Football Victoria

SHEPPARTON UNITED SOCCER CLUB

Child Safety Policy

&

Code of Conduct

1 November 2025

1. CHILD SAFE POLICY

1. Introduction

All FV football clubs are required to implement the Child Safe Standards and the mandatory reporting guidelines from the Victorian Government's amendment to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) ("**CYFA**") and the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) ("**Crimes Act**").

Shepparton United Soccer Club (the "**Club**") is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone involved at the Club is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

a) work towards a Club culture of child safety.
b) ensure that all persons are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
c) provide guidance on responding where a person suspects any child abuse within all Club Environments.
d) provide a clear statement to players, committee members, volunteers, employees and contractors forbidding any such abuse.
e) provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be investigated.
f) The FV Child Protection Guidelines, available on the FV website, has more detailed information on each of these areas. The Club will use all reasonable endeavours to adopt and comply with those Guidelines in its recruitment practices.

In addition to this Policy, the FV has produced Child Protection Guidelines which are available on the FV website. The Club will comply with those Guidelines to aid and supplement this policy.

3. Scope

This Policy, and the attached Code of Conduct, applies to all players, committee members, volunteers, coaches, team managers, assistants, employees, and parents of players of the Club, whether registered via MFC or otherwise registered with our club. Non-registered individuals who otherwise participate in activities with or for our club are also bound to this policy by virtue of their participation in our club's activities.

Breaches of this Policy or the Code of Conduct may be investigated by the Club and/or FV and may be processed by the Club as it sees fit, or in the alternative by FV as Misconduct in accordance with the FV GDT.

4. Guiding Principles

This Policy is based on the following principles:

a) the Club has zero tolerance for child abuse.
b) the best interests of the child are paramount.
c) child protection is a shared responsibility.
d) all children have a right to feel safe and be safe when they play football, and have equal rights to protection from abuse.
e) the Club will consider the opinions of players and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures.

f) the Club is committed to the diversity and cultural safety of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, minors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, minors with disabilities, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these matters.
g) everyone covered by the Policy must comply with, and is bound to, the Club's Child Safety Code of Conduct at all times (Attachment 1).

5. Role of Child Protection Officers the Committee

The Club's Committee is responsible for ensuring that policies are reviewed and updated, and that training exists for committee members, volunteers, coaches, team managers, assistants and employees on child protection matters. The Committee is also responsible for identifying and managing risk in relation to child safety.

Child Protection Officers (CPOs) are available to listen, discuss and clarify issues confronting individuals in our Club. Players, members, employees, volunteers, and committee members can all speak with a CPO if they have concerns in relation to child abuse. The CPOs will make reports on behalf of the Club and ensure that adequate records are maintained. The Club CPOs will be listed on our club website and identified to all children and parents at the club.

6. Recognizing child abuse

Child abuse includes:

a) any act committed against a child involving:
    a. a sexual offence; or
    b. an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act (grooming); or
b) the infliction, on a child, of:
    a. physical violence; or
    b. serious emotional or psychological harm; or
c) serious neglect of a child.

For the purposes of this policy "Child" (or minor) means a person who participates at the Club under the age of 18 years, unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child.

7. Reporting obligations

Mandatory reporting

a) Under the Crimes Act, all persons have a legal obligation to inform police as soon as practicable where they have a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (of or over the age of 18 years).
b) This legal obligation above is subject to a person having a reasonable excuse for not reporting. A person will have a "reasonable excuse" to not report if that person:
    a. fears for the safety of any person (other than the alleged perpetrator of the offence) if they were to disclose the information to police, or
    b. believes on reasonable grounds that the information has already been disclosed to police and they have no further information.
c) The Club supports and encourages committee members, employees or volunteers, coaches or team managers to make a report to the police if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child. Where a report is made to the police or DHHS, we ask the individual to also advise the Club.
d) Any committee member, employee or volunteer, coach or team manager that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations will be supported by the Club and will not be penalised.

e) If a committee member, employee or volunteer, coach or team manager is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they must speak to the CPO (or FV) for guidance and information. Ultimately, it is a personal decision of the committee member, employee or volunteer employee or coach or team manager whether they choose to make a report to an external authority or not.
f) If an allegation is made against a committee member, employee or volunteer, coach or team manager, the CPO will follow the reporting procedure and take all steps to ensure that safety of the child is paramount.

Voluntary reporting

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, may disclose that information to the police. The Club encourages all persons to speak with the CPO (or FV) for guidance or support with addressing such concerns.

What are "Reasonable grounds for belief"?

