

GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETICS NZ COACHES ON WORKING WITH YOUNG ATHLETES

This resource has been developed to support Athletics NZ Coach Members working with young people and children, to provide a safe and positive training environment.

Why is this important?

Coaches 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.

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

Who is this guidance for?

This resource is relevant for all athletics coaches of 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.

When coaching, 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:

Demonstrating a technique

If you need to demonstrate a technique with an athlete:

- ALWAYS ask permission and advise where you will be touching them first. Children and young people have a right to refuse.
- Physical contact should always take place in an open or public environment and not in secret or out of sight of others.
- Be mindful of how you celebrate success. Do not use any unnecessary, unwanted or inappropriate physical contact. A congratulatory hug should be side to side.

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. Coaches use photographs and videos to assist with coaching and skill development. However, there are some important considerations when it comes to photographing and videoing children.

Key guidelines include:

- Written consent must be obtained from parents or caregivers before any filming or photography of children under the age of 18 can take place. Verbal consent alone cannot be accepted. If you are coaching at a club or school, they should inform you if there are any children 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 unless you have written parental consent and you have informed the children, parents, or caregivers and whānau how the photograph will be used.
- Do not use images of children 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.

Supervision

Children 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 won't be out of sight for long periods of time. Counting children frequently will help effective supervision. If working with young children, consider using bibs or a vest that will help to identify where the children you are responsible for may be.

Immediately address any rough, bullying or sexually inappropriate behaviour in group coaching sessions.

When working with children under 14 it is good practice to ensure you are not the only adult present. Having whanau stay for the session ensures that assistance is available if required and minimises the chances that you will be left alone with a child.

It is safe working practice to avoid being alone with a child as much as possible. For example, if a child 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 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 person what is happening.

Consider the start and end of each session. Try and make sure you have two children left at the end if no other adults are present. Perhaps a family may have to wait for the last child to be picked up before they go. It's okay to ask and make that a boundary.

Keep your personal life separate

Be mindful that you are a role model for the athletes you interact with. Some information about your personal life is inappropriate for children to be exposed to. Maintain a friendly but professional manner

at all times. This extends to social media. We recommend coaches do not add children or young people under the age of 16 as 'Friends' on social media. If social media is your main form of communication with your training squad, it is more appropriate to add the child's parents and loop them into the communication. To avoid confusion it is best practise to avoid the giving or receiving of gifts between coaches and athletes. Don't engage in activities such as babysitting, private coaching or tutoring of athletes under 14 that could be considered grooming.

Changing Rooms and Toilets

All children 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 under any circumstance in changing facilities.
- 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

Under no circumstances should adults consume alcoholic beverages or be under the influence of drugs when supervising children or young people and must not offer alcohol or drugs to children or young people under any circumstances. Coaches need to be aware that as supervising adults, they may be called upon at any time to attend to any number of issues. Having alcohol or drugs in your system can affect judgement and expose volunteers to unnecessary risk. Advice on nutritional supplements should be done in consultation with parents / caregivers.

Signing children out

Clubs have a responsibility for the children and young people in their care that includes discharging that responsibility to an appropriate adult, therefore signing children in and out makes it clear who has the duty of care over the child. There are many cases where children 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.

If you are coaching at a club, be sure to have a process in place with the club leaders. For example, following your session, 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 training squad environment, ensure you have written parental permission advising that they are allowed to travel home by themselves, or with a named person.

Travel

Coaches should not provide transport to children without the specific written permission of the child's parents/caregivers. Travelling alone with a child exposes you to risk. If permission from a parent/caregiver is granted, the child should sit in the backseat. Any coach transporting children or young people as part of team travel must have a full clean driver's license and their vehicle showing a current WOF.

For more information or if you have any concerns, Athletics NZ has an appointed Child Protection Officer, who is the person of contact for any questions related to child safety.

Athletics NZ Child Protection Officer

Fiona Maisey
Young People's Lead
fionam@athletics.org.nz
021 468 545

Definitions of words used in these guidelines.

Child A child is a person under the age of 14.

Codes of Conduct are the standards of behaviour and interaction Athletics NZ expect every person in a Position of Trust with a child or young person to follow. Our Codes of Conduct are in a separate document to this policy, and all staff and volunteers will be inducted into these standards

Duty of Care ensuring our actions (or omissions) do not harm someone else and protect them from risk or harm

Position of Trust describes the relationships where an adult (18 years or older) or a peer (e.g. Young Leader) has, or is perceived to have, power, influence or authority towards a child or young person (under 18 years), by the nature of their role or duties within the organisation. As a result, the power and influence over children and young people can be used to manipulate and abuse

Safeguarding refers to a risk-reducing approach and the steps taken to support wellbeing and prevention of harm to a child/young person

Young person A person of or over the age of 14 years but under 18 years.