



# ATHLETICS FIJI

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## SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2024

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### 1. Introduction

ATHLETICS FIJI is responsible for promoting athletics within FIJI and for making it a safe environment for children and adults to develop their talents and achieve their goals; these should be fun and enjoyable experiences. This Safeguarding Policy (“this Policy”) establishes the responsibilities of ATHLETICS FIJI and its ASSOCIATIONS & CLUBS to ensure that children and adults are able to participate in athletics safely.

Upholding this Policy and promoting the best practice principles contained within it will enable the Member Federation to provide and create safe, happy and inspiring environments for their communities to enjoy and participate in athletics.

Abuse may be carried out by men or women, or children. It happens in every area of the world, in every sport and organisation. No area can consider itself to be exempt or protected from its impact. Abuse, harassment and exploitation occur when there are power imbalances between individuals. When one individual is in a more powerful position, they can take advantage of that and abuse, harassment or exploitation may occur. The more vulnerable an individual, whether because of age, disability, finance or status the more likely they are to be subject to abuse, harassment or exploitation.

### 2. Policy Statement of Commitment and Principles

ATHLETICS FIJI believes that everyone in athletics should be treated with respect and dignity and has the right to participate free from any abuse, harassment or exploitation. will protect everyone within the scope of this Policy from such behaviour. ATHLETICS FIJI believes that this right is regardless of the individual’s race, colour, age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief. ATHLETICS FIJI is committed to preventing abuse, harassment or exploitation towards those who fall within the scope of this Policy and to creating safe environments for all to participate and enjoy the sport to the best of their abilities. Athletes, coaches (by which term we include all athlete support staff), officials, volunteers and board members are all protected by this Policy; they must all understand their rights as well as their duties in this arena.

The principles on which this Policy is based are:

- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be free from discrimination whether it is based on sex, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, beliefs, religious or political affiliation.
- Everyone has the right to participate, enjoy and develop personally through athletics in a safe, inclusive environment free from all forms of abuse, harassment or exploitation.

- Everyone, both children and adults, has the right to have their voices heard particularly if raising a concern about their own or another person's welfare.
- Everyone should know who to ask for help when they have a concern about an individual's behavior.
- Everyone is responsible for the care and protection of children making decisions in their best interests, as their welfare is paramount.

In order to achieve this ATHLETICS FIJI will:

- acknowledge their executive committee members' responsibility to implement and enforce this Policy and will appoint a "Safeguarding Champion" to incorporate the principles of this Policy into all aspects of their programmes;
- have a named member of staff or volunteer who is responsible for leading on safeguarding a "Safeguarding Officer";
- ensure everyone knows this named member of staff or volunteer is the individual they can turn to if they are worried or have a concern about another person and their behaviour;
- ensure that everyone is aware of their rights and the process that will be followed if a concern is raised;
- produce and implement policies and procedures including codes of conduct, rules and disciplinary procedures and keep them up to date as appropriate;
- provide support and guidance to anyone who needs it following a concern, complaint or allegation being made;
- educate and train all members of staff and volunteers about how to deal with concerns and complaints;
- deal with all concerns, allegations and complaints in a fair, transparent, timely and efficient manner ensuring all complainants are updated regularly;
- carry out all investigations and adjudications in a manner that ensures an appropriate level of independence to ensure there is no bias in the resulting report or risk assessment;
- deal with all information about concerns, complaints or allegations confidentially (to the extent permitted by law) and securely;
- recruit appropriate people to roles, whether staff or volunteers, carry out background checks, follow up on references and ensure that only suitable people are appointed; and
- work with local agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations and community groups providing support and guidance for social services to ensure that everyone is kept safe.

### 3. Definitions

Abuse, harassment and exploitation Abuse, harassment and exploitation are described below. They can be perpetrated by both men and women and is often where one party is in a position of power over the other. Where one individual has power over another in a relationship it can lead to situations where abuse is easier to occur. Vulnerable individuals need to be protected and those in authority should ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are put in place. It is also important to understand that coaches, officials or volunteers may be abused by others.

Psychological abuse is an unwelcome act including vilification, belittling, rejection, confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilisation or any other behaviour which may diminish an individual's sense of identity, dignity or self-worth. This is at the centre of most types of abuse as when these occur so does psychological abuse. This can often be seen as bullying or cyber-bullying.

