



Manly Warringah Gymnastic Club CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

POLICY NAME: MWGC Child Protection Policy
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CONTROLLING BODY: MWGC Committee

1. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

MWGC is committed to ensuring that the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children are maintained at all times during their participation in activities run by the Club and its member bodies. Every person and organisation bound by this Policy must always place the safety and welfare of children above all other considerations.

MWGC acknowledges that our staff (paid or unpaid) provide a valuable contribution to the positive experience of our juniors. Accordingly, any person involved in the instruction, management or coaching of any member under the age of 18 years may be asked to undergo screening procedures including police and other probity checks.

2. POLICY APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all members of MWGC, athletes, coaches, judges, employees, administrators, officials, volunteers, and members of the club.

This Policy applies equally to members involved in each of MWGC's gymnastics disciplines, including Men's Artistic Gymnastics, Women's Artistic Gymnastics and General Gymnastics. This Policy applies to behaviour occurring both within and outside the course of MWGC's business, activities and events, when the behaviour involves members and negatively affects relationships within MWGC sport and work environment.

3. DEFINITIONS & POLICY COVERAGE

Child Abuse

Relates to children at risk of harm (usually by adults, sometimes by other children) and often by those they know and trust. It can take many forms. Children may be harmed by both verbal and physical actions and by people failing to provide them with basic care.

Child abuse may include:



- Physical abuse by hurting a child or a child's development; for example hitting, shaking or other physical harm, giving a child alcohol or drugs, giving bad nutritional advice, or training that exceeds the child's development or maturity.
- Sexual abuse by adults or other children where a child is encouraged or forced to watch or engage in sexual activity or where a child is subject to any other inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature (eg. Sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, pornography including child pornography or inappropriate touching or conversations).
- Emotional abuse by ill-treating a child; for example, humiliation, taunting, sarcasm, yelling, negative criticism, name calling, ignoring and/or placing unrealistic expectations on a child.
- Neglect; for example, failing to give food, water, shelter or clothing or to protect a child from danger or foreseeable risk of harm or injury.

Child Protection

Members must not employ or engage a person (whether paid or unpaid) to coach or otherwise supervise a child under the age of 18 years without first:

- Requiring that person to disclose whether or not he or she has been convicted of a serious sex offence.
- Conducting a police or other appropriate probity check on that person.

A member must notify the appropriate authorities (such as the Commission for Children and Young People) of:

- Any applicants for employment that the member rejected as a result of risks identified through screening processes.
- The name and other identifying details of any person against whom relevant disciplinary proceedings have been completed by the member in relation to child abuse (sexual or otherwise) irrespective of the findings.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Administrators

Administrators must ensure that the organisation he or she is employed or engaged by:

- Encourages reporting of discrimination, harassment or child abuse, regardless of who the offender might be, and that appropriate training is provided to those who manage and implement this Policy.

5. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

MWGC has developed a Complaints Management Procedure and will deal with any complaints about breaches of this Policy promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially. MWGC recognises that natural justice is the minimum standards of fairness to be applied in the investigation and adjudication of a complaint.

Disciplinary action will be taken by MWGC against anyone who:

- Is found to be in breach of this Policy;
- Victimises or retaliates against a person who has complained of a breach of this Policy;
- Is found to have made a frivolous or vexatious complaint.

The discipline will depend on the severity of the case and may involve any apology, counselling, suspension, dismissal or other form of action.



6. COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

Procedural Steps

MWGC undertakes to deal with any complaints of a breach of the Member Protection Policy promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially.

At any stage, it is the prerogative of the complainant to proceed with, or dissolve, a complaint.

Discussion

Should a complaint arise, MWGC encourages the complainant to consider the following options:

- Approach the person creating the problem and ask him or her to stop the behaviour;
- If the behaviour continues, or it is not possible to approach the person, contact either:
 - Coach or manager;
 - The club's Member Protection Contact Officer; &/or
 - President or other official of the club or Gymnastics NSW

Member Protection Contact Officer

If the complainant decides to proceed, the Member Protection Contact Officer refers the matter to the Member Protection Grievance Officer or designated person in authority for investigation.

Member Protection Grievance Officer

The member Protection Grievance Officer determines whether or not to investigate the complaint.

If the Member Protection Grievance Officer determines to investigate, the Officer:

- Informs the alleged wrongdoer;
- Interviews both parties separately;
- Keeps confidential records of the process;
- Attempts mediation to achieve resolution; &
- Follows up on the complainant.

Disciplinary Committee

If no resolution is achieved, the Member Protection Grievance Officer gives all reports to the Disciplinary Committee, who determines the appropriate course of action.

External Resolution

If the complaint is not resolved, the complainant may make a written complaint to an external organisation for mediation or arbitration. This can be done with the support of the Member Protection Grievance Officer.

If the complaint is upheld, a remedy will be prescribed by that external organisation.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Communication Boundaries

- Be aware of your communication style and how what you say and do may be interpreted.
- Not all children will understand an action, request or behaviour in the same manner. One child may see an action as usual or acceptable behaviour while another may find it unacceptable. A child's interpretation of an action may also be influenced by cultural and religious differences, disability, gender and prior experiences.



