



RAISING SAFETY CONCERNS IN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

CAN I RAISE ANYTHING TO DO WITH FOOTBALL?

You can raise a concern about anything to do with football. It can be something serious, like the safety of a child or young person involved in football, or it can be something related to the game, to a facility or something else. You have the right to call out bad behaviour and have it taken seriously.

It may be something you notice yourself, or it may be something someone else has raised with you.



DEFINITIONS

A Child: someone involved in footy who is 12 years or younger – usually a player but may also be a sibling of a player or child of an adult at the club.

A Young Person: someone involved in footy who is between the ages of 13 and 18 years old – usually a player but could also be an umpire or in another role at the club, or a sibling or child of a player.

Adult: someone involved in footy who is over the age of 18 – this could be a coach, manager, umpire, club official, AFL staff member, volunteer, and/or a parent.

WHAT KIND OF CONCERN MIGHT SOMEONE RAISE WITH ME?

As a parent involved in the football community you may form connections with children or young people associated with your child's team or the club. This may mean that they view you as a trusted adult and could disclose information to you about their concerns of inappropriate behaviour or abuse, either at home, around football or somewhere else.

This could be telling you that they are experiencing:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- bullying or harassment, or
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- mental health issues.

The aim of this guideline is to provide you with the right tools so you can confidently and appropriately respond to these moments.

It's not your role to investigate or determine a disclosure or allegation. All that is required of you is to listen, support and respond to their concern. In some cases, you are obligated to report what you know to authorities.

 To better understand inappropriate behaviours, and what to look out for, check out this fact sheet: **What Does Abuse in Footy Look Like?**

HOW WILL I KNOW?

DISCLOSURES

When a child or young person tells you about an incident that happened to **them** or that **they** were directly involved in.

They are raising a concern with you.

ALLEGATIONS

When a child, young person or any other person tells you about an incident that happened to **someone else** or that someone else was directly involved in.

They are raising a concern with you.

SUSPICIONS

When you have a reason to suspect an incident of abuse against a child or young person, based on observations, instinct or gut feeling, behaviours and indicators.

You are forming a concern.

HOW TO RESPOND IN THE MOMENT

If a child or young person has come to you with a **DISCLOSURE** or an **ALLEGATION** what you do with this information and how you respond is really important. The 3 R's below are an easy way to remember what to do in the moment. You don't have to be a professional or an expert in this, they just need you to be a safe and sensible adult.



RECOGNISE

Recognise when a child or young person is at risk. Know the signs, the indicators and the red flags. Listen to what a child or young person is telling you. Look out for **DISCLOSURES, ALLEGATIONS** or **SUSPICIONS**.



RESPOND

Respond calmly and sensitively to a child or young person if they tell you about something that has happened to them. Believe them, listen to them, reassure them, and take them seriously.

Avoid asking leading questions. Just make sure they are safe and let them know you will do something to help them.



REPORT

You must **SAY SOMETHING**. Follow the steps below.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

SAY SOMETHING

Even if you have not spoken directly with a child or young person but you have a **SUSPICION** that something is not right, it is important you say something.



You can:

Speak directly with someone you trust in football like a coach, team manager, umpire, official or club representative.



Write down your concerns and pass them onto your club or association via email or a letter.



Use this QR code to raise a concern with the AFL.



FAQS TO HELP YOU GET YOUR HEAD AROUND IT...

WHAT IF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON TELLS ME SOMETHING BUT DOESN'T WANT ME TO TELL ANYONE?

Building trust is important, especially if a child or young person is experiencing something that is making them feel unsafe. You can encourage them to speak up, build their confidence, offer to come with them as support and reassure them.

IMPORTANT – As an adult, you are required in most cases, by state and commonwealth law, to report any concern about the safety of a child or young person to the relevant authorities, including Child Protection and/or Police.

However, even when you are not required by law, you still can, and you should.

WILL MY CHILD LOSE THEIR SPOT IN THE TEAM IF I RAISE A CONCERN?

You and your child should not be treated unfairly for raising a concern.

CAN I CALL IT OUT ANONYMOUSLY?

Yes, you can do this by contacting the **AFL Integrity Unit** however, please remember that if you don't give us your name, we can't come back to you for further information or to update you on what we are going to do.

DO I NEED TO HAVE PROOF?

No, you don't need to have proof or evidence.

- If someone tells you it happened, say something.
- If you think something has happened, based on what you have seen, heard or felt, and have a 'reasonable belief' that it happened, say something.



For any safeguarding queries email childsafety@afl.com.au

As always if anyone is in immediate danger contact the police on **000**

Remember, we want all children and young people in football to be safe, feel safe, play safe.



For more information on how to respond to a disclosure or allegation, go to **Australian Institute of Family Studies: Responding to Children and Young People's Disclosures of Abuse** or watch this video **Responding to Disclosures**