



Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy

Child & Youth Protection Directions for Surf Clubs

As a support strategy for Junior Activities & Youth Activities, SLSQ has provided the following directions which must be widely distributed to relevant personnel & be used by Clubs to assist with their operational procedures surrounding child & youth protection.

Surf Life Saving Clubs and Branches must always consider their own particular circumstances, identify and assess risks and implement appropriate risk management strategies. The following are strategies only and are not legal advice. Please review these directions to ensure that they match club protocol and promote this information in club handbooks, inductions, on websites or in other communication formats as required to make sure that all are aware of the club procedures

Coaches, Trainers, Age Managers and Officials

Coaches, Trainers, Age Managers and Officials need to be aware that not all children will understand an action or request in the same manner. One child may see an action as usual or acceptable behaviour while another may find it unacceptable. A child's interpretation of an action may also be influenced by cultural and religious differences, gender and prior experiences. It is important therefore to be aware of your communication style.

The following principles or actions will help coaches/trainers/age managers/officials provide a safe environment:

- Ensure your actions at all times are unambiguously professional. Give a verbal explanation, in front of all athletes/members (and preferably parents as well) of how, where, when and why you may need to touch athletes/members.
- Ensure that any physical contact with children is appropriate to the skills being developed within the surf lifesaving skills program *eg. it may be appropriate to make contact with a child on the legs, back, and/or arms who is learning positioning on a board for the purpose of improving paddling/balance techniques*. Generally physical contact with athletes/members is relevant to skills development, technique or safety, to treat an injury or to prevent or respond to an injury. Always seek permission to make physical contact when skill development is required to ensure the athlete/member is aware of the contact that is required.
- Remember that the welfare of the child or children is always of paramount importance.
- Know the policies, complaint processes and guidelines under the *SLSA Member Safety & Wellbeing Policy* and how they apply to you.
- Understand and commit to *SLSQ Codes of Conduct*.
- Understand how the child protection legislation in Queensland affects you.
- Be careful about which part of your body is and how much of it is in contact with a child's body.
- Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with children. Do not separate yourself and a child from the line of sight of other people. If you need to have a private talk with a child about their ability or behaviour, do this in an open place near others. Invite another coach/trainer or support person to join the conversation or talk to more than one child at a time.
- Have sufficient coaches/age managers/chaperones/supervisors/trainers and/or water safety for effective supervision based on the age and number of children involved. Provide for disability considerations in regard to supervision. Please refer to the appropriate SLSQ policies such as: the *Under 7 Junior Activities Policy*, the *Water Safety Policy* and the *Chaperoning & Supervision of Minors Policy* for the ratio of supervisors to participants.



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- Have a Club policy that during training and competition, children go to the toilet in pairs or small groups.
- Have a club policy that children apply each other's sunscreen if parents are not able to apply the cream on their own children.
- Use positive and age-appropriate language when talking to and in the presence of children. Do not use aggressive language that could intimidate a child or set a bad example.
- Before entering change rooms knock or announce that you will be coming in and have at least one other adult with you. Do not isolate yourself and a child from others in the change room.
- Have a Club policy that if a parent is late picking up their child that the second to last child and their parent or guardian will wait with you and the child. This will also enable you to concentrate on making contact with the parent.
- Avoid the risk of being left alone with a child by having a parent, guardian or support person assist you with the training. Require that person to wait with you until all children have left.
- Do not engage in or let others engage in any of the following:
 - Abusive initiation or bonding activities
 - Forcing children into 'macho type' activities
 - Rough, physical hurtful or sexually provocative games
 - Regular scape goating, ridiculing, rejecting, isolating or taking the 'mickey' out of a child.
- Maintain control – avoid losing your temper (verbally or physically). If you find you regularly lose your temper with children you should seek support or do not work with children. To maintain control, include:
 - Setting up basic rules at the beginning of the season, such as: follow instructions; have a go; no put-downs. Make sure children are aware of these rules.
 - Give positive messages.
 - Have a time out area for children that are not behaving.

Coaching Children with Special Needs

Coaching or working with children with special needs may require more frequent physical contact and touch as a means of meeting the duty of care to them. Touch may be an agreed form of communication between a child, their parent and coach/age manager/trainer where the child has a communication disability. A coach, age manager, trainer and others will need to be more vigilant and thoughtful in their physical interactions and different approaches that may be required. However, the basic practices and information outlined previously remain applicable to all children. Surf Life Saving has a duty of care to protect children from physical and emotional harm and, while the ways of meeting this duty may differ for different groups, the duty itself remains unqualified. Everyone expected to meet this duty will do so in a manner that respects the dignity of all children as well as their vulnerabilities.

