

Child Safety Responding And Reporting Obligations Policy And Procedure

Beechworth Chain Gang



Purpose

This policy aims to outline the procedures Beechworth Chain Gang has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse. Additionally, the policy seeks to ensure that all club members understand and follow the various legal obligations that apply to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints and concerns about child abuse made by or concerning a child, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to BCG. BCG provides a range of events for children and young people, primarily the Junior Ride Program (weekly mountain bike sessions operating throughout the year). Other events include junior races and club social events.

Definitions

Refer to the Child Safety Policy.

Policy

BCG understands the critical role our club plays in protecting children from abuse. We have various policies and measures to prevent child abuse during club activities.

All children and young people should feel safe to speak to any BCG Committee of Management Member or Junior Ride Program Leader, or Event Volunteer to raise any concerns about their safety or any other matters.

If a child or young person does not know who to approach at BCG, they should start with their JRP Group Instructor (if applicable). Children or young people can also talk to one of the Child Safety Persons, another JRP Group Instructor, the JRP Coordinator or a Committee of Management Member.

At the start of each term, each JRP Group Instructor will talk to the JRP participants to outline who they can talk to if they feel unsafe. At the rider briefing at the start of junior races, the Commissaire will speak with the riders to outline who they can talk to if they feel unsafe.

Identifying child abuse

To ensure we can respond in the best interests of children and young people when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all JRP and Event volunteers must:

- Understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators – for detailed information on recognising child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators, refer to Appendix C Identify child abuse.
- Follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our club acts in the best interests of children and young people and complies with our legal obligations.

At BCG, we recognise the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our club and consider their individual needs and backgrounds when considering and responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

Procedures for Responding to an Incident, Disclosure, Allegation or Suspicion of Child Abuse

In responding to a child safety incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, BCG will follow the Four Critical Actions for complaints and concerns relating to all forms of child abuse, which are:

1. Immediate action if a volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse or reasonably believes, suspects, or receives a disclosure or allegation that a child has been or is at risk of being abused, they must:
 - If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
 - Notify one of the Child Safe Person and BCG Committee of Management President as soon as possible, who will ensure our club follows the steps in these procedures.

NOTE for volunteers.

If you are uncertain if an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion raises a concern about child abuse, you must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to the Child Safe Person and BCG Committee of Management President.

If the Child Safe Person and BCG Committee of Management President are unavailable, the volunteer in charge will take on this role.

2. Reporting to authorities and referring to services

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed and relevant BCG members have been informed, the Child Safe Person or BCG Committee of Management President must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. The following steps will ensure our club complies with the four critical actions and additional actions required under the Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Person or BCG Committee of Management President must ensure all relevant information is reported to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, Victoria Police or relevant services where required.

NOTE: When a volunteer is legally required to report child abuse to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, and they are unable to confirm that another person has reported the information at the club, or the designated member of the club disagrees that a report needs to be made, the volunteer who has formed the reasonable belief must still contact DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police to make the report. If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse but still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing, you must still act. This action may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST or The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support), DFFH Child Protection, or Victoria Police.

3. Contacting parents or carers

The Child Safe Person or BCG Committee of Management President or volunteer in charge must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns about informing parents/carers.

4. Ongoing protection and support

The Child Safe Person and BCG Committee of Management President or volunteer in charge must ensure the club takes appropriate steps to protect the child and other children from any continued risk of abuse. These steps must be taken in consultation with any relevant external agency, such as DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

Ongoing protection will also include further reports to authorities if new information comes to light or further incidents occur. BCG will offer appropriate, culturally sensitive, ongoing support to all affected children and young people. Ongoing support will be based on any available advice from the parents and carers, health practitioners, and other authorities (such as DFFH or Victoria Police). It may include referral to wellbeing professionals, development of a safety plan, children and young person support group meetings, and, for child-to-child incidents, behaviour management and support measures.

5. Record keeping

The Child Safe Person and BCG Committee of Management President will ensure that:

- Detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken, including, where possible, by the volunteer who reported the incident, disclosure, or suspicion to them.
- Detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the club to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion.
- All notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the club's immediate and ongoing actions, are stored in a secure online folder with access limited to the Child Safe Persons and BCG Committee of Management President.

For visitors and community members

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse – refer to Appendix A for detailed information.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection on 1300 655 795 or Victoria Police if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection. For contact details, refer to the Four Critical Actions. Members of the community do not have to inform the club if they are making a disclosure to DFFH Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, when a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children during club activities, the community member should report this concern to a Child Safe Person so that appropriate steps to support the child can be taken.

Additional requirements for all volunteers

All volunteers play an essential role in supporting child safety and wellbeing and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to children.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the above procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse. This means that if, after following the actions outlined in the procedure, a volunteer reasonably believes that a child remains at risk of abuse, they must take the following steps:

- If they are concerned that the club has not taken reasonable steps to prevent or reduce the risk, raise these concerns with a Child Safe Person immediately, and escalate to AusCycling if they remain unsatisfied.
- Report the matter to the relevant authorities where they cannot confirm that another volunteer has reported the information.

Volunteers must refer to Appendix A for further information on their obligations relating to reporting to authorities.

Communication

The BCG Committee of Management will communicate this policy to our club community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our club's website
- Included in volunteer induction processes and training for relevant volunteers
- Discussed at the start of each new Committee of Management meeting
- Communicated to parents, carers and families via the club newsletter and social media platforms.

