Member Protection Information Officer
- Consult with them on how to proceed
- All claims of abuse or breaches of the Code of Conduct should be taken seriously



Further actions

- DoCS Helpline (Ph:132 111) and Police Assistance Line (Ph:131 444) for advice
- Support the child and their family
- Action should be initiated to ensure due process and natural justice is served
- At the conclusion of any employment proceeding, appropriate action should be taken eg CCYP report if the allegation is proven not to be false, vexatious or misconceived



What are some practical measures for “employees” to follow?

- Minimise situations where an adult may be alone with a child eg dressing room procedures
- Ask permission before appropriate physical contact (that is part of a coaching session) is initiated. Kids with special needs??
- Initiation ceremonies??
- Transporting children?
- Residential setting?
- Use posters to show your commitment to child safe measures



Safeguards for members who deliver or supervise children's activities

As a sport safe organisation you should:

- encourage positive behaviours
- adopt positive procedures
- use code of conduct and team based principles when dealing with difficult situations
- use positive reinforcement and acceptable language when talking about or to a child
- increase awareness within your organisation
- review risk minimisation strategies regularly



How do we implement a safe environment for children

- Raise awareness within the organisation by providing child protection information to employees, parents and children involved with your sport
- Establish reporting lines for allegations.....a member protection information officer is a good first step
- Reinvent the wheel? **No go tell**



What do we need to do?

Remember, the key to improving the situation is simple

- Ensure “employees” comply with the requirements of the Working with Children Check process
- Give people a contact point for raising concerns (appoint a child protection officer)
- Ensure that people in your organisation who are dealing with children are informed and aware of your Member Protection Policy and Code of Conduct
- Manage allegations of child abuse through established processes and reporting lines to ensure that there is due process and natural justice
- Report incidents to the relevant authorities



Benefits

- Risk exposure minimised
- Children involved with AASP will feel safe
- Community support by taking a proactive role in dealing with Child Protection issues
- Marketing opportunity
- Compliance with legislation





Will this work?

Practical responses to child protection begin with small steps

- The 5 Steps to creating a safer environment for children *will* minimise the risks to children in your sport.
- Education, training and awareness will also help to protect coaches and volunteers in your sport and reduce the likelihood of allegations.





Protective Behaviours

Communication Boundaries

Physical Contact Boundaries

Location/Environmental Boundaries

Knowledge Boundaries

Leadership Boundaries



Organisational Practices



Scenarios

Worksheet 4 – page 56

