

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Introduction

This policy and the accompanying guidelines are for coaches, managers, officials and other personnel at the Leichhardt Cygnets Junior Australian Football Club.

Leichhardt Cygnets caters for boys and girls from the age of four years. In addition, non-registered siblings of all ages are often at club games and training sessions.

In many junior games, the umpires are also children. They deserve the respect that should be afforded to umpires, and the protections of being a child.

The policy and guidelines are designed to keep children safe and protect volunteer personnel from risk of harm arising from their interaction with other people at our Club.

Reference material

The guidelines should be read in conjunction with the AFL Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy Documents, available on the [AFL Sydney Junior's website](#).

The [Office of the Children's Guardian](#) has a wealth of information online. The Office of the Children's Guardian runs seminars regularly and advisers are available to answer queries. This is a very valuable resource for anyone working with children, whether in a paid or volunteer capacity.

Working with Children Check

Leichhardt Cygnets J AFC requires, in accordance with associated AFL policy, that all coaches and team managers undertake a NSW Government Working with Children Check.

This requirement does not apply to club volunteers who are under the age of 18 years.

What's involved?

A [Working With Children Check](#) involves a national criminal history check and review of findings of workplace misconduct. Information and [video tutorials](#) are available on the Commission's website

The result is either a clearance to work with children for five years, or a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring, and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

The first stage of the Check is completed online. The applicant will then receive an application number. The applicant will need to take this application number and proof of identity to a NSW Motor Registry. Within four weeks, the applicant will receive a Working With Children Check number.

This number needs to be provided to the Football Operations Manager, who will verify the number online.

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

A number of boundaries exist that team and club personnel in positions of authority should maintain. The below outlines the club position on each of the highlighted areas. These positions aim to provide an appropriate level of protection for all children who participate in Club activities, and Club officials are expected to comply with these positions. Any breach of these guidelines will be reviewed by the Club.

Physical boundaries

- Use drills to develop fitness, not as a punishment.
- Only use physical contact that is appropriate of the development of a particular skill
- Work within sight of others at all times

Emotional/verbal boundaries

Use positive feedback on performance, not negative feedback about the person

Be encouraging. Avoid put-downs.

Sexual boundaries

Any sort of sexual relationships with any players are strictly forbidden and illegal.

Do not touch players in ways likely to make them feel uncomfortable.

Physical contact

General physical contact with players should be to:

- Develop sports skills
- Treat an injury
- Prevent or respond to an injury
- Meet the specific requirements of the sport.

Avoid being alone with a child

To protect both yourself and a child from risk:

- Do not isolate yourself and a child and avoid being alone with any particular child.
- If a child approaches you and wants to talk to you privately about a matter, do so in an open area and in the sight of other adults (eg, other coaches, officials or parents/guardians).

Maintain control

- Avoid losing your temper.

- Adopt positive language and behaviour (eg avoid bad or aggressive language that could intimidate a child or set a poor example).
- If you find that you regularly lose your temper with children, you should seek support in learning how to manage children's behaviour, or consider whether you have the patience to work with children.

Establishing and maintaining control

Some ideas to assist with maintaining control include:

Set up some basic rules at the beginning of the season such as: be nice but firm; be fair; follow instructions; have a go; and no put downs. Make sure children are aware of these rules. 'Nice but firm' avoids creating problems of ambiguity as it makes it clear where an adult stands in relation to the child. Being 'fair' is also important because of the strong message it sends to young, impressionable children.

Give positive messages

Have a 'time out' area for children and young people who are not behaving. This could be simply a signal such as an agreed 'T' sign with the hands that children know means to go to time out for two minutes.

Adopt a warning system to express concerns with a child's behaviour rather than becoming verbally agitated. For example, give a first warning, a second warning means time out for a specific period of time, and a third warning could mean the child sits out the rest of the training session or game.

It is important to ensure that children are aware that the rules around bad or aggressive behaviour and language also apply to them, and that inappropriate behaviour or put downs from one child to another will not be tolerated.

