



Worldwide Sports Aikido Federation (WSAF) Child Welfare Policy, Procedures and Guidelines

Introduction

The WSAF believe that it is everyone's responsibility in Aikido to ensure that all children in our sport have a fun, achieve and a positive experience on our Associations.

The UNICEF International Rights of a Child aim for every child, whatever their background or circumstances is to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve personal well-being

It's widely acknowledged that sport can help a child achieve all of these five outcomes. As well as a legal responsibility, we have a moral obligation to protect children whilst our sport helps them achieve the five above outcomes.

The WSAF feels that best practice guidance and policies, clear and transparent procedures, and a robust and relevant training programme underpin good child protection. We also need to continually look for ways to improve our mechanisms for protecting children and increase the ways in which we listen to and involve children in shaping their sport of Aikido

Our values, principles and beliefs

- All child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights.
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- The situation of all children must be improved through promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Child abuse is never acceptable
- We have a collective commitment to protecting children
- When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children.

Policy

Everyone has a role to play in safeguarding children from abuse. Dealing with concerns about child abuse can be very disturbing but stay calm and use this guide to help you decide what you need to do.

Follow these procedures and together we can help to protect vulnerable children and young people and identify any poor practice that may be putting our players or coaches at risk.

It is widely accepted that it is the responsibility of every adult to protect children from abuse. Child abuse and particularly child sexual abuse can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation and it is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the competitive sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them.

The WSAF upholds the principle that all children and young people whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.

The members, coaches and volunteers of the WSAF are committed to the welfare and protection of children so that they can enjoy sporting activities in safety to the best of their abilities without fear, threat or abuse.

Commitments

All Association's will sign up to and abide by the WSAF code of conduct

- All partners will sign and abide by the code of conduct
- All coaches and volunteers will have access to a copy of the child protection policy
- Association will develop procedures including checks on suitability for working with young people
- Coach qualifications will include child protection issues
- Every Association will provide contact details for reporting possible abuse.
- Systems will be established to investigate possible abuse once reported and to deal with it
- Guidance and support will be provided by WSAF members as appropriate to ensure compliance.

Principles

Children and young people have a right to expect us to protect them from harm. By taking care to uphold these principles we can help to assure their welfare and development.

- The young persons welfare is, and must always be, the paramount consideration.
- All young people have the right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity.
- We will take seriously all suspicions and allegations of abuse and respond swiftly and appropriately.
- Anyone under the age of 18 years is considered as a child for the purposes of this document.
- We recognise that working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of the children.
- The WSAF recognises the roles and responsibilities of national statutory agencies in relation to safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare and is fully committed to working together with national agencies

It is a criterion of membership that all Associations, and affiliated bodies require coaches, officials, administrators, parents and participants adopt and abide by Protection Policies and Procedures.

We recognise that we have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the interests and well being of young people with whom we are coaching.
- Take all reasonable practical steps to protect them from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment and respect their rights, wishes and feelings.
- Confidentiality should be maintained in line with the Human Rights Act 2000

Our child protection procedures are intended to:

- Offer safeguards to the children and young people with whom we coach, and to our members, volunteers and those in affiliated organisations.
- Help to maintain professionalism and high standards of practice. We recognise that any procedure is only as effective as the ability and skill of those who operate it.

We are therefore committed to:

- Operating safer recruitment procedures
- Providing support, appropriate training and adequate supervision to all our members and officials so that they can work together with parents/carers and other organisations to ensure that the needs and the welfare of children remains paramount.
- Ensuring that all Associations offer child protection training as part of any coaching qualification.

The WSAF will:

- appoint a Lead Child Protection Officer
- convene a Disciplinary Panel when necessary
- ensure all cases of poor practice that may be abuse and any allegations of abuse are investigated and where appropriate, referred to other agencies
- provide support, training and guidance to members
- make decisions on misconduct/poor practice within agreed timescales.
- inform all appropriate individuals and bodies of their decisions within agreed timescales.
- keep a list of all suspended, disciplined and disqualified persons and where appropriate refer people disqualified to relevant government agencies for consideration
- to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy

Types and Definitions of Abuse

Physical Abuse

This occurs when individuals including other young people, deliberately physically hurt or injure children, or knowingly do not prevent such injuries occurring. It includes injuries caused by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting or using excessive force. It also occurs when young people are given alcohol, inappropriate drugs, or there is a failure to supervise their access to these substances.

