

Attachment D4: PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation, contact the Police immediately on 000.

Fact sheets on reporting allegations of child abuse in different states and territories are available at www.playbytherules.net.au.

An allegation of child abuse is a very serious matter and must be handled with a high degree of sensitivity. It is not the responsibility of anyone working in FFA in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate authorities. The following outlines the key steps to follow. More information can be obtained from state or territory government agencies.

Step 1 – Initial Receipt of an Allegation

If a child or young person discloses an allegation involving harm or abuse to them or another child, then it is crucial that you:

- Stay calm;
- Listen, be supportive and do not challenge or undermine what the child says;
- Reassure the child that what has occurred is not the fault of the child;
- Be honest with the child and explain that other people may need to be told in order to stop what is happening;
- Ensure you are clear about what the child has said but do not elicit detailed information, ask leading questions or offer an opinion;
- Act promptly to accurately record the discussion in writing;
- Do not discuss the details with any person other than those detailed in these procedures; and
- Do not contact the alleged offender.

Step 2 – Report allegations

- Immediately report any allegation or disclosure of child abuse or situation involving a child at risk of harm, to the police and/or government child protection agency. You may need to report to both.
- Contact the relevant child protection agency or police for advice if there is any doubt about whether the complaint should be reported (for example, the allegation may relate to poor/inappropriate practice).
- If the child's parent/s is suspected of committing the abuse, you should report the allegation to the relevant government agency.
- If the allegation involves anyone to whom our Policy applies, then also report the allegation to the MPIO or relevant State Member Protection Officer so that they can manage the situation (e.g. contact the parents following advice from the authorities, deal with any media enquiries and manage steps 3 and 4).

Step 3 – Protect the child and manage the situation

- The MPIO or relevant State Member Protection Officer will assess the risks and take interim action to ensure the child's/children's safety. Action the relevant Governing Body may implement includes redeployment of the alleged offender to a non-child related position, supervision of the alleged offender or removal/suspension from their duties until the allegations are finally determined, however it is not the MPIO's role to undertake such actions. The relevant Governing Body should seek legal advice if person is in a paid employment.
- The MPIO or relevant State Member Protection Officer will consider the kind of support that the children and parents may need (e.g. counselling, help lines, support groups).
- The MPIO or relevant State Member Protection Officer will address the support needs of the alleged offender.
- The MPIO or relevant State Member Protection Officer will also put in place measures to protect the child and the person against whom the complaint is made from victimisation and gossip. If the

person is stood down, it should be made clear to any persons aware of the incident that this does not mean the respondent is guilty and a proper investigation will be undertaken.

Step 4 – Internal action

- Where there is an allegation made against a person to whom this Policy applies, there may be three types of investigations:
 - Criminal (conducted by police);
 - Child protection (conducted by child protection authority);
 - Disciplinary or misconduct (conducted by the relevant Governing Body).
- Irrespective of the findings of the child protection and/or police inquiries, the relevant Governing Body will assess the allegation to decide whether the person should be reinstated, banned, have their employment or position terminated or any other action having regard for all the information, including the findings of the police, government agency and/or court.
- If disciplinary action is to be taken, the procedures outlined in section 8 of the Policy will be followed.
- If disciplinary action is taken, FFA will advise and provide a report to the relevant government authority should this be required (e.g. the NSW Commission for Children and Young People requires notification of relevant employment proceedings).

When you contact the Department, the Duty Officer will gather and record information that you provide and decide how best to respond. The type of information that the officer will gather includes:

- Details about the child/young person and family;
- The reasons you are concerned;
- The immediate risk to the child;
- Whether or not the child or family has support;
- What may need to happen to make the child safe;
- Your contact details, so that the officer can call you to obtain further information if required or to provide feedback.

You do not need to have all the details about the child or family when you contact the Department for Child Protection.

For more information: visit <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildProtection/> or call 1800 622 258.