**Mandatory Reporting Procedures**

**Purpose**
The purpose of this document is to outline the mandatory reporting obligations and procedures for responding to concerns about child abuse or neglect within the Ballarat Football Netball League (BFNL). It ensures that all relevant individuals understand their legal and ethical responsibilities to protect children from harm.

**Who Must Report?**

Under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*, the following are **mandatory reporters**:

* Teachers, including early childhood educators
* Registered medical practitioners and nurses
* Police officers
* School principals
* Youth justice and welfare workers
* Psychologists and counsellors

In the BFNL context, all staff, volunteers, coaches, umpires, and committee members are expected to report any concerns relating to child abuse, regardless of whether they are legally defined as mandatory reporters. This reinforces a culture of safety and shared responsibility.

**What Must Be Reported?**

A report must be made when you believe on **reasonable grounds** that:

* A child is being or has been **physically abused**, **sexually abused**, **emotionally abused**, **neglected**, or **exposed to family violence**; and
* The child’s parents or guardians are **unable or unwilling to protect the child** from that harm.

**Examples of abuse** include:

* Unexplained bruises or injuries
* Sexualised behaviours inappropriate for the child’s age
* Fear of going home or fear of certain adults
* Sudden changes in behaviour or withdrawal

**Making a Report:**

When a concern is identified, the following steps must be followed:

**Step 1: Immediate Response**

* Ensure the child is safe. If the child is in **immediate danger**, call **000 (Police)**.
* Provide appropriate support to the child in a calm and reassuring manner.

**Step 2: Consult Internally (Where Safe and Appropriate)**

* Notify the **BFNL Child Safety Officer** or your club’s designated child safety contact.
* Discuss your concerns and the grounds for your belief.

**Step 3: Make a Report to Authorities**

Mandatory reporters must report suspected abuse to:

**Child Protection – Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)**
Central Intake: **1300 664 977** (Business hours)
After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service: **13 12 78** (5pm–9am weekdays, 24hrs on weekends/public holidays)

You may also contact:

**Victoria Police** – **000** (if immediate risk) or local station

**Step 4: Record and Document**

Maintain a clear, factual written record of:

* The disclosure or incident
* Your observations and actions
* The details of any reports made (who you spoke to, date, time, advice received)

Use BFNL's **Child Safety Incident Reporting Form** if available.

**Ongoing Obligations**

* Support the child and their family, where appropriate and safe.
* Maintain confidentiality—do not discuss the matter with anyone not directly involved.
* Follow up to ensure the concern has been acted on if you are unsure.

**Protection for Reporters**
Under Victorian law:

* Anyone who makes a report in good faith is protected from liability.
* Your identity as a reporter is kept confidential (with limited exceptions).
* It is illegal to victimise or retaliate against someone who reports a child safety concern.

**Failure to Report**

* **Failure to disclose** known child sexual abuse to police is a criminal offence in Victoria.
* **Failure to protect** a child from the risk of sexual abuse within an organisation is also a criminal offence for those in positions of authority.

**Contact Information**

**BFNL Child Safety Officer:**
**Name:** Gemma Murphy
**Email:** gemma@bfnl.com.au
**Phone:** 0401 152 906

**External Contacts:**

* **Child Protection** (DFFH): 1300 664 977
* **After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service:** 13 12 78
* **Victoria Police:** 000

**Review and Training**

* All BFNL personnel will receive training in mandatory reporting and child safety obligations.
* These procedures will be reviewed every 2 years or after any serious incident or legislative update.