
PORT SAINTS FOOTBALL CLUB CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Endorsed at Committee Meeting 6 December 2023

Updated 28 January 2024

Summary

Port Saints Football Club is a community football (soccer) club based at Findlay Park in Port Macquarie, New South Wales (NSW). Port Saints Football Club is a family friendly club and aims to ensure everyone can enjoy playing football.

Port Saints Football Club values:

- fairness and equity,
- respect for others both on and off the field, and
- good sportsmanship.

Port Saints Football Club is a member club of Football Mid North Coast, which is in the Northern NSW Football zone of the Football Federation Australia. Each of these organisations' policies also apply to Port Saints Football Club, its players, spectators and visitors.

Port Saints Football Club has zero tolerance for mistreatment of children. This policy has been developed to assist our community give effect to the right of all children and young people to be safe from abuse at all times, including when they are in sporting environments.

Port Saints Football Club Child Protection Policy

Introduction

“Protecting Australia’s children is everyone’s business...all Australians need to work together to keep children safe”

– Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031

According to the Clearinghouse for Sport (2022), child protection (or “safeguarding”) is concerned with keeping all young people under the legal age of responsibility safe from abuse, discrimination and harassment. It also involves protecting young people from those who are deemed unsuitable to be working with children, and from potentially harmful practices.

Sporting organisations:

- have a legal and moral obligation to ensure that children are protected from physical and/or psychological harm while participating or attending their events and activities,
- are obliged to comply with the respective child protection legislation that exists in each Australian state and territory, and
- are required to have approved national integrity policies, including member protection and child safeguarding, in practice in order to receive Australian Government recognition and/or funding.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant child protection and safeguarding policies of Football Mid North Coast (including the Codes of Fair Play), Northern NSW Football and Football Federation Australia (Football Australia). Port Saints Football Club (PSFC) notes Football Australia’s commitment to safeguarding children and

adults at risk, in particular the Member Protection Framework. PSFC also notes the Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) commitment to safe, supportive and child friendly sports environments, in particular the Child Safe Policy. This PSFC Child Protection Policy is intended to be consistent with these policies and commitments whilst providing practical support for keeping children safe in our local community.

This policy also acknowledges the role of other parties in the conduct of our competition, in particular the local councils and other parties that provide and manage sporting fields and facilities that are used by PSFC and other clubs in the area. The policy is intended to be consistent with applicable policies of relevant other parties.

Policy Requirements

This policy is applicable to everyone who is associated with PSFC, in whatever capacity they associate with PSFC. This includes club officials, volunteers, players, coaches, managers, parents, families, friends and spectators. It is important to note that PSFC considers this policy also applicable to other clubs and officials, including Match Officials.

The PSFC child protection policy requirements cover five main points:

- Live our values,
- Speak up,
- Rule of Two,
- Screening (Working with children checks), and
- Trauma awareness.

Live our Values

Noting that a positive environment supports sports participation (Clearing House for Sport, 2023), this policy builds on the PSFC values of fairness and equity, respect and good sportsmanship (as listed in the Summary on page 2).

Three values-based questions can help determine if our local environment is appropriate to support our children and young people to safely participate in football:

- Is the situation fair and equitable?
- Are people treating each other respectfully?
- How is good sportsmanship evident in this circumstance?

This policy requires everyone associated with PSFC to be familiar with our values and put them into practice at our fields, during our games and training or associated activities. We should each demonstrate these values and encourage others to do so at all times.

Speak up

Sometimes behaviour that is not consistent with the PSFC values will be encountered both on and off the field. This is the time to speak up about it, in a manner that is consistent with the values. This is important because it addresses undesirable behaviours in a timely way and helps others understand what the standard is.

Speaking up is an important part of creating and maintaining an environment that keeps others safe. However, some people may feel uncomfortable raising matters directly and this is where others can assist. Coaches and managers, club officials and duty officers are all possible options to consider when it is time to speak up about unacceptable behaviour.

Alternately, the Feedback option on the PSFC web page is another way of raising matters by providing details in an online form. The Feedback Report can be found at:

<http://www.portsaints.com.au/feedback/>

Rule of Two

Ensuring that wherever possible at least two adults are always present helps to keep our children and young people safe, as well as protect and support the generous volunteers who keep our club running. This also provides back up in the case of an emergency such as accidents or medical episodes.

The Rule of Two developed under the Responsible Coaching Model by the Coaching Association of Canada (2018) recommends that the two adults be screened and trained. PSFC supports this intention, although recognises the challenges of realising it given the practical issues of involving enough volunteers in regional areas.

In particular, parents are asked to support the Rule of Two by making themselves available to assist coaches and other officials when it is evident that only one adult is present. Parents should also discuss with their children what to do if they feel unsafe.

Screening/Working with Children Checks

Working with Children (WWC) checks are free for volunteers and easy to apply for. By asking volunteers including coaches and managers to obtain a WWC check, PSFC meets regulatory requirements and reduces the risk of unsuitable people being a part of our club.

Coaches and managers are asked to consider if they already have WWC checks in place that can support this requirement. Parents and families are encouraged to discuss this amongst their child's teams. Each team having two or three parents with WWC checks, and registered with the club as volunteers, would provide coverage if coaches and managers were unavailable during the season, and it also helps to support the Rule of Two.

Trauma awareness

PSFC aims to be trauma aware. Trauma can be defined as events and experiences that are so stressful they are overwhelming, and is very common according to the Blueknot Foundation, (2021). Trauma impacts people in different ways, including in the way the body functions and how people respond to situations (Blueknot, 2021).

Trauma awareness means that to fully understand situations and behaviours we may need to change the way we think about them. For example, a child or young person who has experienced trauma may not be able to process instructions in the same way as others. They may not be able to cope with raised voices or shouting. Rather than assuming they are being defiant, or ignoring directions, taking a moment to remember that the child or young person may not be able to respond in any other way is important – for example, they may not be able to handle the pressures of competition (Positive Coaching Alliance, 2023).

Responding to the situation by connecting with the child or young person to help them self-regulate can make all the difference, including by avoiding the situation escalating and causing further distress. Keeping children and young people safe means avoiding re-traumatising them, and this is important for everyone to understand, especially players, officials including referees and spectators.

Policy Implementation

To support the successful implementation of this policy:

1. This policy will be reviewed, refined as necessary and endorsed by PSFC officials and then tabled at the next AGM.
2. This policy will be made available to everyone on the PSFC web site (www.portsaints.com.au).
3. This policy will be referred to at the start of each season and as appropriate.

References

- Australian Government Australian Sports Commission. (2022). *Child Safe Policy*.
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- Football Mid North Coast. (2023, August 20). *Football MNC Codes of Fair Play*.
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