

## GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETICS NZ CLUB TEAM MANAGERS AND OTHER TEAM VOLUNTEERS ON WORKING WITH YOUNG ATHLETES

This resource has been developed to support team managers and other team volunteers travelling on club teams with young people and children, to provide a safe and positive training environment.

### Why is this important?

Athletics club teams managers and other volunteers are uniquely placed to see what is happening with children and young people. You have a vital role to play in their future and you can have an impact that lasts a lifetime.

Childhood sporting experiences should be positive, and it is our responsibility to provide an environment that is safe, positive and enables children to flourish.

While we aim to provide a safe environment and have the necessary preventative measures in place, we acknowledge that concerns about a child or young person's wellbeing may still arise. These guidelines are part of a collaborative approach to creating safe environments for both children or young people and team managers and other volunteers.

Our guidelines around safeguarding children and young people in athletics is based on core principles which align with Sport NZ's Safe Sport for Children policy and Athletics NZ's Member protection regulation:

- Children and young people have the right to have fun and be safe in their activities
- Children and young people should feel respected, valued, and encouraged to enjoy their participation in athletics and to reach their full potential
- Athletics New Zealand, Centres, member clubs, coaches, and team club managers, as leaders, organisers and deliverers of athletics, have a duty of care when it comes to children and young people and should take steps to ensure that children and young people can participate safely in the activities we provide
- Athletics activities are uniquely placed to contribute to safeguarding and the welfare of children. Club team managers and other team volunteers have a responsibility to be a good role model and to be a listening ear if a child or young person has a concern

### Who is this guidance for?

This resource is relevant for all athletics team managers and other team volunteers of club teams working with children and young people.

When working with children and young people in sport, we need to be aware of the position of trust we are in. There is a power imbalance between us as a person in authority and those who look up to us. We are role models, and we need to acknowledge this and have clear guidelines with personal and professional boundaries.

#### **What is appropriate behaviour and language when travelling with club teams?**

When travelling with club teams, you should always conduct yourselves professionally around children and young people. We also need to be able to recognise and respond safely to signs of abuse and neglect of children and young people.

Here are some guidelines for you to consider:

### Have all team administration sorted prior to travel

Before you depart on a trip with children or young people, you should know who you are dealing with. Make sure that you have the following information for each child or young person:

- Any medical conditions that can impact the child or young person's health and wellbeing while on the trip, and awareness of any medical treatments that may be necessary (i.e. Bobby has asthma and keeps an inhaler in the front pocket of his backpack).
- Parental or caregiver consent to photographs and videos being taken of the child or young person. Or if the parent or caregivers declines to give consent then this must be known too.
- If the child or young person have previously been involved in an incident while away on a trip that may affect the child or young person's performance or behaviour on the trip.
- Any concerns that the parent or caregiver may have about the child or young person attending this trip (i.e. Bobby has anxiety around food allergies so is nervous to eat at new restaurants).

Note: The above list is not exhaustive.

### Keep your personal life separate

Be mindful that you are a role model for the children and young people you interact with. Some information about your personal life is inappropriate for children and young people to be exposed to. Maintain a friendly but professional manner at all times. This extends to social media. We recommend club team managers and other team volunteers do not add children or young people under the age of 16 as 'Friends' on social media and refrain from contacting or communication with children or young people for matters not relevant to the club team. If social media is your main form of communication with your training squad, it is more appropriate to be add the child or young person's parents or caregivers and loop them in on the communication.

### Photographs and video

Capturing photos and videos of children and young people is an established way of celebrating achievements and promoting the activity or sport. Club team managers and other team volunteers use photographs and videos to provide memories of the experience for both athletes and parents or caregivers of athletes. However, there are some important considerations when it comes to photographing and videoing children and young people.

Key guidelines include:

- Written consent must be obtained from parents or caregivers before any filming or photography of anyone under the age of 18 can take place. Verbal consent alone cannot be accepted. Before travelling with a club team made up of children and young people, club administration should inform you if there are any children or young people who are not allowed to be photographed, otherwise be sure to check with them.
- Do not publish photographs with the full name(s) of children or young people unless you have written parental consent and you have informed the children, young person, parents, or caregivers and whānau how the photograph will be used.
- Do not use images of children or young people and detailed personal information in publications, including websites or blogs.
- Photography in changing rooms, toilets and showers is not allowed under any circumstances
- Images should focus on the activity or technique, rather than individual children or young people.

