



SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

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FOREWORD

Sports can have a powerful and positive impact on the growth and development of children and youth athletes. Not only does it provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement, but also teaches valuable qualities such as leadership, teamwork, determination, and self-esteem.

However, the positive influences of sport can only take place if sport is placed in the right hands. The hands of those who place the welfare and protection of children and youth athletes above all else.

The International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (“IMMAF”) is committed to the creation of a safe and inclusive environment for all individuals competing and involved in the sport, this is especially true for youth athletes and children.

The creation and implementation of the appropriate safeguarding mechanisms and cultures are of paramount importance in order to ensure the well-being and protection of youth participating in all IMMAF-sanctioned events.

The welfare of the youth athletes is critical to the IMMAF and the continued success of the sport rests on the assurance of safeguarding and protection for all youth athletes and children participating in Mixed Martial Arts.

This Policy is a reflection of the IMMAF’s commitment towards safeguarding, as well as an outline of the risks that may occur to a child or youth athlete, along with the measures and precautions that can be taken to protect from such risks.

The Policy details the meaning of safeguarding, the principles of safeguarding, potential forms of abuse and risks towards children or youth athletes, guidelines and procedures to be taken in responding to any concern that a child or youth athlete involved in the IMMAF, or its activities, may be at risk of or is experiencing.

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INTRODUCTION

The IMMAF serves as the global authority for MMA, with an estimated 449 million followers globally. The IMMAF is focused on developing MMA as an international sport, driving the development of common sets of rules, safety regulations, structure progression, pathways and safeguarding tools.

A significant part of ensuring the positive growth and development of the sport is recognising the need to provide appropriate and sufficient safeguarding tools/mechanisms, in order to allow the safe participation of children and all persons interested in MMA. The IMMAF strives to gain worldwide recognition for the sport of MMA on every level, enabling excellent safeguarding, minimising risks and increasing opportunities and benefits for the sport's participants.

The approach of the IMMAF to safeguarding is based on principles that are outlined in international legislation as well as national laws. The following has been taken into consideration:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC);
- Council of Europe: Article 1. (ii) of the European Sports Charter (version dated 2001)
- UNESCO: Article 10.1 of the Revised International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (version dated 2015)
- Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
- National Legislation such as the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, and the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- The IOC Consensus Statement (2016) – Definitions of Harassment and Abuse;
- IMMAF Safeguarding Booklet.

There are 10 (ten) standards that the IMMAF follows in order to ensure a safe sporting environment for children. They are:

1. Policy and procedures for responding to concerns: Providing a safeguarding policy for the protection of children that helps create a safe environment for youth athletes.
2. Operating systems: Clear step by step guidelines on what to do in certain circumstances, that clarify roles and responsibilities and lines of communication. This helps ensure prompt responses to concerns.
3. Prevention: Minimise the possibility of children being abused by those in a position of trust.

4. Codes of ethics and conduct: Setting the standard of behaviour to ensure a clear benchmark of what is acceptable.
5. Equity: Abuse happens to males and females of all ages, ethnicities, social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations, religious beliefs and political persuasion. IMMAF shall take steps to combat discrimination and actively include everyone in this Policy.
6. Communication: Ensure awareness of the Policy and inform the whole IMMAF staff as well as members.
7. Education and training: Providing training and development opportunities for staff, volunteers, members and coaches to have the necessary understanding and skills to handle the safety of children.
8. Access to advice and support: Ensure advice and support are in place to help people play their part in the protection of children.
9. Implementation and monitoring: Implementation of this Policy and conducting necessary reviews of the same periodically to ensure adaptation with time.
10. Influencing: Influence, encourage, and promote the adoption and implementation of measures to safeguard children by partner organisations. IMMAF will set the standard of support and resources in relation to the implementation of safeguarding measures.

