

Child Protection Policy

Version 7.0 (Reviewed and reconfirmed without change 12 March 2024)

1 Child Protection Policy Statement

The New Zealand Ice Figure Skating Association (NZIFSA) has a responsibility to help safeguard all children involved in events organised under the auspices of the NZIFSA from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

The NZIFSA will help to ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in NZIFSA activities through adherence to this Policy. The NZIFSA Board shall appoint a member of the organisation to be the Child Protection Officer.

The NZIFSA will promote this policy and awareness and understanding of child protection.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as a person under the age of 17 and those 17 or over with special needs. The NZIFSA shall work to protect all children and young persons under the age of 17 even where the law may not recognise the need for such protection.

2 Policy Aims

The aim of the NZIFSA Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- 2.1 Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst involved in NZIFSA activities.
- 2.2 Allowing all staff, volunteers, coaches, officials and parent(s)/caregiver(s) to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
- 2.3 Helping to prevent the possibility of false accusations.
- 2.4 Protecting the organisation and our community against the damage what would result if a child under our care was abused.

3 Abuse

Child abuse means the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment or abuse of any child. Abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse.

4 Child Protection Officer

A Child Protection Officer shall be appointed by the NZIFSA Board. The officer may be chosen from within the organisation or from outside. Pre-appointment checks must include the following:

- 4.1 An application form must be completed. The application form must include self-disclosure about any criminal record of abuse or violence.
- 4.2 Two confidential references (preferably involving work with children). These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- 4.3 A Police check.

The Child Protection Officer should make reasonable efforts to attend a workshop or classes in child protection or child abuse and, when attendance is approved by the Board, course costs shall be paid by the NZIFSA and any travel and accommodation costs paid under the terms of the Travel and Reimbursement Policy.

5 Good practice guidelines

Everyone involved in the sport should strive to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. Staff, volunteers, coaches, officials and parent(s)/caregiver(s) are expected to follow these good practice guidelines during any activity or training for any activity held

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under the auspices of the NZIFSA or the ISU. Concerns over failure to follow these guidelines should be reported to the Child Protection Officer.

Good practice means:

- 5.1 Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- 5.2 Treating all children/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- 5.3 Always putting the welfare of each child first.
- 5.4 Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff, volunteers, coaches or officials to have an intimate relationship with a child other than their own or to share a room with them).
- 5.5 Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- 5.6 Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- 5.7 Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- 5.8 Involving parent(s)/caregiver(s) wherever possible, for example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parent(s)/caregiver(s), team managers, coaches or officials work in pairs.
- 5.9 Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away for the day or night, they should be accompanied by both a male and female chaperone or team leader when practical. Always remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- 5.10 Ensuring that at events, adults (other than the children's parent(s)/caregiver(s)) should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- 5.11 Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- 5.12 Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of children and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- 5.13 Securing parent(s)/caregiver(s) consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- 5.14 Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

6 Practices which must be avoided

The following **must be avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (e.g. the child needs **urgent and acute** medical care, or a parent(s)/caregiver(s) fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of an event), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge or the child's parent(s)/caregiver(s). The circumstances of any exceptions must be reported in detail to the NZIFSA Child Protection Officer within 48 hours.

Practices never to be sanctioned:

The following are never sanctioned. Staff, coaches, officials, and volunteers should never, while involved in an activity or training for any activity held under the auspices of the NZIFSA or the ISU:

- 6.1 Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- 6.2 Share a room with only one child other than their own, without the written consent of the child's parent(s)/caregiver(s) and completion of the pre-selection checks in section 8.
- 6.3 Share a room with children unless two or more are other than their own, without the written consent of the children's parent(s)/caregiver(s) and completion of the pre-selection checks in section 8.
- 6.4 Enter a child's room unless they are the parent(s)/caregiver(s), are accompanied by another adult or the child's parent(s)/caregiver(s) has provided written consent for that person to assume responsibility for the child at that time.
- 6.5 Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.

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- 6.6 Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- 6.7 Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- 6.8 Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- 6.9 Engage in any form of verbal or emotional abuse.
- 6.10 Encourage a child to engage in bullying or abuse.
- 6.11 Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- 6.12 Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- 6.13 Invite or allow children to stay in one's hotel room unsupervised.
- 6.14 Make overnight stopovers travelling to or from an event unless the stopover has been organised by the NZIFSA as a part of a team's travel or the children are travelling with their parent(s)/caregiver(s).

Otherwise, avoid:

- 6.15 Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- 6.16 Taking or dropping off a child to an event unless accompanied by another adult or other children.

7 Use of photographic/filming equipment at events

Organisers of competitions, camps and other events should ensure everyone photographing or filming events has a connection to the sport or is from the media. Except for media and officially appointed photographers and videographers and those operating video cameras for the judging system, those photographing, or filming should be required to sign a form identifying them that prevents distribution of any recordings.

8 Checks on adults accompanying children on trips

The NZIFSA recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from accompanying children on activities which involve an overnight stay.

Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- 8.1 All adults accompanying children other than their own on trips, must provide a written self-disclosure about any criminal record of abuse or violence.
- 8.2 A confidential reference (preferably involving work with children) for adults, other than coaches or officials registered with NZIFSA. This reference must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- 8.3 A police check.
- 8.4 A signed Representatives Agreement. (to be found on the NZIFSA website forms' page)

9 Reporting abuse, or suspicions of abuse or poor practice

Disclosure by a child, suspicions and concerns of abuse or poor practice or violations of this policy should be brought to the attention of the Child Protection Officer. It is important that any such concerns are communicated to the Child Protection Officer so that patterns of suspicious behaviour or unsafe practices may be monitored and recorded. You do not need to have proof, nor should you wait for proof before reporting your concerns. Do not look the other way. Do not assume that someone else will act.

