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American Football Ireland

**Youth Football
Guidance and Child
Safeguarding Policy**

Protect Children, Grow the Game.



September 2019

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Irish American Football Association Mission Statement

IAFA's mission, as the national governing body, is to promote and teach all aspects of American Football in a fun and positive environment while adhering to our core values.

Core Values

Integrity

We as an association aim to run the association with the utmost integrity, honesty and transparency at all times, through consistent and fair decision making and application of IAFA's By-laws and constitution. We, as an association, are accountable to our membership.

Respect

We, as an association, aim to ensure respect between fellow teammates, coaches, clubs, officials and administration and support them in all and any endeavours. We believe in fair play and creating a safe and fun environment throughout the association.

Inclusivity

We, as an association, aim to create a diverse membership that doesn't discriminate against individuals or clubs. We aim to provide an inclusive and family friendly environment for all.

Excellence

We, as an association, aim to strive for excellence through constant review and development of all aspects of the association. We will set, work towards and aim to continuously achieve the highest of standards to inspire participation and further evolve the sport in the country at both club and national level.



Teamwork

We, as an association, aim to commit to working together to promote and combine the skills of all members in a coordinated manner to assist and develop the association at all levels and to help us reach the association's goals more efficiently. We will rely on each other and understand each individual has a part to play.

Youth Football Purpose

The primary purpose of the IAFA Youth Football League is the introduction of the sport and basic skill development of U18 players in a fun and safe environment.

Additional benefits include:

- More options for Irish youth to be active and fit
- Long term improvement of football skills across the IAFA
- Increase retention of new players
- Pipeline of players into Junior/Senior team ranks
- Increased cohesion of Irish American Football community

Player level focus is "Learn, Compete, and have Fun."

Club and IAFA level focus is "Grow the game while Protecting Children."

Purpose of this document

This document provides players, parents, coaches, and member clubs with IAFA guidance on providing Youth football to their communities. The



information found here is IAFA policy as it relates to the care of children by our member organizations.

This policy is a requirement that all persons within the IAFA must comply in order to safeguard children from harm. Additionally, this document will describe the general outline of IAFA's Youth football organization with an emphasis on administrative requirements to ensure a smooth Youth football season.

References

- Child Care Act 1991
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Criminal Justice Act 2006
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016
- Children First Act 2015
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017
- Children (NI) Order 1995
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Department of Health, 2017)
- Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport (Northern Ireland)
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- British American Football Association Safeguarding Policy
- Irish American Football Association 2019 By-Laws
- Irish American Football Association Vetting Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- Safeguarding for Children and Young People in Sport 2019 (Sport Ireland and Sport NI)



Abbreviations

IAFA – Irish American Football Association

ROI – Republic of Ireland

NI – Northern Ireland

DSCO – Designated Safeguarding Children’s Officer (NI)

DLP – Designated Liaison Person

CCO – Club Children’s Officer

HSCT – Health and Social Care Trusts (Northern Ireland)

NVB – National Vetting Bureau, organisation responsible for processing vetting checks in Ireland

PPU – Public Protection Units, PSNI sector responsible investigating child abuse allegations

PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland

Introduction

The sport of American Football provides participants, especially young people, with the opportunity to develop values such as teamwork, hard work, and self-discipline. Development of self-esteem, physical fitness, mental toughness, and leadership are also qualities that are keys to success in American Football. All of these positive benefits are only possible if young people are coached and mentored within a safe environment.

The IAFA have a moral and legal obligation to ensure young people, coaches, volunteers, administrators, and officials provide children and vulnerable people with the highest standards of care when they are within our responsibility. The IAFA staff, club administrators, coaches, and parents must work together to ensure proper safeguarding of children occurs.

Implementation of the policy and best practice guidance within this document will help to provide a safe environment critical to the safety and success of all. Member clubs are expected to meet the standards outlined when interacting with children whether within a youth football season or during the off-season.



Responsibilities

Persons under the age of 18 are considered children. It must be noted that some adults may also be vulnerable to abuse. As with children, you should report any concerns you have about the welfare of an adult at risk.

The IAFA must:

- Appoint a designated person to lead Safeguarding with the organization. The title for this position is the IAFA National Children's Officer (NCO).
- Appoint a Designated Liaison Person. This person can also serve as the NCO.
- Appoint a Relevant Person. Defined as a person who is appointed by the IAFA to be the first point of contact in respect of the IAFA's Safeguarding Statement. This person can also serve as the NCO.
- Publish an IAFA Safeguarding Policy with implementation procedures. Review those policies and procedures every 3 years or earlier if required to comply with any changes in law or best practice guidance.
- Conduct a Safeguarding Risk Assessment and implement risk mitigation measures. Review the Risk Assessment yearly.
- Ensure all volunteers working directly with children receive the required level of safeguarding training based on position held within the organization. See Training requirement chart under Training Section.
- Publish an IAFA Safeguarding Statement.
- Appoint an IAFA Vetting Officer, publish a vetting policy, manage requests for vetting, and determine the suitability of people to work with children.
- Implement a procedure to record and report cases of misconduct.



- Publish and IAFA Code of Conduct and gain formal acknowledgement and support from all members of the association (through signature).
- Conduct checks on Safeguarding policy compliance at all levels of the IAFA.

