



# GIPPSLAND SPORTS ACADEMY

## PARENTS AND GUARDIANS GUIDE

<b>Date created:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2022
<b>Audience:</b>	Parents and Guardians of Members and Participants who are under the age of 18 years.
<b>Version:</b>	July 2022
<b>Purpose of Document:</b>	<p>(a) To summarise and simplify what parents and guardians need to know about all of our responsibilities to keep children and young people in the Gippsland Sports Academy (GSA) safe; and</p> <p>(b) To ensure that parents and guardians have oversight of the information the GSA distributes to its members under the age of 18 years.</p>
<b>Actions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and understand.</li> <li>• Ask and ensure that Parents and Guardians acknowledge that they have read and understand this guide</li> <li>• Encourage others to read and understand</li> </ul>
<b>Review:</b>	July 2023 if not prior
<b>Gippsland Sports Academy Contact:</b>	<p>Executive Officer: Anita Pistrin (5127 0223)</p> <p>Board Chair: Jim Vivian</p>
<b>Contents:</b>	<p><b>[Document(s)]</b> Child Safe Parents and Guardians Guide</p> <p><b>Page</b> 6</p>
<p><b>Other relevant resources (see GSA website)</b>  <a href="https://www.sportgippsland.org.au/about-us/child-safe-standards/">https://www.sportgippsland.org.au/about-us/child-safe-standards/</a>:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Conduct for dealing with Children &amp; Young People</li> <li>• Child Safe Policy</li> <li>• Teens Guide</li> <li>• Athlete Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Social Media Policy</li> </ul>



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## PARENTS AND GUARDIANS GUIDE

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The Child Safe Framework or equivalent sets out the responsibilities that all GSA participants (including parents) have to keep our kids safe. It consists of:

- **GSA's Commitment Statement for Safeguarding Children and Young People (or equivalent)];**
- **GSA's Policy for Safeguarding Children & Young People** and
- **GSA's Code of Conduct for dealing with Children & Young People.**

### **WHY YOUR CHILDREN'S SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY:**

1. We love sport at the GSA. We also love your kids playing sport with us and want them to keep participating. Yet we realise that they have to FEEL safe to enjoy the GSA Programs and want to keep coming back.
2. All kids have a right to feel safe, be involved and have a voice in decisions that affect them\*.
3. Society has changed, and with it, higher standards of behavior are now expected – of all of us. Sometimes, even though we have good intentions, others' *perception* of behaviour is different. So we want to help you to understand how we will work with you to protect your children.

### **WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO:**

**We're here to help. Victoria has legislative requirements and mandatory standards in place about child safety. We can't ignore those. But we want to make it as simple as possible for you, your kids and all of our GSA volunteers, coaches and members to keep children safe.**

We've developed simple resources for you to explain how we keep children and young people safe in our GSA. This Guide also includes links to our other child safe resources that we hope are helpful for you to summarise and simplify the key commitments, messages and boundaries that we adhere to and practice at the GSA when they are part of our community.

## SOME CHILD SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS:

You know your children best. Also, our schools now often teach their students about safety, boundaries with adults and that it's OK to speak up if they don't feel comfortable or safe. You can also help us to reinforce the key messages we have for children about child safety at the GSA, just as in life.

The **three key messages** we have in our Child Safe "Teens Guide" are:

1. GSA should be fun, safe and enjoyable.
2. You should never feel uncomfortable around others in GSA programs, particularly adults.
3. If you don't feel safe or comfortable, it's OK to speak up. We want you to **tell an adult that you trust** – whether that's your Mum or Dad, guardian, coach or another member of your club or family.

We know that children are more likely to speak up if they **feel valued** and are **listened to** in an **authentic** and **genuine** way. So please help us to **keep the conversations open with your kids** about how they are feeling

## SOME CONVERSATION TIPS TO TALK ABOUT SAFETY WITH YOUR CHILDREN:

It's not always comfortable talking to kids about how they are feeling in our programs, community or other environments. The delivery of conversations is just as important as the message or content itself. You're more likely to engage with children about tricky topics if the conversation is calm, non-judgmental and open. That is, you're listening carefully to them and open to hearing more – showing empathy and letting them know that they're doing the right thing by talking.