DEFINITIONS & INTERPRETATIONS

1. **Children:** The UNCRC defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. For the purposes of this policy, this legal definition shall apply.
2. **Safeguarding:** Processes to ensure that a child and any other person participating in IMMAF events remains safe whilst participating in these events.
3. **Grooming:** Method of harassment in which an individual builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so that they can manipulate, exploit and/or abuse them.
4. **Child Protection:** The processes involved in responding to the concerns about a child.
5. **Statutory Agencies:** Organisations that have a statutory/legal role in responding to concerns about children. They include:
 - a) **Police:** To address concerns about criminal behaviour.
 - b) **Local Authorities:** Designated officers who address concerns about those in positions of responsibility.
 - c) **Charitable Organisations:** Registered charities that provide resources and assistance in preventing abuse, and helping create safe environments for children. For example, the NSPCC.
 - d) **Children's Services / Social Services / Children's Social Care:** Any kind of work aimed to protect children in harm.
6. **Abuse:** A violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which may result in significant harm. The effects of abuse can be significantly damaging if untreated and may follow a person into adulthood. There are multiple forms of abuse, a non-exhaustive list of the same are:
 - a) **Physical Abuse:** The act in which a person causes a child willingly or unwillingly physical injury, illness or pain, or subjects the child to neglect. This may involve, but is not limited to, the person hitting the child with or without an implement, pinching, kicking, pushing, throwing, shaking, pulling the child's hair, scratching or biting the child, stepping or stamping on the child, or forcing objects into the child's mouth. Physical abuse also may include, but is not limited to, poisoning, burning, scalding, scratching, and trying to drown or suffocate the child. Any form

of corporal punishment is considered physical abuse of children. Physical abuse can also be caused when a parent/guardian feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. Some examples of physical abuse in MMA may be when the nature and intensity of training and competition exceed the capacity of a child's immature and growing body, the use of drugs to enhance performance or delay puberty.

- b) **Psychological & Emotional Abuse:** Psychological abuse includes, but is not limited to, excessive or disproportionate disciplining, ridicule, criticism, mockery, disparagement, rejection, freezing out, unreasonable demands, forced isolation from social contacts and age-appropriate activities, and constant refusal to listen to what the child has to say. Certain harmful experiences shall also be considered psychological abuse, for example, if the child is forced to witness (see or hear) violence in his/her immediate environment and / or live in an environment where there is frequent violence or threats of violence. All forms of physical abuse of children, including sexual abuse, involve psychological abuse.
- c) **Neglect and Acts of Omission:** The ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse. In MMA, there could be concerns about malnourishment or cleanliness in a child's home, and / or young people not being given water during training, not being allowed to go to the toilet, starving children in order to lose weight, forcing / making the child work excessively hard etc. Neglect can cause a serious impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may also include the refusal to give children love, affection, and / or attention.
- d) **Sexual Abuse:** Covers all forms of sexual acts forced on a child by another person. This could include, but is not limited to, full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, persistent harassment, molestation, insertion of appendages, or other items through oral, anal, vaginal or other cavities, anal intercourse, fondling, and / or showing pornographic material (books, videos, pictures) to a child. Sexual abuse is often characterised by the exploitation of a child's vulnerability and dependence. It involves actions that are primarily driven by a perpetrator's own desires, which can be physical, psychological or emotional. This form of abuse infringes the child's bodily autonomy and can often take place against the child's explicit opposition or without their understanding, as children may lack the maturity to comprehend the nature of the act or provide informed consent. In MMA, coaching techniques which involve physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed and so it is crucial that such abuse is recognised and addressed immediately.
- e) **Sexual Exploitation:** Actual or attempted abuse of a child's vulnerable position for sexual purposes based on a position of power or trust. This includes, but is not

limited to, promising the child monetary, social or political gain through sexual exploitation.