Member Clubs must:

- Comply with the IAFA safeguarding policies and best practice guidance.
- Appoint a Club Designated Liaison Person (ROI) or Club Designated Children’s Safeguarding Officer (NI)
- Appoint a Club Children’s Officer (ROI). The DLP may also serve as the CCO.
- Conduct a Safeguarding Risk Assessment and implement risk mitigation measures. Review the Risk Assessment yearly.
- Publish a Club Safeguarding Statement.
- Educate members on the IAFA Safeguarding Policy and require players, parents, staff, and coaches to formally acknowledge and support (through signature).
- Ensure all volunteers that apply to work directly with children are properly vetted. Follow the IAFA vetting policy.
 - The level of vetting in Northern Ireland is the Enhanced Disclosure with a barred list check via AccessNI. The AccessNI must be submitted to the IAFA Vetting Officer. Failure to submit an individual’s AccessNI check will disbar that person from working with children. It is a crime to recruit a barred person to a regulated activity role (i.e. coaching).
 - In ROI it is an offence to recruit anyone paid or unpaid to work with children without undertaking a NVB check beforehand. There



are significant fines, laid out in law, for responsible persons within an organization who knowingly allow an un-vetted person to work with children.

- Ensure all volunteers working directly with children receive the required level of safeguarding training based on position held within the organization. See Training requirement chart under Training Section.
- Implement a procedure to record and report cases of misconduct in line with IAFA policy.
- Educate club members on how to report potential cases of misconduct and safeguarding best practice.

Key Principles

- All people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse and harassment.
- It is the responsibility of welfare experts (Tusla, HSCT, PSNI, Garda, etc) to determine whether or not abuse has taken place, but it is everyone's duty to report any concerns.
- All suspicious incidents and allegations of poor practice or abuse should be taken seriously and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Parents are a vital partner in the protection of children.
- Confidentiality should be upheld throughout the entire process of reporting allegations of abuse; for the reporter, potentially abused, and the accused.



Required Training

Safeguarding

In the ROI, safeguarding training has three workshop levels. This training is provided by County Sports Partnership Offices. Contact Sport Ireland at 01 860 8800 for training schedules.

In NI, Safeguarding training has two workshop levels: Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport (SCYPS, 1st level) and Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer (DSCO, 2nd level). Contact Sport Northern Ireland for training schedules, tel. 028 9038 1222.

Safeguarding 1 Refresher (e-learning module). This is a free online course that will count as refresher training for people who have previously attended Safeguarding 1 (ROI) or Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport (NI) face to face workshops. ***Please note that this course counts for refresher training in both the ROI and NI for level 1 Safeguarding requirements.***

The chart below shows the role, training requirement, and validation Period.

	Safeguarding 1 or SCYPS	Safeguarding 2 or DSCO	Safeguarding 3 or DSCO	Safeguarding 1 Refresher
Coach (U18)	Required, 3 yrs	Recommended		Required
DLP	Required, 3 yrs	Required, 3 yrs	Required, 3 yrs	Required
CCO	Required, 3 yrs	Required, 3 yrs	Recommended	Required
DSCO	Required, 3 yrs	Required, 3 yrs	Recommended	Required
NCO	Required, 3 yrs	Required, 3 yrs	Required, 3 yrs	Required
Committee	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	
Parent	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	



U20 Nat'l Team Mngr & Coaches***	Required, 3 yrs			Required
Director of Youth Football	Required, 3 yrs	Required, 3 yrs	Recommended	Required

*** Only if there are players on the U20 team that are 17 years old or under.

Coaching

Each youth team must have at least one current IAFA Level 0 qualified coach present at training and games.

Required Training Verification

Member Clubs and the U20 National Team Manager must submit copies of Safeguarding training certificates and a list of Youth coaches to the IAFA National Children's Officer (NCO) no later than 2 weeks prior to the beginning of Youth training for a season.

Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our Association and member clubs. There would be no American Football in Ireland without our dedicated volunteers. The people who lead, manage, coach, and provide support to our sport carry the reputation of our organizations on their shoulders. It therefore essential that we ensure those volunteers are competent in the skills required for their roles and that they uphold the values of our Association and Clubs.

Create a Description of the Role

- Draw up a role profile which highlights key responsibilities of the role.
- Describe the skills and experience that an individual will need.
- Identify the aims of the organization (NGB or club)
- Describe the organizations positive stance on child welfare and equal opportunities.

Applications



- Use application forms to collect appropriate information on each applicant.
- Ensure that more than one official looks at each application form.
- Request two reference from individuals who are not related to the applicant
- Ensure applicant completes the vetting process

Interviewing

- Meet with all applicants prior to any recruitment decision made.
- Ensure more than one official is present.

It is good practice to interview all people working with young people and / or specifically known vulnerable adults. The interview should be carried out according to acceptable protocol and recommendations.

The meeting/interview will enable the NGB or club to explore further the information provided in the application form. The questions to be asked should be prepared in advance and should provide the applicant with the opportunity to recount previous experiences and give examples of how they have or would handle situations. It's important to elicit information regarding an applicant's technical capabilities and is also necessary to explore their attitudes and commitment to welfare.

It is recommended that one the organisation's Safeguarding Officer is present at such interviews.

Induction

All new volunteers will undergo a formal induction in which:

- Their qualifications as coach/official/staff are substantiated:
- They complete a profile to identify training needs.
- They have agreed to conform to the organisations safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct and they may face disciplinary action if there is an allegation that the code has been broken.
- Welfare and Equality procedures are explained, people will be made aware of their responsibilities.
- Where practicable, the new volunteer should be mentored by an experienced member of staff.

Good Practice with Young People



Introduction

Establishment of good recruitment procedures may assist in deterring potential perpetrators of abuse. It is also necessary that all IAFA members are aware of their responsibilities, not only to ensure the best possible protection is given to young people and vulnerable adults, but also to avoid allegations of poor practice against themselves.

The following Code of Conduct provides details of the standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when working with young people. The Code is divided into three categories: good practice, practice to be avoided and practice never to be sanctioned.

All IAFA members are expected to adhere to the Code. Any reported allegation of non-compliance will be dealt with in line with the IAFA disciplinary procedures.