- Explain in front of all children (and parents, if possible) your method of instruction and when and where you will need to touch them, if at all.
- Use positive and age-appropriate language when talking to and in the presence of children.
- Ensure feedback is linked to performance and is not of a personal nature.

Physical Contact Boundaries

- Ensure any physical contact with children is relevant and appropriate to the development of the skills required for the activity.
- Seek permission to touch when development of the skill is required.
- Be careful about which part of your body and how much of it is in contact with a child's body.
- Do not engage in any intimate, over-familiar or sexual relationships with people under the age of 18 years.

Location Boundaries

- Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities (ie. Being alone with a child).
- Avoid entering change rooms. If you must enter, knock or announce that you will be coming in and try to have at least one other adult with you. Do not isolate yourself and a child from others in the change room.
- Avoid driving a child unaccompanied.
- Do not invite or encourage children to your home.

Knowledge Boundaries

- Understand and comply with all relevant policies.
- Understand and comply with the child protection legislation in NSW.
- Seek out opportunities to enhance your knowledge on child protection.
- Keep coaching skills and accreditation up to date.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions and to seek advice.

Leadership Boundaries

Do not engage in or let others engage in:

- Abusive initiation or team bonding activities;
- Rough physically hurtful or sexually provocative games; or
- Regular scape-goating, ridiculing or taking the 'Mickey out' on a child.

8. COACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Coaching or working with children with special needs may require more frequent physical contact and touch as a means of meeting the duty of care to them. Touch may be an agreed form of communication between a child, their parent and coach where the child has a communication disability. A coach and others may need to be more vigilant and thoughtful in their physical interactions and different approaches may be required. However, the basic practices and information outlined previously remain applicable to all children. Sporting organisations, coaches and others have a duty of care to protect children from physical and emotional harm and, while the ways of meeting this duty may differ for different groups, the duty itself remains unqualified. Everyone expected to meet this duty should do so in a manner that respects the dignity of all children as well as their vulnerabilities.

9. CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Different cultures have different attitudes and traditions surrounding the concept of appropriate touch. It is important that coaches and others appreciate culturally specific expectations regarding touch so that embarrassment or offence can be avoided for everyone. Where children (and families) are known or suspected to have escaped traumatic circumstances, considerable diplomacy, care and effort in early interactions will need to be taken. Many culturally based community organisations are very keen to address other groups, including sporting groups, about the values of their culture and to establish understanding and respect – it may help to invite or seek their advice so that sport personnel become more familiar with the values of the cultural groups of the children participating in their sport.

10. USE OF IMAGES

Acquiring Images

- If acquiring an image of a child, permission needs to be obtained from the athlete's parent/guardian prior to taking the child's image. Ensure that all concerned are aware of the way in which the image is to be used.
- Where possible, request that all people taking photographic/video images (including spectators, parents, coaches, professional photographers or members of the media) register at an event or facility. Provide members of the media and professional photographers with an identification pass that they wear for the duration of the event.
- Clearly outline to professional photographers that all images taken will remain the property of the sporting organisation and can not be used or sold for any other purpose. Also outline that all negatives/proofs etc need to be destroyed or given to the sporting organisation at the conclusion of the event for which the photographer has been contracted or within a specified timeframe.
- Clearly outline what is considered appropriate behaviour and content (ie. the image obtained in the photo or by video) to those taking photographic/video images. Publicise this information throughout your organisation so that your members understand what behaviour from photographers your organisation considers appropriate.
- Do not allow photographers (professional photographers, spectators, fans, coaches or members of the media) unsupervised or individual access to athletes/children.
- Do not approve photo/video sessions outside the event venue or at the home of a child unless parent/guardian consent is obtained and they agree to be present at the photo opportunity.
- Provide details of who to contract if concerns or complaints of inappropriate photographic behaviour or content are raised.

Displaying Images

- Consider using models or illustrations for promotional/advertising purposes.
- If permission needs to be obtained from the parent/guardian of the athlete/child, obtain it prior to using the image of the athlete/child. Ensure that all concerned are aware of the way in which the image is to be used and for how long the image will be displayed.
- If the athlete/child is named, avoid using their image.
- If an image is used, avoid naming the athlete/child. If this is not possible avoid using both a first name and surname.
- Do not display personal information such as residential address, email address or telephone numbers without gaining consent from the athlete/child, or if applicable, their parent/guardian.
- Do not display information about hobbies, likes/dislikes, school, etc as this information can be used as grooming tools by paedophiles or other persons.
- Only use appropriate images of the athlete/child, relevant to the sport or activity, and ensure that the athlete/child is suitably clothed. Images of athletes participating in sports or activities that involve minimal clothing (eg. swimming and gymnastics) or unusual body positions/poses could

potentially be misused. The age of child is another factor to consider when deciding if the image is appropriate. The image should focus on the activity and not on a particular child.

- Reduce the ability for the direct copying of pictures from a website to another source (ie. disable the 'right mouse click' function).
- Provide details of who to contact and what to do if concerns or complaints of inappropriate image use are raised.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY AND REPORTING

MWGC administration responsible for implementing this Policy will keep confidential the names and details relating to complaints, unless disclosure is:

- Necessary as part of the disciplinary or corrective process.
- Required by law.

