

# COACHES AND MANAGERS SAFE BEHAVIOURS

## SAFE HOCKEY SAFE KIDS CODE

All adults are expected to ensure children and young people always feel safe and welcome in hockey.

### What is the Safe Hockey Safe Kids code?

The Safe Hockey Safe Kids Code provides clear guidance around what is expected of adults in hockey when interacting with children and young people.

## SAFE HOCKEY SAFE KIDS CODE

This is an extract from the HA Code of Conduct and provides specific expectations of any adult in hockey who is in contact with a child or young person. For further information on how each of the eight statements apply go to the [Safe Behaviours Policy & Procedure](#).

**I will do what I can to provide a safe, fun and welcoming environment for all children and young people in hockey, free from physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect.**

**I will do this by:**

1. Listening and responding to children and young people, and take what they say seriously
2. Communicating safely and effectively with children and young people, in person and online
3. Having firm boundaries when interacting with children and young people
4. Only engaging in safe and appropriate physical contact with children and young people, putting their safety and wellbeing first
5. Never engaging in any behaviour of a sexual nature, physically, verbally non-verbally, or through online communication
6. Role modelling positive behaviours that prioritise the health and safety of a child or young person in hockey
7. Contributing to a safe and inclusive environment for children and young people from ALL backgrounds and treating everyone fairly
8. Taking any concerns about the safety of a child or young person seriously, and responding in line with policies, procedures, guidelines and the law.

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## Why do I need to sign it?

You are required to sign it as evidence that you have received it and understand it and commit to follow it. You will be accountable to this Code, as well as the HA Code of Conduct, and any actions or behaviour that is in breach of this Code will have consequences.

It is our way of making sure everyone is clear on what is expected of them in hockey to keep children and young people safe.

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## What happens if I breach the Safe Hockey Safe Kids Code?

If a concern is raised about you in relation to a potential breach of this Code, it may result in any of the following outcomes:

If it is in relation to the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, but is less serious or not a clear example of abuse, it will be registered as a Low Level Concern and your behaviour will be discussed with you by a representative from your club or association.

If a concern is raised and it is an allegation of any type of child abuse, it will be registered as a Reportable Concern and a report will be made to the police and child protection authorities.

Additionally, the allegation will be reported to the Member Association who will consider the provisional suspension of your membership pending either an internal or an external (police) investigation of the allegations.

The matter will be handled according to the following key documents:

- [Safe Responses Policy & Procedure](#)
- [Safe Hockey Responding to Concerns Guide](#)
- [HA Complaints & Disputes Policy](#)
- [HA Code of Conduct](#)

## What do I do if I see something that isn't right?

- Tell the police if there is an immediate danger 000
- Tell a representative of your club via email, phone or in person
- Use the [Raise a Concern](#) button here on the website
- Contact [STOPLINE](#)



# 1. LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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## How can we actively engage young athletes?

Don't forget to make it fun - young people told us that occasionally, adults are so focused on the sport, the game and the result that they forget that it is also meant to be fun. Young athletes need to know that hockey is a place to connect with friends, engage in physical exercise and enjoy the company of the hockey community. This is a messages that you can consistently communicate to them but is also driven through the culture of the club, through events, fundraising activities, games and activities that engage young athletes or junior umpires and connect them to their club.

'If a club has a good culture it gives young people a sense of connection and identity and they are more likely to want to volunteer their time and help out. Culture is so important.'" Shaun, Vic.

**STRATEGIES**

Encourage young athletes to provide feedback on clinics, game days, trips or social activities. Involving young athletes in decision making increases their sense of belong, is more likely to keep them engaged and takes some pressure off you.

**2. COMMUNICATING SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**In person**

When communicating with young athletes or junior umpires it is important to remember that what you say matters.

**Appropriate Communication** includes:

- Using language that is:
  - patient and calm
  - empowering and encouraging
  - simple and clear
  - highlights strengths.
- Limiting communication to hockey activities such as sharing information relating to events
- Always include at least one other adult in group communication
- Communicate directly with the parent or guardian or include a parent or guardian when communicating with an individual child or young person

**Inappropriate Communication** includes:

- Derogatory language, including in reference to body image.
- Discriminatory, racist or sexist comments.
- Language that is belittling, negative, threatening or intimidating.
- Any language or comment that is sexual in nature.
- Requesting to meet in person for reasons not related to hockey.
- Asking the child or young person to keep secrets including in relation to communication.
- Communication take place outside of the hours reasonable to the program, service, activity or event.

