# ATHLETICS FIJI

Vodafone Arena
Laucala Bay Road
P. O. Box 1175, Suva

Phone: 7706470/3306470
Email: athleticsfiji@connect.com.fj
Website: athleticsfiji.com


## SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2026

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## 1. Introduction

**ATHLETICS FIJI** is responsible for promoting athletics within **FIJI** and 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** can safely participate in athletics.

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

Abuse may be carried out by children, men or women. It happens in every area of the world, in every sport and organization. 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. It will protect everyone within the scope of this Policy from such behavior. **ATHLETICS FIJI** believes that this right is regardless of the individual's race, color, 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 create a safe environment for all to participate and enjoy the sport to the best of their ability. Athletes, coaches (by which term we include all athlete support staff), officials, volunteers and the executive committee members are all protected by this Policy; they must all understand their rights as well as their duties in this area.

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 they are raising a concern about their own or another person's welfare.

- **Everyone** should know who to ask for help when they have concern about an individual's behavior, is responsible for the care and protection of children, making decisions in their best interests, as their welfare is paramount.

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 programs;
- have a named member of staff or volunteer who is responsible for leading on safeguarding a "Safeguarding Officer";
- ensure everyone knows that Ms. Lilian Amasa, is the individual they can turn to if they are worried or have a concern about another person and their behavior
- 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 on 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 regarding 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 Organizations and community groups providing support and guidance for social services to ensure that everyone is kept safe.

## 3. Definitions

**Abuse, harassment and exploitation** are described below. They can be perpetrated by both men or 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 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, infantilization or any other behavior which may diminish an individual's sense of identity, dignity or self-worth. This is at the center 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 lead 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 behavior 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 behavior.

**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, color, 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 authorized 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**, it's 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 behavior of another person they must report these concerns to **ATHLETICS FIJI's Safeguarding Officer**:

- **Ms. Lilian Amasa**
- **Email: lilyamasa@yahoo.com**
- **Phone: 9960397**

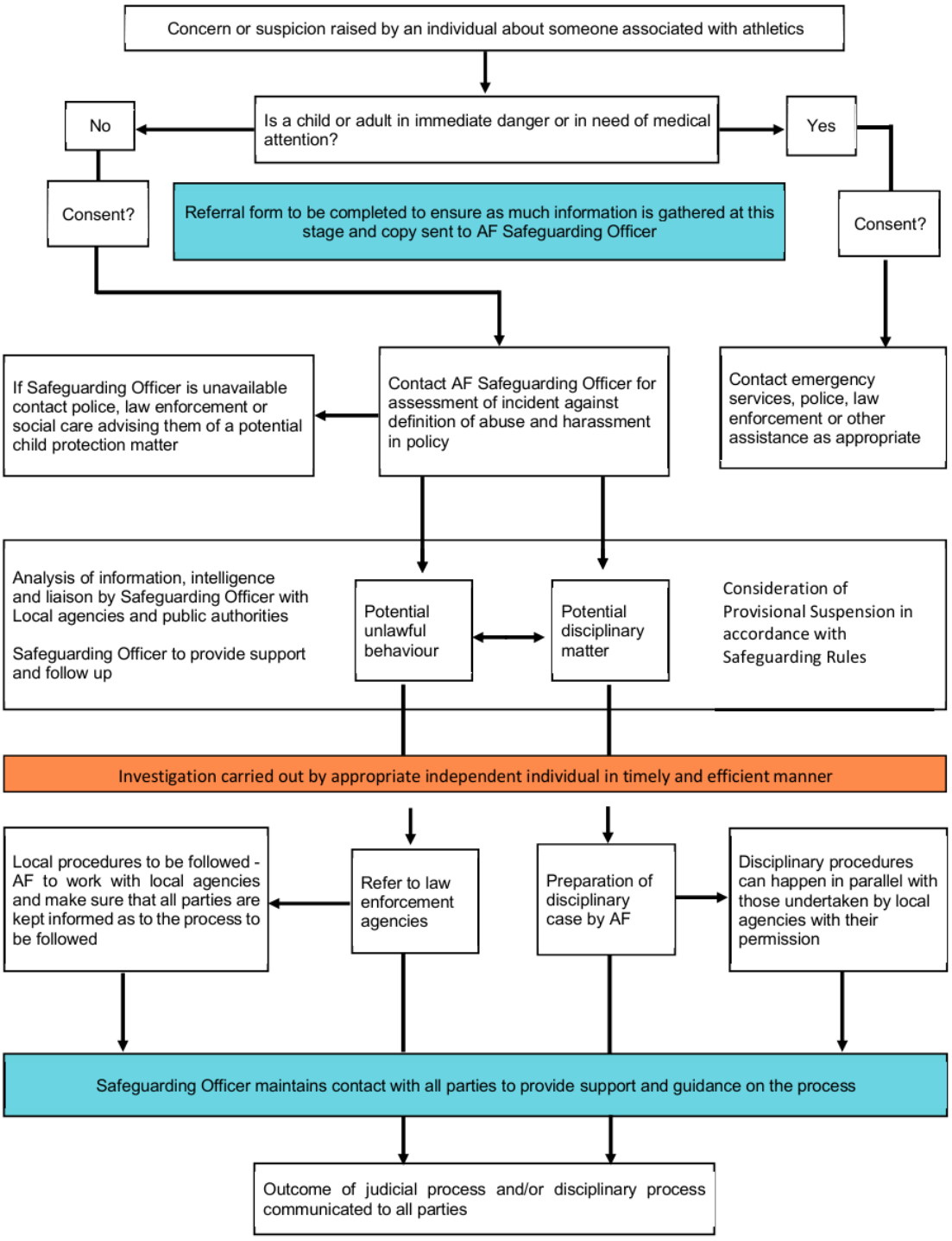
so that they can be assessed and dealt with appropriately. It may also be necessary for the police or social services to be involved and **ATHLETICS FIJI's Safeguarding Officer** will do this and coordinate the actions required.

