

5.3 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Reference: SOA_5.3PP – Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy & Procedure

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Special Olympics Australia is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Children, young people and vulnerable adults who participate in Special Olympics Australia activities have the right to feel safe and to participate in an environment where they are protected from any form of abuse. We recognise that people with a disability may be vulnerable to abuse either by the actions of staff or volunteers, by the actions of other athletes, or by their family members or other associates. Abuse may take many forms and includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

We take this responsibility to safeguard our athletes seriously and all alleged incidents will be responded to appropriately. Special Olympics Australia recognises that safeguarding athletes is everyone's responsibility and expect anyone involved in our activities to report any concerns of abuse to the National Complaints Officer. Special Olympics Australia will also seek to manage effectively the risks associated with our sport delivery involving children and vulnerable adults.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to support the objectives of:

- promoting and prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults.
- providing guidelines for acceptable behaviour during the course of an individual's involvement with Special Olympics Australia.
- ensuring that everyone involved with Special Olympics Australia understands their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding our athletes and is provided with information, training and support.
- reinforcing Special Olympics Australia's commitment to safeguarding our athletes and promoting a positive culture for all.
- ensuring appropriate action is taken in the event of any allegations regarding harm or abuse of a child or vulnerable adult involved in Special Olympics Australia.

3. SCOPE

The policy is applicable to all athletes, volunteers and staff of Special Olympics Australia.

4. DEFINITIONS

Abuse

'Abuse' as it is used throughout this policy refers to sexual assault, physical, emotional, financial and systemic abuse, domestic violence, constraints and restrictive practices, and to neglect.

Child

A child is a person under the age of 16 years (The Children and Young Persons Act 1998 No 157).

Child Abuse

Child abuse can be when someone does something harmful, or does not provide for or protect, a child or young person. Child abuse can cause long-lasting emotional, physical and behavioural damage.

Risk of Significant Harm

Risk of significant harm is a legal term. It refers to harm that may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on a child.

Special Olympics Australia Board

Directors acting as a Board of Directors

Vulnerable Person

A child or an adult who may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason (Department of Social Services).

Young Person

A young person is defined as a person who is aged 16 years or above but who is under the age of 18 years (The Children and Young Persons Act 1998 No 157).

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is accountable to the board by ensuring the principles of a child safe organisation are implemented across the organisation. This includes having appropriate policies and procedures in place, monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

Where allegations are received, respond in a timely manner and report to relevant state/territory child protection authorities where required. Full cooperation will be given to all relevant state/territory child protection authorities or other recognised bodies in their investigations of alleged child abuse.

Club Leadership Team

The Club Leadership Team will play a central role in promoting and educating all volunteers on their responsibility to promoting a safe environment for all athletes.

National Complaints Officer

This position is held by a staff member at the Special Olympics Australia central office. This staff member is trained in managing complaints and understands the relevant state and territory obligations regarding complaints handling. In the instance of concerns or allegation of abuse of a child the complaint will escalate directly to the National Complaints Officer.

The National Complaints Officer is responsible for notifying the Chief Executive Officer of all concerns or allegation of child abuse, but may also choose to involve the Chief Executive Officer in other complaints if deemed necessary.

Special Olympics Australia Board

The Special Olympics Australia board is responsible for promoting child safe best practice by ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place that minimize the risk of child abuse and have adequate safeguards established to respond and deal appropriately to allegations.

Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers have a duty of care to ensure strategies that safeguard children and vulnerable adults are implemented whilst involved in Special Olympics Australia activities. All staff and volunteers of Special Olympics Australia have a responsibility to report any abusive incident when observed and ensure that they contribute to making Special Olympics a safe environment for all.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1 General Safe Practice in Training, Competition and Travelling Teams

As part of the overall commitment to safeguarding and risk management, a number of practice guidelines are

recommended below when delivering training, competition and participation in travelling teams.

