



## Maribyrnong Park Football Club

# Child Safety Policy

## AFL VICTORIA CHILD SAFE STANDARDS (CSS)

The Child Safe Standards (CSS) are an important addition to Victorian legislation to ensure children feel safe and are protected from harm in all organisations. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure this is the case. The CSS include the introduction of compulsory, minimum standards for all organisations in the State that work with children. More information can be found at the [Commission for Children & Young People \(CCYP\) website](#).

AFL Victoria requires each of its Affiliates and Programs to nominate a **Child Safety Officer** who is the initial point of contact for any report. The position of Child Safety Officer for MPFC is Kate Ballantyne. In her role Kate provides a point of contact for anyone at the club to speak to if a child is feeling unsafe or if any adult has concerns for a child's welfare.

## Child Safe Policy

### 1. Purpose

This policy demonstrates the commitment of committee members, officials, and volunteers of the Maribyrnong Park Sports Club to child safety, and provides an outline of the policies and practices the Club has developed to keep everyone involved with our club safe from any form of abuse. This Policy aims to protect children and young people against the risk of abuse and harm and eliminate, so far as is practicable, the opportunity for these situations to occur.

### 2. Policy Statement

#### Commitment to Child Safety

All children who are a part of the Club have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and the Club has a zero tolerance to child abuse. The Club strives to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe, are safe, and have fun. Maribyrnong Park Sports Club will provide values based leadership and a Club culture of respect, diversity and inclusion to support all members of your community.



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## 3. Implementation

### Application of Policy

This policy was developed by the MPSC Committee with reference to Victorian Government Child Safe Standards, Amendments to the Working with Children Act 2005, Vic Sport Guidelines, and AFL Community policies. The policy reflects the Club's well-established values of respect, inclusive participation and safety-first mindset. This policy applies to all individuals involved in our club (unpaid and paid) including, but not limited to:

- Administrators
- Coaches
- Officials
- Volunteers
- Players
- Parents/Carers
- Spectators
- Service providers.

### Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined as an act or omission by a parent, caregiver, other adult or child that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. Types of child abuse include: (as documented by AFL Vic – Child Safe Standards in Football)

**Physical Abuse**

**Emotional Abuse**

**Sexual Abuse**

**Neglect**

**Family Violence**

**Grooming.**

(See Appendix 1 for definitions.)



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## Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

MPSC has appointed a Safety and Wellbeing Committee person as the Club's Child Safety Officer. This person will respond to any concerns expressed by staff, volunteers, parents, carers or children regarding known or suspected abuse of a child connected with the Club.

The Child Safety Officer will:

- Provide support to the child, parent/carer, person who made the report.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint, and refer in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, to police or Child Protection.
- Initiate processes to ensure the safety of the child, and other children.
- If necessary, make the report as soon as possible, or support the complainant in making the report as soon as possible.
- The Child Safety Officer may also provide support to the accused if they are a club volunteer or staff member.
- Work with the appropriate Committee members, club officials, and/or league officials regarding behaviour and/or disciplinary action, if not found to be a Child Protection or police matter.
- Review club policies and practices to minimise risk of future similar events/behaviour.

## Recruitment

MPSC recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur – therefore, we will endeavour to maintain a strict recruitment process for all staff and volunteers who will likely have regular contact with children and young people at the club. Adults who are involved with children under the age of 18 must hold a current Working with Children Check.



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## **Roles & Responsibilities of Personnel Protecting Children**

While the CSO at MPSC may be the best point of contact for child safety issues, it is also the responsibility of all club and community members to be diligent in relation to child protection. It is mandatory for MPSC, with the guidance of the CSO, to ensure all players, coaches, officials, administrators, parents, spectators and members are educated about Child Safety, including a basic understanding of the indicators and risks of child abuse and how to respond to any concerns that have been observed by, or reported to, them. MPFC will make this policy known and readily available to everyone at their club. Education of the Child Safe policy and protocols may include displaying policy in clubrooms, downloadable version available on the club website, Professional conversations about roles and responsibilities of club members and reminders of Professional standards via Facebook page and Marby Lions Juniors email updates.

