



RAIEBURN CALISTHENICS INC

Child Safe Guidelines & Definitions

Raieburn Calisthenics Inc (the Club) has adopted the guidelines and definitions as listed below to assist our members, officials, volunteers and families in the assessment of Child Safety and what it means for our Club.

The following has been adapted from the [Play By The Rules](#) website.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE -

Coach

As a coach of young people, you are in a position of power and influence. Young people will look up to you and be guided by your actions. You will be likely to have the most amount of interaction with the young people at our Club, so you will often be among the first to see or recognise a developing problem or situation. You have a key role in our Club.

Your responsibilities are to:

- treat all children respectfully, and within the child protection laws of Australia (free from any form of abuse)
- refrain from any form of verbal abuse, or verbal communications that are harmful, spiteful or sexually suggestive
- act appropriately and responsibly with children of all ages (up to 18 years)
- raise your 'child safe' awareness to be able to spot any problems or situations before they escalate
- inform the nominated club or organisational officer if you witness or suspect any situations that may potentially lead to, or may constitute, child abuse
- be a positive influence, and/or voice for change, in the creation of a child safe environment at our Club
- make sure that your intentions, your actions and your efforts ensure a child safe environment

Participant

As a student of our Club, you are responsible for treating your fellow teammates with respect. You will often see or hear things that might be hidden from the adults.

Speaking to an adult, or to a club official, about any situation that you feel is harmful to a fellow teammate will help make sure that all students can feel safe to enjoy our sport.

Parent

As a parent who attends competitions, practice classes or club functions, you are both a role model and a responsible adult when it comes to all children you encounter within our Club environment.

Your responsibilities are to:

- treat all children respectfully, and within the child protection laws of Australia (free from any form of abuse)
- act in accordance with our Club and governing body's (Calisthenics Victoria) code of conduct on how to interact with children of all ages (up to 18 years)
- be aware of our Club's policies and reporting processes and act accordingly if you witness or suspect any situations that may potentially lead to, or may constitute, child abuse
- be a positive influence in the creation of a child safe environment at our Club

Committee

As an administrator, club representative or committee member, you play a vital role in making sure that our Club has the right child protection policies and systems in place. Remember, our Club's 'culture' is shaped by courage and leadership. Speaking up about practices that are not child safe, being a voice for change, making sure that systems and policies are well communicated and followed, and taking the time to check in with other roles within the club about child protection will not only create a child safe environment, but will also keep our Club free from the worry, stress and legal hassles of any complaints.

Your responsibilities are to:

- treat all children respectfully, and within the child protection laws of Australia (free from any form of abuse)
- act appropriately and responsibly with children of all ages (up to 18 years)
- raise your 'child safe' awareness to be able to spot any problems or situations before they escalate
- ensure that club policies and systems regarding child protection are well placed, effective and well communicated
- be a positive influence, and/or voice for change, in the creation of a child safe environment in our Club
- make sure that your intentions, your actions and your efforts ensure a child safe environment.

WHAT CONSTITUTES CHILD ABUSE? –

Generally, there are five types of abuse that constitute child abuse. There are no universal definitions, so we have provided only a summary here from the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

- sexual
- physical
- emotional
- neglect
- family or domestic violence

HOW DO I RECOGNISE IT? -

Sexual Abuse

The World Health Organisation defines child sexual abuse as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to ... or that violate the laws or social taboos of society.

Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the non-accidental injury and/or physical harm to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or other person. This injury can also be caused by another child. Physically abusive behaviours can include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking.

Physical abuse may be intentional or the inadvertent result of physical punishment that causes physical harm. Remember too that child abuse can be unintentional, such as an injury caused through poorly maintained or sub-standard facilities and equipment.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse involves behaviours that may psychologically harm a child, including verbal abuse, threats, bullying, harassment or excessive and unreasonable demands.

Emotional abuse may take the form of:

- rejection, where an adult refuses to acknowledge a child's worth, or continually belittles them maliciously
- terrorising a child with verbal 'assaults', creating a climate of fear, intentionally bullying or frightening a child
- corrupting a child by deliberately encouraging anti-social, deviant and destructive behaviour.

Neglect

Neglect is where a child is at risk of injury/harm or is harmed by the failure to provide them with the basic physical and emotional necessities of life. It is important to be aware that some children with a disability are at greater risk of child abuse due to mobility constraints and/or difficulties with communication. Extra care should be taken to reduce the risk of abuse.

Neglect also covers any injury or harm to a child due to poor maintenance or sub-standard facilities and equipment.

Family Violence

Sometimes known as domestic violence, family violence means violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person's family (the family member) or causes the family member to be fearful (*Family Law Act*).

WHAT SHOULD I BE AWARE OF? –

Indicators of Abuse

Some indicators of child abuse are:

- bruising, particularly in the face, head or neck region
- 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 which 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 to 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, ring and consult with the child protection authorities.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS A CLUB? –

Whole club approach

A whole club approach means that child safety is part of the thinking at all levels, rather than there being 'pockets of care'.

This sort of approach should address:

- systems and club policies that ensure child safety
- education of all people involved in the club about child safety
- monitoring expected behaviours from both adults and children at the club
- effective communication to all members, officials and volunteers about child safety

A whole club approach means that the club is best set up to act proactively, and to respond effectively when it comes to child safety.

Impact of abuse

Child abuse has the potential to damage a child's mental and physical health, to negatively impact on their future and to create problems for the child that may last well into adulthood.

The damage from child abuse is never limited to the child. It is a natural instinct to want to protect children, and any crime against them has a far-reaching impact on the family of the child, and on the community.