Physical abuse is any intentional or unwanted act for example kicking, beating, biting or burning which causes injury or physical harm. It can include the forced consumption of alcohol or systematic doping practices. It can also be any forced or inappropriate physical activity such as training which is unsuitable for the age or physique of the athlete. Forced or excessive training may escape notice in a sporting environment as the ambitions of both athletes and coaches, as well as peer pressure, may induce one or both to impose or take on excessive training loads and/or competition commitments. Dialogue among athletes and coaches aimed at setting mutually agreed and achievable performance goals can help define tolerable and acceptable training demands. It is up to coaches to temper ambitions that may run counter to an athlete's health and wellbeing.

Sexual abuse is any conduct of a sexual nature, either contact (penetrative or non-penetrative) or non-contact, where consent is not given, cannot be given, is coerced or manipulated. This can involve individuals looking at or making sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging others to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a person in preparation for abuse.

Grooming is the process (whether online or in person) whereby an individual builds a relationship with an athlete encouraging them to trust them so that the groomer can manipulate and exploit them for their own advantage. Grooming an athlete's family, entourage and friends often leads those individuals to believe that the groomer is dependable and trustworthy enabling the groomer to have access to the athlete. By manipulating the athlete and exploiting the relationship they will make the athlete believe they have to comply with the groomer's demands. The power a groomer has over the athlete is used to isolate them from friends and family who might otherwise warn or caution them from complying with the groomer's demands.

Harassment is unwanted or unwelcome behaviour which offends or makes the person feel humiliated or intimidated. Power harassment is where someone in a position of power over another individual, usually in a workplace, uses that power to physically or psychologically harass another person in a lower position. Power harassment can include exclusion, inappropriate work assignments (too little, too much or of a lower level that acceptable) as well as intrusive behaviour.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical. Examples of verbal sexual harassment include unwanted or degrading intimate questions relating to body, clothes or one's private life, jokes with a sexual innuendo and proposals or demands for non-consensual sexual acts. These may be unwanted text messages, telephone calls, letters or other forms of communication with sexual content. Non-verbal examples may include staring, gesticulation, or sharing photographs or pictures with sexual allusions. Examples of physical sexual harassment are unnecessary physical contact with a sexual nature such as pinching, attempting to kiss or caress or touching.

Exploitation is when someone exercises control over another person and/or their assets for their own "personal gain" and without the fully informed consent of the person. Personal gain may be psychological, reputational or commercial and constitutes exploitation when the rights of a person are sold or negotiated without express and fully informed consent of the other person. Examples in athletics may be fraudulent misrepresentation of an athlete's age or nationality, acting on behalf of an athlete fraudulently or taking an unreasonable share of the proceeds of sponsorship or funding arrangements. Exploitation comes in many different guises. Examples include sexual exploitation, financial exploitation and signing up athletes to long term contracts while they are still children.

Neglect is the failure to provide a minimum level of care either physical or emotional which causes harm, allowing harm to be caused or creating an imminent danger of harm. This usually relates to the care given by parents or caregivers to children but is also relevant to other people who have a duty of care towards another person such as a coach or team leader towards an athlete. This can include the failure to provide adequate water in high temperatures, adequate clothing in cold temperatures, suitable food, accommodation or safe travel arrangements.

Abuse, harassment and exploitation may be based on race, religion, colour, beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, socio-economic status and athletic ability or a combination of any of these characteristics. It can be a single isolated incident or a series of events, in person or online, deliberate, unsolicited or coercive. Bullying, hazing and negligence all other aspects of harassment, abuse or exploitation and should be treated in the same way under the terms of this Policy.

Any of these forms of abuse, harassment or exploitation may include an aspect of financial abuse. It may be that an individual may be coerced into signing contracts or agreements which benefit others financially but are not necessarily of financial benefit to themselves. Any element of coercion may be abuse, harassment or exploitation if the individual is a child, if the individual has not authorised someone to act on their behalf or if the individual has not been adequately advised by an independent professional such as an accountant or lawyer on the impact of the terms of the agreement.

There may be times when actions which might not be abusive to one person may be abusive or harmful due to the vulnerability of the individual who is being abused. This may be due to the person's age, ability or other form of vulnerability.

Abuse, harassment and exploitation often result from an abuse of authority by someone in a position of trust, meaning the improper use of power by someone in a position of influence, power or authority by an individual against another person. This is often when there is an age difference but it can also happen between peers – people of similar ages. There can be abuse between athletes or indeed coaches, officials or any others involved in athletics. This is sometimes referred to peer-on-peer abuse. It should be dealt with in the same way as any other type of concern. Abuse can also be perpetrated by family members such as parents, partners and siblings.

