



## **POLICY - CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES**

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Football Federation Northern Territory insists that all matters including disciplinary hearings and appeals relating to Child Protection, child abuse and the Working with Children

**Check is to be treated as strictly confidential.**

To ensure strict confidentiality the Football Federation Northern Territory insists that the Child Protection Officer is responsible for the management of all club and Association allegations of child abuse and child protection matters

It is a criminal offence for any Child Protection Officer or other person to disclose details relating to results of any Prohibited Persons Declaration or other Child Protection matters.

### **FOOTBALL FEDERATION NORTHERN TERRITORY CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

The Football Federation Northern Territory is committed to ensuring that the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is maintained at all times during their participation in activities run by the Football Federation Northern Territory and its member bodies.

The Football Federation Northern Territory, through the implementation of the Working with Children check, aims to promote a safe environment for all children.

We are committed to assisting all staff, officials, coaches, trainers, managers, members and volunteers to recognise the signs of child abuse and neglect and to follow the approved guidelines as set down by the Football Federation Northern Territory.

The focus of the Football Federation Northern Territory Child Protection Guidelines is the prevention of child abuse in the sporting environment.

Administrators, coaches, managers, trainers and officials often have a high contact with children in the sporting environment and play a major part in the successful operation of sporting activities. These people are often seen as role models and have significant influence on children they come in contact with and therefore have significant responsibilities.

The Football Federation Northern Territory expects all administrators, coaches, managers, trainers and officials whether paid or unpaid, who participate in organised sport under the Football Federation Northern Territory banner, to commit to implementing the strategies developed by the Football Federation Northern Territory for child protection and intervention.

## **CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES TO APPLY WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE FOOTBALL FEDERATION NORTHERN TERRITORY**

The following procedures are laid down for the guidance of all Councils and Clubs operating within the structure of the Football Federation Northern Territory.

### **ENQUIRES & ASSISTANCE**

The Football Federation Northern Territory requests that all enquires relating to Working with Children and Child Protection are directed to the Football Federation Northern Territory, Child Protection Officer:

Contact:	Kirsten Smooker
Office Phone:	8941 2444
Office Fax:	8941 8644
Office E-mail:	assistant@footballnt.com.au
Office Hours:	9am - 5pm Monday to Friday

The Government child protection authority, the Commission for Children and Young People is responsible for the governance of the Working with Children Check. Due to the enormity of the legislation this agency appoints individual government organisations to act as an agency according to their specific field. The Screening Agency for sporting organisations is the Northern Territory Police.

For information regarding Child Protection seminars please call:

The Office of Sport & Recreation  
Phone: (08) 8982 2358

## **OVERVIEW**

### **WHAT IS THE WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK?**

In October 2003, the Football Federation Northern Territory introduced the Volunteer Accreditation Policy. This Policy is to ensure that the safety, welfare and well-being of children is maintained at all times during their participation in activities run by the Football Federation Northern Territory and its member Councils and Clubs.

## COUNCIL AND CLUB RESPONSIBILITIES

In brief Councils and Clubs are required to:

Ensure that all coaches, managers, trainers and persons in charge of children within Associations and Clubs sign the Authority to Release Criminal History Form;  
(Attachment 1)

- Ensure that all allegations of child abuse at Club or Association are investigated thoroughly in accordance with these guidelines.
- Ensure that these investigations and disciplinary proceedings are conducted in a professional manner and treated as strictly confidential
- Should the Councils, Clubs or Child Protection Officer determine that the matter is of a more serious nature, then the Council or Club is requested to contact the Territory Child Protection Officer and/or the Football Federation Northern Territory Disciplinary Committee for assistance.
- Ensure that all completed disciplinary action against a coach, manager, trainer or official in relation to Child abuse is reported to the Football Federation Northern Territory Child Protection Officer for reporting to the Commission for Children and Young People.

## **CHILD PROTECTION FORMS & REPORTING PROHIBITED EMPLOYMENT DELIRATION**

(Attachment 1)

The AUTHORITY TO RELEASE CRIMINAL HISTORY (Attachment 1) is the only form, which is to be distributed to Clubs.

Clubs are not permitted to complete any other forms associated with Child Protection unless instructed by Association or State Child Protection Officer.

All forms are available from the Football Federation Northern Territory.

### **COMPLETED DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS**

All information relating to completed disciplinary findings by an Association against a Coach, Manager, Trainer, Committee Member or official in relation to Child Abuse must be forwarded to the Football Federation Northern Territory.

The State will assist the Association in determining the closure of the proceedings against the offender and in completing and submitting the necessary forms to Commission for Children and Young People.

**Clubs are not permitted** to submit forms directly to the Northern Territory Police.

The submission of a persons name to the Register for offenders is a serious action and can consequently cause undue problems should any part of the actual investigation into the matter be questionable or the allegations be deemed frivolous, misconceived or untrue.