Good Practice

In order to ensure everyone experiences enjoyment of the game, that people are in a safe environment, adults are aware of their responsibilities and possible vulnerable positions are avoided, IAFA requires that its member organisations adopt and adhere to the following:

Club Responsibility (these are club roles not the individuals code of conduct/behaviour)

- Adoption of the IAFA Safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Designate a Children's Officer. Ensure the person undergoes the vetting process, and is informed of training opportunities.
- Promotion of the policy to all members and parents.
- Promotion of an environment where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal or recrimination.
- Establish guidelines and procedures for dealing with complaints or concerns confidentially that comply with IAFA reporting guidelines.



- Ensure guidelines are in place for obtaining written consent – for participation, use of photographic images, and to act as loco parentis in emergencies.
- Keep written records of any reported poor practice or Safeguarding related incidents and accidents, including any action taken.
- Provide training opportunities for adults working with young people.
- Take every effort to prevent situations where an adult is alone with a child or group of children.
- Ensure that at least two responsible adults are present at all times during training sessions.
- Ensure those in the club follow IAFA guidelines for away trips and events.
- Keep participants and parents fully informed about Safeguarding Young Persons and Vulnerable Adults procedures.
- Ensure Codes of Conduct and Codes of Practice are communicated to all stakeholders and are complied with.
- Develop, promote and publicise the IAFA Anti-Bullying policy.
- Provide regular monitoring and appraisal opportunities.
- Encourage good practice.
- Offer support for those who report concerns on suspicious or poor practice.

Good Practice Guidelines for IAFA Members

All members of the IAFA should demonstrate the highest possible behaviour standards. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within American Football.



- Always work in a publicly open environment. Avoid being in private and unobserved situations with a young person.
- Encourage an open environment (e.g. no secrets)
- Ensure that at least one other adult is present during training sessions.
- Situations may occur when in order to teach or coach certain techniques it is necessary to make physical contact with a player. In such instances the following principles should apply to physical contact:
 - Only to meet the child's needs, NOT the adult's.
 - The players and parents must be made aware of context in which this may happen when joining the Club / activity.
 - Physical contact for coaching should only be used when there is no other alternative of coaching a technique, or in an emergency.
 - Avoid inappropriate or unnecessary contact.
 - Develop skills or techniques.
 - To treat an injury (following first aid guidelines).
 - To prevent an injury or accident from occurring.
 - Explain the nature and reason for the physical contact to the child.
 - Responding to distress and success.
- If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms ensure that the adults work in pairs, and that gender is appropriate.
- If team includes mixed ages, ie the junior squad which includes over 18s, ensure that no over 18s team members are in the changing rooms when under 18s are present.
- Ensure that if mixed gender teams are taken away, they are accompanied by male and female adult members.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Place the welfare of each person before winning or achieving goals.
- Only work within the limitations of your knowledge and qualifications.



- Keep up to date with knowledge and technical skills.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of young people avoiding excessive training or competition and not push them against their will.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback; avoid negative criticism.
- Build balanced relationships based on trust empowering young persons or vulnerable adults to share in the decision making process.
- Behave in an exemplary manner; be an excellent role model.
- Make sport fun and enjoyable and encourage fair play, and never condone the use of prohibited substances.
- Team communications by emails, texts or whatsapp must be in a group format.
- Emails should be addressed to another coach and all team members only by bcc. Parental/guardian permission must be obtained for you to communicate with their under 18s in this manner.
- Teams may have a closed social media site but parental permission must be obtained to communicate with young persons in this manner and if parent/guardian wishes to also have access this permission must be given.

Practice to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the NGB's or Club's head official or Children's Officer or the young person's / vulnerable adult's parents/guardian.

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a person/s away from others.



- Avoid taking people (young / vulnerable adult) on a car journey where you will be alone with them.
- Avoid having 'favourites' - this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other people and may lead to false allegations.
- Avoid, where possible, doing things of a personal nature for young people that they can do for themselves unless you have been requested to do so by their parents. *

* **Note.** It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for some people, particularly if they are young or have a disability. Such tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the person and where possible their parents / guardians. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with them about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Never take on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Practice never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Take a young person / vulnerable adult, to your home or secluded places where you will be alone with them.
- Have one to one friendship/communication on any social media including text and email messages.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games such as horseplay.
- Have adults participate in any games or training sessions with young people. If there is a need for an adult to facilitate learning through the use of coaching aids it should be done with the utmost care, with due regards given to the safety and well-being of the young participants.



- Share a room with a child or invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to people, even in fun.
- Use inappropriate language, or allow inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
- Ensure they maintain healthy, positive and professional relationships with all young people. Coaches and others in positions of authority and trust in relation to player aged 16 and 17 years must not engage in sexual relationships with them while that unequal power relationship exists.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- Depart premises until all young people have been dispersed safely.
- Resort to bully tactics or verbal abuse.
- Cause a young person to lose self-esteem.
- Allow the use of alcohol or illegal substances.

If any of the following incidents occur it should be reported immediately to another colleague and make a written record. The parents of the child must also be informed if:

- You accidentally hurt a young person.
- A young person appears distressed in any manner.
- A young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- A young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.



Position of Trust

Appropriate boundaries should be upheld, especially when one person is aged under 18 or a vulnerable adult. The power and influence that a member of staff has over someone attending a group or activity cannot be underestimated. If there is an additional competitive aspect to the activity and one person is responsible for the other's success or failure to some extent, then the dependency will be increased. It is therefore vital for people to recognize the responsibility they must exercise in ensuring that they could not be considered to have abused their positions of trust.

Coaches should be careful to ensure that the appropriate boundaries remain in their working relationships between themselves and all players, especially those aged under 18 years. Even if a child can legally consent to sexual activity, it is inappropriate and extremely poor practice for an adult to pursue a relationship with a young person with whom they are in a position of trust. In some cases 'abuse of trust' is a criminal offence. Whilst the coach-player relationship exists, coaches must not enter into an intimate relationship with an under 18 yr old.