Further Information and Resources

The following club policies are also relevant to this policy (see our website [Club Governance – Beechworth Chain Gang](#)):

- Child Safety Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct

Version Control

Date	Purpose of Change	Details
15 December 2022	Develop a document the procedure to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse	New policy and procedure

Appendix A

Reportable Conduct

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is focused on worker and volunteer conduct and how organisations investigate and respond to suspected child abuse. The scheme aims to improve organisational responses to suspected child abuse and to facilitate the identification of individuals who pose a risk of harm to children.

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005:

1. sexual offences against, with or in the presence of, a child
2. sexual misconduct (which includes grooming) against, with or in the presence of, a child
3. physical violence against, with or in the presence of, a child
4. behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
5. significant neglect of a child.

A reportable conduct allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that a worker or volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct.

If a BCG volunteer becomes aware of reportable conduct by any current or former contractor or volunteer, they must notify one of the BCG Child Safe Person and the BCG Committee of Management President immediately. If the allegation relates to the BCG Committee of Management President, they must notify AusCycling.

For more information about reportable conduct, see the Commission for Children and Young People's website.

Failure to disclose offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 in Victoria.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000, the local police station or the Police Assistance Line 131 444) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

'Reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

'Reasonable excuse' is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person, including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)

- where the information has already been disclosed to Victoria Police, and you have no further information to add (for example, through a mandatory report to DFFH Child Protection or a report to Victoria Police from another club member).

Failure to protect offence

This reporting obligation applies to volunteers in a position of authority. This can include BCG Committee of Management members or JRP Group leaders. Any volunteer in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with BCG (such as a contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. These actions may include removing the adult (i.e. persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a volunteer in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

For more information: [Failure to protect: a new criminal offence to protect children from sexual abuse | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)

Appendix B Managing Disclosure – Important information for volunteers

When managing a disclosure relating to child abuse, you should:

- listen to the child and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency, and where possible, use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the child that it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions; for example, gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to; other professionals will ask them a lot of questions, and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age-appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop
- the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child, this may be as simple as saying, "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you")

When managing a disclosure, you should AVOID:

- Displaying expressions of panic or shock
- Asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- Going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- Making any comments that would lead the child to believe that what has happened is their fault
- Making any promises, you will keep the information the child provided confidentially
- Making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead, reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

Appendix C Identify Child Abuse

The most common physical and behavioural indicators of child abuse are outlined below. This list is not exhaustive.

If you feel uncomfortable about a child's physical presentation or behaviour but have not directly witnessed or been told about the abuse or risk of abuse, you should still act.

Common Physical Indicators of Child Abuse

- bruises, welts, cuts/grazes or burns (especially those on the back, bottom, legs, arms and inner thighs or in unusual configurations and may resemble an object)
- internal injuries and bone fractures that are not consistent with the explanation offered
- any injury to the genital or rectal area (e.g. bruising, bleeding, infection or anything causing pain to go to the toilet) · wearing clothes unsuitable for weather conditions to hide injuries
- sexually-transmitted diseases and/or frequent urinary tract infections
- appearing consistently dirty and unwashed and/or inappropriately dressed for weather conditions · being consistently hungry, tired and listless
- having unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care
- internal injuries

Common Behavioural Indicators of Child Abuse

- disclosure of abuse and/or drawings or writing which depicts violence and abuse
- habitual absences from school without reasonable explanation
- significant and unexplained delays in emotional, mental or physical development
- regressive or unusual changes to behaviour (e.g. sudden decline in academic performance, nervousness, depression, withdrawal, hyperactivity, aggression, bedwetting)
- drug or alcohol misuse, suicide or self-harm, harm to others or animals
- an inconsistent or unlikely explanation for an injury or inability to remember the cause
- reluctance to go home and/or wariness or fear of a parent/carer
- unusual fear of physical contact with adults
- persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity (e.g. excessive masturbation or rubbing genitals against adults, promiscuity)
- poor self-care or personal hygiene
- an unusually close connection with an older person
- possessing expensive gifts or money (e.g. a new mobile phone given to them by a "friend")
- taking on a caretaker role prematurely, trying to protect other family members

What are the Signs that an Adult is Perpetrating Abuse?

The most common indicators that an adult is abusing a child are outlined below. This list is not exhaustive.

If you feel uncomfortable in any way about a relationship between an adult and a child (or inappropriate relationships between children such as siblings), you **MUST** still act.

Common Behavioural Indicators of Adults Abusing Children

Family Members (Parents, Siblings, Extended Family)

- attempts by one parent to alienate their child from the other parent
- overprotective or volatile relationships
- reluctance by the child to be alone with one or more of their family members
- a child and a sibling behaving like a boyfriend and a girlfriend (embarrassment if they are found alone together)

Other Adults (Eg. Volunteers, Coaches)

- touching a child inappropriately
- bringing up sexual material or personal disclosures into conversations with a child
- inappropriate contact with the child (e.g. calls, emails, texts, social media)
- obvious or inappropriate preferential treatment of the child (making them feel “special”)
- giving inappropriate/expensive gifts to a child
- having inappropriate social boundaries (e.g. telling the child about their own personal problems).
- offering to drive a child to or from school
- inviting themselves over to their homes, calling them at night
- befriending the parents/carers of the child and making visits to their home
- undermining the child's reputation (so that the child won't be believed)

Where to go for Further Advice?

- DHHS Child Protection on 131 278.
- Your local police station