Child - a “child” or “children” refers to an individual or group of individuals who have not yet reached the age of 18 years old.

Safeguarding - is the process of protecting vulnerable persons, children and adults from abuse, harassment and exploitation. Creating a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is respected and valued is at the heart of safeguarding. Everyone involved with athletics has a role to play in making sure they actively prevent abuse, harassment and exploitation, listen to accounts from children and adults of their experiences and respond safely and fully if there is a problem.

#### **4. Scope of this Policy**

This Policy applies to ATHLETICS FIJI, its athletes, officials, staff and any other person associated with ATHLETICS FIJI. This includes officials, volunteers, members of an athlete’s entourage, parents, careers and anyone associated with athletics within FIJI in which ATHLETICS FIJI is based. All those to whom this Policy applies must comply with the Policy. Any breaches of this Policy by these individuals will be subject to potential disciplinary action.

#### **5. Reporting of concerns**

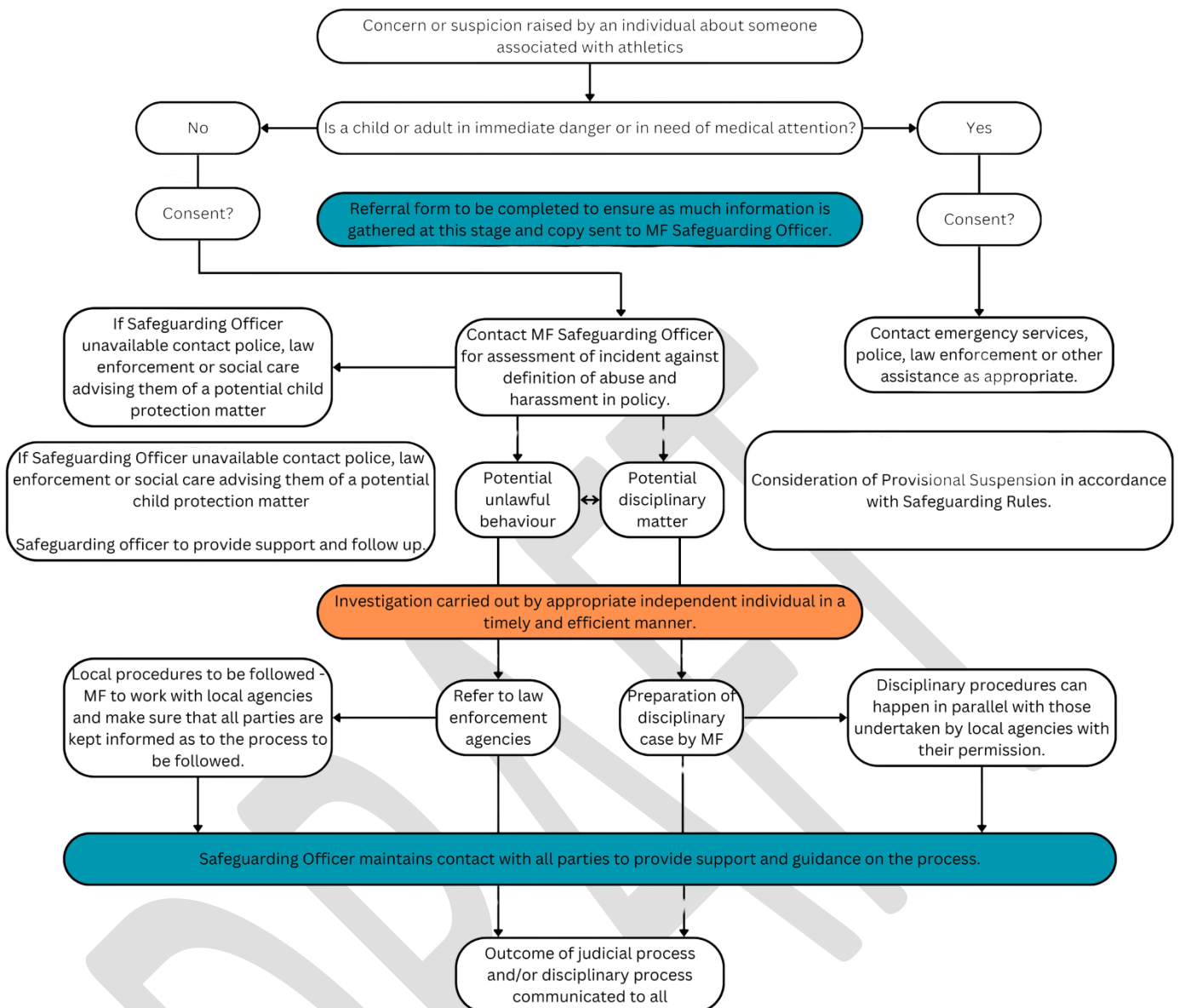
Everyone is responsible for ensuring that no one suffers abuse, harassment or exploitation. Therefore, if anyone has any suspicions that a child or adult may have been subject to abuse, harassment or exploitation in some form or about the behaviour of another person they must report these concerns to ATHLETICS FIJI’s Safeguarding Officer so that they can be assessed and dealt with appropriately. It may also be necessary for the police or social services to be involved and ATHLETICS FIJI’s Safeguarding Officer will do this and coordinate the actions required.

