

Code of Conduct to Protect Children

The safety and well-being of children involved in soccer is our top priority. This Code of Conduct outlines the expectations and responsibilities of all participants to ensure a safe and positive environment.

Child Welfare First

- Prioritize the safety, health, and well-being of all children involved in soccer activities.
- Recognize that the welfare of the child is the ultimate priority in all decisions and actions.

Respect and Dignity

- Treat all children with respect, kindness, and dignity.
- Value the individuality of each child and promote their self-esteem.

Appropriate Boundaries

- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries with children.
- Avoid any form of abuse, harassment, or exploitation, whether physical, emotional, or sexual.

Open Communication

- Foster an environment of open communication where children feel comfortable sharing their concerns.
- Listen actively to children and respond to their needs and feelings with empathy and understanding.

Supervision and Safety

- Ensure proper supervision of children during all soccer activities.
- Adhere to safety protocols and guidelines to minimize risks and ensure a secure environment.

Education and Training

- Stay informed about best practices in child protection and player welfare.
- Participate in training and workshops focused on safeguarding children in sports.

Reporting Concerns

- Report any concerns about a child's welfare, misconduct, or inappropriate behavior immediately to the appropriate authorities.
- Encourage others to do the same, creating a culture of accountability.

Inclusive Environment

- Promote inclusivity, ensuring that all children, regardless of background or ability, feel welcome and valued.
- Challenge any discriminatory behavior or attitudes.

Parental Involvement

- Engage parents and caregivers in discussions about child protection and the responsibilities of adults in sports.
- Provide resources and support to help them understand their role in safeguarding their children.

Positive Role Modeling

- Set a positive example for children by demonstrating respect, integrity, and sportsmanship.
- Encourage healthy competition and emphasize the importance of fun and enjoyment in the sport.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour toward a child:

- embarrassing
- shaming
- blaming
- humiliating
- putting them down
- holding them accountable for things out of their control (i.e.- missed practices)

Reporting Requirements

- All staff, team officials and volunteers must report suspected child sexual abuse, inappropriate behaviour, or incidents that they
- become aware of, whether the behaviour or incidents were personally witnessed or not.

Where to report:

1. All allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour (for example, child sexual abuse) that a staff/volunteer witnesses first-hand, must be promptly reported to police and/or child welfare in addition to WLYSC President.
2. To ensure the protection of all children in the Clubs care, all allegations, or suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour that a staff/volunteer learns of must also be promptly reported to police and/or child welfare. Police and/or child welfare will make the determination as to whether the allegation or suspicion requires further investigation.
3. All allegations or suspicions of inappropriate behaviour of unacceptable behaviour (see above examples), that a staff/volunteer learns of or witnesses first-hand, must be reported to the WLYSC President. This Code is intended as an example only.
 - **Keep It Confidential:** Your concerns will be treated with seriousness and respect. Information will only be shared with those who need to know to address the issue.
 - **Support is Available:** Remember, you are not alone. There are people and resources available to help you.
 - **Your Voice Matters:** It is important to know that you can speak up without fear of retaliation or negative consequences.
 - **You Have Rights:** Every athlete has the right to feel safe and respected in their sport. Reporting concerns is part of protecting yourself and your teammates.
 - **Check In:** After reporting, it is okay to ask about the status of your concern. This shows that you care about the outcome.
 - **Seek Support:** If you are feeling anxious or uncertain after reporting, talk to someone you trust about your feelings.

Conclusion

Remember, reporting concerns is a brave and major step. By speaking up, you help create a safer and more supportive environment for everyone involved in sports. Always trust your instincts—if something feels wrong, it is worth discussing.

Keep in mind that you may learn of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour through the child or some other third party, or you may witness it first-hand. Examples of the type of behaviour you may learn of or witness and that you must report as set out above include:

- a. Potentially Illegal behaviour by a Team Official/Staff/Volunteer of the organization

- b. Potential Illegal behaviour by a third party, such as a Parent, Teacher, Babysitter, Coach

If you are not sure whether the issue you have witnessed or heard about involves potentially illegal behaviour or inappropriate behaviour, discuss the issue with the WLYSC President who will support you through the process. **Remember: You have an independent duty to report all suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour directly to police and/or child welfare.**

Follow up on Reporting

When an allegation or suspicion of potentially illegal behaviour is reported, police and/or a child welfare agency (locally – Family and Children Services Niagara – FACS) will be notified. WLYSC will follow up internally as appropriate.

When an allegation or suspicion of inappropriate behaviour is made, WLYSC will follow up on the matter to gather information about what happened and determine what, if any, formal or other disciplinary action is required.

In the case of inappropriate behaviour, if:

- multiple behaviours were reported
- inappropriate behaviour is recurring, or
- the reported behaviour is of serious concern

WLYSC may refer the matter to a child welfare agency or police.