- f) **Sexual Abuse Online (through the Internet):** This kind of abuse covers all forms of sexual abuse, physical and non-physical, forced on a child by another person through the internet.
 - g) **Online Abuse:** A type of abuse that happens on the web/internet. It can occur in different scenarios such as through social media platforms or networks, playing online games, or using mobile phones. Children can be at risk of cyberbullying from people they know as well as strangers.
 - h) **Bullying:** Bullying is the act of individuals or groups seeming to cause harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable. Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours which may be combined. Bullying can be physical, emotional or verbal. It can take place anywhere and may involve a child bullying another child or an adult displaying bullying behaviours. Bullying can cause considerable stress to children and young people, in some cases affecting their health and development. Bullying in MMA may consist of athletes being pushed too hard by their coaches or parents, a child being intimidated or discriminated by others, physical abuse or threats or bullying via social media.
 - i) **Inappropriate Training:** This is a form of abuse and involves any activity in which an adult forces or encourages physical training at a level which is too intense and fatiguing for a child or young person. In MMA, this can take many forms including, but not limited to, frequent and hard competitive sparring, endurance or stamina training; such as over-long runs, or distance runs at a pace that causes extreme fatigue and distress. There is the risk of over-exertion during gym work, which could involve inappropriate levels of training in excess of a child's natural capacity, or with a frequency that is inappropriate for their age and physical development.
 - j) **Poor Practice:** Poor practice is the omission of affording the necessary priority to the needs of a child, which comprises their wellbeing. Poor practice can easily turn into abuse if it is not dealt with as soon as concerns are raised or reported. Poor practice is unacceptable in MMA and will be treated seriously with appropriate actions taken.
7. **Children's Workforce:** Any and all persons who work as a volunteer, employee, coach, referee, cutman, or in any position that involves working with children in any capacity are considered a part of the children's workforce.

POLICY STATEMENT

The IMMAF is committed to providing an environment in which all children and youth athletes can participate in its activities and have a safe and positive experience, whether in training, competition, work, or volunteering.

The sport of MMA in all its disciplines is dynamic, constantly changing and evolving. This Safeguarding Policy for the Protection of Children has been designed to both inform and guide those within our sport on all aspects of safeguarding.

The IMMAF believes that all participants, staff and volunteers should feel safe while participating in MMA. We are committed to creating and maintaining a positive environment where all concerns will be listened to and acted on appropriately such that all participants are treated with respect.

The overriding objective of this policy is to ensure that the welfare of all children and youth athletes involved in our sport is protected. All children should be valued and treated with equality and fairness, regardless of their age, culture, disability, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity. It is the responsibility of every adult involved in boxing to ensure that every child and young person is able to participate in the sport in a safe and friendly environment.

1. Responsibilities:

All IMMAF agencies will seek to help keep children and youth athletes safe. They shall:

- Accept the moral and legal responsibility to implement procedures to provide a duty of care for children and young people, safeguard their well-being and protect them from abuse.
- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and youth athletes.
- Provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Require staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by the Safeguarding Policy for the Protection of Children.
- Take all allegations and concerns of conducts violating the safeguarding policy seriously and act appropriately.
- Recognise that all athletes participating in an IMMAF-funded activity, regardless of age, class, sexual orientation, gender, religion or disability, have a right to a safe environment and to be protected from harm.
- Appoint a person to take the lead responsibility in ensuring all safeguarding practices, policies and guidance are adhered to in full and ensure succession planning. These appointed people are Sophie Mueller and Daniyal Shamkhalov (contact details are at the end of this document).

- Ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- Appoint a Safeguarding Officer to handle the concerns regarding the safety of any child and incidents that may occur.

