



ONLINE SAFETY AND ASSOCIATED RISKS

ENSURING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A POSITIVE AND SAFE EXPERIENCE ONLINE

It is acknowledged electronic communication is an important way for clubs to share club news and information with members and that clubs use a range of electronic communication tools to do this. Communication should protect members' privacy, maintain clear boundaries and ensure bullying and harassment does not occur.

Club administrators are responsible for ensuring everyone at their club is safe and enjoys their experience.



DEFINITIONS

A **Child or Young Person** is someone involved in footy under the age of 18, usually a player but could be an umpire or in another role at the club, or a sibling of a child player.

An **Adult** is someone involved in footy who is over the age of 18. This could be a coach, manager, umpire, club official, AFL staff member, volunteer, and/or a parent.

Online Abuse refers to behaviour that uses the internet or electronic devices to share content that is threatening, intimidating, harassing, bullying or humiliating to a person. Online abuse can cause psychological, social, or physical harm.

BE AWARE OF WHAT KIDS ARE DOING ONLINE AND THE RISKS

Parents, coaches, and other adults may not be aware of all the digital media and apps a child or young person is using. The more digital platforms a child uses, the more opportunities there are for children and young people to be exposed to online risks, including but not limited to grooming, cyberbullying and sexting.

ONLINE ABUSE

Online abuse can have serious impacts on a person's mental and physical wellbeing so it's important to understand the types of online abuse so clubs can learn how to deal with situations appropriately.

Common forms of online abuse include trolling, sharing or threatening to share intimate images or videos of a person without consent, using intimate images to blackmail someone (sexual extortion), creating fake social media accounts (impersonation accounts), sharing personal details online to cause harm (doxing), deepfakes, and comments posted with the intent to cause reputational harm (defamatory comments).



For any safeguarding queries email childsafety@afl.com.au

Contact Kids helpline on 1800 55 1800 (it's free) or www.kidshelpline.com.au

As always if anyone is in immediate danger contact the police on **000**

Remember, we want all children and young people in footy to be safe, feel safe, play safe.

USE OF ELECTRONIC AND ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

Adults, including club representatives and others in a position of authority at a club, should not communicate with children one-on-one or with a group of children via any electronic means, which includes but is not limited to text messages, WhatsApp, phone calls, social media or email.

If a club representative or an adult at a club, such as a coach, needs to communicate with a child outside training or a game, they must do this via the child's parent, guardian or carer. It is acceptable for a parent-only chat group or similar group to be set up where messages for children can be posted for parents to pass onto their children.

SAFE ONLINE BEHAVIOUR INCLUDES

- Providing guidance that is positive, helpful, and focused on your footy game, not you as a person.
- Using language that is calm and kind and that you can easily understand.
- Parents, guardians or carers being included in communication and communication being used with the whole team.
- Being limited to football-related content such as sharing information relating to events.
- Avoiding connecting with young people on online social media platforms through personal profiles.
- Clubs considering if they need public social media accounts and, if they do, limiting content to football-related content such as sharing information relating to events.
- Adults not communicating with or being connected with a child online such as through social media platforms and personal profiles.
- Allowing young people to navigate their online world without judgement, prejudice or unsolicited comments from their football connections.
- Seeking informed consent from the child and their parents, guardian or carer before sharing or uploading video or photos of a child if a club wants to upload photos of participants to social media accounts.
- Reporting or addressing any online abuse or harassment that you may observe when it involves young people in sport through their parents and/or the club.
- Checking in on a young person's wellbeing if you have any reason to suspect that they are experiencing abuse or harassment online.

UNSAFE ONLINE BEHAVIOUR INCLUDES

- Liking, sharing, or commenting on personal photos or posts from a young person that is not related to football, or if related to the sport, without their consent and a justified reason to like/share/comment. If you are unsure, don't like, share, or comment.
- Communication that takes place outside of the hours reasonable to the program, service, activity, or event.
- Requesting to meet in person for reasons not related to football.
- Asking the child or young person to keep secrets including in relation to communication
- One-on-one with communication with a child.
- Communication that is aggressive, rude, sexual in nature, frightens, distresses or embarrasses a child.
- Harassing, threatening, or targeting another person.
- Posting someone else's personal information online.
- Posting pictures, or videos designed to hurt or embarrass another person.
- Sharing rumours on social media.
- Sharing negative, harmful, false or mean content about someone else.
- Pretending to be someone else online to solicit information.
- The use of mean or hateful names, comments or content about any race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

WHO IS AT RISK?

All children and young people who use technology are at risk of being exposed to online risks, including but not limited to grooming, cyberbullying and sexting.

WHAT IS ONLINE GROOMING?

Online grooming occurs when an adult uses electronic communication in a predatory fashion. It can include online chats, sexting, and other online interactions. Online grooming includes actions adults take to position themselves to commit a sexual offence against a child or young person. It does not always involve behaviours of a sexual nature. The imbalance of power in coach-athlete relationships, reduced supervision and/or presence of parents provides an environment where grooming can occur.

Grooming can include but is not limited to:

- Building rapport and trust with a child and their family
- Giving a child special treatment
- Isolating a child
- Targeting a specific child

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying can include the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass or target another person. Cyberbullying can take place over digital devices such as mobile phones, computers, and tablets and can occur through SMS, texts, apps, online social media, forums or anywhere people can view, participate in or share content. You must not under any circumstances engage in cyber bullying.

Cyberbullying can include, but is not limited to:

- Online threats
- Mean, aggressive or rude texts, tweets, posts or messages
- Posting someone else's personal information online

WHAT IS SEXTING?

Sexting involves sending or receiving sexually explicit pictures, videos, or messages over digital devices such as mobile phones, computers, and tablets and can occur through SMS, texts, webcams, email, apps, online social media, forums or anywhere people can view, participate in or share content.

Sexting can include but is not limited to:

- Sharing sexually suggestive content, including nude or semi-nude images, or explicit content.
- Sharing sexually explicit videos, text messages, or live video chats.
- A message or post written in sexual language.
- Photos or videos of sexual acts.

Sexting can be a criminal offence and is strictly prohibited within the AFL.

CONTINUOUS REVIEW

Clubs should ensure they have a social media policy that is shared with everyone involved in the club. The club's social media policy should include reference to team officials not accepting, requesting, or following children or young people on social media accounts. The policy should be reviewed annually so members know how to appropriately engage on the club's digital platforms. Children and young people should be given information about online safety and discuss their responsibilities and how to stay safe online.

SAY SOMETHING

If you have concerns about your safety or the safety of another child or young person, or have seen or heard something that just doesn't feel right, it is important you say something.

Ways you can do this include:



Speak to a parent, carer, family member or trusted adult like a coach, team manager, umpire, official or club representative.

You can also talk to a trusted Elder, or cultural mentor if you have one at your club or community.



Write down your concerns and pass them onto your club or association via email or letter.



Use [this link](#) or the QR code below to raise a concern through the AFL's Integrity Portal



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