This damage from child abuse can also extend to sporting clubs and organisations, and to the people within those clubs and organisations who are tainted by one person's abusive behaviours. Reputations are hard fought and easily lost.

Dealing with an abuse complaint can take a heavy toll on a club, its committee and volunteers.

One cruel or abusive action can ripple out to impact on literally hundreds of people.

It cannot be stressed enough that the work done by a club or organisation to ensure a child safe environment will have far-reaching positive benefits.

Spectrum of Behaviours within an organisation

Child Safe Behaviours

At this end of the spectrum, the club environment and behaviours of club members, volunteers and employees ensures that all children (anyone under 18) are able to participate and enjoy their sport free from any form of abuse, neglect, inappropriate or hostile adult behaviour. Children are treated with respect and are expected to treat adults with respect.

Inappropriate Behaviour

At this point there are behaviours from adults towards children that are inappropriate. They may involve behaviours that 'technically' don't break any rules or laws (but could breach a code of conduct) but are unwanted around the club environment and are not consistent with respectful behaviour towards children. These may include swearing in the presence of children, making suggestive comments, asking a teenage child about their 'love life', not asking permission from the child to touch them when demonstrating a skill that requires physical contact. It is expected that these behaviours would be noticed and dealt with in a sensitive but clear-cut way, and that all adults and children involved in the club environment would be aware of what is expected of them in their behaviour towards children.

Unacceptable Behaviour

At this point there are behaviours that fall in the 'grey area' when it comes to the legal definition of abuse. These behaviours are unacceptable, and if allowed to continue could easily escalate into legally defined abuse and neglect. Examples might include any use of camera equipment in any areas where private activities occur (e.g. change rooms), turning a blind eye to bullying behaviour and continual disregard for a child's personal space and boundaries when demonstrating a skill that requires physical contact. When behaviour has reached this unacceptable level, it has quite likely been allowed to go unchecked or un-noticed. This sort of behaviour usually indicates poor communication in the club about acceptable behaviour, poor monitoring of adult behaviour towards children, and a poor awareness in the club environment of child safety. This behaviour should be dealt with immediately. If there is any question in relation to whether someone's behaviour constitutes child abuse, it is advisable to contact the relevant authorities and discuss it with them.

Neglect

This is behaviour that exposes a child or children to physical or emotional harm. It can take many forms, such as allowing facilities to run down and become potential dangers or having unsafe equipment. It also extends to the duty of care of the adults towards children. For example, taking children on club excursions and not being diligent when they cross a road, or allowing children to roam unaccompanied in a public place while under the care of the club. It may also include a neglect in dealing with potentially abusive situations, harassment or bullying.

Physical and/or emotional abuse

At this point of the spectrum there are behaviours that fall within the legal definition of physical or emotional abuse. Please note that these are two separate types of abuse. Slapping, pushing, hitting a child are examples of physical abuse. Continued humiliation or abusive treatment are examples of emotional abuse. A club or organisation should have policies in place to deal with any complaints of this nature, and to also support any volunteers or workers who are the subject of a complaint. Proper education, diligent monitoring, effective policies and systems should all work towards avoiding this behaviour taking place.

Reporting

The situations where you will need to be familiar with your club or organisation's reporting procedures include:

- you have suspicions of harm or abuse occurring to a child
- a child discloses to you a concern or harm
- you are named in a complaint
- you are a club administrator or official dealing with a complaint.

Anyone who has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a child or young person is being neglected, abused or needs protection should report it. The person does not have to be certain or have proof, but only needs to make sure the concerns are well founded and based on information they know or have from a reliable source.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, contact the police immediately - 000

Best practice

If you are in a situation where a child is disclosing information about alleged abuse, make sure you remain calm, that you minimise the child's distress, and that you ask open-ended questions ('What happened then ...') rather than questions that elicit 'yes/no' answers.

Take this disclosure immediately to the appropriate officer in your club and be prepared to cooperate with any investigation. You may choose to consult with and report to your state or territory's child protection agency.

If you are mandated* to report, then you must consult these agencies.

Mandatory reporting

Although everyone has a moral and social responsibility to report concerns about child abuse, some individuals are legally required to make a report to Child Protection if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers and school principals, police, youth workers, social workers and psychologists are all mandatory reporters. It is an offence (subject to a fine) if those mandatory reporters do not report to Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming the belief, and after each occasion they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief, unless a defence applies.

As long as a report is made in good faith, the report is not unprofessional conduct, or a breach of professional ethics and the reporter cannot be held legally liable. Confidentiality is provided for reporters in the Children, Youth and Families Act, and prevents the disclosure of the name or any information likely to lead to the identification of a person who has made a report in accordance with the legislation except in very specific circumstances.

Vicarious liability

Vicarious liability describes the principle in law which says that, depending on the circumstances, an organisation can be held responsible for the behaviour of its employees (including staff, volunteers and contractors), unless:

- it can be shown that all reasonable steps were taken to prevent the behaviour from happening in the first place
- there were appropriate policies and procedures in place for dealing with the behaviour when it occurred.

The same principle applies to governing bodies and clubs.

Legislation

The Victorian Child Safe Standards (the standards) now apply to all sporting organisations that provide services or facilities to children within Victoria. This is a legal requirement for sporting organisations of all sizes from grassroots clubs all the way through to national sporting organisations.

The Standards relate to developing a child safe culture within our organisation and include requirements to have practices, procedures and policies in place to prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse.

The standards are implemented by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). They are an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people, with a focus on vulnerable children and young people.

Vicsport, the peak body for sport and recreation, is committed to providing support and up-to-date resources to assist sporting organisations to meet the standards and identify if the culture and environment within their organisation is supportive and protective of children.