



## CHILD ABUSE AND OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

As a coach and employee of Manly Warringah Gymnastics you work directly with children. Your role has you teaching the skills of gymnastics and assisting in the physical and mental development of young people.

As a coach and employee, you are “a person of trust”, someone to whom a young person may turn to if they need help. Consider this an honour and responsibility.

The aim of this document is raise awareness of the responsibilities of your position and to offer you clear direction on what to do if child comes to you with a suggestion of abuse.

The World Health Organisation (1999) defines child abuse as: *“Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”*

Abuse can happen inside and outside the gym, it can happen via social media and it can also happen at home. No matter where the abuse is coming from we have a mandatory responsibility to report it.

There are processes in place that will determine what action and direction is required. It is very important to understand that we cannot ignore a child who may be in danger.

If you become aware of an issue,

- Be aware of the sensitivity of matters of abuse. Your role is to listen and if possible take notes. Reassure the child that you are there to help
- Explain that you have a responsibility to report it, and that the people you will tell can be trusted to keep it confidential.
- Do not offer advice or opinion, simply tell the child that you are there to support them
- Immediately report it to MWGC's Member Protection Officers Dominique Godden or Alex Hunt. Their contact details are available through reception. They will guide the matter through systems that will best assist/protect the child and you
- Do not discuss the matter with other children, colleagues or parents. Child protection and privacy laws prevent you from doing so

## **Types of child abuse**

### **Sexual abuse/sexual misconduct**

Any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person. This can include exposure to inappropriate sexual behaviour or material. For example, suggestive behaviour, inappropriate touching or voyeuristically watching an athlete shower or change clothes. In most states and territories of Australia, by law, children (under 16 years of age) do not have the ability to consent to any sexual activity with an adult. It is against the law for adults in a position of power or authority (e.g. Coach, Manager, Selector, MPIO, Administration member) to engage in any form of sexual activity with a child.

### **Physical abuse**

Non-accidental injury and/or harm to a child or young person, caused by another person such as a parent, coach or even an older child. For example, physically punishing a young person for poor performance by verbally scolding, ignoring or pushing them is unacceptable. Additional rope climbs/push ups or other “punishments” are also deemed as abusive.

### **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 are unacceptable. Persistent negative comments to a child or young person is also deemed as abusive.

### **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, ignoring a child that has an injury or making children play or train in excessive heat. Over-training young athletes and/or denying a child their basic rights (access to toilets, water and food).

### **Family violence**

Sometimes known as domestic 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).

### **Organised sexual abuse**

This can include a range of circumstances where multiple children are subject to abuse from multiple people. This can include organized child pornography or child prostitution.

## **Indicators of abuse**

It is important that people working with children are aware of the indicators of child abuse and have the confidence to respond to any indication that a child may have been abused. Indicators can be identified in various ways. Children and young people may tell an adult about the abuse occurring (what is known as a disclosure), however you may identify injuries on a child or young person that could lead you to believe they are at risk of abuse. 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
- talking about sexual acts, pornography, sexualised questions to adults or other children (that are 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/volunteering with children need to consider the context in which the indicators are observed and use common sense.**

If you wish to discuss any part of this policy please contact CEO Ian Hardy - [ian@mwgymclub.com](mailto:ian@mwgymclub.com)