For more information on coaching children with special needs visit:

<http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/disability>

Cultural Considerations

Different cultures have different attitudes and traditions surrounding the concept of appropriate touch. It is important that coaches/age managers/trainers and others appreciated culturally specific expectations regarding touch so that embarrassment or offence is avoided for everyone. Where children (and families) are known or suspected to have escaped traumatic circumstances, considerable diplomacy, care and effort in early interactions will need to be taken. Many culturally based community organisations are very keen to establish



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understanding and respect – invite or seek their advice so that club personnel become more familiar with the cultural groups of the children participating in their club activities and surf sports.

Parents

Parents often turn to sport & community activities as a safe place for children to build character, develop skills, and learn valuable lessons and to have fun. While involvement in these activities remains a positive experience for most participants, parents are now aware that children can face the risk of being harassed and abused. In addition to Clubs, parents can also play a key role in creating a safe environment for children in Surf Life Saving.

The following actions will help parents contribute to providing a safe environment:

- Get involved and get to know your child's coach/age manager/trainer/supervisor. Maintain open and frank communication. If things occur that disturb you, talk to the coach/age manager/trainer/supervisor about them.
- Speak out when you hear language or attitudes that contribute to a negative or unsafe environment. You should where appropriate pursue your issues with the Club's Executive.
- Do not put coaches/age managers/trainers on pedestals. Tell your children it's okay to say 'no' if the coach/age manager/trainer is doing something that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Make an effort to attend training and carnivals whenever you can.
- Seek approval from the Team Manager/Age Manager/Supervisor when you wish to interact with your child/children during team/group activities, especially if you wish to deviate from the group activity or program.
- Do not accept any suggestion of private, closed training sessions. If they do occur ask the coach/trainer for an explanation.
- Monitor closely any increases in the amount of time the coach/trainer spends with your children beyond the training/activity session.
- If you volunteer to assist in junior activities you will be asked to take part in screening, accept this as a positive step to keep children safe.
- Make sure you are not part of the problem. Don't sling verbal abuse at officials, coaches, age managers or others.
- Know and abide by the *Members Code of Conduct* and encourage others to do the same.
- Encourage your child to play by the rules.
- Never ridicule your child for making a mistake.

Drop off and pick up of participants by parents/guardians

Children must be dropped off before an activity and picked up afterwards by their parents or guardians. In no circumstances should children make their own way to and from an activity. On their way to and from activities children may be exposed to potential risk. Procedures must be put in place to minimise these risks. Clubs must have strategies in place to meet specific circumstances and the following must be considered as a minimum:

- Agree with parents a set procedure for drop off and pick up arrangements. Let children and their parents/ guardians know the times of training and competitions and when they can expect to collect their children. Advise them that it is not your responsibility to transport children home if parents are delayed.
- Consider the lack of parking available at various beaches. Inform parents that they may have to park a distance from the competition/ training area and that they must never leave their children unattended.



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- Ensure there is a buffer period where a coach or trainer arrives a certain period of time before an activity starts and stays a certain period of time after it ends.
- Have a Club policy that the second to last child and their parent/ guardian will wait with the coach/ trainer and the child. This will also enable the coach/ trainer to concentrate on making contact with the parent/ guardian.
- If you have a Clubhouse where there will be external people, have a policy that latecomers are to collect their children from the Club. Wait with the child if possible (in the presence of others) and make contact with the parent/ guardian if necessary.
- If there are other people at the Clubhouse/ facility, wait for the parent/ guardian closer to those people. In the meantime attempt to make contact with the parent/ guardian.
- Do not risk being alone with a child by having a parent/ guardian or support person assist you with the training. Require that person to wait until all children have left.
- Have a Club policy that there is a register of parent/ guardian emergency contact numbers and make sure coaches/ age managers/ trainers/ supervisors have access to a phone.

Transport of Athletes/ Members

All athletes/ members should have their own transportation to and from Surf Life Saving events.

You should only provide transportation when:

- The driver is properly licenced
- Other athletes/ members / parents/ guardians are in the vehicle
- The ride has been approved by parents/ guardians
- The ride is directly to or from Surf Life Saving related activities
- You should also call the parent/ guardian and tell them what you are doing, the exact time you are leaving – so that you are accountable for your time.