You have "reasonable grounds" to notify when:

a) a minor tells you that he/she has been physically or sexually abused;
b) a minor states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the minor may be talking about themselves);
c) someone else, such as a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the minor, tells you that a child has been abused;
d) your observations of the minor's behaviour or knowledge of children lead you to believe that the child has been abused; or
e) you observe physical signs or indicators of abuse (e.g. bruises, cuts etc.).

The club encourages reporting where you hold a concern about the safety of a minor.

8. Prevention

Risk Management

The Club will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the Club will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls. The Club will ensure that appropriate training is conducted for:

- Committee members
- Coaches, team managers and volunteers; and
- Employees.

Information will be provided to players (or for players such as Miniroos and Junior teams) to their parents/carers, about child safety.

The Club will also ensure that all committee members, volunteers, coaches, team managers, and employees are provided with ongoing supervision and support such that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child-safe environment.

Communication

The Club is pro-active in the area of prevention and will communicate the Child Protection Policy, Procedure and Code of Conduct in the manner below.

PLAYERS	PARENTS, GUARDIANS, COMMUNITY, SPONSORS, PARTNERS	COMMITTEEE MEMBERS, COACHES, MANAGERS, EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS
• Conditions of becoming a member • Website • Player registration • Direct email communication • Induction sessions	• Conditions of becoming a member • Website • Player registration • Direct email communication • Induction sessions	• Website • Letters of appointment/ contracts/agreements • Direct e-mail communication • Induction sessions

Recruitment

The Club is pro-active in its recruitment of individuals to the club, including committee members, volunteers and employees, coaches, and team managers, in the area of Child Safety. The Club will:

a) Implement a recruitment process for coaches, assistant coaches, team mangers, etc, for all the teams of our club.
b) Ensure all coaches, volunteers, etc read and understand the Clubs' Code of Conduct and other policies.
c) Screen for inappropriate people and conduct interviews, reference checks and online background searches to satisfy ourselves about people coming into positions of responsibility at our club.
d) Conduct all necessary Working with Children Checks (WWCC).
e) Include child safety issues in induction training.

The FV Child Protection Guidelines, available on the FV website, has more detailed information on each of these areas. The Club will use all reasonable endeavours to adopt and comply with those Guidelines in its recruitment practices.

Further steps we will take as a Club

a) Unless unavoidable, no adult will have access to an unaccompanied minor without prior permission form the minor's parents or guardian.
b) We will ensure all new coaches, team manages, etc to our club have a WWCC check.
c) We will ensure appropriate training and education sessions into child safety are available to all new coaches, team manages.
d) We will communicate or Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct to our stakeholders and follow it.
e) We will set guidelines and rules for the appropriate levels of communication between coaches, team managers and players who are minors on social media.
f) We will take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety.
g) We value and empower minors to participate in decisions which affect them.
h) We will foster a culture of openness that supports disclosure of incidents.
i) We will respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount.
j) Ensure minors know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable to do so.
k) Report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities; and
l) Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk.

9. Responding to an allegation

In the case of an allegation being made against a committee member, coach, team manager, employee, volunteer and/or contractor at the Club, the CPO will follow this Child Protection Procedure. At all times the safety of the child is paramount.

Withdraw the individual

The first step is to consider withdrawal of the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased

supervision while the matter is being investigated. During the investigation process, it may be necessary for a person to be stood down from their usual duties at the Club or suspended from all activities at the Club.

Investigations

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust it is essential that it is dealt with sensitively and professionally:

The Club will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the Club to conduct an investigation in addition to any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g., the police).

The CPO will conduct an independent investigation, or will appoint an appropriate person to do so, into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the police and will co-operate with authorities as required. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the Club to engage a person from outside the Club to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.

All people covered by this Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct must co-operate fully with any investigation by DHHS, the police or the Club.

The CPO will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time-to-time other committee members, employees, volunteers may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g., to provide witness statements).

An investigation conducted by the Club will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. The Club will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible.

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with children, increased supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecutions.

The Club shall notify FV of the outcome of any investigation that results in suspension of an individual from the Club for abuse related matters.

10. Record keeping

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded by the CPO. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm are to be recorded. Reports must be to be securely stored by the CPO or club administrator.

11. Privacy and confidentiality

The Club will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (*Cth*) and FV's Privacy Policy.

There are two guiding principles in respect to a child's privacy.

a) First, the Club will operate on the best interest's principle. All committee members, employees, volunteers, and contractors will do what they believe to be in the best interest of the child. This principle supersedes all others.
b) Second, the Club will respect a child's confidentiality except in situations where it conflicts with the best interest's principle.

