



Child Protection Policy and Safeguards

As a soccer club primarily focused on delivering soccer programs to children, we must always, as coaches, coordinators, staff, or parents, be attentive and ensure that the environment is safe and supportive to their safety and needs. As such, the West Ottawa Soccer Club (WOSC) expects all of those directly involved with children in soccer, to always present a positive learning atmosphere and ethical representation of themselves while taking into account children's safety.

Endorsed by the West Ottawa Soccer Club Board of Directors

Maltreatment

“Maltreatment” is defined as a volitional act that results in harm or the potential for physical or psychological harm and includes any of the following behaviours or conduct:

- **Psychological Maltreatment:** Any pattern or single serious incident of deliberate conduct that has the potential to be harmful to the psychological well-being of an individual. Psychological Maltreatment is determined by the objective behaviour, and not whether harm is intended or results from the behaviour. It includes, without limitation:
 - **Verbal Acts:** Verbally assaulting or attacking an individual, including but not limited to unwarranted personal criticisms; body shaming; derogatory comments related to an individual’s identity (e.g., race, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, Indigenous status, or ability/disability); comments that are demeaning, humiliating, belittling, intimidating, insulting or threatening; the use of rumours or false statements about an individual to diminish their reputation; using confidential information inappropriately. Verbal Maltreatment may also occur in online forms.
 - **Non-assaultive Physical Acts (no physical contact):** Physically aggressive behaviours, including but not limited to throwing objects at or in the presence of others without striking another; hitting, striking or punching objects in the presence of others.
 - **Acts that Deny Attention or Support:** Acts of commission that deny attention, lack of support or isolation including but not limited to ignoring psychological needs or socially isolating an individual repeatedly or for an extended period of time; arbitrarily or unreasonably denying feedback, support or attention for extended periods of time and/or asking others to do the same.
- **Physical Maltreatment:** Any pattern or single serious incident of deliberate conduct that has the potential to be harmful to the physical well-being of an individual. Physical Maltreatment is determined by the objective behaviour, and not whether harm is intended or results from the behaviour. It includes, without limitation:
 - **Contact behaviours:** Deliberately punching, kicking, beating, biting, striking, strangling or slapping another, deliberately hitting another with objects.

- Non-contact behaviours: Isolating an individual in a confined space; forcing an individual to assume a painful stance or position for no purpose, withholding, recommending against, or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention or sleep; denying access to a toilet; providing alcohol to an individual under the legal drinking age; providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medications to an individual.
- Sexual Maltreatment: Any act targeting an individual's sexuality, gender identity or expression, that is committed, threatened or attempted against that person, and includes but is not limited to the offences of sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, indecent exposure, voyeurism and non-consensual distribution of sexual/intimate images under the Criminal Code of Canada. Sexual Maltreatment also includes sexual harassment and stalking, cyber harassment, and cyber stalking of a sexual nature. Sexual Maltreatment can take place through any form or means of communication (e.g. online, social media, verbal, written, visual, hazing, or through a third party). Examples of Sexual Maltreatment include, but are not limited to:
 - Any penetration of any part of a person's body, however slight, with any object or body part by a person upon another person, including but not limited to:
 - vaginal penetration by a penis, object, tongue, or finger; and
 - anal penetration by a penis, object, tongue, or finger.
 - Any intentional touching of a sexual nature of any part of a person's body, however slight, with any object or body part by a person upon another person, including but not limited to:
 - kissing;
 - intentional touching of the breasts, buttocks, groin or genitals, whether clothed or unclothed, or intentionally touching of another with any of these body parts;
 - any contact, no matter how slight, between the mouth of one person and the genitalia of another person;
 - making a person touch themselves or someone else with or on any of the body parts listed in 2); and
 - any intentional touching in a sexualized manner regardless of the relationship, context or situation.
- Neglect: Any pattern or a single serious incident of lack of reasonable care, inattention to an individual's needs, nurturing or well-being, or omissions in care. Neglect is determined by the objective behaviour but the behaviour must be

evaluated with consideration given to the individual's needs and requirements, not whether harm is intended or results from the behaviour. Neglect, or acts of omission, include without limitation, not being aware of and not considering an individual's physical or intellectual disability, or subjecting individuals to the risk of Maltreatment.

