

Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Contents

1. PURPOSE	3
2. POLICY STATEMENT	3
3. SCOPE.....	3
4. DEFINITIONS.....	4
5. EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR AT OUR CLUB.....	4
6. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	5
7. SUPPORTING CLUB STAFF, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS	5
8. RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH.....	6
9. COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING.....	6
10. REPORTING AND PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE	6
11. POLICY BREACHES	7
12. RECORD KEEPING AND INFORMATION SHARING.....	7
Appendix 1: Child Safe Standards	8
Appendix 2: Related documents & legislative requirements	9
Appendix 3: Child Safety Risk Management Plan	10
Appendix 4: Related child safety education resources and links	12



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to educate all members, staff, supporters and spectators of the Mt Alexander Women's Sports Football Club (**Club**) on their responsibilities when interacting with children and young people at our Club and to familiarise members, staff, supporters and spectators with the Club's processes for its response to any concerns, incidents or allegations of harm or abuse to children and young people.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club:

- 2.1. is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for all children and young people who participate in sport and umpiring activities at our Club;
- 2.2. is committed to implementing child safe practices in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Appendix 1);
- 2.3. will not tolerate any form of child abuse or harm and will act quickly to protect children and young people should an incident occur. All complaints will be treated seriously, fully investigated and handled confidentially;
- 2.4. is committed to the active participation of children and young people at the Club, ensuring all children and young people know their rights, have their views taken seriously and involve them in decisions that may directly affect them and their peers at the Club;
- 2.5. recognises the important role families play in supporting children and young people to participate in Australian football and values the input of families in decision making at our Club;
- 2.6. recognises the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and will promote their cultural safety within the Club environment;
- 2.7. All children and young people have equal rights to protection from harm and abuse regardless of their race, religion, age, disability cultural background, gender, sexual orientation or family/social background. Our Club considers that the health, safety and wellbeing of children and young people take priority over all other competing considerations.
- 2.8. The safety and wellbeing of all children and young people at our club is a shared responsibility between the Club, its staff, contractors, associates, parents/carers, coaches, spectators, volunteers and members of our Club community.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This Policy applies to everyone involved at our Club including (but not limited to) participants, parents, spectators, contractors, officials, coaches, and committee members.
- 3.2. This Policy should be read in conjunction with Club's related policies and procedures (Appendix 2), the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Appendix 1) and Commonwealth and Victorian legislation (Appendix 2).
- 3.3. Our Club is committed to continually reviewing its policies and practises to protect the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in consultation with all Club participants including children, young people, parents/carers, board/committee members and other interested parties.



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. **Child and Young Person** means a person under the age of 18 years.
- 4.2. **Child Abuse** includes all forms of physical, emotional, psychological, verbal and/or sexual abuse. Child abuse also includes sexual exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, grooming, harassing behaviour, bullying or other exploitation of a child or young person and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child or young person. Child abuse can be a single incident or take place over time.
- 4.3. **Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
- 4.4. **Club** is the name of the Club outlined in the header of this Policy document.
- 4.5. **Family violence** occurs when children and young people are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. Family violence includes violence between members of a family, or extended family, or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
- 4.6. **Grooming** is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator builds a relationship with a child or young person with the intent to abuse or harm them. Perpetrators may also groom parents/carers by forming relationships of trust with parents/carers before harming a child or young person. Grooming can take place over a long period of time before abuse occurs or the abuse can happen relatively quickly. Grooming can take in physical (face-to-face) environments or online.
- 4.7. **Harm** can be any action that may have a significant impact on a child or young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be caused by:
- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
 - Sexual abuse or exploitation;
 - Family violence;
 - a single act, omission or circumstance; and
 - a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
- 4.8. **Sexual abuse or exploitation** is any act which exposes a child or young person to or involves them in sexual acts beyond their understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexual offence behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, grooming, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It also includes engaging a child or young person to participate in sexual conversations online.
- 4.9. **Concerns and complaints** include any issue that an adult or peer considers may negatively impact on the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.

5. EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR AT OUR CLUB

- 5.1. All participants, parents, spectators, contractors, officials, coaches, and board/committee members have responsibilities in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at our Club and are expected to:
- 5.1.1. understand the definitions of child abuse and harm and act on anything that they hear or see;



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

- 5.1.2. understand the rights of children, as appropriate to their role and cause no harm to a child or young person;
- 5.1.3. value equity and diversity at the club and treat all children and young people with respect regardless of their race, religion, age, disability cultural background, gender, sexual orientation or family/social background;
- 5.1.4. at all times, know and follow this Policy and related child safety and wellbeing guidance (including but not limited to our Club's Code of Conduct);
- 5.1.5. co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations to the best of their ability.
- 5.2. All third-party contractors are expected to abide by our Club's Code of Conduct (including Child Safety components), and where they may engage with children or young people, sign an agreement requiring them to comply with this Policy and our Club's Code of Conduct, prior to delivering any services.
- 5.3. All parents and carers are required to personally supervise or otherwise ensure responsible supervision of their child/ren who attend any Club events or functions, including senior team training, games, Auskick and junior training or games.
- 5.4. Children under 10 will require active supervision, meaning they are within sight and/or earshot of the responsible supervising person at all times.
- 5.5. Senior players who have not organised responsible supervision of their child will not be able to train or play.
- 5.6. Adult senior players who give lifts to any members of the team who are under 18 will need to have and show a valid Working With Children Check to the coach or the Child Safety officer.
- 5.7. Adult senior players who give lifts to any members of the team who are under 18 must notify the coach each time they will be providing that transport to their team member who is under 18.
- 5.8. Our Club will appoint a Child Safety Officer or equivalent role that will be the primary point of contact for all concerns and complaints related to child safety and wellbeing.

6. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

- 6.1. Our Club seeks to implement screening practices that reduce the risk of harm or abuse to children and young people by:
 - 6.1.1. Recruiting people suitable to work and interact with children and young people (e.g. by requiring Working With Children Check or other State equivalent and/or Police checks). No adult will be allowed to work in a child related role at our Club until a valid Working with Children Check and/or Police Check has been obtained.
 - 6.1.2. Undertaking background checks of staff, contractors and volunteers who interact with children and young people such as two referee checks with specific child related questions.
- 6.2. Our Club also requires that all board/committee members hold a valid Working with Children Check.
- 6.3. Once engaged, staff, volunteers, board/committee members and contractors must read this Policy and related documents (such as those outlined in Appendix 2) and familiarise themselves with child safe practices at our Club.



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

7. SUPPORTING CLUB STAFF, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

- 7.1. Our Club is committed to supporting all staff, board/committee members and volunteers to understand how to create a child safe and child friendly environment at our club.
- 7.2. Our Club recommends that staff, board/committee members and volunteers familiarise themselves with the following online training in child safe practices - *AFL Safe Footy* Safeguarding webinars and resources, Play by the Rules training (child protection, cultural awareness, LGBTI+ inclusive clubs, Let Kids be Kids, Complaint handling) and eSafety Commissioner (safe online environments) (Appendix 4).

8. RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- 8.1. Our Club recognises the importance of identifying and managing risks to children and young people in physical and online environments and will implement a risk management plan (Appendix 3) to address risks.
- 8.2. The risk management plan will be updated on a regular basis in consultation with staff, volunteers, parent representatives and children and young people to ensure it is fit for purpose.

9. COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING

- 9.1. Our Club will take all concerns and complaints seriously, whether they are raised by an adult, child or young person. All child related concerns and complaints will be responded to promptly and confidentially.
- 9.2. Our Club has a complaint handling process in place and will ensure that all people associated with the club, including children and young people are aware of the person in the Child Safety Officer role and how they can contact that person to raise a concern or a complaint with the Club.
- 9.3. If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child or young person, immediately call the Police '000'.
- 9.4. If a child or young person is not in immediate danger but any person believes on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from any form of child abuse or harm, that person may disclose that information to a relevant support service such as the Orange Door, the Police, Child Protection or the Commissioner for Children & Young People.
- 9.5. If a concern or complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, Club staff and volunteers must report it in accordance with this Policy and the Club Code of Conduct.
- 9.6. Any Club staff member, board/committee member or volunteer who is the subject of a child or young person related concern or complaint may be requested to stand down from their position in the Club during an investigation, have their duties altered so they do not engage with children and young people and/or have their access to the Club's IT system/database removed.
- 9.7. Our Club will investigate allegations of inappropriate conduct against a child or young person in accordance with procedural fairness, unless there are reasonable grounds to believe this may raise a risk of exposing a child to further harm and will handle the allegations in a confidential and sensitive manner.
- 9.8. Our Club will keep a register of any allegations regarding inappropriate conduct.



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

10. REPORTING AND PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE

- 10.1. All adults must report to Victoria Police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16. It is an offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) *not* to report ('[failure to disclose](#)').
- 10.2. It is an offence for a person in a position of authority in an organisation, including this Club, not to take reasonable steps to remove or reduce an identified substantial risk of sexual offences being committed against a child under 16 ('[failure to protect](#)').
- 10.3. A number of professions in the community (including but not limited to teachers, nurses and doctors) are also required by law to report to Child Protection where they have formed a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection because they have suffered (or are likely to suffer) significant harm due to physical or sexual abuse.
- 10.4. This report must be made as soon as practicable, and on any occasion where they become aware of other allegations and have reasonable grounds for belief.

11. POLICY BREACHES

- 11.1. It is a breach of this Policy for any person or organisation subject to this Policy to have been found to have done anything contrary to this Policy. Any person who breaches this Policy will be subject to sanctions outlined in the Code of Conduct. ([insert relevant Club discipline process, Member Protection Policy and/or grievance procedure outlined in the Club constitution/Handbook](#)).

12. RECORD KEEPING AND INFORMATION SHARING

- 12.1. Our Club is committed to making and retaining accurate records of reports of child safety related concerns and complaints.
- 12.2. Our Club will maintain records and outcomes of investigations and resolutions of concerns and complaints. In maintaining records of reports about child safety, our Club will maintain confidentiality and privacy for children and families in accordance with legislation.
- 12.3. As part of our Club's commitment to continuously improve our children and young people safety practices, the Club will review identified risks to child and young people through the incident management and record keeping process and will incorporate those risks into the risk management plan.
- 12.4. From time to time, our Club may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people where appropriate and in their best interest. This may include sharing information with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise the safety of a child or young person.



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Appendix 1: Child Safe Standards

Victorian Child Safe Standards	
1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Appendix 2: Related documents & legislative requirements

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- the laws of the Commonwealth and Victoria (as amended from time to time) including but not limited to:
 - Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
 - Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
 - Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) Failure to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child Under 16 (section 327); Failure by a Person in Authority to Protect a Child from a Sexual Offence (section 49 O);
 - Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic); and
 - Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) Organisational liability for child abuse.
- the Club's policies and procedures, including but not limited to:
 - Constitution;
 - Club Code of Conduct (which includes Complaints and Reporting procedures);
 - LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Policy
 - First Nations Inclusion Policy
 - Social Media Policy.

[consider: Privacy Policy;

- Member Protection Policy;
- Complaints and Reporting procedures;
- Photography and Videography Policy;]



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Appendix 3: Child Safety Risk Management Plan