Those who make reports, and those about whom accusations are being made, are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, committee members, employees or volunteers must not disclose or make use of the

information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with this Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct, and relevant statutory requirements.

AT ALL TIMES, THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS MUST BE OBSERVED AND ACTED UPON

STEP 1:
Any person (aged 18 or over) that forms a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (aged 18 or older), must make a report to the police as soon as practicable, unless exceptions apply.

Committee members, employee, volunteers, or of-age players of the Club should discuss these observations and concerns with the Club Child Safety Officer, who can assist the person to make the report to the police as required. FV can also assist.

Any person (of any age) that forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or neglect), **may** disclose that information to the police or the Department of Health and Human Services ("**DHHS**"). The Club encourages all persons with concerns to raise this directly with the Club Child Safety Officer.

STEP 2:
It may be that, following the previous step, a person decides to make a report to DHHS or the police with the support of the Club Child Safety Officer.

Where a report is made, the individual should also advise the Club.

Making a report:
Ring:

- Victoria police on 000 for emergencies.
- If it is not an emergency, ring the Victoria Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team on (03) 8690 4056.
- DHHS on 1300 664 977 or 131 278(AH). Ask for Child Protection.

Information for making a report:

- name, age and address of child.
- the reason for suspecting that the behaviour or injury is a result of abuse.
- an assessment of the immediate danger to the child.
- a description of the injury or behaviour observed.
- the current whereabouts of the child.
- any other information about the family.
- any specific cultural details, e.g., English speaking, disability, etc.

Ask that the Club be informed of each step of the procedure.

Request that if an interview is to take place at the Club the visiting officer is in plain clothes and the time of the interview is specified so that appropriate arrangements for a meeting room can be organized.

If the complainant alleges that a crime has been committed by a committee member, employee, volunteer, or contractor, that person will be stood aside immediately.

The Club Child Safety Officer should conduct (or appoint another person to conduct) an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by DHHS or the police and will co-operate with the authorities as required.

Where an allegation has been the made, the Club will make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of child abuse and the Club's response to it.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this Procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

STEP 3:
If the child is agreeable to be interviewed by DHHS or the police, the Club Child Safety Officer should offer to be present at the interview to give support.

STEP 4:
Following a report, DHHS or the police may need to contact the Club about the notification. Inform the Club Child Safety Officer that a report has been made or is about to be made.

The Club Child Safety Officer should advise FV of such matters so that we can update our records in relation to the individual.

STEP 5:
Following a report, it is important to both protect confidentiality and the interests of the child and family at all times, as well as natural justice for the process.

Special comments:

- DHHS will only interview the child if he/she is agreeable.
- the family will not be contacted until it is believed there is a case, and the child is at risk.
- the identity of the person making a notification will be kept confidential (except when that information is required in a court case) unless that person gives permission for the information to be divulged. Such confidentiality should also be requested by Club Child Safety Officer and any other person who may become aware that a notification is to be, or has been, given.
- throughout the entire process of observation, discussion and reporting, the interests of the child and their family should be protected from unnecessary disclosure of information concerning abuse.
- following the making of a report to the DHHS or the police, any investigation that takes place is the responsibility of that external body.

1. CHILD SAFETY - CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to promote child safety within all Club environments.

Any form of abusive, derogatory, discriminatory, offensive, or intimidating behaviour or language by adults towards minors, or minors towards other minors, is not acceptable.

Any action that may be hurtful or risk being interpreted by a reasonable observer as grooming behaviour is unacceptable. Comments or actions that are negatively and unreasonably critical of a person's culture, ethnicity, language, gender identity, disability, sexuality, or age, are unacceptable.

Committee members, volunteers, employees, coaches, managers, players, and parents/guardians of players at the Club are bound by, and required to abide to, this Code.

2. Unacceptable behaviour

The following matters are derived from the Victorian Government's *Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority*.

These actions are prohibited and may, depending on the specific circumstances, constitute Misconduct in accordance with the FV GDT:

a) ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
b) put a minor at risk of abuse;
c) speak to a minor in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as overly harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are offensive swearing in the presence of a minor, or intimidatory language and gestures directed at a minor.
d) express inappropriate personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of a minor (unless the minor is a member of your family);
e) discuss sexual activities with a minor(unless it is a specific job requirement and the person is trained to discuss these matters, or the minor is a member of your family), or engaging in any sexually-oriented conversations with a minor;
f) have contact with a minor outside of Club activities or events without the Club's knowledge and/or consent;
g) have any online contact with a minor (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc) or their family without the Club or Team's knowledge and/or consent;
h) exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a minor (unless the minor is a member of your family) without the Club or Team's knowledge and/or consent;
i) using, possessing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of a minor;
j) using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol while supervising a minor (unless the minor is a member of your family or your contact with the minor is accidental/incidental, and you are not performing your professional obligations);
k) providing or allowing a minor to consume illegal drugs;
l) discriminate against any minor, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity, or disability;
m) engage in rough physical games (outside of what is reasonably considered appropriate in a Club training session), hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a minor in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way (unless the minor is a member of your family, and you comply with all relevant legislation);
n) take a minor to their home or encourage meetings outside Club activities or events (unless the child is a member of your family or parental permission has been provided) without the Club or Team's knowledge and/or consent;
o) photograph or video a minor inappropriately, or in circumstances where you have been requested to cease;
p) being naked in the presence of a minor (unless the minor is a member of your family);

q) possess sexually oriented or morally inappropriate printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, messages, clothing, etc.) in the presence of a minor;
r) sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag or tent with a minor (unless the minor is a member of your family); and/or
s) engage in sexual contact with a minor.

Any violation of this Code of Conduct by a committee member, volunteer, employee, coach, manager, player, parent or guardian or other Club Associate at the Club may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter by the Club, or may be referred to the FV as Misconduct under the FV GDT provisions.

3. Physical contact/touching

Committee members, volunteers, employees, coaches, managers, and players are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behaviour management of minors. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviours by minors.

Physical contact may be required in an emergency situation to remove minors quickly from danger or threat of danger.

Appropriate contact between committee members, volunteers, employees, coaches, managers and players and minors is part of normal human relationships. Some considerations and guidelines include the following:

a) consider the minor's age, developmental level, maturity and level of care required, for example, touching a minor to gain their attention, guiding or comforting a distressed minor;
b) work in an open environment; for example, in one-to-one discussions indoors the door should be open with visual access;
c) be alert to cues from minors about how comfortable they are in your proximity and respect their need for personal space;
d) be sensitive when interacting with minors who may misinterpret your actions, such as those who may have been traumatised by abuse or adolescents seeking attention from a member of the opposite sex;
e) be aware of cultural norms that may influence the interpretation of your behaviour;
f) be cautious about physical contact in training or during matches. If you need to make physical contact for demonstrations, explain the activity and what you will do, maintain a safe and appropriate distance;
g) physical contact should be made in a way that makes minors feel comfortable, for example, shaking hands, a congratulatory pat on the back or rub on the side of their arm for reassurance. Massaging a minor if you are not trained to do so or allowing a child to massage you is inappropriate physical contact.

4. Transportation and off-site events

Other than in an emergency or other abnormal situation where no other option could be reasonably foreseen, it is unwise to transport children without permission of their parent, carer, or guardian.

It is prohibited to have unnecessary and/or inappropriate physical contact with minors while in vehicles. Minors should be transported directly to their destination. No stops should be made other than those that are reasonably scheduled for meals or comfort stops.

It is prohibited to have minors spend the night at the residence of a committee member, volunteer, employee, or contractor without parental/guardian prior approval.

Changing and showering facilities or arrangements for adults must be separate from facilities or arrangements for children (unless the child is a member of your family).

5. Confidentiality

Disclosing information to committee members and CPO

The privacy of the child should be respected at all times. When considering breaching the privacy who and how many people are told should be based on what is believed to be in the best interests of the child.

Information in relation to abuse or suspected abuse of a minor should be disclosed to a committee member or CPO of the club only, in order to limit the potential dissemination of confidential information.

Disclosing information to people external to the organisation

Committee members, volunteers, employees, coaches, managers and players should not discuss confidential matters about children with people outside the organisation in a way that identifies that child except when they have the express permission of the child, or it complies with the Club's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct. In circumstances where committee members, volunteers, employees, coaches, managers, and players believe that there is not enough knowledge within the Club to provide the best possible assistance to a child, they are able to seek expertise external to the Club. When communicating with people outside the Club the child's identity should be protected.

Informing children

It is the responsibility of the Club to communicate the limits of confidentiality in the Club to children who are likely to have an ongoing relationship with the Club. These guidelines should be published in an accessible place for children.

6. Related legislation

a) Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic);
b) Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic); and
c) Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
d) Child Protection Crisis Line – 24 Hours, seven days a week. Telephone: 13 12 78Gather feedback from children about your Club's child-safe policies and processes and seek input on whether they would feel safe to raise concerns. Implement improvements based on this feedback.

1. Train volunteers/employees/contractors on methods of empowering children and encouraging children's participation.
2. Encourage participation and empowerment of children in a range of Club activities (not just that relating to child safety), such as planning and decision making.
3. Raise awareness in the Club and the community about children's rights.