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, considering 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.

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 any individual who is not connected to **ATHLETICS FIJI**, for example the **FASANOC Safeguarding Officer**. The individual could be contracted to do the investigation ensuring it will be carried out without bias, efficiently and as quickly as is possible.

## 6. Reporting Flowchart



## 7. Codes of Conduct

**ATHLETICS FIJI** has the following codes of conduct:

- coaches;
- athletes; and

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 behavior that is expected of them by **ATHLETICS FIJI**. These codes should form part of any training program 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 and will be required to register with Fiji Teachers Registration Authority (FTRA). Any 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 organization. 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 **every two years or when the need arises.**

## 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 every 2 years.

## 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.

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**Athletics Fiji DISCIPLINARY Policy (As per AF 2014 Constitution)**

Any matters regarding Members' disciplinary issues that are related to Athletics Fiji shall be dealt with in a discreet and as prompt a manner as possible internally by the Executive Committee and within the ambit of this Constitution.

No matter of Disciplinary nature shall be considered for hearing, if a period of 6 months has elapsed from whence the alleged Disciplinary breach occurred, unless the breach is of a Criminal nature under the Fiji Criminal Code or involves abuse or misappropriation of finance or interests of Athletics Fiji.

There shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting of Affiliated Member Clubs and Associations a Disciplinary Tribunal the members of which shall be as follows:

- One Affiliated Clubs and Associations Representative who shall hold no Executive role in Athletics Fiji.
- One Athletics Technical Representative who is a reputable past member of Athletics Fiji its Affiliated Clubs or Associations.
- One practicing independent Legal Practitioner, who shall preside in all convening of the Tribunal

All decisions by the Disciplinary Tribunal shall be determined in chambers and only be upheld on a unanimous decision being passed. If no unanimous decision is reached, then the matter shall be brought to a sitting of Athletics Fiji's Clubs' and Associations' Presidents convened by the Executive Committee. It is the obligation of AF to inform all the Presidents, 72 hours prior the meeting. Any five Presidents shall constitute a quorum for such a meeting. All Presidents present shall each have a single vote on the matter, and their majority decision shall be final.

Any allegation of breach demanding disciplinary adjudication shall be submitted in writing and presented to the Secretary of Athletics Fiji and copies of which shall be delivered to all Members of the Executive Committee. On receipt of such submission the Executive Committee shall determine and inform the Presidents of Affiliated Member Clubs and Associations immediately of the matter and if the matter ought to be heard by the Executive Committee or by the Disciplinary

Tribunal. However, on the request and subsequent endorsement of two or more Presidents of Affiliated Member Clubs and Associations, the Executive Committee shall be relieved from performing their disciplinary duties for that disciplinary case at hand and the matter shall immediately be referred to and be heard by the Disciplinary Tribunal.

In cases where a conflict of interest may exist, insofar as the involvement of any of the Executive Committee Member(s) in any such disciplinary issue(s) the matter shall be brought to the Disciplinary Tribunal. It shall be the duty of the members of Executive Committee whose involvement in no way conflicts with the matter to inform the Disciplinary Tribunal.

In determination of all matters in regards discipline, all involved parties shall be given the due opportunity without bias to make their case heard to the Executive Committee and or the Disciplinary Tribunal whichever forum may be appropriate, and the decision reached after all such submission shall be upheld.

The decision of the Executive Committee and Disciplinary Tribunal in matters of discipline may be appealed by the Member concerned in writing within 48 hours, failing which the decision as initially upheld shall remain, and be considered as accepted by the Member concerned thereby concluding the matter.

In case of an Appeal being held, an Appeals Tribunal made up of the AF's Disciplinary Tribunal and two officials to be appointed by F.A.S.A.N.O.C. shall be convened. After all submissions are put to the Appeals Tribunal, the Appeals Tribunal's resolution regards the matter shall be determined as the final decision of Athletics Fiji, thereby concluding the matter.