## Supervision

Children and young people should not be left without reasonable supervision. Children under the age of 14 should not be left unsupervised, except in clearly defined circumstances and with the knowledge and permission of the children's parents. For example, going for a run in a controlled area with a set return time.

Be aware that you need to do your best to supervise everyone, for example, positioning your body to enable you to see as widely as possible or using space where the children and young people will not be out of sight for long periods of time. Counting children and young people frequently will help effective supervision.

It is safe working practice to avoid being alone with a child or young person as much as possible. For example, if a child or young person follows you into the sports shed or changing rooms, move yourself as soon as possible out of that one-to-one situation. It may be helpful to have some rules in place in advance, for example, stating that children and young people can only come into an enclosed space with you two at a time. If one-to-one situations are unavoidable, take precautions such as leaving a door open, or telling another member of staff what is happening. Even better, ask a parent or caregiver to stay for the session, so you are not the only adult present.

## Overnight Accommodation

Motels, hotels, and campgrounds accommodation place children and young people in a communal environment where they will interact with and be in the presence of the general public. This poses a risk to children and young people that must be assessed and action taken to reduce the risk.

Rooming arrangement standards will be mandated:

- No sharing of a room with an adult.
- No bed sharing.
- No mixed-gender room sharing.
- Privacy to get changed and use the bathroom.
- Children and young people will be made aware of these standards.
- Club team managers, volunteers, parents or caregivers will be informed of these standards.
- No one-to-one meetings in the club team manager's room
- Team meetings to be held in a communal area or accommodation conference/meeting room preferably

Parents and/or Caregivers will be informed of the details of the team accommodation including; who their child or young person is sharing a room with, the address and contact of the accommodation, and the contact number of the club team manager and/or volunteer also staying at the accommodation.

## Changing Rooms and Toilets

All children and young people must be safe in changing facilities where they may be particularly vulnerable to bullying and abuse. Responsible adults will keep children safe and respect appropriate boundaries.

Thinking about how you can effectively meet the needs of all children and young people is important. It is important to consider the facilities that are available, who can access them and whether the environment is safe for children and young people.

We know that children and young people are particularly vulnerable in changing areas. Due in part to various stages of dress/undress and because they are often less supervised than at other times.

There is a risk of child-to-child/young person to young person problems, such as bullying if the changing room is left unsupervised.

The following procedures can help to reduce the risk of misconduct or abuse in changing facilities:

- Changing facilities should not be used by adults and children/young people at the same time. Where this is unavoidable, there should be access to separate changing, showering and toilet areas.
- Under no circumstances should adults be undressed in front of children/young people in changing rooms.
- If disabled children and young people need to use changing facilities, make sure they are accessible and that the disabled child or young person and their parent, caregiver or whānau are involved in deciding if and how they should be assisted. Make sure the child can consent to the assistance that is offered.
- The use of mobile phones and/or photographic equipment with video recording capabilities is not acceptable in changing facilities under any circumstance.
- Where no changing facilities are available, children/young people and their parents, caregivers or whānau should be made aware of this prior to the activity taking place.
- Parents, caregivers or whānau should be discouraged from entering changing facilities unless it is absolutely necessary.

## Alcohol and Drugs

Club team managers and volunteers should not consume alcohol or drugs in the presence of children or young people and must not offer alcohol or drugs to children or young people under any circumstances. Club team managers and volunteers must be fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol, or medicine which is likely to impair judgement and/or the ability to drive.

## Signing children and young people out

Clubs have a responsibility for the children and young people in their care that includes discharging that responsibility to an appropriate adult (the club team manager, other team volunteer, parent, and/or caregiver), therefore signing children and young people in and out makes it clear who has the duty of care over the child or young person. There are many cases where children or young people wander off alone or get a lift with an inappropriate adult, such as a parent with a protection order that prevents them from having access to their child or young person.

When travelling with club teams made up of children, the club team manager should be sure to have a process in place for every location throughout the trip. For example, children must pair up on trips to the bathroom on toilet stops during the trip. Or another example, following the competition, all children return to a gathering point at a certain time where parents and caregivers can collect and sign their children out.

When working with teenagers and young people in a club team environment, ensure you have written parental permission advising that they are allowed to travel home from the competition by themselves, or with a named person.

## Travel

Travelling alone with a child or young person exposes you to risk as a volunteer. During any travel to and from a competition as part of a club team, children and young people should sit in the back seat.

**Athletics NZ Child Protection Officer**

Athletics NZ has an appointed Child Protection Officer, who is the person of contact for any concerns related to child safety.

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