



WHAT DOES ABUSE IN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL LOOK LIKE?

Abuse can look and feel different for different people. There are different types of abuse, they happen in a variety of environments and different people are impacted. Some ways and places that abuse may happen in football include:

- during football – at training, before, during or after games, or at club events
- travelling to football – in a car, or bus
- during camps, carnivals or overnight football trips
- from the sidelines.

It can happen between two or more people including:

- child to child
- young person to child
- young person to young person
- adult to child
- adult to young person.

Additionally, a child or young person may experience abuse elsewhere, but feel comfortable telling someone they trust from their club, or a person in their club recognises the signs.

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.

TYPES OF ABUSE

1 PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any action that uses physical force that hurts a child or young person. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning, suffocating.

2 SEXUAL ABUSE

Any behaviour that is sexual, or that makes a child or young person feel uncomfortable, threatened or scared, or is illegal. This includes physical touch and talking about sexual and private things in person or online or showing someone

videos or photos that are sexual or private, or asking someone to send private or sexual videos to someone else.

3 GROOMING

This includes when an adult is acting in a way that singles out a child or young person, has one on one time with a child or young person, and/or looks for ways to be alone with a child or young person away from other adults. It can feel like it is normal and might not even make the child or young person uncomfortable, but it doesn't happen to others.

4 EMOTIONAL ABUSE

The use of words or acts that can make a child or young person feel bad, sad, embarrassed, left out, worried, confused, shamed, anxious or threatened.

5 NEGLECT

When an adult doesn't provide a child or young person with basic needs such as food, water, shelter, appropriate clothing, supervision, access to education and health services.



6 BULLYING

Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying may include:

- verbal (name calling, put downs, threats)

- physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting)
- social (ignoring, excluding, alienating)
- psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).

EXAMPLES IN FOOTBALL

- A coach who sends personal WhatsApp messages late at night to the 13-yr old players in their team.
- The manager who continually singles a player out in front of the rest of the team, commenting on how they are not good enough to be in the team and should be playing down a grade.
- The U21 captain who tells the new 17-year-old player that they have to 'be initiated' into the

team and encourages the other players to 'rough them up' after training.

- A parent who is helping out on an interstate trip who thinks it's cool to show porn to the under 13s team in the hotel after the match.
- An 18-year-old player sharing nude photos of his girlfriend with his teammates.
- A child is touched unnecessarily by a coordinator or parent helper when being taught how to perform a skill.

BEHAVIOURS IN A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON THAT MIGHT CONCERN YOU

- withdrawn, unusually quiet or absent
- violent and aggressive
- not wanting to go home or not wanting to come to the football club
- bruising or other injuries
- reluctance to participate / be left alone with a specific adult
- spending more time than others with an adult during any football activity, be it a game or training.

WHAT THESE BEHAVIOURS MIGHT BE TELLING YOU

They are:

- Experiencing abuse or neglect from someone in their football circle.
- Experiencing bullying or harassment at the football club.
- Experiencing abuse or neglect at home or in another setting such as school.
- In need of support regarding physical or mental health.

- Finding it difficult to participate due to feeling culturally unsafe, lack of inclusiveness, a learning difficulty or disability.

BEHAVIOURS IN OTHER ADULTS IN FOOTBALL THAT MIGHT CONCERN YOU

- Being secretive or asking young athletes to keep secrets.
- Singling out players – favouring certain children or young people.
- Offering to help out more than usual – lifts home, one to one coaching.
- Contacting young athletes about things not related to football.
- Befriending parents, creating times where there is more contact with one particular child or young person – alone or with the family.
- Ignoring or dismissing simple rules or expectations, loose boundaries.
- Sexual jokes, asking about relationships or showing private images.
- Creating scenarios where physical touch is required, outside of normal football related contact.

HOW YOU MIGHT FIND OUT ABOUT SAFETY CONCERNS

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.

WHAT MIGHT THIS SOUND LIKE?

Another person says:

“I need to tell you about something that happened to me”

“That happened to me too”

“Somebody did something to me that I didn’t like”

“I have done something I shouldn’t have”

Another person says:

“I am worried about my friend, she told me something happened to her”

“I saw that person do something to my friend”

“Those people have been doing something that makes me uncomfortable”

You are saying to yourself:

“I just don’t feel right about this situation.”

“That person makes me really uncomfortable”

“I have noticed her behaviour has changed lately; she doesn’t seem herself”

“I don’t like the way that person treats her”

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.



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

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

Remember – You don’t need proof, you just need a ‘reasonable belief’, that it is likely something has happened.