If an individual is at immediate risk of serious harm, there should be no delay in reporting a matter to the emergency services. There are occasions when the consent of the individual to report a matter should be sought, taking into account their age and mental capacity. The capacity for consent of a child under the age of 12 is different from that of a child between the ages of 12 and 18 and between a child and an adult. If an individual refuses to give consent the matter may still need to be reported. [This may be an area that is addressed by local legislation or procedures and should be included in this Policy].

Concerns, allegations and other matters reported to ATHLETICS FIJI should be investigated by someone who is not connected to the matter in any way. It is not necessary for an investigator to be entirely separate from ATHLETICS FIJI if it is a “low level concern”. The more serious the concern or allegation the more necessary it is for the individual investigating it to be separate from ATHLETICS FIJI. If a concern is referred to the police, then they will carry out an investigation. Any investigation ATHLETICS FIJI carries out for a serious concern should be done by an individual who is not connected to ATHLETICS FIJI and is contracted to do the investigation ensuring it will be carried out without bias, efficiently and as quickly as is possible.

#### **6. Reporting flowchart**

*[This is a generic flowchart which needs to be amended to take local procedures into account.]*



## 7. Codes of Conduct

ATHLETICS FIJI has the following codes of conduct:

- coaches;
- athletes; and
- any others which Athletics Fiji has decided to have.

All these codes of conduct are about treating others with respect, dignity, equality and integrity and are based on the principle that everyone has value and is worthy of respect. They are designed to provide everyone associated with athletics with the behaviour that is expected of them by ATHLETICS FIJI. These codes should form part of any training programme for these groups to ensure that everyone is aware of the existence of the codes, the expectations of ATHLETICS FIJI and the possibility of disciplinary action if they are not adhered to. The codes have been developed following consultation with the groups involved and will be regularly reviewed.

Codes of conduct will be made available to the relevant groups and displayed on any noticeboards, websites or on paperwork such as membership renewal forms.

If an individual is aware of any other individual breaching the relevant code of conduct, then this should be referred to the Safeguarding Officer as a concern for investigation and potential disciplinary action. Breaches of any of the codes of conduct may be dealt with under disciplinary procedures if there are no specific safeguarding rules in use by ATHLETICS FIJI.

## **8. Recruitment**

All applicants for any roles, whether staff or volunteers that work closely with children will be required to undertake background checks/criminal records checks. All applicants will be required to attend an interview, provide two references and once appointed will attend an induction session. An interview will include questions about the individual and their experience as well as their knowledge of safeguarding. References will be verified for their veracity and should be from an employer, either current or previous, and another individual who has experience of the applicant's work with children or in sport. Induction sessions will ensure that the successful applicant is aware of their role and responsibilities as well as information about safeguarding policy and procedures.

## **9. Training and Education**

All members of staff of ATHLETICS FIJI, volunteers and officials will be given safeguarding training relevant to their role within the organisation. Those working with children will be given specialist training specifically relating to their responsibilities for the children in their care.

Safeguarding training should be undertaken regularly at least [annually/every two years].

## **10. Disciplinary Procedure**

Breaches of this Policy and ATHLETICS FIJI's Safeguarding Rules will be dealt with under ATHLETICS FIJI's Disciplinary Procedures and should be referred to for further guidance.

## **11. Review of this Policy**

This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## **12. Monitoring**

The monitoring of this Policy and the implementation of it will be carried out regularly as appropriate by ATHLETICS FIJI or an independent safeguarding authority with the necessary expertise to do this task.