Overnight Trips

- Abide by the *SLSQ Chaperoning & Supervision of Minors Policy*. Refer to this policy for the ratio of members to supervisors and sleeping arrangements for males and females.
- Ensure that pre-requisites are met by all Chaperones.
- Ensure members complete *parental consent forms* if an activity is to be conducted off Club premises.
- Always have more than one adult with children on an overnight trip/ camp, even if the number of children is small.
- Familiarise yourself with surroundings and note any possible risk areas and promote this to the other staff/ volunteers/ parents/ chaperones on the trip to ensure suitable measures are implemented to avoid them.
- Do not separate yourself and children from other adults.
- Obtain separate sleeping accommodation from the children (adults in separate rooms).
- Ensure that adults are within hearing distance of the children to be able to respond to any alarm raised by a child. If an alarm is raised by a child more than one adult must respond.
- Perform regular room checks to ensure that all are complying with the *SLSQ Codes of Conduct*.



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Off-Premises Activities

- Abide by the *SLSQ Chaperoning & Supervision of Minors Policy*.
- Ensure members complete *parental consent forms* if an activity is to be conducted off Club premises.
- There must always be more than one adult with a group of children, even if the number of children is small.
- Familiarise yourself with surroundings and note any possible risk areas and promote this to the other staff/ volunteers/ parents/ chaperones on the trip to ensure suitable countermeasures are implemented to avoid them.

The Use of Images of Children

There have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on web sites and other publications. Evidence in Australia indicates that information posted on an Internet site or published in a magazine or newspaper can be used to target children, to locate them, and then to condition or groom them. Additionally images can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. The end result is that in spite of the best intentions on the part of the publisher, children can end up being victims of abuse. Surf Life Saving Clubs need to be aware of these potential risks and take appropriate steps to address them.

Acquiring Images

- Permission needs to be obtained from the member's parent/ guardian prior to taking the image. Ensure that they are aware of the way in which the image may be used. Refer to the *SLSA Photography Policy 6.18* for more information and sample release forms etc.
- Insist that professional photographers and/ or spectators taking photographic/ video images register with the Club/ Branch/ SLSQ and gain permission. Refer to the *SLSA Photography Policy 6.18* and the *SLSQ Photography Policy* for information on how to obtain accreditation at events.
- Clearly outline and publicise what is considered appropriate behaviour and content to those taking photographic/video images.
- Do not allow unsupervised or individual access to members.
- Do not approve photo/ video sessions outside the event venue or at a member's home.
- Provide details of who to contact if concerns or complaints of inappropriate photographic behaviour or content are raised.

Displaying Images

- Use models or illustrations for promotional/ advertising purposes (if available).
- Permission needs to be obtained from the member's parent/ guardian prior to using their image. Ensure that they are aware of the way in which the image is to be used and how long the image will be displayed when used on a website.
- If the member is named, avoid using their image.
- If an image is used, avoid naming the member. If this is not possible avoid using both a first name and surname.
- Do not display personal information such as residential address, Email address or telephone numbers without gaining consent from a parent/guardian first.



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- Do not display information about hobbies, likes/dislikes, school etc. as these can be used as grooming tools by paedophiles or other persons.
- Only use appropriate images of the member, relevant to the lifesaving activity, and suitably clothed. Images of members in an activity that involves minimal clothing or unusual body positions/ poses, which could potentially be misused, should focus on the activity not on a particular child and avoid full face and body shots.
- Reduce/ eliminate the ability for the direct copying of pictures from a website to another source (i.e. disable the 'right mouse click' function).
- Provide details of who to contact if concerns or complaints of inappropriate image use are raised.
- Ensure that the *SLSA Social Media Policy 6.20*, and the *SLSQ Social Media Policy* are complied with.

Activity Induction

Before your activity goes ahead, provide an induction about what will happen, regardless of whether it is a 'one off' activity or an activity conducted over a period of time. Provide this information to parents, carers and the children or young people taking part.

Ensure that the induction:

- Clearly identifies what will happen and what is expected of the activity
- Highlights anything that would be of concern to parents, carers, children, or young people
- Answers any questions people may have
- Lets people know what will happen if anything goes wrong, and
- Lets people know who they can talk to if they have issues or concerns.

From the perspective of parents, carers, children and young people, the induction must:

- Provide an opportunity to ask questions and clarify issues
- Help them understand what is expected of them
- Make them aware of what will happen if an issue arises, and
- Let them know who to contact if they have any concerns in the future.

Your organisation's relevant Code of Conduct/s must be presented at any induction to parents, carers and young people. SLSQ has a range of Codes of Conduct including:

- Administrators/Directors/Officers
- Coaches/Officials
- Members
- Team Managers/Age Managers/Chaperones
- Youth Leaders.

References:

Australian Sports Commission website: Home > Supporting Sport > Ethics in Sport > Child Protection (http://www.ausport.gov.au/supporting/ethics/child_protection)

Play by The Rules website (<http://www.playbytherules.net.au>) - Guidelines for Coaches and Officials.