2. Principles:

The guidance provided in the procedures are based on the following principles:

- This policy recognises and builds on the legal and statutory definition of a child provided for in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (“UNCRC”).
- An adult has a moral and statutory duty for the care, custody and control of any child under the age of 18 under their supervision.
- The child’s welfare is paramount.
- All young people, regardless of age, culture, any disability they may have, gender, language, racial heritage, religious belief and sexual orientation or identity have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs and / or other issues.
- Deaf and disabled children are four times more likely to be abused than non-disabled children. The presence of impairments and / or disabilities significantly increases the risk of abuse and neglect.¹ As such, it is imperative to be especially mindful of their safeguarding needs as there may arise situations wherein additional measures are required to safeguard these children.
- All young people have a right to practise the sport in an enjoyable and safe environment.
- Young players have a right to expect appropriate management, support, personal and social development regarding their involvement in the sport of MMA
- All incidents of poor practice or suspicions of poor practice and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- The IMMAF and all concerned organisations shall work in cooperation with the relevant statutory authorities on matters relating to the safeguarding of children. Should the IMMAF receive an incident report / disclosure of a safeguarding concern, the same will be referred to the relevant statutory authorities where appropriate.

3. Assent:

All individuals involved in the sport of MMA in the IMMAF at every level, including recreational athletes, competitors, tournament officials, coaches, administrators, board members, club officials, referees and spectators agree to abide by this Policy from the date of its publication on the IMMAF website and all such individuals participating or being involved in the IMMAF are deemed to have assented to and as such recognise and adhere to the principles and responsibilities embodied in this document.

SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES

¹ Sullivan PM and Knutson JF (2000) Maltreatment and Disabilities: a population based epidemiological study. Child Abuse and Neglect 24 10 1257–1273.

The IMMAF's aim is to create a culture where everyone feels confident to raise legitimate concerns without prejudice to their own position. Concerns about the behaviour of coaches, officials, or any individual which may be harmful to a child must be reported as per the procedures outlined in the reporting section of this Policy.

Whilst keeping in mind that safety and welfare of children is of paramount importance, there will be times when those responsible will need to exercise discretion and common sense to ensure well-being. These guidelines are designed to provide information on a number of different topics which individuals may find useful and will help create a safe, friendly, and welcoming environment for children.

1. Safe Environments:

A safe environment is one where:

- the possibility of abuse is openly acknowledged;
- the volunteers and employees are appropriately recruited and trained; and
- those who report suspicions and concerns are confident that these will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Communication is central to maintaining a safe environment; this includes information given to parents, choosing the correct and appropriate method of providing information to children (email/phone to parents), listening to children's views on matters which affect them, as well as considering how to communicate in an emergency (mobile/landline).

Messages relating to children, sent via telephone, emails and texts, should be through their parents/guardians. Where appropriate, older players who have the mental capacity and capability to participate and contribute in decisions that may affect them may be copied in if absolutely necessary, but this should always be done by blind copying in order to protect their data. Direct personal communication with children should be avoided at all times unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g.: a risk of harm.

When a child is competing in a tournament, it is essential to ensure that tournament organisers are aware of and follow the "Guidelines for Youth Events" provided in the IMMAF website: <https://immaf.org/get-involved/participant-pathways/> to ensure a safe environment.

2. Recruitment:

In the sport of MMA, there are numerous individuals who work in close quarters with children, for example, the coaches, cut-men, referees, judges, volunteers and staff members. It is essential that all these individuals undergo the necessary training and fulfil the required criteria to be suitable to work with children. The IMMAF provides the standards to be fulfilled by tournament organisers, coaches, referees, judges, and cut-men. Such standards must be adhered

to when undergoing recruitment processes for staff and volunteers, hiring coaches, cutmen, referees & judges, and any other member of the children's workforce.

Children's workforce must be suitable and all steps should be taken to exclude anyone who may pose a threat to children. When recruiting new members of the children's workforce, all new members must be requested to provide a written reference, which must then be verified. Such reference, if the new member has worked in the relevant field prior, must be from the former employer / supervisor / boss of the new member. If the new member has not worked in the relevant field prior, the reference must be obtained from a person of repute. Anyone volunteering for a position in the children's workforce should be provided with a job description setting out clearly their responsibilities and remit.