Guidelines for use of video/photographic images

Some people are known to have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sports people in vulnerable positions.

Ensure that your club has permission from a parent to take photographs/video of their children. Photographs/video should only be used for training purposes or activities to promote the sport. See IAFA sample proforma.

Promoting good practice and Recognising Poor Practice, Abuse and Bullying

Introduction

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can generate strong emotions in those having to deal with such an allegation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about what action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people to harm them.



A teacher, coach or club volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where protection is needed. All suspicious cases of poor practice or alleged abuse should be reported following the guidelines in this document. When a person enters a club or team setting having been subjected to abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the person's self-esteem. In such instances, the club must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the young person receives the required support.

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect young people and to protect themselves from allegations. The relevant sections of the Irish American Football Association Code of Ethics and Conduct should be studied. In addition, the following are common sense examples of good practice and how to create a positive culture when working in American Football:

- making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play;
- always putting the welfare of each person first, before winning or achieving goals;
- always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment with no secrets);
- building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people to share in the decision-making process;
- giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- treating all young people equally and with respect and dignity;
- maintaining a safe and appropriate distance both emotionally and physically (e.g. it is not appropriate for an adult to have an intimate relationship with a young person or vulnerable adult (in some cases this is illegal) or to share a room with them);
- keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport;



- ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by male and female staff;
- ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms unless in an emergency. If an adult is working in a supervisory capacity, they should only enter children's rooms when accompanied by another adult;
- being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol whilst supervising children and promoting a healthy diet;
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of children, avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will;
- securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment;
- keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given, which is then reported to the parents at the first opportunity;

Abuse can and does take place outside the family setting. Even for those experienced in working with abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Volunteers are not expected to be experts at such recognition; however, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone, an adult or another child, towards a young person. Member organisations should encourage, and expect staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a person immediately with the designated officer and follow the procedures in IAFA's Safeguarding Policy.

Abuse

Abuse can and does happen in a wide range of environments, within or outside of the family setting, at school and in a sporting environment, and often it is people (adults and other young people) a young person knows and trusts. The effects of abuse can be immensely damaging to a young person's physical, mental or emotional health. Untreated, the detrimental effects caused by abuse can follow a person into adulthood.



Neglect

Neglect is where adults fail to meet a young or vulnerable person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the person's health or development. For example failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a person from physical and/or emotional harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Neglect in sport could include not ensuring children are safe by:

- Leaving people alone without proper supervision.
- Exposing people to undue cold or heat without providing protection or fluids.
- Exposing people to unnecessary risk of injury.

Physical Abuse

Includes situations where another person deliberately physically hurts or injures a person, or knowingly fails to prevent such injuries. Giving young or vulnerable people alcohol, inappropriate drugs, or other harmful substances can also cause harm. Additionally there is the feigning of symptoms or deliberately inducing illness in a young or vulnerable person.

In a sporting environment physical abuse may occur when:

- Young people are exposed to exercise/training that disregards the capabilities of an immature and growing body.
- Young people are exposed to overplay, over training or fatigue.
- Leaving young / vulnerable people alone without proper supervision.
- Exposing people to undue cold or heat without providing protection or Fluids
- Adults giving young people the opportunity to consume alcohol whilst under age.
- Adults who recommend the taking of performance enhancing drugs.



Sexual Abuse

Male and Female adults/peers and other children abuse people to meet their own sexual needs through:

- Full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, or fondling.
- Showing people pornographic books, photographs or videos or taking photographs for pornographic purposes.
- Encourage people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

In a sporting environment abuse may occur through:

- Inappropriate physical contact taking place during the coaching/teaching of techniques and skills, treatment or touching.
- Techniques involving physical contact could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed.
- The power of the coach over young performers, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.

Emotional Abuse

Situations in which emotional abuse can be caused are:

- When there is a persistent ill treatment caused by a lack of care, love, affection, or attention shown to a person.
- Where a person is constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted.
- The corruption of a person in a sporting environment by emotional abuse may occur when a young or vulnerable person:
 - Received constant negative feedback.
 - Has their efforts to progress ignored.
 - Has demanded of them performance levels above their capabilities.
 - Is subjected to racism, name calling and bullying



Exploitation – is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as:

- -Child labour including slavery or servitude engagement in criminal activity

Indicators of Abuse

The following list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is taking place.

- Unexplained injuries, particularly if on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- Any injury for which the explanation appears inconsistent.
- Untreated injuries.
- Reticence to return home.
- Aggressive behaviour towards others.
- Constantly hungry and tired.
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- Frequently late or absent from training sessions.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour.
- Sexual awareness inappropriate for age.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Mistrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Having difficulty in making friends.



- Being prevented from socialising with other children or young people.
- Variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Loss of weight for no apparent reason.
- Someone else expressing concerns about the welfare of the person.

Bullying

This form of abuse can and is inflicted by children as well as adults. Bullying behaviour may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms: the three main types are physical, verbal, emotional, and can be face to face or via social media.

Those who display bullying behaviour are deliberately hostile and aggressive toward another person because they perceive them as different, weaker or less powerful. The outcome of bullying behaviour is always painful and distressing for the victim. Bullying behaviour can include:

- Physical: e.g. hitting, kicking and theft.
- Verbal: e.g. name-calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats, graffiti and gestures.
- Emotional: e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring.
- Sexual: e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

Bullying behaviour can and does occur anywhere there is inadequate supervision. The competitive nature of American Football makes it an ideal environment for the bully. The person displaying bullying behaviour could be:

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- An overzealous coach with a 'win at all costs' attitude who deliberately tries to cause harm to players
- A team member who intimidates others.