- Grooming: Often a slow, gradual and escalating process of building trust and comfort with a young person which includes, without limitation, deliberate conduct by a Coach or Participant to sexualize a relationship with a Minor, and which includes making inappropriate behaviour seem normal and gradually engaging in "boundary violations" which have been professionally identified to Canadian standards (e.g., a degrading remark, a sexual joke, sexualized physical contact; Adults sharing rooms with a Minor who is not an immediate family member; private social media and text communications; sharing personal photographs; private meetings; private travel, and providing gifts).
- Maltreatment Related to Process: The behaviours identified below also constitute Maltreatment.
 - Interference With or Manipulation of Process: A Participant violates the Code by directly or indirectly interfering with a process instituted pursuant to this Code:
 - falsifying, distorting, or misrepresenting information, the resolution process, or an outcome;
 - destroying or concealing information;
 - attempting to discourage an individual's proper participation in or use of the Code's processes;
 - harassing or intimidating (verbally or physically) any person involved in the Code's processes before, during, and/or following any proceedings;
 - publicly disclosing an individual's identifying information, without that person's agreement;
 - failing to comply with any temporary or provisional measure or other final sanction;
 - distributing or otherwise publicizing materials a Coach gains access to during any investigation or hearing, except as required by law or as expressly permitted;
 - influencing or attempting to influence an individual to interfere with or manipulate the process.
 - Retaliation: Retaliation is prohibited. A Participant shall not take an adverse action against any individual for making a good faith report of

possible Maltreatment or for participating in any process under the Code. Retaliation includes threatening, intimidating, harassing, coercing or any other conduct that would discourage a reasonable person from engaging or participating in the Code's processes. Retaliation after the conclusion of investigation and sanction processes is also prohibited. Retaliation may be present even where there is a finding that no Maltreatment occurred. Retaliation does not include good-faith actions lawfully pursued in response to a report of possible Maltreatment.

- Aiding and Abetting: Any act taken with the purpose of facilitating, promoting, or encouraging the commission of Maltreatment. Aiding and Abetting also includes, without limitation, knowingly:
 - allowing any Participant who has been suspended or is otherwise ineligible to be in any way associated with sport or to coach or instruct sport participants;
 - allowing any Participant to violate the terms of their suspension or any other sanctions imposed.
- Maltreatment Related to Reporting:
 - Failure to Report Maltreatment of a Minor: The failure to report is in and of itself a violation of the Code. An adult Participant who fails to report actual or suspected Psychological Maltreatment, Sexual Maltreatment, Physical Maltreatment or Neglect involving a Minor Participant pursuant to the Code's processes and to law enforcement or child protection services (when applicable) shall be subject to disciplinary action under the Code. This obligation is ongoing and is not satisfied by making an initial report; instead, this obligation includes reporting, on a timely basis, all relevant information that the adult is or becomes aware of, and requires making a direct report. Any report shall include personally identifying information of the potential Minor Complainant (to the extent known), as well as a duty to reasonably supplement the report as to identifying information learned at a later time.
 - Failure to Report Inappropriate Conduct: Not all inappropriate conduct meets the threshold for constituting Maltreatment. However, such inappropriate conduct may represent behaviour that runs the risk of escalating to Maltreatment. Any Participant who suspects or becomes aware of another Participant's inappropriate conduct, even if it is not defined as Maltreatment, has a duty to report such inappropriate conduct through the internal procedures identified in this Code. Participants in positions of trust and authority who become aware of another Participant's

inappropriate conduct have a responsibility for reporting the concern within the procedures herein. The person making the report does not need to determine whether a violation of the Code took place. Instead, the responsibility lies in reporting the objective behaviour.

- Intentionally Filing a False Allegation. Filing a knowingly false allegation or influencing others to file a knowingly false allegation that a Participant engaged in Maltreatment shall be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the Code. An allegation is false if the events or conduct reported did not occur and the person making the report knows that the events or conduct did not occur. A false allegation is different from an unsubstantiated allegation; an unsubstantiated allegation means there is insufficient supporting evidence to determine whether an allegation is true or false. Absent demonstrable bad faith, an unsubstantiated allegation alone is not grounds for a violation. Any person found to have made mischievous, intentionally false or malicious complaints will render themselves liable to appropriate disciplinary action.¹

Grooming

Grooming is commonly used to describe the process of entrapping and preparing a child, the adults around them, and even the environment to enable abuse to take place.