Collection of children

- In Auskick and junior grades, a parent/guardian or responsible adult should be at the ground at all times.
- On occasion, it is understood that parents may need to leave the ground. In this case, a team official must be expressly and clearly advised that the responsible adult is leaving, and what arrangements have been made for the child's collection.
- Team managers should make sure parents are clear about training and match start and end times. Coaches and managers should have access to parent/guardian emergency contact numbers.
- If a parent is late for collection, ask the second to last child and their parent/guardian to wait with you and the child.
- If there are other people at the ground or facility, wait for the parent/guardian closer to those people. In the meantime, try to make contact with the parent/guardian.
- Avoid the risk of being alone with a child by having a parent/guardian or support person assist you with the training. Require that person to wait until all children have left.

Avoid transporting players

Ideally, all players should have their own transportation to and from sporting events.

In your capacity as a representative of Leichhardt Cygnets, you should only provide transportation when:

- the driver is properly licensed to carry passengers, and
- other players/participants/parents/guardians are in the vehicle, and
- the ride has been approved by parents/guardians, and
- the ride is directly to/from sports or recreational activities.

Photographing children

The registration form contains a general consent clause, allowing images of players to be used for any promotional, marketing and publicity purposes. However, such images may not be identified by name.

There are some people who visit sporting events to take inappropriate photographs or video footage of children. You need to be alert to this possibility and report any concerns to a responsible person in your club (either the Ground Manager, the Child Protection Officer, or other Club executive, eg President, Vice President, Secretary or other Board member). The Club will assess the situation and escalate as necessary.

Children and Toilets

We would recommend that primary school age children should not go alone to use toileting facilities near to the ground or training facilities. If a child needs to use the bathroom during a game or training, we recommend that the child is accompanied by their parent or guardian, or two other children. If a team official accompanies a child to a toilet block, please ensure at least one other person (either adult or child) is present. Ensure the toilet block is empty, and then wait outside for the children.

Types of Child Abuse

We would like our club volunteers to be aware of different types of child abuse, and the known indicators of child abuse. To that end, the Australian Institute of Family Studies, a branch of the Australian Government, specifies the four main types of child abuse as:

Sexual abuse/sexual misconduct

This includes any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person. For example, suggestive behaviour, inappropriate touching or voyeuristically watching an athlete shower or change clothes.

Physical abuse

Non-accidental injury and/or harm to a child or young person, caused by another person such as a parent, care-giver or even an older child.

For example, physically punishing a young person for losing a game by hitting, throwing equipment, pushing or shoving.

Emotional abuse

Behaviours that may psychologically harm a child or young person.

For example, threatening language, bullying, ridicule, personal abuse and comments designed to demean and humiliate.

Neglect

Failing to provide a child or young person with basic physical and emotional necessities, harming them or putting them at risk of harm.

For example, keeping the best young player on-field to win the game despite having an injury or making children play in excessive heat.

Indicators of Child Abuse

It is important that people working with children are aware of the indicators of abuse and have the confidence to respond to any indication that a child may have been abused.

Some indicators of child abuse are:

- bruising, particularly in the face, head or neck region
- multiple bruising or injuries – for example, burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations or fractures
- injury left untreated
- differing versions of how an injury occurred
- child/relative advising of abuse
- a child, referring to someone else being abused, may mean him/herself
- sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for the age of the child
- nightmares/bedwetting/going to bed fully-clothed
- a high level of distrust of other people
- an inability to relate well with adults and/or children
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour, disruptive or aggressive behaviour and bullying
- seeking indiscriminate or inappropriate adult affection.

The presence of one indicator does not necessarily suggest that a child is the subject of abuse. People working with children need to consider the context in which the indicators are observed and use common sense. If you feel any doubt, discuss the matter with the Club's Child Protection Officer or call the Child Protection Helpline on **132 111**.

This information in this document has been adapted for use by the Leichhardt Cygnets Junior Football Club from other sources. It does not purport to cover all situations. It is not intended as legal advice.