Date reviewed	May 2024
Next review due	January 2025

Risk	Risk controls	Who is responsible?	By when?
<i>Risks identified in your organisation or in the activity</i>	<i>Actions you will take to manage the identified risks</i>	<i>Who will take these actions and make sure they are effective?</i>	<i>When will the actions be taken and reviewed?</i>
<p>Children aren't sure how to let someone know if they have child safety concerns or want to make a complaint.</p> <p>Children and/or parents are unaware of Code of conduct and Child Safety Policy.</p>	<p>Parents are all notified who is Child Safety officer and how to contact them and provided with Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Parents are encouraged to tell their children.</p> <p>Junior team coaches and Auskick facilitator to start each season by telling children who they can tell if they have any kind of issue (ie. coach or Child Safety Officer).</p>	<p>Auskick facilitator and junior coaches will make sure each season has an opening discussion on how to make a complaint.</p> <p>Auskick facilitator, junior team coaches and committee lead and Child Safety officer to debrief and present to Committee about operation of Child safe policy and procedure and any concerns identified.</p> <p>Child Safety officer to prepare initial contact to parents with Code of Conduct, requests for WWCC etc. To be sent in March 2024 and possible follow up immediately before Auskick and junior Season commences.</p>	<p>Auskick facilitator, junior team coaches and committee lead and Child Safety officer to annually debrief in October.</p> <p>Committee presentation and discussion in October/November.</p> <p>Review and make any changes to process, Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct by January.</p> <p>Child safe officer to prepare email out for parents and carers in Feb.</p>



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Risk	Risk controls	Who is responsible?	By when?
<p>Committee members, team and coaches are not well informed about child safe standards and their obligations.</p>	<p>Every person in the club made aware of contact details for the Child Safe Officer, including via the website contact form.</p> <p>Code of conduct includes child safe content and is provided to all people involved with the club.</p> <p>Child safety education is made freely available in multiple formats and on multiple occasions.</p>	<p>The Child Safety Officer will be responsible for attending regular continuing education on the topic of child safeguarding, particularly in the context of sporting clubs.</p> <p>The Child Safety Officer will regularly attend Committee meetings for the purpose of updating the committee and ensuring every member of the committee are aware of protective practices and risks in relation to child safety.</p> <p>The Child Safety officer will ensure that body safety and consent will be covered in orientation discussions at the start of each season, in a format and at a level appropriate for, Seniors, Juniors and Auskick participants. Coaches and the Auskick facilitators will share responsibility for communicating these messages and monitoring compliance.</p>	<p>See details of presentations to Committee and review of policy etc above.</p> <p>See also opening season requirements to communicate to parents, carers, players and Auskick participants.</p>
<p>Unsupervised children at Club events, including Auskick could lead to multiple kinds of harm to children.</p>	<p>Coaches and Auskick facilitators to enforce supervision requirements in the Childsafety and Wellbeing Policy.</p>	<p>Coaches and Auskick facilitator.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Risk	Risk controls	Who is responsible?	By when?
<p>Under 18 players participating in the Senior team may be exposed to inappropriate adult behaviour during team socialising or may be engaged by adult players in unequal or unsafe romantic or sexual relationships.</p>	<p>Expected standards of behaviour are made clear in the Code of conduct and the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy, including safeguards around giving lifts to young people.</p>	<p>Coaches are responsible for ensuring players receive and understand the code of conduct and abide by the specific policy requirements around lifts for young team members.</p>	<p>Communication around expected standards of behaviour (and inappropriate behaviour that will not be tolerated) at the start of the season and monitoring/enforcement is ongoing.</p>
<p>Risks of grooming or other predatory actual abuse of children by any adult associated with the Club</p>	<p>WWCC required for all adults in contact with children.</p> <p>Code of conduct for all associated adults identifies risks and unacceptable behaviour.</p> <p>Educational material to be provided to parents/carers about effective practices to protect children.</p>	<p>Child safety officer is responsible for coordination and planning.</p> <p>All committee members, coaches and Auskick facilitators are responsible for ensuring a child safe culture and organisational commitment.</p>	<p>Ongoing with annual requirements to review WWCC etc at start of season.</p>



Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club Falcons Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Appendix 4: Related child safety education resources and links

- AFL Safe Footy Safeguarding webinars and resources
 - www.afl.com.au/clubhel/safeguarding-children
- Play by the Rules training (child protection, cultural awareness)
 - www.playbytherules.net.au
- eSafety Commissioner (safe online environments and sporting organisations)
 - www.esafety.gov.au