The damage inflicted by bullying behaviour can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to young people and adversely affect their health, well-being and development. There are a number of signs that may indicate that a young person or adult at risk is experiencing bullying behaviour:



- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, becoming clingy, depressed, and tearful and emotionally up and down; reluctance to go to school, training or sports club.
- A drop off in performance at school or standard of play.
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing; for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

Parents as supervisors

Parents should be encouraged to accompany their children to activities, but they should not be included in supervision calculations unless they are members of the club and acting in a volunteering role or other capacity during the activity. In these circumstances, they should meet all appropriate requirements in terms of;

- appropriate background checks;
- clarity about their role and responsibilities;
- who has overall responsibility for the group;
- what is acceptable practice.

Changing Rooms

Where practical, children should be supervised at all times in the changing rooms by two members of staff¹. Adult staff should not change or shower at the same time using the same facility as players. Staff of the opposite gender should not be present whilst players are showering or changing. If a young person is uncomfortable changing or showering in public, no pressure should be placed on them to do so and they should be encouraged to do this at home. If the club has children with disabilities, involve them and their parents in deciding how they should be assisted and ensure they are able to consent to the assistance that is offered but club members should avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which they are not appropriately trained.

All players and staff should be aware that no photographic equipment (including cameras, video cameras, mobile phones) should be used in the changing room environment.

¹ The term staff is used in this context to include volunteers representing IAFA governing body or club's



Transport to Events

- It is good practice to receive informed consent from parents and young people who will be transporting their child, why and how long the journey will take.
- Attempt to have more than one child in the car.
- Alternate drivers if possible and which child is dropped off last.
- Driver should have a point of contact/mobile phone.
- A person other than the planned driver should talk to the child about transport arrangements to check they are comfortable about the plans.
- The driver must ensure that they have insurance to carry others.
- Drivers representing and volunteering on behalf of a club should be vetted through National Vetting Bureau/Access NI **if driving regularly**, and therefore meeting the regulated activity criteria.
- Parents and coaches can also download Sport Irelands SafeSport App @ https://www.sportireland.ie/Participation/Code_of_Ethics/Code-Of-Ethics-App. One of the features of the App is a 'Travel Tracker' function. This allows parents and coaches who are driving someone else's child/children home, for example after a training session, to permit the child's parent or guardian to view and have oversight of their location for a specified period of time while they are travelling on a journey.

Personal arrangements between parents

If parents make personal arrangements between themselves this is not the responsibility of the club unless there are particular concerns about a parent's ability to drive for example due to the consumption of alcohol.

Overnight Travel

The involvement of children at competitions and other squad or group activities helps with their motivation and supports their prolonged participation in sport. Travelling and staying together for an event or activity helps develop a team spirit that fosters an open, honest and inclusive team atmosphere. There are a number of options for clubs and U18 national teams to consider when staying away. The options are dependent on clear boundaries of responsibility for the trip arrangements for children involved, as follows:



- Parent responsibility – parents are responsible solely for their own children
- Club responsibility – whereby the club agrees to undertake all the arrangements
- Parent and club responsibility – a combination of club and parent responsibilities
- Use of host families – where local families are used for accommodating children

The IAFA procedure for overnight travel covers the requirements for groups travelling away together where by the arrangements are made either in conjunction with or solely by the club/NGB. The protocol provides detailed procedures for all children, instructors, team managers and associated helpers to adopt and adhere to for away events in order to safeguard the well-being of all participants.

It is also important that all children know to raise any issues or queries with their Children's Officer or other such trusted adult.

Dos and don'ts of mixing juniors and seniors These measures are to protect both the under 18s and the adult in these circumstances.

- Under 18s and over 18s should not share bedrooms*
- Under 18 males and under 18 females must not share bedrooms
- Under 18s must not be expected to share a room with an instructor/coach or person in authority (unless this is with their parent).

*Please note that this measure does not apply to parents and their own children or to sharing by siblings.

The maximum ratio of supervising adult to children when the children are 15 to 17 years old is 1:10. Younger children will require lower ratios.

Detailed planning is required that produces a comprehensive itinerary that includes transportation arrangements, timings, and agendas for each scheduled event. Specific rules for the safety and accountability of children will



be detailed in writing. The parent and child are required to agree to the travel rules. The club/NGB should provide this trip plan document to parents for review and request that the parent provide permission for their child and all travel rules are followed. The parent and child will then sign the permission form.

Communication

Introduction

In all their contacts and communications with the members of their club / teams, leaders must be seen to be open and transparent. This is the case whether communications are by traditional means or by electronic means.

Note: *Leaders must not communicate with children or young people via leader's personal social networking profiles, email accounts, or chat rooms.*

Social Media Good Practice

- The club page/profile must be password-protected, and the password must be held by at least three leaders of the organisation.
- The site should be monitored by a designated supervisor. This person should have access to the login details of the site. This supervisor will be appointed by the Designated Person/Safeguarding Panel in Charge of Child Protection.
- Any inappropriate posts by children/young people or leaders should be removed by the designated supervisor. Reasons should then be explained to the person who posted the content. Where possible sites should be monitored before content is put up.
- The site should be kept 'Private' i.e. only permitted members or 'friends' can see what is posted on the site.
- The use of personal addresses and telephone numbers etc. should be avoided as, while sites are 'private', there is the potential for items to be copied and shared.
- Content of any postings should be consistent with the aims of the organisation. In cases of doubt leaders should seek advice.