In Aikido situation physical abuse may also occur due to:

- Overly hard randori without mutual consent and technical justification.
- Demonstrating techniques too hard or repeatedly where the intention is to hurt or intimidate the uki (the person being thrown).
Inappropriate use of joint locking techniques
- Over training and inappropriate training which disregards the capacity of the player's immature and growing body. This also applies to over competing.
- Forcing (or "suggesting") that a child loses weight or over trains
- This is a very complex issue and beyond the scope of this document but as a rule of thumb a child should eat a healthy well balanced diet, train as appropriate to the capacity of their immature and growing body.
- Inappropriate levels of physical exercises as a punishment – making a child carryout exercise as a punishment may not only constitute physical abuse in some circumstances but sends mixed messages. We want children and young people to train and exercise to have fun and stay healthy.

Sexual Abuse

Girls and boys can be abused by adults (both male and female) or other young people. This may include encouraging or forcing a child or young person to take part in sexual activity. Showing children pornographic material is also a form of sexual abuse.

In an Aikido situation sexual abuse may occur when:

- An adult uses the context of a training session to touch young people in an inappropriate sexual way.
- Coaches, managers or volunteers use their position of power and authority to coerce young players into a sexual relationship.
- Coaches or managers imply better progression of the player in return for sexual favours.

Emotional Abuse

This occurs when individuals persistently fail to show young people due care with regard to their emotional welfare, when a young person may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted, or be subject to sarcasm and unrealistic pressures. There may also be over-protection, preventing young people from socialising, or bullying to perform to high expectations. The young person may lose self-confidence and may become withdrawn and nervous.

In an Aikido situation, emotional abuse may occur when coaches, volunteers or parents:

- provide repeated negative feedback in public or private.
- repeatedly ignore a young player's effort to progress.
- repeatedly demand performance levels above the young player's capability.
- over-emphasise the winning ethic.
- making a young player feel worthless, unvalued or valued only insofar as they achieve the expectations of their coach/parents/others.

Neglect

This occurs when a young person's essential needs for food, warmth and care both physical and emotional are not met.

In an Aikido situation neglect may occur when:

- young players are left alone without proper supervision.
- a young player is exposed to unnecessary heat or cold.
- a young player is not provided with necessary fluids for re-hydration.
- a young player is exposed to an unacceptable risk of injury.
- exposing children to unhygienic conditions.
- exposing children to a lack of medical care.
- non-intervention in incidents of bullying or taunting.

Bullying

It is important to recognise that in some cases of abuse, it may not always be an adult abusing a young person. It can occur that the abuser is a young person, for example in the case of bullying. Bullying can be defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour that can take its form both physically and verbally against another person, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Although anyone can be a target of bullying, the victim is usually shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons, overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, culture or religious belief. Bullies can be both male and female. Although bullying often takes place in schools, it does and can occur anywhere there is poor or inadequate supervision, on the way to/from school, at a sporting event, in the playground and in changing rooms. Bullies come from all walks of life; they bully for a variety of reasons and may even have been abused themselves. Typically bullies can have low self-esteem, be aggressive, jealous and excitable. Crucially, they have learnt how to gain power over others.

Whilst the WSAF acknowledges bullying we feel that bullying is also a form of physical and/or emotional abuse and will not be afraid to call certain behaviour as just that – abuse.

There are many types of bullying including:

- Physical: hitting, kicking and theft.
- Verbal: name-calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats and gestures.
- Emotional: tormenting, mobile text messaging, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments, use of camera phones to record images of players in changing rooms.
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Homophobic: because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality

In Aikido situation bullying may occur when:

- a parent/coach who pushes too hard.
- a coach lacks supervision and an awareness of the young people he/she is supervising
- a coach who adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy.
- a player who intimidates others.
- an official who places unfair pressure on a person.

Coaches hold a position of power in the relationship with their athlete and must not abuse this position to bully children/vulnerable young adults in their care.

In Aikido a situation bullying may occur when the coach is:

- overly zealous
- resorts to aggressive, physical or verbal behaviour
- torments, humiliates or ignores an athlete in their charge/care

Aikido does not traditionally have a culture of bullying. The reasons for this may be many, but it is widely accepted that the principles underpinning the approach to training taken by the founder of modern Aikido, Professor Kenji Tomiki, is certainly at its heart.

Take a proactive approach:

- Ensure the Aikido Code is promoted and embedded within your Association.
- Ask your young people to write their own code of conduct to run along side the Aikido Code.
- Take ALL signs of bullying seriously.
- Ensure everyone at your Association knows you have an open and telling culture.
Anyone who knows bullying is going on is expected to inform the Association Welfare Officer.