**Online**

Using social media to communicate with young athletes has both benefits and risks, just remember:

**INTENT:**

- What are my intentions?
- Are they appropriate?
- Can I justify making contact with someone?
- Is it necessary?
- Would another adult have any reason to question my intentions?

## CONTENT:

- Is the content of my communication relevant to hockey?
- Is it personal?
- Would I be comfortable if their parents read this?
- Would I be happy to read this if it were between my own child and their umpiring coach?

## STRATEGIES

Where possible, all online communication sent to a young athlete should be copied to their parent or guardian. It is best practice to introduce a secure app or program to facilitate communication between coaches and young athletes where possible. Avoid apps with encrypted data like WhatsApp and stick to mainstream apps like Facebook and Facebook Messenger where your communication can be intercepted if necessary. Remember, transparency is everything.

Ensure your club or association is only sharing or posting family friendly material and content to its social media pages. It is a great platform to promote positive messages especially about Safe Hockey and club culture, so use it wisely.

Keep an eye on the useful resources available including this <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/social-media/social-media-issues>

## 3. HAVING FIRM BOUNDARIES WHEN INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Professional boundaries are the limits to the relationship between a coach/manager and a young athlete that you set yourself, based on your values, your circumstances and what is best for the young person.

You are expected to apply professional boundaries to any relationship with a child or young person and ensure behaviours are within the confines of your role.

Maintaining professional boundaries is important because they protect both the young person and you.

Professional Boundaries' may include, but are not limited to, ensuring not to:

- favour, isolate or single out an individual child or young person
- accept or give gifts to children and young people or their families without notifying a supervisor and seeking consent from parents or guardians
- initiate contact with children or young people (or former participants) outside of Hockey activities, including through social media, unless an established relationship already existed (family or friends).
- offer support to a child or young person, or their family, outside of Hockey activities, such as babysitting or financial support

Unlike the law, or policies, professional boundaries may be applied differently in different circumstances. Eg. Providing a lift or socialising with your team outside of hockey may be unavoidable in small communities or in rural areas with limited transport.

## 4. ONLY ENGAGING IN SAFE AND APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

### Can I use physical contact when coaching young athletes?

Yes. It is acknowledged that physical contact is an important part of coaching as long as it is appropriate. Physical contact is also important for building rapport and connection, such as pat on the back or a high five, again, as long as it is appropriate.

Appropriate physical contact with young athletes people includes contact that is relevant to hockey and within the confines of your role as coach or manager. This may seem subjective, and the boundaries around physical contact may differ from person to person, however these guidelines should provide some guidance to ensure your own behaviour is appropriate and the behaviour and actions you observe from others are too

Play by the Rules define appropriate and inappropriate physical contact as:

Physical contact is **appropriate** if it:

- is used to assist in skill development
- is required for the child's safety
- occurs with the player's understanding and permission
- is for the child's benefit, not adult gratification
- occurs in an open environment.

Physical contact is **inappropriate** if it:

- includes touching the groin, genital area, buttocks, breasts or any part of the body that may cause distress or embarrassment
- frightens, distresses or embarrasses a child
- destroys their trust
- occurs in a private place.

<https://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/physical-contact-with-children>

### How do I know what is ok and what is not ok?

Asking yourself the following questions will help to navigate you in good practice when interacting with young athletes. If you answer no to any of the following questions you must reassess your actions.

- Is it **relevant** to hockey and my **role**?
- Is the young athlete **aware** of what I am doing, and why? Do I have their consent?
- Is the young athlete showing any signs of **distress** or **discomfort**? If so, stop.
- Would I do this even if **another adult** was watching?
- Would I be **comfortable** with someone using the same contact with my own child?

Additionally, there may actually be someone else who would be more appropriate to make this contact?  
Eg. The first aid officer / a physio or the young athlete's parent.

#### STRATEGY

Whenever you interact with a young athlete ask yourself, would I be ok if someone else interacted this way with my own child? This is the 'my own child' rule.

## 5. NEVER ENGAGING IN ANY BEHAVIOUR OF A SEXUAL NATURE

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### What is sexual behaviour and grooming?

Sexual behaviour and grooming of a child or young person is always inappropriate, illegal and a breach of the [Safe Hockey Safe Kids Code](#) and The Safe Behaviours Policy & Procedure.

**You must not under any circumstances, engage in behaviour of a sexual nature or grooming with or in the presence of a child or young person.**

Inappropriate sexual behaviour and grooming includes contact (including touching, caressing holding) and non-contact behaviour (including verbal or online communication, exposure to pornography).

