

WORKING WITH KIDS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I best give feedback to a player or participant about their poor behaviour?

Feedback should be used to teach or reinforce appropriate behaviour and not to gain power, embarrass or humiliate a child or young person. Behaviour management strategies are a normal part of a coaching relationship.

Should I drive a player/participant home after a game or practice?

Ideally, all players/participants should have their own transportation to and from sporting events. You should follow your club's guidelines for transporting children. If you have no other options, you can provide transportation when:

- the ride has been approved by parents/guardians
- other players/participants/parents/guardians are also in the vehicle (where possible).

What should I do if an athlete is injured and clothing must be removed to treat the injury?

Only people who are qualified in administering first aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury. You should avoid treating injuries out of sight of others. Other things to consider include:

- the comfort level and dignity of the player/participant should always be the priority
- only uncover the injured area, or drape the player's/participant's private parts
- always report injuries and treatment to parents, and document an incident fully.

Can I physically comfort a player or participant?

It is okay to comfort a child or young person who is upset or hurt. However, you should comfort a player/participant in public and not in an isolated setting.

What if I witness someone harassing a team mate?

Where possible you should intervene and stop the behaviour, following the guidelines for dealing with harassment as outlined in your club's Member Protection policy. You could also use the situation as an opportunity for an open discussion with the entire team about the club's policy on discrimination, harassment and abuse.

What should I do if I discover that initiation rites/behaviours occurred during a team trip?

Do not take part in, encourage or tolerate behaviour that frightens, embarrasses, demoralises or negatively affects a player's/participant's self esteem and sense of safety. You should talk to all players/participants and discuss the organisation's policy on bullying and harassment. You should discuss the implications, and follow policy guidelines.

What should I do if a parent, who is involved in a custody dispute over a child on your team, arrived to pick up his/her child without the other parent's permission?

You may need to ask your club or association to seek the advice of a lawyer when establishing guidelines regarding child-release policies and procedures. Check if your club has a 'release form' for parents, specifying who may pick up the child from games, practices, etc. If in doubt, contact the other parent before releasing the child. Try to keep the child protected from public tussles between parents over who should take the child home. Call the police to deal if matters escalate.

What should I do if a parent is repeatedly late to pick up a player after games and practices - often so late that everyone else has left the facility?

Late pick-up of athletes can create difficult situations for coaches and other people working with children. Some ideas include:

- attempt to phone the parent/guardian
- attempt to contact the alternative contact provided by the parent/guardian
- wait at the facility with the child - ideally with other club members, team members or parents
- when the parent/guardian arrives, address the issue of late pick-up immediately and directly.

How might coaches and officials manage the 'ugly parent'?

The 'ugly' or angry parent can be a big problem for the child or young person, the team, and the club or organised group. Some solutions are: Codes of Conduct for parents' behaviour, banning or excluding parents from games or events, or club policy regarding appropriate parent behaviour.

As a coach or official, it is important that you:

- stay calm and in control, not getting caught up in the same behaviour
- remind them of the Codes of Conduct, and that they are role models for the children and young people
- get support from the club if excluding or banning parents from games
- circulate a "Dos and Don'ts" of expected behaviour before each season.

As a coach, can I become friends with parents and not be accused of playing favourites?

Stay professional and objective. If the child or young person is left off the team, or is on the field more than others you could be perceived as having a bias. Ways to avoid this are:

- have two officials on selection panels
- routinely rotate players on the field
- make the game the important thing not the winning.

If it is clear that you are acting professionally at all times, it will be difficult to accuse you of favouritism.

Two junior team members ask to be dropped off in the city following an away game. Is this okay?

No. During all activities where you have the care and responsibility for children, you retain a duty of care for their safety and wellbeing until they are returned to their parents/guardians.

For more information visit www.playbytherules.net.au