



KEEPING OUR SPORT SAFE –

Parent Handbook

It is the mission of the South Metro Junior Football League “to provide kids a safe, supportive and inclusive environment which develops, promotes and maximizes participation in Australian Rules Football.”

Child Safe Standards:

As of 1 January 2017 the Child Safe Standards were implemented in all sporting organisations that operate and provide sporting services to children within Victoria. The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards that apply to organisations that provide services for children in order to help protect children.

The main principles of these standards are:

- Promote the safety of children
- Prevent child abuse
- Ensure organisations have effective processes in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse
- Providing a minimum standard of child safety across all organisations

The seven Child Safe Standards include:

1. Strategies to embed an organisational **culture of child safety**, including through effective leadership arrangements
 - Implementing policies and mission statements to promote being a child safe organisation and to raise awareness for child safety, such as abuse prevention
2. A **child safe policy** or statement of commitment to child safety
 - Strategies to ensure parents and children are encouraged to participate in reviewing and contributing to the further development of policies
 - Policies provide clarification and issue resolution, and should comprehensively cover your clubs stance of what is and isn't tolerated and what will happen if an incident occurs
3. A **code of conduct** that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
 - The Code of Conduct outlines how the club expects staff, volunteers, parents and players to behave
 - The Code of Conduct outlines the procedure when someone breaches the Code of Conduct, who to report a breach to and what constitutes as a breach of the Code of Conduct

4. Screening, supervision, training and other **human resources practices** that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
 - Information is provided in regards to child abuse recognition and instructions how to follow through on suspicions or disclosures from children
 - Policies implemented that promote good recruitment practices within the club, ensuring the clubs have quality personnel committed to keeping children safe. This document ensure staff meet the requirements for working with children, and that referee checks will be undertaken on all volunteers of the clubs
 - Training is frequently undertaken by Child Safety Officers, coaches, trainers and volunteers to provide education regarding issues and steps of resolution and updates regarding legislation updates
5. Process for **responding to and reporting** suspected child abuse
 - Whilst the SMJFL aims to prevent any issues taking place, some still may occur and it is vital that they are handled properly
 - Processes are implemented for acting on recollections from children or suspicions regarding a concern for children's safety
 - Guidelines are provided to staff and volunteers in regards to what to do if the form a reasonable belief or a child discloses information indicating abuse has or has the potential to occur
6. Strategies to **identify and reduce or remove risks** of child abuse
 - Policies created and implemented to ensure one-on-one situations do not occur
 - Risk assessment checklists are undertaken by clubs to ensure risks or potential risks are prevented
 - Identified risks are revisited as new situations can arise or change, yet through undertaking regular risk assessments the clubs are able to remain one step ahead
7. Strategies to promote the **participation and empowerment of children**
 - The SMJFL is continuously looking into ways to better improve children opportunities to voice their opinions, concerns and issues
 - Children are informed of their rights and have signage around their club to remind them of these rights
 - The SMJFL is continuously working to ensure children feel safe, empowered and that their concerns are taken seriously

Working with Children's Check:

The changes to the Working With Children Act 2005 which were implemented 1 August 2017 have now been added to the updated SMJFL Child Safety Handbook which is accessible via the SMJFL website. The main changes that would affect the league and all clubs are the following:

- The definition of '**direct contact**' in the Act has been expanded to include all oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact.
- The removal of references to '**supervision**' from the Act, which means that even if a person's child-related work is supervised by another person they still need to obtain a WWCC

Everproof is used by the SMJFL to verify all WWCC's and ensures all individuals WWCC are valid with the ability to identify any that have or about to expire or when an individual cannot participate in any child related work.