For Leaders Using a Social Networking Site

- Leaders should not ‘friend’ or ‘follow’ children or young people on social media. (Children or young people may ‘follow’ leaders on social media so leaders should make sure any content they post is appropriate.)
- Messages left to or from children or young people on social network sites should be written on an open page (e.g. A facebook ‘Wall’) and not in a private message or by using ‘chat’ [one-on-one].
- Leaders should not network with members of their organisation/group via closed [one-on-one] chats e.g. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, etc,. This should be done only through ‘Group Chat.’
- Any events or activities run by the organisation that are organised or publicised on the site should be a closed event so as non-members cannot access the event without suitable permission by the site administrators.
- Any emails sent to children or young people via the site must be sent to at least one other leader. (This can be done by ‘bcc’ if necessary.)
- Leaders should avoid communicating with children or young people in their organisation/group via email late at night.
- In signing off a post or email leaders should not do so in a way that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted by the recipient, e.g. “Luv X”; “xoxoxo”. Simply sign your name.
- Parents/carers should be asked to give their approval for leaders to communicate with their children/young people via social networking sites, or by any other means of internet communications (e.g. email).
- Parental and child’s permission is required before pictures of videos of children or young people are posted online.
- Any disclosures of abuses reported through a social networking site must be dealt with according to your reporting procedures.

Responding to Concern, Suspicions and Allegations

Introduction

It is acknowledged that individuals with a deep commitment to the sport are



reluctant to believe that young people may be experiencing abuse, making it difficult to accept that young people may be at risk. Taking appropriate action is never easy, the discovery that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a young person will be cause for concern and mixed feelings for fellow colleagues.

Levels of awareness need to be raised without creating an atmosphere of anxiety or suspicion. Be aware of the attitudes of adults and of their interaction with young people. Sometimes certain behaviour is excused because of the way in which certain individuals or teams are known to behave. If the behaviour is contrary to IAFA Safeguarding policy and procedures, meaning that young people could be at risk, then action has to be taken.

Anything that causes a person to feel uncomfortable should be brought to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Adults must also be alert to any unusual incidents or activities that take place where they may be placing themselves in a vulnerable position.

How to respond to an allegations

If a young or vulnerable person says or indicates, they are being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a person is being abused; the person receiving the information should adopt the following guidelines:

- React calmly so as not to alarm or frighten the person.
- Reassure the young person they are not to blame and assure them that they were right to tell.
- Let the young person know that you are taking what they say seriously.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Try not to ask direct or leading questions, as it could lead to compromise.
- Reassure the person but do not make promises of confidentiality. Explain you may have to tell others.
- Make a full record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible. This record will be referred to in the event of further investigation. Detailed questioning should be left to a qualified investigator.



- Ensure the safety of the person. If medical attention is needed call an ambulance. Inform the medics of the concerns, and make sure they are aware that the incident is a Safeguarding Young Persons matter.
- Consult with the Club Designated Liaison Officer or IAFA National Childrens’ Officer
- To report directly to the IAFA National Childrens’ Officer (NCO) use the IAFA website’s CONTACT US page. Select the drop down menu for Child Protection. The information will be sent directly to the NCO.

If you are unsure of actions to be taken seek advice. Concerns can be discussed informally with Tusla, Child & Family agency in the ROI

(<https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/contact-a-social-worker/>) or In Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts. Each trust will have a Gateway team to deal with reports of abuse and also more local contacts for ongoing professional liaison for advice on concerns.

Regional Emergency Social Work service. Available 5.00 PM – 9.00 AM Monday to Thursday and 5.00 PM on Friday to 9.00 AM on Monday. There is a 24 hour cover over public holidays. Tel: 028 9504 9999. See next page for regional #s.

9.00 - 5.00 Gateway Numbers	
Northern HSC Trust	Tel: 03001234333
South Eastern HSC Trust	Tel: 03001000300
Southern HSC Trust	Tel: 08007837745
Belfast HSC Trust	Tel: 028 90 507000
Western HSC Trust	Tel: 028 71314090

Northern Ireland only - Reporting concerns to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

If an organisation employs people, paid or unpaid, who are carrying out regulated activity, if they remove someone from this activity (or would or may have if the person had not left or resigned or ended their arrangement with the club/sport) because of their behaviour, the organisation must inform the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) about this. This is called a duty to refer,



and an organisation has a legal obligation to refer individuals to DBS if they believe a person has:

- Been cautioned or convicted of a relevant offence
- Engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children (i.e. an action or inaction (neglect) that has harmed a child or put them at risk of harm or
- Satisfied the “harm test” in relation to children i.e. there has been no relevant conduct but a risk of harm to a child still exists.

Failing to provide this information when there is a duty to do so is an offence under Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act.

Clubs should talk to IAFA safeguarding lead or seek legal advice. More information about making referrals can be found on DBS website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-barring-referrals-to-the-dbs>

Positive actions when responding to an allegation or concern²

- Remember if the child has made the decision to talk to you they already they trust that you will help them and respond in a caring manner.
- Remember this is about really listening to the child.
- Allow the child to use their own words.
- If needing to ask questions make sure they are open questions e.g. “tell me more about that..” or “tell me everything that happened, start where you want to start”.
- If it helps repeat back what they told you so that the child/young person can correct you if you got something wrong.
- Try to keep the ‘event’ as chronological as possible.
- Summarise the main points of the account as this is a way of checking that you have heard everything correctly and allow the child/young person to add anything they may have forgotten.
- Always thank the child/young person for talking to you and explain what you will do next.

Actions to Avoid when responding to an allegation or concern

The person receiving the allegation should not:

- Panic or allow their shock to show.

² Reprinted with permission from Ann Stuart – P.E.A.C.E Questions Types



- Ask questions other than to clarify that you have enough information to act.
- Dismiss the concern.
- Allow their shock or distaste to show.
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.
- Probe for more information than is offered.
- Speculate or make assumptions.
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Approach the alleged abuser.
- Discuss the allegations with anyone who does not have a need to know.
- Take sole responsibility.
- Delay in reporting the concerns.