Please remember that only allegations against a COACH, MANAGER, TRAINER, COMMITTEE MEMBER or OTHER APPOINTED PERSON IN CHARGE OF CHILDREN is subject to these Child Protection Procedures.

# CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES FOR COUNCILS AND CLUBS

## 1. COUNCIL AND CLUB CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

### 1.1 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL OR CLUB CPO

Associations must appoint an Association Child Protection Officer and advise the Football Federation Northern Territory General Manager in writing of this appointment.

### 1.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council or Club Child Protection Officer is responsible for:

- Coordinating the distribution of the Prohibited Employment Declarations (Attachment 1) to Clubs.
- Safe storage of signed PED forms for a period of 7 years.
- Maintaining confidential records in relation to Child Protection.
- Handling all information relating to Child Abuse allegations, investigations and reporting of completed disciplinary proceedings
- Coordinating with the FFNT CPO in advising P&D and appeal committees on understanding the definitions relating to child abuse.
- Ensuring all persons involved in your Council or Club is aware of the Child Protection Policy and relevant codes of conduct.
- Ensuring matters relating to Child Protection are treated as strictly confidential.

## 2. PROHIBITED EMPLOYMENT DECLARATIONS

### 2.1 DISTRIBUTION TO CLUBS

- Distribute the **AUTHORITY TO RELEASE CRIMINAL HISTORY** (Attachment 1) to all of your affiliated clubs.
- Instruct the clubs to ensure that all Coaches, Managers, Trainers, Committee Members and club officials sign the form.
- Advise the club that if anyone refuses to sign the form, then they must withdraw from the position.
- Request the club return the forms to you when completed.
- Store the forms in a secure place for a period of 7 years. These declarations remain valid for one season/year only. New forms must be signed at the start of each new season.

### 2.2 DISTRIBUTION WITHIN YOUR ASSOCIATION

- Request that all-Council **Representative Team** Coaches, Managers, Trainers and Officials sign an **AUTHORITY TO RELEASE CRIMINAL HISTORY** and return them to you.
- When you receive these signed forms send them to the FFNT office. These declarations are valid for one (3) season only but must be stored securely for 7 years.

### 2.3 GUEST COACHES OR INSTRUCTORS

- Where possible, request that any guest coaches or instructors of your Association or club teams sign a form prior to being given control of the team members.

### **3. MANAGING CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATIONS**

#### **3.1 OVERVIEW**

All Child Abuse allegations at Council or Club must be reported to the FFNT Child Protection officer immediately.

The CPO will investigate the allegations and report their findings to the FFNT Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee will treat this matter according to the FFNT processes and in accordance with these Guidelines.

Persons who are subject to disciplinary proceedings in relation to child related matters are entitled to appeal in accordance with the Football Federation Northern Territory appeals procedures.

The results of all disciplinary proceedings related to Child Abuse must be reported to the Football Federation Northern Territory State Child Protection Officer.

The FFNT CPO will assist the Council and Clubs CPO in determining the closure of the proceedings against the offender and in completing and submitting the forms to the Northern Territory Police when necessary.

The submission of a persons name to the Register for offenders is a serious action and can consequently cause undue problems should any part of the actual investigation into the matter be questionable or the allegations be deemed frivolous, misconceived or untrue.

**ALL MATTERS, INVESTIGATIONS AND HEARINGS  
RELATING TO CHILD ABUSE IS TO BE TREATED  
WITH THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.**

## **4. CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATION PROCEDURES**

An allegation of child abuse is a very serious matter and must be handled with a high degree of sensitivity.

### **4.1 INITIAL RESPONSE**

- Clarify the allegation - who, what, when, where
- Follow established procedures
- Assess any risks to the other children in the club
- Take interim action to ensure the safety of these children
- Consult FFNT CPO and report to Northern Territory Police if necessary
- Address the support needs of the child and the club

### **4.2 GUILT**

- Every person who has an allegation of abuse against them is entitled to be treated fairly and must be considered innocent until proven otherwise. Remember, at this stage it's an allegation only.

### **4.3 NEXT STEPS**

- Identify relevant people to provide information eg witnesses; referee reports, parents, coach, and manager or club officials.
- Do not involve or question the child without parental consent
- Document details for submission to Disciplinary Committee
- Collect relevant documents and information to assist THE disciplinary Committee in decision making in relation to child related matters. i.e. Definitions, advice from State CPO, advice from Office of Sport & Recreation.