It is mandatory for all new members / applicants to undergo an interview process with the Safeguarding Officer prior to being hired. The Safeguarding Officer must approve the candidate post the interview, in order to be eligible for hire

All persons who hold a position in the children's workforce must undergo a mandatory check for criminal records in order to determine whether it is appropriate to place this person within the workforce or to remove them.

Hiring staff and Safeguarding Officers must conduct risk assessments for all persons to commence working with children prior to the receipt of the criminal check clearance and determine what level of supervision is necessary.

All new members that are hired to be a part of the children's workforce must be capable of contingency planning in order to ensure that if a child's injury requires significant attention, and coaches are away or absent from a team, levels of precaution are taken to ensure supervision over the persons attending to the injured child.

Coaches are the backbone of any sport and it is essential to ensure that coaches are well trained and have received the appropriate accreditation before working with children. It is critical to ensure that all coaches that are employed or volunteering to work with children have undergone the IMMAF Coach Education Certification program provided for in the IMMAF website: <https://immaf.org/get-involved/coaches-area/#coaches-area>.

Tournament organisers must ensure that all those working in a youth competition have obtained the relevant accreditation. Referees and judges must have completed the IMMAF International Referees & Judges Certification course as provided in the IMMAF website: <https://immaf.org/get-involved/officials-area/>.

All IMMAF-sanctioned events comply with the safeguarding for events framework that has been developed as well as follow the 10-steps for safeguarding in events, both available at: <https://immaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/IMMAF-Safeguarding-Booklet-3.pdf>

Individuals that are responsible for addressing cuts and injuries during official tournaments must also have the appropriate IMMAF Cutman License and must have completed the IMMAF Cutman certification course: <https://immaf.org/get-involved/officials-area/#cutman>

When an individual has been selected for a role / position that may involve working with children, the responsible body must conduct an induction process which ensures that the individual:

1. is fully aware of the duties and responsibilities of the post.
2. is aware of who their direct supervisor is and to whom they are to report.
3. Has fully read and understood the IMMAF Safeguarding Policy for the Protection of Children and understands their responsibilities and obligations.
4. is directed to attend a recognised safeguarding and protection of children course such as the UK Coaching's 'Safeguarding and Protecting Children Workshop' or an equivalent course organised by another sporting body.

All individuals (volunteers, employees, coaches, cutmen, referees etc.) who are a part of the children's workforce shall sign a declaration form to be provided by the Safeguarding Officer, that they shall comply with all the requirements for their respective positions. This declaration form is the 'Declaration of Honour' as provided herein as Annexure C.

3. Training & Monitoring:

The behaviour and performance of new volunteers and employees should be monitored for a period of four (4) weeks. to ensure they are following the safeguarding guidelines and principles.

As provided for under the recruitment section of this Policy, all individuals who have a coaching role and / or other roles within the children's workforce must have obtained the appropriate certificate / accreditation and passed the appropriate course in order to adequately perform their duties for the respective. Additionally, as provided for herein, all individuals must be aware of and comprehend this Policy as well as be compliant with this Policy.

To provide a safe environment, volunteers and employees must avoid working in isolation out of the sight of parents or other volunteers. Whilst volunteers and employees are awaiting the criminal check clearance, they must be supervised by someone who has the clearance.

Volunteers working in IMMAF-sanctioned events must preferably be selected through the process outlined in the IMMAF website: <https://immaf.org/get-involved/immaf-volunteer/> Parents/carers/guardians must be advised that it is not acceptable to drop children off for training or at competitions without any adult supervision.

4. Adult to Child Ratios:

There should always be at least one adult in charge of any group of children. For avoidance of any doubt, each and every adult supervising shall be an adult who has been checked and cleared of all criminal records. The IMMAF recommends a minimum ratio of adult to children of:

- 1:10 for children over 8 years old
- 1:8 for children under 8 years old aged 7 and 8
- 1:6 for children under 7 years old

People supervising children and young people shall have an appropriate qualification for conducting supervision activities, appropriate insurance to cover the activity, understand the IMMAF safeguarding regulations and a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

People appointed to supervise children and young people shall be responsible for first aid and, consequently, they shall ensure that there is a qualified first aider on site; that first aid boxes are accessible and up-to-date; and that there is access to a phone and an appropriate network service in order to contact emergency services.