Poor Practice & Abuse

Child abuse is a very emotive and difficult subject. It is important to understand the feelings involved but not to allow them to interfere with our judgment about any action to be taken. It is also important that child abuse and child protection are openly discussed as this helps create an environment where people are more aware of the issues and sensitive to the needs of children. Open discussions also create environments that deter abusers. An environment that explicitly attempts to identify and report abuse helps create a safer culture for children and young people.

This child protection policy is inclusive and the same actions should be taken regardless of the needs and background of the child or young person. The WSAF recognises however that some children and young people are disadvantaged by their experiences or have additional vulnerabilities and would want to highlight the following.

Children and young people with disabilities

Children and young people with disabilities might be additionally vulnerable because they may:

- Lack a wide network of friends who support and protect them.
- Have significant communication differences - this may include very limited verbal communication or they may use sign language or other forms of non-verbal communication.
- Be subject to the prejudices and/or misconceptions of others e.g. about their attractiveness' to potential abusers
- Require personal intimate care.
- Have a reduced capacity to resist either verbally or physically.
- Not be believed.
- Depend on the abuser for their involvement in sport.
- Lack access to peers to discover what is acceptable behaviour.
- Have medical needs that are used to explain abuse.

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups are additionally vulnerable because they may be:

- Experiencing racism and racist attitudes.
- Experiencing racism through being ignored by people in authority.
- Afraid of further abuse if they challenge others.
- Subjected to myths, e.g. all people of a particular culture are good with or hit their children.
- Wanting to fit in and not make a fuss.
- Using or learning English as a second language.

If you should identify specific needs for materials for groups or individuals where they have additional vulnerabilities and barriers to getting help please contact the Association Child Protection Officer.

Reducing the potential for vulnerability

Bearing in mind that children and young people can be and are disadvantaged by these and other experiences, it is important for all clubs, and event coaches to be extra vigilant in creating a safe culture, including:

- Finding ways of understanding and communicating with all children and young people.
- Ensuring best practice at all times in physical and health care.
- Developing knowledge of the diverse cultures they serve.
- Respecting cultural differences.
- Building relationships with parents and carers of players in Association activities.
- Observing carefully changes in mood, appearance and behaviour and discussing those concerns with families, carers or the designated person if suspicions or concerns are significantly aroused about the care of the child or young person.
- Acknowledging that disabled children and young people are additionally vulnerable and that vigilance is essential.
- Acknowledging that abusive behaviour directed towards young people whilst they are carrying out a leadership role is not acceptable and will be reported to the appropriate designated person as poor practice and or abuse.
- Implementation of a club code of conduct for spectators and players.
- Acceptance of the special role club officials have in setting a good example of the way in which people should behave towards children and young people in leadership roles.

It may be necessary to ask other specialist agencies for help and advice.

Signs & Indicators

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place.

WSAF Associations and their coaches and officials whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition.

Children and young people are reluctant to tell someone when they are being abused, so it is essential that every adult is aware of the possible signals that a child and young person's welfare or safety is being threatened. However there is rarely a clear sign and you may often have to piece together various snippets of information and rely on your instinct that something does not seem quite right.

You may have one piece of information that, when added to that of others, forms a clear picture of abuse. This is often compared to getting pieces of a jigsaw together. Only when you have a few pieces can you start to see the true picture.

Remember, it is not your job to decide whether or not a child or young person is being abused – however it is your responsibility to share concerns. You may be the only adult in the child's or young person's life that is in a position to notice these pieces of the puzzle.

Recording the Information – keep it clear and simple

Information may need to be passed to National Authorities so accurate records of dates, times and conversations would need to be recorded.

Concerns

You don't have to take responsibility for deciding if child abuse is taking place or not but, if you have concerns; there are people who can help.

It is not the responsibility of any one working under the auspices the WSAF, in a paid or voluntary capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to act on concerns to protect children in order that appropriate agencies can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child.

Bring your concern to the attention of the person with designated responsibility for child protection:

Allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers

Whistleblowing is an early warning system. It is about revealing and raising concerns over misconduct or malpractice within an organisation or within an independent structure associated with it.

Child abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur within other settings, for example, sport or other social activities. This could involve anyone working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity, for example, a volunteer in clubs, club helpers, tutors at training camps, clinics or festivals and coaches.

The WSAF will fully support and protect any coach or volunteer who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be abusing a child.

Reporting a concern – what you need to do

Any suspicion that either a coach has abused a child or a volunteer will be reported to the Associations National Welfare Officer.

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned and to protect the integrity of the investigation process. All referrals must be reported to the Lead Child Protection Officer as soon as possible.

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