To open up a conversation with your child about safety in GSA programs, first of all, choose the right time. Sometimes, you may get more information in casual interactions, such as when driving in the car or going for a walk together. You could try using an example that you have heard of with another kid and whether they had seen or heard anything similar. For example, *"another parent at the club told me that they were worried about how the coach is talking to their child. Have you seen or heard anything similar?"*.

## IF YOU NEED HELP:

If ever your child tells you that they are not happy, comfortable or safe in our GSA program, **please tell an appropriate senior person in the GSA such as our Child Safety Officer or a trusted GSA official**. Then we'll make sure that any issue raised is dealt with appropriately and in line with our Child Safe Framework.

If you reasonably believe<sup>^</sup> any child is in immediate danger of a significant nature, please call 000 to speak with police. You can also contact services such as Parent Helpline, NAPCAN, Lifeline, Kids Helpline and the Raising Children Network.

\*Australian Government National Child Office for Child Safety Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people – A Reference Guide, 2019.

# Commission for Children and Young People – Empowerment and Participation of Children Tip Sheet.

<sup>^</sup> A **reasonable belief** is one that a reasonable person in the same position would have formed on the same grounds.

## YOUR RIGHTS

We believe that all kids involved in our sport should:

- Feel comfortable;
- Feel safe;
- Have a right to contact your parents/guardians or others if you feel unsafe, uncomfortable or distressed at any time when you are involved in [sport/activity];
- Be provided with clear directions and given the chance to positively change your behaviour if GSA staff, coaches, volunteers or officials believe that you have broken any rules or policies or you have misbehaved;
- NOT be subject to disciplinary action involving verbal or physical punishment, or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered cruel, frightening, humiliating or like you are being put down; and
- Contribute suggestions or feedback about [sport/activities].

## OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU IN GSA PROGRAMS

The GSA now has a **Child Protection Commitment Statement** that aims to make sure you are protected from harm. When involved in GSA programs, we want it to be enjoyable for everyone. So, we'll try to make sure that activities are suitable for your age and development and are led by qualified people.

GSA commits to:

- Doing our best to make sure that you are protected from harm;
- Supervising your involvement in GSA programs in Victoria;
- Obtaining parent/guardian permission in writing before we can:
  - take you on an excursion;
  - arrange overnight stays or camps; and/or
  - provide transport to another location.
- Ensuring that **employee/coach/volunteer/official-to-teens ratios are maintained**. (Note - please check with us if you are unsure what is meant by "ratios");
- Trying to make sure that **you are not alone** with staff, coaches, volunteers or officials where they can't be seen by other adults;
- Trying to make sure that **GSA staff, coaches, volunteers and/or officials stay within their role**. This means that they cannot be employed for looking after you or visiting you at your home unless with the permission of your Parent/Guardian. They are not allowed to friend you on Facebook, take photos or footage of you for Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat or other forms of social media unless they are doing this through official club communication channels with the consent of your parent/guardian.

- **Communication between you and coaches, officials and volunteers** in our sport must be regarding your involvement in GSA unless your Parent/Guardian has given their permission for you to have contact with them at a particular time;
- **Guiding teens fairly, respectfully and appropriate to their age and background;**
- **Reporting and responding to any incidents** of abuse or neglect towards teens involved in [sport/activity].
- Where and when possible, our **GSA staff, volunteers and officials wearing a uniform and/or having an appropriate name badge visible** on when on duty.

## What to do if you have concerns:

- If at any stage you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or worried, you should let your parent/guardian or a trusted adult in the GSA know what has happened – they will want to support you.
- All you need to do is tell someone about what happened and they will do their best to make sure that you feel safe and protected from harm.

## WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEENS IN GSA

When you are involved in GSA programs, you also have some responsibilities. These include:

- Letting a member/parent/guardian know if you are unhappy or you don't feel safe;
- Treating other participants and adults with respect;
- Following the rules when involved in GSA programs;
- Remembering that there are others involved in GSA programs. You are certainly free to choose your own friends. However, don't stop other teens or younger kids from enjoying and participating in GSA programs; and
- Listening to others and respecting their opinions.

### **GSA Contact:**

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