Supervisors shall also realise risk assessments prior to any activity involving children and young people. While analysing any potential risks, many factors shall be taken into account, this list includes but is not limited to: health and safety elements of environment and equipment; analyse if the venue is closed and exclusive or open and accessible, the age of the participants; special needs and additional supervision needs of the participants; experience and competence of the participants; and nature of the activity.

5. Transport:

The responsibility of transporting to and from events / clubs shall lie with the parent / guardian of the child. The coaches, officials, volunteers or other members of the children's workforce shall not be tasked with the transport of children to and from events / clubs.

If a parent / guardian is late to pick up their child, the supervising adult must attempt to contact the parent / guardian, stay with the child until the parent / guardian arrives, report the situation to the Safeguarding Officer and / or Police and / or Social Services if the parent / guardian cannot be contacted.

In a situation wherein the children are required to compete / participate in events / tournaments that are far away from their place of residence, they shall travel with responsible adults who shall adhere to the following guidelines:

- a. It is required for the parent / guardian to have given prior consent for the transport of their child with another adult.
- b. The adult in charge of transporting must be provided with relevant emergency contact information by the parents / guardians.

- c. The adult in charge of transporting the children must be a member of the children's workforce, having undergone the recruitment process outlined herein.
- d. The adult must provide information regarding the time of travel, mode of transport, and route taken to the parents / guardians. It is required that the adult provide updates to the parents / guardians regarding the journey when appropriate.

Parents / guardians must be informed in advance of any events / tournaments that are taking place that require the children to be transported by another adult and must be notified of any changes at the earliest opportunity.

The mode of transport used by an adult in the children's workforce in charge of transporting children can not be a private vehicle. The club / organisation must service a vehicle for the purpose of transporting the children. If a private vehicle is the only feasible mode of transport, the adult in charge must ensure it is road worthy, safe for children to travel in, and provide the vehicular information to the relevant parents / guardians.

The adult in charge of transporting children must ensure they hold a valid license to drive the vehicle, valid registration and insurance for the vehicle, ensure the safety of the passengers, ensure all passengers are wearing the seatbelts during transit, never be alone with a child in the car. Should a situation arise when the adult is alone in the car with a child, they must ensure the child is in the back seat whilst they are in the driver's seat.

In a situation wherein a vehicle is being rented to be used for transportation of children, the organisation must ensure the vehicle is suitable for transport of children, assign an adult that is competent to drive such a vehicle, consider if more than one driver is required to complete the journey safely, determine the suitability of the vehicle for transport of children with additional needs if necessary.

An adult in charge of transporting children must never take a child on a journey without parental / guardian's consent and must never leave the child alone in the car without supervision.

6. Inappropriate Relationships with Children:

All adults should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with children and young people. Intimate or sexual relationships between those working with children at IMMAF events and a child will be regarded as a grave breach of trust and will be treated very seriously and may result in disciplinary action, including barring individuals from attending all IMMAF events.

All adults should ensure that their relationships with children are appropriate to the age and gender of the children, and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when adults are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

From time-to-time adults may encounter young people who display attention-seeking behaviour and / or young people who profess to be attracted to them. All adults should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately, but ensure that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted. In these circumstances, the adult should also ensure that the appropriate authority is aware of the situation, by submitting a written communication at his / her earliest convenience and always.

An adult in a position of trust must never be present at the home, private room, or dormitory of a child alone without the presence of the child's parent / guardian. All adults in a position of trust must never take a child back to their own home or private room / dormitory, invite / allow a child to stay with them unsupervised, share a room with a child, enter a child's room without another adult present, or enter the room of a child without their permission / request.