Responding to Non-Recent Allegations of Abuse

It is possible that non-recent allegations of abuse can be made a number of years after the actual incident. This may be because of a change in circumstances for either the survivor or the alleged perpetrator. Any non-recent allegations must follow the current IAFA safeguarding procedures. If there are grounds for concern then statutory authorities must be informed (Police or social service teams). The following points should also be considered;

- Clearly establish with the adult complainant if there may be any children currently at risk of harm from the person they are saying abused them as a child.
- Advise the person making the complaint that they should inform the Police. Encourage them to do so while acknowledging the brave steps they have already taken in beginning to talk about their experience as a child. It is important that the person knows that there is a likelihood that an abuser will not have stopped abusing after their individual abuse ended and if the person harmed them they could be continuing to cause harm to others. This needs to be done without reinforcing the inappropriate guilt the survivor may already have for not coming forward earlier.
- If the complainant refuses to talk to the statutory authorities but has provided you with enough identifying factor's then this information MUST be shared with the police. This breach of the complainants' confidence is only appropriate if there is any potential that the alleged perpetrator is still a risk to children or could face prosecution (i.e. they are alive). Remember, the welfare of any children currently at risk is paramount. This must take priority over any request of confidentiality



from the person providing you with the information/complaint.
This should be explained to them at the earliest possible stage

- Offer support to the complainant when making a formal complaint to the police.
- Signpost the complainant to support agencies that can provide counselling.

When an adult making a complaint chooses not to report the matter to the police and you have already discussed the possibility of any child still being at risk you **MUST** follow IAFA reporting procedures and inform the Police or Social services Team immediately of any identifying features of the allegation including the name of the alleged abuser. The person making the complaint should be informed that this is the organisation's moral and legal responsibility. If the individual wishes to remain anonymous this should be respected but again explaining that without any further co-operation there may be little action the Police can take to protect others. Encourage them to talk directly to the social services team, if not the Police, in order to enable social services to consider if there is any action they can take to protect children at risk, as their threshold for intervention is lower than the evidence required for any criminal justice prosecution.

Records and Information

Information passed to the social services or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the allegation/concern. Information should include the following:

- The person's name, address, date of birth, race, ethnic origin, and any disabilities.
- The nature of the allegation.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries.
- Any observations regarding the person's behavior and emotional state.
- The person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Whether the person writing the report is expressing their own concern or those of another.
- Witnesses to the incident(s).
- Any times, dates or other relevant information.
- Sign and date form.
- Retain a copy.



- Provide a copy to the Club's Designated Liaison Officer (ROI) or Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer (NI).

When possible use the Accidents and Incidents Report Form located at the end of this Policy. This will help guide you on information that is helpful to that will help you.

Confidentiality

It is essential that there is a clear understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.

Below are the key points Clubs should consider in terms of confidentiality:

- Where child protection and welfare concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child/young person with the relevant statutory authorities and with parents/guardians.
- No promises of secrecy can be given, but confidentiality will be maintained. Those working with children/young people and families and in adult services should make this clear to parents/guardians and the child/young person. Information will only be shared with those who need to know to ensure the young person is kept safe.
- The proportionate provision of information to the statutory agencies necessary for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.
- **Talking to parents/carers:** It is important to always keep parents informed unless doing so would put the child at any further risk or in cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair the statutory authority's ability to carry out an assessment. Also, it is not necessary to inform the family if the person making the report reasonably believes it may place them at risk of harm from the family. When in doubt you can informally consult the statutory agencies.

Specific Reporting Procedures for Children or Concerned Adults

Whether officially part of a club/NGB or not children or adults can report concerns of abuse. This abuse could be occurring to themselves or others. When in doubt about procedure, inform a trusted adult or authorities such as



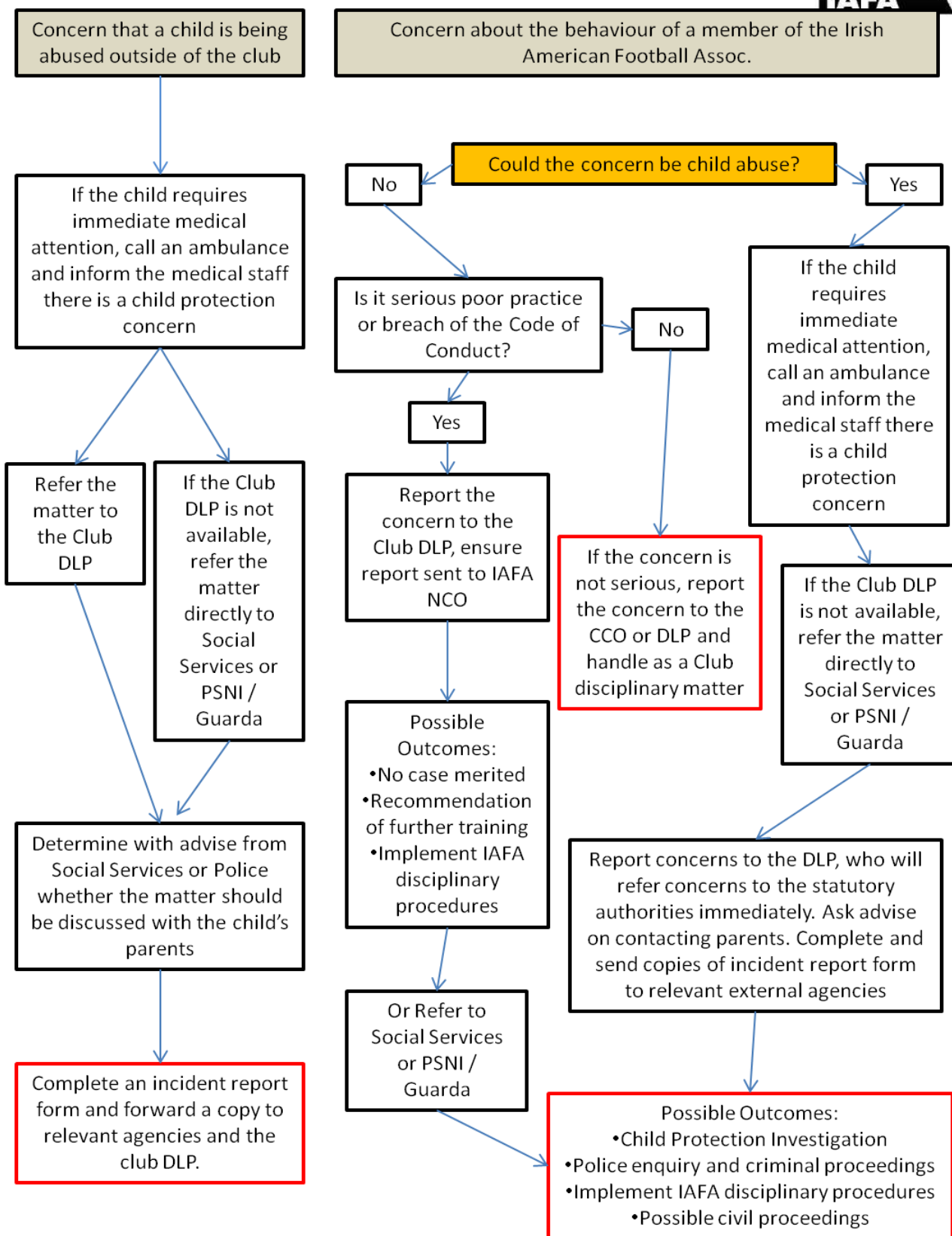
the police, Tusla, Regional Emergency Social Work services, or health care workers such as your GP.