6.1.1 Two Adult Rule

Wherever practical it is recommended that no fewer than two adults are present at all times during training, competition or care of athletes on a travelling team. This is an important practice on a number of levels including:

- protects staff and volunteers from false allegations
- reduces the risk of an incident of abuse because a potential abuser is in constant sight of another adult
- reduces the possibility of a claim of negligence
- provides help if there is an accident or emergency
- sends a clear statement that children and vulnerable people are important and valued

6.1.2 Behaviour Management

At all times, staff and volunteers are expected to manage behaviour of athletes participating in activities in a positive manner. Positive reinforcement should be the cornerstone of all interactions and at no time is it acceptable to approach behaviour management in a punitive, humiliating or aggressive manner.

6.1.3 Physical Contact

Physical contact is necessary from time to time during training in a coaching context. There may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort at times of distress, physical support in a contact sport or demonstrating a skill/technique. In all cases, contact should only take place with the consent of the athlete. Consideration should be given to whether the physical contact is appropriate in the setting.

6.1.4 Transporting of Athletes

As a general rule, athletes should not be transported in the private vehicles of volunteers or staff without specific permission from their parents/guardian if they are a minor. In the event that an athlete needs to be transported for safety reasons the Two Adult Rule applies. It is not good practice to transport an athlete alone in a car, however short the journey.

The driver should be appropriately licensed and the vehicle should be registered and insured.

6.1.5 Change Rooms / Toilets

All athletes should be afforded privacy when using toilets and change rooms. Where an adult needs to assist an athlete the principles set out above regarding physical contact apply. Supervising adults should work to maintain the privacy of the athlete at all times and the Two Adult Rule applies when entering change rooms.

6.1.6 Managing Injuries or Illness

Should an athlete be injured or become ill during training or competition, first aid should be rendered and parents contacted immediately. An ambulance should be called if the injury/illness cannot be alleviated by basic first aid.

The athlete should be appropriately supervised until either parents/guardian/carer or the ambulance takes over their care. An incident report is to be completed and returned to the club.

6.1.7 Lone Athlete at End of Training / Competition

At no times should an athlete under the age of 18 years of age be left alone at the end of training or competition unsupervised. Where the athlete is waiting for a parent/guardian/carer to pick them up it is important to ensure that the Two Adult Rule is applied and the athlete is appropriately supervised until the parents/guardian or carer arrives to take over their care.

It is the responsibility of the coach, team manager or appropriate volunteer to ensure all athletes (regardless of age) have a safe way to get home at the conclusion of training or competition.

6.1.8 Photography / Video

The taking of photography and video at training and competition is not uncommon; however it is important that all attendees do so with sensitivity. It is encouraged that permission to take photographs or video be sought from the athlete or adult before including them. For the privacy of everyone we would discourage anyone posting video or photographs containing athletes who aren't their own child on social media or other public forums.

All photography and video must be taken in a public setting and not be taken in change rooms or otherwise private facilities.

6.1.9 Contact with Athletes Outside of Special Olympics Australia Activities

Staff and volunteers should not meet an athlete who is under the age of 18 years outside of an organised Special Olympics activity without consent from the parent/guardian/carer. This includes inviting the athlete to their home.

6.2 Reporting an Incident or Allegation of Abuse

Any concerns or allegations of abuse is taken seriously and should follow the procedures as outlined in the Complaints Handling Policy.

It is important to understand that at no time should you start an investigation or question anyone after an allegation or concern has been raised. This is the role of the appropriate authorities.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- SOA_5.2PP - Recruitment, Selection and Screening
- SOA_5.4PP - Working with Children Check and Police Check
- SOA_5.5PP - Induction
- SOA_6.3PP - Code of Conduct
- SOA_6.6PP - Complaints Handling
- SOA_6.7PP - Responding to concerns or allegations of abuse of a child
- SOA_6.8PP - Responding to concerns or allegations of abuse of an adult

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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