In addition, it is unacceptable behaviour for any adult to conduct meetings with children in their room or in any other private space without another responsible adult being present, or allow any physically rough / sexually provocative games, or take part in inappropriate talking / touching. Where there is a suspicion of any such activity, the individual concerned will immediately be reported to the prosecutorial bodies, whilst reserving the right to carry out any other disciplinary proceedings that may be necessary.

7. Breach of Position of Trust:

'Position of Trust' is a term that refers to certain roles and settings where an adult has regular and direct contact with children. Persons in a position of trust must not engage in sexual activity with a child in their care. No-one in a position of trust shall in any way, shape or form encourage, allow, or wilfully manifest a physical or emotionally dependent relationship to develop between them and a child in their care; this is often referred to as grooming.

The sexual offences legislation in numerous countries around the world already provides that sexual activity between adults and children is illegal and constitutes abuse. This includes sexual activity and relationships with adults who hold a position of trust, responsibility or authority in relation to them and, as a result, have a considerable amount of power and influence in their lives.

On being notified that an adult in a position of trust is involved or suspected to be involved in a sexual relationship with a child, the matter will be reported to the police. In addition, the accused person shall be suspended from all IMMAF activities until a final decision is rendered by a judge / tribunal regarding the matter.

It is the responsibility of the organisations and people who work with children to ensure that no-one who is in a position of trust abuses the child / children who are under their care, including, but not limited to, obtaining any unfair gain or advantage due to their position; using profane, insulting or harassing language; allowing themselves to be drawing themselves into

inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour or make suggestive derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children and young people.

8. Good Role Models:

The Children's Workforce should consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance and refrain from pursuits considered unhealthy in front of their players. They must not make sexually explicit comments to and / or in front of children and any language which causes them to feel uncomfortable and / or lose confidence or self-esteem is unacceptable, as is the use of obscene or foul language.

9. Physical Element of MMA:

The well-being and safety of children must be placed above the development of performance. Skills involving physical contact such as jabbing, takedowns, kicks, sprawling, clinching, punching, etc. must be taught in a safe and secure manner paying due regard to the physical development of the child involved.

Adults must never perform / participate in contact versions of MMA with children including training games or drills unless absolutely necessary, for example, in the instance of a coach. When conducting training sessions, a risk assessment on the conditions, children, and apparent risks must be carried out by the person responsible for the overall session, for example, the coach.

Upon the completion of a risk assessment and development of the training session, if the person responsible, for example, the coach, determines that it is appropriate to teach the child the contact / physical elements of MMA, the following principles must be adhered to:

- Physical handling by a coach must only be used for safety reasons or where there is no other way of coaching the technique.
- The reasons for physical contact should be explained wherever practical so that the children and their parents are comfortable with this approach.
- Any contact with buttocks, genitals or breasts shall be avoided and shall never be carried out in a way that could be interpreted as sexual.
- Physical contact shall be led by children / young athletes. Bearing this in mind, there are many contexts in which physical activity must take place: to develop skills and techniques; to treat injuries; to give sport massages and or any other treatment, diagnosis and / or examination realised by a trained and qualified individual.
- Any physical intervention is carried out in the least restrictive way necessary to prevent them from getting hurt.
- The risks associated with physical intervention should be compared with the risks of not physically intervening and a reasonable decision made.
- People related to IMMAF shall be aware that interpretations of touching will be influenced by cultural or religious differences.

- Do not proceed with the action or consider alternatives if the child appears to be apprehensive or reluctant, or there are other concerns about the child's likely reaction.
- The activity should always be conducted in an open environment and in the presence of another adult.

