



# RAISING SAFETY CONCERNS IN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL



## WHAT IS A CONCERN?

A concern can be raised by anyone (a child, young person, family member, carer, umpire, official, senior player, coach, manager, club member or member of the community) and be about anything (facilities, behaviour of another child or young person, behaviour or actions of an adult).

If the concern raised by you is in relation to the safety of a child or young person it will be categorised, reported to authorities if required, and recorded in a register.



Concerns can be reported through the **AFL Integrity Unit**. Further information can be found at the **AFL Safeguarding Children and Young People Complaints and Reporting Procedure**.

## DEFINITIONS

**A Child:** someone involved in footy who is 12 years or younger - usually a player but may also be a sibling of a player or child of an adult at the club.

**A Young Person:** someone involved in footy who is between the ages of 13 and 18 years old - usually a player but could also be an umpire or in another role at the club, or a sibling or child of a player.

**Adult:** 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.



## WHAT KIND OF CONCERN MIGHT SOMEONE RAISE WITH ME?

As a football coach or manager, you are likely to form connections with children or young people associated with football. This may mean that they view you as a trusted adult and could disclose information to you about their concerns of inappropriate behaviour or abuse, either at home, at any football related activity or location, or somewhere else.

This could be telling you that they are experiencing:

- physical abuse

- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- neglect
- bullying or harassment, or
- mental health issues.

The aim of this guideline is to arm you with the right tools so you can confidently and appropriately respond to these moments.

There is no expectation for you to play counsellor, psychologist or therapist. All that is asked of you is to listen, support, and respond to their concern.



To better understand inappropriate behaviours, and what to look out for, check out this fact sheet: **What Does Abuse in Footy Look Like?**

Some survivors of child sexual abuse have reported that the way an adult or organisation responded when they told them about the abuse was more traumatic than the abuse itself. This is not ok.

## HOW WILL I KNOW?

### DISCLOSURES

When a child or young person tells you about an incident that happened to **them** or that **they** were directly involved in.

**They are raising a concern with you.**

### ALLEGATIONS

When a child, young person or any other person tells you about an incident that happened to **someone else** or that someone else was directly involved in.

**They are raising a concern with you.**

### SUSPICIONS

When you have a reason to suspect an incident of abuse against a child or young person, based on observations, instinct or gut feeling, behaviours and indicators.

**You are forming a concern.**

## HOW TO RESPOND IN THE MOMENT

If a child or young person has come to you with a **DISCLOSURE** or an **ALLEGATION** what you do with this information and how you respond is really important. The 3 R's below are an easy way to remember what to do in the moment. You don't have to be a professional or an expert in this, they just need you to be a safe and sensible adult.



### RECOGNISE

Recognise when a child or young person is at risk. Know the signs, the indicators and the red flags. Listen to what a child or young person is telling you. Look out for **DISCLOSURES, ALLEGATIONS** or **SUSPICIONS**.



### RESPOND

Respond calmly and sensitively to a child or young person if they tell you about something that has happened to them. Believe them, listen to them, reassure them, and take them seriously.

Avoid asking leading questions. Just make sure they are safe and let them know you will do something to help them.



### REPORT

You must **SAY SOMETHING**. Follow the steps below.



**STRATEGY** – If you have to respond to a child or young person who is disclosing or alleging that something unsafe has occurred, respond as you would if they were your own child. This is the 'my own child' rule.

## WHAT TO DO NEXT

### SAY SOMETHING

Even if you have not spoken directly with a child or young person but you have a **SUSPICION** that something is not right, it is important you say something.



### You can:

Speak directly with someone you trust in football like a coach, team manager, umpire, official or club representative.



Use this QR code to raise a concern with the AFL.



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

## FAQS TO HELP YOU GET YOUR HEAD AROUND IT....

### WHAT IF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON TELLS ME SOMETHING BUT DOESN'T WANT ME TO TELL ANYONE?

Building trust is important, especially if a child or young person is experiencing something that is making them feel unsafe. You can encourage them to speak up, build their confidence, offer to come with them as support and reassure them.

### WILL I LOSE MY JOB AS COACH IF I RAISE A CONCERN?

You should not be treated unfairly for raising a concern.

### CAN I RAISE A CONCERN ANONYMOUSLY?

Yes, you can do this contacting the **AFL Integrity Unit** however, please remember that if you don't give us your name, we can't come back to you for further information or to update you on what we are going to do.



**IMPORTANT - As an adult, you are required in most cases, by state and commonwealth law, to report any concern about the safety of a child or young person to the relevant authorities, including Child Protection and/or Police. However, even when you are not required by law, you still can, and you should.**

### DO I NEED TO HAVE PROOF?

No, you don't need to have proof or evidence.

- If someone tells you it happened, say something.
- If you think something has happened, based on what you have seen, heard or felt, and have a 'reasonable belief' that it happened, say something.



For any safeguarding queries email [childsafety@afl.com.au](mailto:childsafety@afl.com.au)

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

**We want all children and young people in football to be safe, feel safe, play safe.**



For more information on how to respond to a disclosure or allegation, go to **Australian Institute of Family Studies: Responding to Children and Young People's Disclosures of Abuse** or watch this video **Responding to Disclosures**