People who set out to harm children will use a range of tactics to trick and entrap a child, these often include:

- seeking access – looking for jobs or volunteer roles with regular contact with children and actively seeking out organisations with unclear boundaries and policies.
- testing the culture – breaking small rules to test whether they are challenged about their behaviour. If left unchallenged it provides the environment for these policy breaches to escalate.
- building trust – giving advice, attention or gifts to build a trusting relationship with the child and sometimes the whole family. Trying to appear respectable and even indispensable to the adults in the organisation.

¹ CAC Code of Conduct and Ethics with Reporting Procedures, coach.ca/responsible-coaching-movement-old

- exploiting power – using a power imbalance to take control and make a child feel dependent or isolated, such as having authority over how a child progresses in their sport.
- keeping secrets – using secrets to control, frighten or test the compliance of a child, increasing the feelings of shame and guilt put on the child to encourage their silence.
- manipulation – using reverse psychology or strategic withdrawal to trick the child into thinking they are in control of the situation.
- online – using social media and messaging apps as a tool to manipulate a child, pretending to be someone they are not, pressuring a child into sending pictures and then threatening to share them. In sport, this means the grooming process can take place away from the organised activity and progress at greater speed.

In a sports environment, some signs a child is being abused may include:

- sudden changes in participation
- avoiding club sessions or training
- changes in behaviour such as becoming withdrawn
- fear of certain places or areas
- fear of certain people

Other signs may be more noticeable away from the sports environment, such as:

- developing a problem with their mental health and wellbeing
- secretive use of phones and tablets
- having unexplained gifts
- inappropriate sexualised knowledge
- alcohol or drug misuse
- having a much older 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'
- developing sexual health problems

Sexual abuse can affect any child. However, abusers will target children who appear to be vulnerable in a way they can exploit such as children in care, children with low self esteem and children experiencing difficulties with their peers or families.

This is because they perceive these children to be easier to manipulate and isolate from potentially protective adults or friends.

In sport, a child may be vulnerable because of their dependence on an individual for their progress in the sport or even their place in the team or squad.²

Coaches

The responsibility is always with the adult to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with children.

Coaches are in a position of trust, and it's through professional boundaries that this foundation of trust between coaches and athletes is built. If boundaries are broken, the pillars of the relationship crumbles.³

On behalf the Board of Directors, the following child protection policy must be adhered to at all times. For purposes of this document and policy, WOSC considers a child to be under 18 years of age.

Mandate for Coaches and Staff

A Team Official/Coordinator/Staff, **must not**:

- Engage directly for personal reasons not pertaining to soccer related issues with children through the phone or social media channels such as: email, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, texting, etc. Club and team-based group communication sites such as TeamSnap or PowerUp are to be utilized whenever possible.
- Participate in any direct meeting with a child that is not in an openly visible location to another adult such as the team manager, assistant coach and/or the child's parent or guardian. Ad-hoc direct feedback before, during or post games/practice scenarios is encouraged but must always be done at the training ground or similar venues within a visible setting.
- Be alone with a child in a non-visible place and/or enclosed space, such as a car, change room or similar area or provide transportation to and from practices, tournaments, festivals and games to children unless accompanied by the child's guardian or with the guardian's consent.
- Leave children alone after a game or practice if their parent/guardian has not arrived to pick them up. If such a situation were to arise, it is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that another adult or person remain in the company of the coach and child wherever possible if not in an openly visible location.

² Thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/best-practice/protecting-children-in-sport-from-grooming-and-sexual-abuse/

³ C2K_CoachingAssocCanada_Interacting_en.pdf, commit2kids.ca/en/#keeping-kids-safe-in-sport

- Conduct practices in a non visible area with no parents/guardians and or other adults who have children on the team present in the immediate vicinity from arrival at the session to departure.
- Use profanity, ridicule, verbal abuse or engage in any unwarranted physical contact with a child.

Given the importance of the role of a coach and their interaction with players, parents and families, attention to the above is required and appreciated. If at any time a coach is faced with a “grey” situation, take the side of caution or seek guidance from the club.