### AGE OF CONSENT

It is acknowledged that you hold a position of authority over young athletes under the age of 18. Under no circumstances are you, a person in a position of authority, to engage in behaviour of a sexual nature with a child or young person, even if they are above the legal age of consent.

*Inappropriate contact behaviours of a sexual nature include, but are not limited to:*

- sexual intercourse
- sexual penetration
- kissing
- touching of the genital, buttocks or breast areas or
- inappropriate and unnecessary physical touching of any kind.

*Inappropriate non-contact behaviours of a sexual nature include but are not limited to:*

- flirting
- sexual innuendo
- inappropriate and unnecessary communication
- nudity
- exposure to pornography or
- requests to observe sexual acts

## 6. ROLE MODELLING POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS

While supervising or interacting with children or young people, People in Hockey must not:

- use, possess or be under the influence of an illegal drug
- use or be under the influence of alcohol
- be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs
- supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to children or young people
- smoke cigarettes or use e-cigarettes during Hockey activities.

Assume a child or young person is watching, or listening and behave in a way that models respectful, responsible and lawful behaviours.

## 7. CONTRIBUTING TO A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

### What does inclusive hockey look like?

A safe and inclusive environment ensures that people from a range of different backgrounds feel valued and welcomed and have equal access to opportunities and resources.

All Hockey programs and activities should encourage and support safe and inclusive experiences for all children and young people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, children with disabilities, children from culturally diverse backgrounds, and children who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Inclusion and diversity in sport is an important element of child safety and should be approached as it's own initiative. There are a significant number of resources available to assist umpires and officials improve the way they approach inclusion. Below are a few starting points.

### What does diversity look like in hockey?

All players bring different backgrounds, cultures, experiences and understanding to your coaching sessions. As a coach you are not expected to have an in-depth knowledge of every player's background, culture or circumstances, but having some cultural, disability, gender and sexuality sensitivity can help create better coach-player relationships.

### What can coaches & managers do?

- Acknowledge important events and traditions that are relevant to the young athletes with diverse backgrounds
- Do your own research. If there are young people from specific cultural backgrounds or with a disability you should educate yourself with basic knowledge so you can ensure they feel included, safe and welcome.
- Don't question or dismiss important cultural issues that may arise, even if they conflict with your expectations.
- Call out racist or discriminatory behaviour, including side comments and jokes, that may single someone out for their race, culture, religion, disability or sexual identity. It is your responsibility to make sure that hockey is a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

*Remember, the way you respond to these matters can have a significant impact on whether a young athlete and their family feel included and welcome in the hockey community.*

### EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVE HOCKEY

1. Games are typically run on a Saturday, but there is a local tournament coming up that will be held on a Sunday. Stuart's family are members of the Greek Orthodox Church and his father explains Stuart will be unable to attend as they do not engage in any activities on the Sabbath. You could respond by saying:
  - ✓ **"No worries, I understand that is important to you. We look forward to having Stuart back next Saturday" OR**
  - × **"What? But we need him! Can't you just skip that rule for one week?"**
2. Danika is a young Aboriginal woman playing in the under 18's. During a game you hear a parent on the side-line say 'I bet she is only in the team to tick a box. That is someone else's spot she is taking. It is unfair'. You don't think Danika has heard the comment, so you could:
  - ✓ **Move over to the parents and firmly but respectfully say 'I heard your comment. What you said is disrespectful and racist and there is no place for that here.'**
  - × **Ignore the parents because you don't want to make a scene.**

## 8. TAKE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE SAFETY OF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON SERIOUSLY

The [Coaches & Managers Safe Responses Guidelines](#) provide detailed guidance about how to respond to concerns about the safety of a child or young person.

*Appropriate behaviours* when responding to concerns about the safety of a child or young person include:

- remaining calm
- providing a confidential space
- reassuring the child or young person
- allowing the child or young person to speak safely and freely
- validating their concerns

*Inappropriate behaviours* when responding to concerns about the safety of a child or young person include:

- dismissing the concerns of a child or young person
- telling them or implying that they are exaggerating, you don't believe them or they are lying
- blaming them or suggesting they invited the behaviour
- sharing their concerns with others in the group or other people who are not relevant
- not responding promptly and following the procedures as outlined in the [Safe Responses Policy & Procedure](#).

### What do I do if I see something that isn't right?

- Tell the police if there is an immediate danger 000
- Tell a representative of your club via email, phone or in person
- Use the [Raise a Concern](#) button here on the website
- Contact [STOPLINE](#)

