
GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN

These guidelines are for coaches and other personnel to protect them from risk and to keep children safe.

If interaction with children is to occur, it should always be within clear guidelines to reduce the risk of inappropriate contact and to ensure people working with children eg coaches, officials etc. are not placed in situations where they could be accused of abuse.

1. MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

Coaches and other personnel in positions of authority should maintain clear:

Physical boundaries

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

Emotional boundaries

- Provide feedback about their performance and effort, not about the person
- Be encouraging and avoid put-downs

Social boundaries

- Attend sport related events such as awards nights and annual meetings but do not socialise with athletes outside sporting functions
- Do not socialise with athletes via social media or text messages

2. MINIMISE PHYSICAL CONTACT

Do not touch athletes in ways likely to make them feel uncomfortable. Generally, physical contact with players or participants should only be to:

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

All physical contact should fulfil the following criteria:

- Physical contact should be appropriate for the development of a sport skill/s
- Permission from the player or participant should always be sought

- Players or participants should be congratulated or comforted in public not in an isolated setting

Physical contact MAY BE appropriate if it:

- is used to assist in skill development
- is required for the child's safety
- occurs with the player's understanding and permission
- is for the child's benefit, not adult gratification
- occurs in an open environment.

3. AVOID BEING ALONE WITH A CHILD

To protect yourself and the 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 sight of other adults (eg other coaches, officials or parents/guardians)
- Before going into change rooms, knock or announce that you will be coming in. Try to have at least one adult with you in a change room with children
- Do not give children a lift in your car, or offer to drive them home or to public transport. Parents or guardians must be responsible for transporting their children to and from their sporting commitments.