MPSC CSO will be available for individuals seeking further clarity on any child safety related issues. They must be provided with the training, information and resources to assist with a large array of issues and will know the proper course of action for a majority of complaints, concerns or reports. Should they not have the ability to provide assistance, they will know the appropriate method of advancing the issue to higher authorities, whether that be the EDFL, Police, DHHS or other department.

## **Child Safe & Child Friendly Guidelines/Risk Management**

The following guidelines are simple ways that all persons can uphold their child protection responsibilities and promote positive, safe and friendly behaviour towards children and young people.

- Positive guidance - acting appropriately with children.
- Diversity & Inclusion – Do not tolerate any discriminatory practices; promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal or culturally/linguistically diverse children and their families; welcome children with a disability and act to promote their participation



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- Adhering to role boundaries – should not act outside out of the confines of the duties of your role.
- Use of language and tone of voice – no swearing or defamatory language, clear direction and encouragement, not being harmful in what you say.
- Supervision – avoid being alone one on one with a child out of the view of others where possible.
- Use of electronic communications – where possible email, text messages and social media communications to include parent/guardian or within an open group message.
- Photographs of children and young people – within expectations of AFL privacy policy e.g.photos taken in context of the program, dressed appropriately, etc.
- Physical contact with children and young people – done when reasonable and in an appropriate manner.
- Sexual misconduct – under no circumstances are sexual acts to occur with or in the presence of children.
- Change room arrangements – important to supervise children while also balancing a child's right to privacy.
- Transporting children – prior authorisation from management and child's parents.
- Gift giving – prior authorisation from management and child's parents.
- Overnight stays – work purposes only within a part of a formal program with authorisations from parents. Gender of supervisors considered and balanced with children participating.
- Alcohol & Drugs – while on duty must not use, possess, supply or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including being incapacitated from legal medications.

### **Supporting Staff and Volunteers**

MPSC provides support and supervision to all volunteers so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. This Code of Conduct is also discussed with players to make it meaningful.

Coaches, Team Managers, and Ground Managers monitor and manage behaviour of players, parents, spectators, and volunteers. Serious breaches of the Code of



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Conduct are reported to the Conduct Manager and/or Child Safety Officer who will act according to Club, League, and legislative processes. Coaches sign an additional Code of Conduct, available on the club website.

### Review

As Legislation and National Policies change and develop, so too will the MPSC Child Safety Policy. Taking on board national changes as well as seeking input from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers involved with the MPSC and its affiliated clubs, this policy will be reviewed in February of each year and changes will be made accordingly.

### Appendices

#### Definitions of Abuse

**Physical abuse** is intentionally causing or threatening to cause physical injury to a child, or inadvertently causing injury as a consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment. Examples: Physical assault, hitting, shaking, restraining, etc. Signs: Bruises, cuts, burns, fractures, covering up seemingly unnecessarily

**Emotional abuse** occurs when a person engages in inappropriate behaviours such as rejecting, ignoring, humiliating, isolating, threatening or verbally abusing a child, or allowing others to do so. Examples: Yelling, ignoring, teasing, verbal abuse, bullying, etc. Signs: Delayed physical/emotional development, withdrawn, low self esteem, shy, agitated, anxious, self harming

**Sexual abuse** is when any person uses their authority over a child to involve the child in any sexual activity. Examples: Fondling genitals, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, sexting, etc. Signs: Bruising, withdrawal, anxious, over-sexualisation, secretive, low self esteem, weight loss or gain self harming



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**Neglect** means failing to meet a child's basic needs such as providing adequate food, drink, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention. Examples: Withholding any basic need, lack of emotional support, no security or stability, withholding education, etc. Signs: Hunger, lack of clothing, homeless, poor hygiene, stealing, skinny, tired, regularly ill, attention seeking

**Family violence** occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home, and can be very harmful. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm, and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.

**Grooming** is the behaviours used to prepare a child with the intention of sexually abusing them. This includes building a trusting relationship with a child and their parents/carers, and 'special relationships' and spending time alone with children or outside the work role. It graduates from attention-giving and non-sexual touching to increasingly intimate and intrusive behaviours.