The essence of this policy is to put the child’s safety and well-being first.

As a Team Official/Coordinator/Staff, you must also be aware and keep all Ontario Soccer requirements up to date. Please reference this links for more information:

- Respect in Sport Program
- Protecting Children & Youth in Sport

How to Support a Child During Disclosure

Listen – what a child needs when disclosing is for you to listen. Children may fear of an adult’s reaction as well as not being believed. It takes incredible courage to share such an experience. Listen attentively and avoid sharing your own stories or experience.

Control your Reaction – Do not over or underreact. If the child believes that they are being judged by you or that you do not believe them, they are likely to shut down and stop the disclosure.

Take it Seriously – Let the child know that what they are telling you is very important to you. Explain to the child that you are going to listen very carefully to what they have to share with you.

Praise the Child for Telling – It takes tremendous courage to disclose sexual abuse and a child will often assume responsibility for the abuse. Assure the child that it is not their fault, and the they did the right thing by telling you.

Protect the Child and Other Children from Overexposure – Respect the child’s need for privacy and confidentiality, and make sure that no other children are around to hear the child’s disclosure. Only adults who will be directly involved in taking action should be present.

Show your Warmth and Caring – Use a calm voice and get down to the child’s level in order to make eye contact with them. A child who discloses needs appropriate support and understanding.⁴

Record the Disclosure – Record the disclosure using the child’s words.⁵

Reporting

Contact 9-1-1 if you or an individual is facing immediate and or a life-threatening emergency.

If a WOSC Team Official/Coordinator/Staff witness or become aware of any contravention of the above policy, they shall immediately report it to the Child Protection Liaison at childprotection@wosc.com. If there is a conflict with that individual, a report can be made directly to the General Manager at gm@wosc.com.

In addition, if any WOSC Team Official/Coordinator/Staff were to witness or have a suspicion of child abuse, the incident(s) shall be immediately reported to the Child Protection Liaison of the WOSC, at childproection@wosc.com, who shall immediately communicate the incident to the Law enforcement of jurisdiction. The Child Protection Liaison shall also ensure that the information be shared with the Children’s Aid Society or Child Protection Services of jurisdiction.

The Child Protection Liaison shall report to the local Children’s Aid Society when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection. Information that an average person, using normal and honest judgement, is reason enough to report.

The Child Protection Liaison’s duty to report is ongoing. They must continue to make reports if they believe the child still requires protection.

It is not your responsibility to decide if maltreatment is occurring, but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it. Under Canadian child welfare laws, if you know or suspect child maltreatment, you have a legal obligation to report it. This is known as the “duty to report”.

Under section 125 of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a Children’s

⁴ C2K_SportEdition_ParentsGuide_eng.pdf, commit2kids.ca/en/#keeping-kids-safe-in-sport

⁵ Oacas.org/publications-and-campaigns/dresspurpleday/dress-purple-day-teacher-guide/

Aid Society. Professionals who work with children and youth have an added responsibility to report.

Parents

Parents who also witness or suspect child abuse shall report the incident to childprotection@wosc.com. Reports can be made anonymously, however, the reporters contact information may be shared with a Child Protection Agency.

Reporting inappropriate behaviour creates accountability so proper action can be taken and expectations can be re-established.

Parents may also want to have an age-appropriate conversation with their children about personal safety and boundary breaking behaviour. Some topics to talk with children about are the qualities of healthy relationships, the importance of personal boundaries, and how to get help or where to bring their concerns.

Let's all help make sport a positive and memorable experience!

Additional Resources

The Canadian Sports Helpline is a confidential helpline for harassment, abuse and discrimination. It provides a safe place for victims and witnesses to report their concerns. The Canadian Sports Helpline exists to provide advice, guidance, and resources on how to proceed/intervene appropriately in circumstances.

Text or Call 1-888-83-SPORT (77678)

Email info@abuse-free-sport.ca

The Kids Help Phone operates 24/7 and provides professional counselling, referrals, and information to young people. Young athletes can talk confidentially with a trained volunteer Crisis Responder for support with any issue – big or small.

Text 686868

Call 1-800-668-6868

Live Chat at kidshelpphone.ca/live