If you are concerned that the Child Protection Officer is involved or may have a conflict of interest, then report your concerns to the NZIFSA President or General Secretary or another member of the Board. Anyone has the legal right to report abuse, disclosure of abuse, or suspicions of abuse directly to the police or Oranga Tamariki or to any other agency.

10 Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in the NZIFSA or affiliated organisations, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any serious concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities and to try to prevent further harm.

The NZIFSA shall fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that another person involved in the sport is, or may be, abusing a child.

11 Actions to be taken by the Child Protection Officer or the NZIFSA Board

11.1 Responding to concerns about poor practice or violations of this policy:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Child Protection Officer will write to the person involved about the NZIFSA's commitment to child protection and the need for individuals to follow the good practice guidelines and include a copy of this policy.
- Repeated poor practice after written notice will be considered a violation of this policy and subject to disciplinary procedures, including expulsion from the organisation.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to NZIFSA Board who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
- Staff, volunteers, coaches, officials or parent(s)/caregiver(s) accompanying children on overnight stays may be removed from such duties or prevented from taking on such responsibility without the need for disciplinary action if such action is believed to increase child safety or to decrease risk.

11.2 Responding to concerns about suspected or reported abuse:

- When abuse is suspected or reported, the first consideration will be to ensure the safety of the child.
- The Child Protection Officer should involve at least one other member of the Board when responding to suspected abuse, and shall follow the provisions in this policy.
- When a child discloses abuse to the Child Protection Officer, the guidelines contained in 'An interagency guide: Working together to keep children safe' publication from Oranga Tamariki will be followed.
- It is understood that only a minority of children actively disclose abuse. Most child abuse is disclosed accidentally, or through observation by an adult of a child's behaviour and physical appearance.
- A child who is displaying signs of possible abuse will not be questioned or interrogated, however it is important the child is listened to and responded to appropriately if he/she discloses abuse.
- The alleged offender should not be questioned or counselled.
- The Child Protection Officer shall refer any serious abuse or any serious suspicions of abuse to Oranga Tamariki and/or to the Police.
- When it is decided that concerns are not significant enough to refer to statutory authorities, confidential records will be kept, and efforts to monitor the child shall be considered where appropriate.
- In cases involving emotional or verbal abuse where it has been decided that concerns are not significant enough to refer to statutory authorities, then the matter may be brought to the attention of the NZIFSA Board, who may write to the offender or take disciplinary action against the offender, including expulsion from the organisation.
- The parent(s)/caregiver(s) or carers of the child will not be contacted regarding any concerns, as appropriate.

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- If the Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation or might be seen to have a conflict of interest, the report may be made to the NZIFSA President or to the NZIFSA General Secretary who will act in place of the Child Protection Officer.
- Staff, volunteers, coaches, officials or parent(s)/caregiver(s) accompanying children on overnight stays may be removed from such duties or prevented from taking on such responsibility without the need for disciplinary action if such action is believed to increase child safety or to decrease risk.

11.3 Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. However, the Child Protection Officer should not work alone in cases of suspected or reported abuse and unless a conflict of interest is involved, the President should also be consulted; otherwise another member of the Board should be consulted.

Confidentiality and “need to know only” dissemination applies to everyone, including the following people:

- the Child Protection Officer
- the parent(s)/caregiver(s) of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- Oranga Tamariki
- the Police
- the NZIFSA Board.
- the alleged abuser (and parent(s)/caregiver(s) if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people only.

Irrespective of the findings of Oranga Tamariki or the police inquiries, the NZIFSA Board may assess and consider an issue under the rules for disciplinary action or take the issue into account when making future assignments. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

11.4 Information to record about suspected abuse:

To ensure records are as useful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure or concern. It is important that unless the child makes a disclosure, they should not be questioned, nor should an alleged offender be questioned. The detailed record should include the following:

- The child's name.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- Did anyone contact the parent(s)/caregiver(s)?
- If so, who spoke to the parent(s)/caregiver(s) and what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, who spoke to the child and what was said?

- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

11.5 Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff or coach or volunteer who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the Child Protection Officer should follow the procedures as detailed above **and** report the matter to the Oranga Tamariki or the Police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse should not work with children.

12 Bullying by Children

Bullying includes hitting, tripping, pushing, intimidating actions (including texting, e-mailing and/or any other form of social media) directed at other skaters on or off the ice, damaging another child's property and/or name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse. For this policy, we consider bullying of children by adults and those in positions of power, trust or responsibility as physical, emotional or verbal abuse (and are dealt with in other sections of this policy).

Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who bullies another individual or individuals.

12.1 Actions to be taken by individuals, clubs and sub-associations or the NZIFSA to help the victim and prevent bullying in the sport:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Consult with the Child Protection Officer if you are unable or unsure how to proceed.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (children have committed suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any incidents to the Child Protection Officer.

12.2 Action to be taken by clubs, sub-associations or the NZIFSA towards the bully(ies):

- Consult with the Child Protection Officer if you are unable or unsure how to proceed.
- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully(ies)'s parent(s)/caregiver(s).
- Insist on the return of any 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change their behaviour.
- Impose sanctions as necessary or write to the NZIFSA to ask that disciplinary action be taken.
- Inform all organisation (club, sub-association) members of action taken.
- Inform the Child Protection Officer of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.