At this stage consult with the Football Federation Northern Territory Child Protection Officer to determine if the organisation intend appointing an independent person to conduct the investigation

### **4.4 PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS AND NATURAL JUSTICE**

- After the initial stage of the investigation, the allegation will be put to the alleged offender in an interview with the Association disciplinary committee.
- There will be no other parties present other than the disciplinary committee, those persons directly involved in the matter and any advisors as required by the committee.
- Persons involved in the incident or who are acting, as witnesses to the incident or who have tendered a statement are not permitted to be part of the disciplinary committee.
- If the Child Protection Officer is not part of the disciplinary committee, the Child Protection Officer acts as a neutral adviser to the disciplinary committee.
- The alleged offender has the right to have an observer present during the interview and to consult an adviser (eg a solicitor, club official or friend) about the process.



- They will have an opportunity to respond both during the interview and (if they wish) in a written submission.
- All proceedings are subject to strict confidentiality and all parties must maintain that confidentiality.

#### 4.5 MAKING A FINDING

- The Association / Committee will consider all the information gathered
- A finding as to whether the allegation is sustained or not sustained will be made
- The rationale for the finding must be clearly documented

#### 4.6 FINAL RESULT

- A finding of sustained or not sustained will be delivered
- A decision about what action to take will be made considering the following possibilities:
  1. Disciplinary action
  2. Reporting of the finding to CCYP
  3. Amendments to policy/procedures

#### 4.7 TAKING ACTION

- If the allegation is **sustained** (proven) a report will be made to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and the offenders name will be submitted for inclusion on the CCYP database for child related offenders.
- The Association is to consult with the State Child Protection Officer in relation to completion of necessary documentation Person under and submission to CCYP.
- If the allegation is **not sustained** the disciplinary process is concluded.
- A final report of the findings is to be forwarded to the Football Federation Northern Territory Child Protection Officer.

#### 4.8 DOCUMENTATION

- All documentation relating to Child related matters must be stored securely for a period of 7 years.

#### **4.9 OTHER SITUATIONS WHICH MAY ARISE**

- Should the alleged offender not appear before the disciplinary committee as requested then the Association CPO is to contact the State Child Protection officer for consultation. In some cases, under the legislation, the matter is deemed to be concluded if the offender chooses not to appear or deems himself non-contactable. If this is the case then the person is reportable to the Commission for Children and Young People.
- Should the Police become involved in the matter then the procedures for investigation and the disciplinary proceedings would continue as set out in these guidelines.

**The Football Federation Northern Territory does not permit clubs to handle matters relating to child abuse or child related allegations**

**All Child related matters must be treated as strictly confidential**

#### **DEFINITIONS**

##### **CHILD**

Person under the age of 18 years

##### **CHILD ABUSE**

An act of assault or any action, physical or verbal, that puts a child at risk of harm and exploits, harms or damages the child's physical, emotional or psychological well being.

##### **Types of reportable Child Abuse:**

Physical, Verbal, Emotional and Threatening abuse

##### **Types of reportable sexual misconduct:**

Physical Sexual misconduct and Verbal Sexual misconduct

##### **Type of reportable Acts:**

Violence in the presence of children, Violence directed at a child or Violence, which directly involves a child

##### **Emotional Abuse**

Any behaviour, which destroys the confidence of a child, which results in significant emotional deprivation or trauma. Impairment of a child's social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development or disturbance of a child's behaviour.

##### **Physical Abuse**

Non-accidental injury to a child by a parent, caregiver or another person responsible for the child.

##### **Sexual Abuse**

Any sexual act, sexual threat, sexual behaviour, either verbal or physical imposed upon a child or any exploitation of the immaturity of a child.

##### **CHILD NEGLECT**

Failure of a parent or carer to provide a child with basic necessities: Food, Clothing, Shelter, Security, Medical Care or Adequate Supervision.

## **CONFIDENTIAL**

To retain information in secret, not to disclose, promote or advertise information to another person, persons or agent.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS**

Proven completed disciplinary proceedings against a person in the position of Coach, Manager, Trainer, team official, executive, committee member or person officially in charge of children. Which, involves, Child Abuse, Sexual misconduct or an act of violence which:

- (a) Involved a Child
- (b) Was directed at a Child
- (c) Which took place in the presence of a Child

## **VERBAL ABUSE**

Child related verbal abuse in relation to sporting organisations is subject to some debate. Advice indicate that in most cases one-off instances of swearing or an ongoing exchange of swear words in any one instance does not constitute verbal abuse against a child. However, if it can be proven that the child has been emotionally or mentally affected then there is a likelihood that it could be deemed to be verbal abuse against a child.

## **VIOLENT ACT**

Abuse or intimidating behaviour perpetrated by one person against another, which causes fear, physical or psychological harm.

## **Enquires:**

**For further information on definitions, please contact  
Kirsten Smooker**

**Phone: 08-8941 2444**

**or**

**E-mail: [assistant@footballnt.com.au](mailto:assistant@footballnt.com.au)**