Reporting concerns within the IAFA. There are many options. The option the person making the report used is based solely on what is most comfortable for them. All reports of concern will be taken seriously.

- Verbally or in writing report concerns to your club Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
- Verbally or in writing report concerns to your Club Childrens' Officer (CCO).
- Report concerns to the IAFA National Childrens' Officer.
 - Use the contact form on the IAFA website. Use the drop down box 'child protection'. <https://www.americanfootball.ie/contact-us/> or
 - Email the National Childrens' Officer: childprotection@americanfootball.ie
- Report your concerns to anyone on the IAFA management board. Use the contact page on the IAFA website located here:
<https://www.americanfootball.ie/governance/management-team/>

When possible use the Accidents and Incidents Report Form located at the end of this Policy. This will help guide you on information that is helpful to that will help you.

Concern / Incident reporting flow chart





Suspension

If a case is judged to be potentially serious poor practice or abuse, the National DLP following advice from IAFA case management group may decide to take the neutral act of suspending the individual pending further investigations. Following a Children's Social Care or Police investigation, the Irish American Football Association will assess the available information to decide whether the individual can be reinstated to their role in American Football. This may be a difficult decision; particularly when advised there is insufficient evidence for the Police to act or obtain a conviction and social services at not taking any further action. In such cases, the IAFA case management group must reach a decision based upon the available information available on a balance of probability. The case management group may decide that the person is more likely than not to pose a risk or that an individual should undertake certain actions such as further training or completing a new vetting disclosure, with failure to comply with IAFA risk assessment would result in removal from the sport.

Summary

There is a lot of details within this safeguarding policy, but much of it is also common sense when you consider what is in the best interests of the child. IAFA members who work with children are expected to know and follow this policy. The bottom line is that as long as the IAFA and member clubs ensure that children's welfare is the priority over all other matters, common sense is used, and a "we will take your concern seriously" attitude prevails then IAFA and our clubs will be able to protect the children within our care while growing the sport.

Get vetting complete, attend safeguarding training, ensure coaches are qualified, and make child welfare the top priority!



Accidents and Incidents Reporting Form

Name: _____

Name of Organisation/Club: _____

Role: _____

Contact Information (you):

Address: _____

Eircode: _____

Telephone numbers: _____

Email address: _____

Child's Name: _____

Child's DOB: _____

Is there any additional, relevant information to add? _____

If yes please state _____

Child's Gender: _____

Parent's / carer's name(s): _____

Contact Information (parents/carers):

Address: _____

Eircode: _____

Telephone numbers: _____

Email address: _____

Have parent's / carer's been notify of this accident / incident?

Yes No

If YES please provide details of what was said/action agreed:

Are you reporting your own concerns or responding to concerns raised by someone else:

Responding to my own concerns

Responding to concerns raised by someone else

If responding to concerns raised by someone else: Please provide further information below

Name: _____

Position within the sport or relationship to the child: _____

Telephone numbers: _____

Email address: _____

Date and times of accident / incident: _____

Details of the accident / incident or concerns: _____

Include other relevant information, such as description of any injuries and whether you are recording this accident / incident as fact, opinion or hearsay.

Child's account of the accident / incident: _____

Please provide any witness accounts of the accident /

incident: _____



Please provide details of any witnesses to the accident / incident:

Name: _____

Position within the club or relationship to the child: _____

Date of birth (if child): _____

Address: _____

Eircode: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

Please provide details of any person involved in this accident/incident or alleged to have caused the accident / incident / injury:

Name: _____

Position within the club or relationship to the child: _____

Date of birth (if child): _____

Address: _____

Eircode: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

Please provide details of action taken to date:

Has the incident been reported to any external agencies?

Yes No

If YES please provide further details:

Name of organisation / agency: _____

Contact person: _____

Telephone numbers: _____

Email address: _____

Agreed action or advice given _____

Your Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print name: _____

Contact your organisation's Designated Safeguarding Officer in line with (insert your organisation / club name) reporting procedures.