The SMJFL require ALL volunteers to hold a valid Working with Children Check if conducting the roles that require a WWCC (including all VIT registered teachers and Police Officers). The roles that require a WWCC are:

- Coaches
- Assistant Coaches
- Trainers
- Runners
- Team Managers
- Coaching Coordinator
- Club Volunteer Umpires (modified rules)
- Child Safety Officer
- President, Secretary, Board members and Committee members
- Any person at the club that does not have children at the club i.e senior players helping with training
- Umpire Escorts

Child Safety Officer (CSO) Role:

- All clubs nominated a Child Safety Officer as of 2017
- Responsibilities:
 - Ensure the club is compliant with new legislation regarding the 7 Child Safe Standards
 - Ensure thorough and regular risk assessments are performed
 - Continually seek new ways and initiatives to support a club culture in which the safety and development of children is the primary concern
- Requirements:
 - Valid WWCC
 - Undertake training on child safety issues as directed by the SMJFL
 - Be a trustworthy member of the club, capable of interacting appropriately with children and parents
- The CSO's contact details are accessible on the club's website or on posters around the club
- How to explain the CSO role to children:
 - Always available to listen to any concern
 - Can talk about anything, such as something you don't like around the club, someone calling you a name you don't like or if someone is hurting you
 - What they talk about with you will remain confidential unless the content of their disclosure involves something which has the potential or is inflicting harm on the child
 - They are trained to know how to help you with all different types of problems or concerns

A Child Safe Organisation:

The SMJFL strives to achieve a safe environment for all members, whilst aiming to ensure you as a parent understand your right to ask how the club ensures all safe standard requirements are met.

To ensure you feel comfortable with the coaching staff and other club personnel being in care of your child/children, you can:

- Ask other parents from the club of their experiences with the coaches and other club personnel
- Feel free to voice any concerns or suggestions with the club for further development
- Supervise your child/children at training for a while until you feel confident in leaving them in the capable care of the club staff

Children's right to safety:

- The SMJFL encourages children to express their views about their safety
- The SMJFL ensures the club's listen to suggestions made by the children, especially in regards to matters that directly affect them
- Children's rights advertised throughout clubs state:
 - "You have the right to discuss problems or concerns you may be facing with your Child Safety Officer"
 - "You have the right to feel safe no matter where you are"
 - "You have the right to be treated equally and be accepted for who you are"
 - "You have the right to have your opinions heard and be involved in the club's decisions"

Risk Management:

- The SMJFL recognizes the importance of a risk management approach to minimize the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and uses these assessments to inform members of our policy, procedures and activity planning
- To reduce the risk of child abuse or harm occurring, policies have been implemented. Some examples that should be taken into consideration include:
 - Using the change room facilities
 - Use of accommodation on overnight stays and when traveling with the team
 - Physical contact when coaching, managing or interacting with children
- The SMJFL reviews the league's and clubs risk assessment procedures as well as ensuring these assessments are conducted regularly to assess areas that require further development

Electronic Communication and Social Media:

The SMJFL is implementing ways of educating staff on ensuring all communication is monitored and that children understand what is appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication to their coaches, trainers and other club personnel. There are both appropriate and inappropriate forms of electronic communication:

- Emailing in regards to game day times is acceptable
- Accepting a friend request from a player or coach is inappropriate
- Texting regarding a training session being cancelled is appropriate, but asking about plans after the game is inappropriate

The SMJFL Social Media Policy states:

- Social media platforms and other online environments are also subject to the terms of this policy
- Online bullying, harassment, abuse, humiliation, sexual comments or behaviour and other misconduct are all offences under this policy and subject to punishment under its terms
- Incidents of online social media misconduct are also subject to the SMJFL Social Media Guidelines

Parent Code of Conduct

The SMJFL's Code of Conduct is available within their club policies. General codes of conduct are outlined and followed by role specific codes of conduct. As each role with the football league requires different forms of communication and interaction with children and club personnel, the SMJFL has outlined what is expected from each assigned role. Please see below the code of conduct expected of parents when attending training and/or games.

- Encourage your child to participate, have fun and try their best
- Offer help to coaches or other club personnel at training sessions or on game day, where possible
- Display appropriate behaviour free from discrimination, prejudice or indecency
- Remember that your actions and words carry a lot of weight in terms of encouraging or discouraging a child from continuing to participate
- Maintain a focus on the children's efforts and performance rather than the end result of the game
- Model appropriate behaviour, including respect for all players, club personnel and umpires
- Respect any decisions made by coaches, club personnel and/or umpires

Club CSO Contact Details:

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