When training children who are beginners to the sport of MMA, coaches are advised to follow the Guidelines for Young Beginners provided in the IMMAF website: <https://immaf.org/get-involved/participant-pathways/>

10. Weigh-In:

Weigh In procedures are a critical element of all MMA-related events and tournaments and are especially important to have secure procedures in place with relation to the weighing in process of children / young athletes. The IMMAF commits to the following guidelines with regard to weigh in procedures:

- i. For all events, there must be separate weigh in rooms available for male and female children / young athletes, for both official as well as unofficial weigh ins;
- ii. The rooms allocated for the weigh in procedure must ensure the utmost privacy to the children / young athletes and have clear paths for entering and exiting the room;
- iii. Weigh ins may take place at a central location which is either the venue or the official hotel.
- iv. Event organisers must provide a sufficient number of calibrated electronic scales. These scales are to be checked by the IMMAF Sports Director or appointed commissioners every day before start of the official weight control.;
- v. Officials supervising the weigh-in process of children / young athletes must be the same gender as the child.

All event and competition organisers are required to and shall refer to the IMMAF Weigh in Rules at: <https://immaf.org/events/rules-and-policies/#competitionrules>, and ensure that all events / competitions organised are compliant with the procedures and rules laid out therein.

11. Changing Rooms & Showers:

Adults and children must never use the same changing or washroom facilities at a venue to shower or change at the same time. Where 17-year-old children are playing in the adult game they should be offered separate changing and shower facilities. Adults must only enter children's changing rooms by themselves when absolutely necessary due to poor behaviour, injury or illness, or in an emergency and when waiting for another adult could result in harm to a child.

If children need supervision in changing rooms, or coaches or managers need to carry out a range of tasks in that environment this must involve two individuals of the same gender as the children. For mixed-gender activities separate changing and washroom facilities should be

available. If the same changing and washroom facilities must be used by adults and children on the same day a clear timetable should be established.

Where a disability requires significant support from a parent or carer, the child concerned and their parents / carers should decide how they should be assisted to change or shower. Before any assistance is offered by another person, appropriate consent should be given by a parent / carer and the child themselves if they are of sufficient maturity to do so.

Should the changing rooms and shower facilities be of a communal nature, no pressure should be placed on children who feel uncomfortable changing or showering with others; if this is the case they should be allowed to shower and change at home.

12. Use of Social Media Platforms:

Social media is an extremely useful tool and can have many benefits, allowing organisations to stay in contact with children and families, provide specialist support to children, livestream events and run online events, and create online communities. However, there is also the risk of children and youth athletes being exposed to inappropriate and harmful content, as well as online abuse. As such, it is important to have appropriate measures in place to keep children safe online.

When sharing photos or videos of children on social media, it is important to be aware of the risks attached. Images can be modified and / or misused out of context, a child can be identified for future grooming and abuse, or a child could be identified by an existing perpetrator of abuse. Such risks must always be assessed prior to publishing any images or videos online.

Every person has the responsibility to help make online spaces safe for children, and this can be done by:

- a) Recognising how important the online world is to children and talking to them about it;
- b) Make sure to talk to children about any worrying experiences they may have had online without pressuring them;
- c) Ensure the online safety is an ongoing process and not a one-off session;
- d) Set rules on the use of social media and online platforms within your organisation and ensure these rules are well understood by children and staff;
- e) Discourage children / young people to talk offensively about other people, and especially, people that in a vulnerable situation (e.g. their colleagues);
- f) Use technological solutions to manage access to platforms; help children understand how to manage their privacy online.

It is important to assess risk with social media and always keep the 4Cs of online safety in mind:

- i) Content - anything posted online such as videos or images. Children may see illegal,

inappropriate or harmful content when online such as pornography, racism, fake news, self-harm etc.

ii) Contact - interacting with others online. The risks herein could be peer-to-peer pressure, inappropriate commercial advertising, adults posing as children with the intention of grooming or exploiting children for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

iii) Conduct - the behaviour of people online. The risks herein include online bullying, sharing or receiving nude / semi-nude images and viewing or sending pornography.

iv) Commerce - risks involving online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing, financial scams etc.

In order to tackle these issues, organisations must set out behavioural standards that are expected from adults or volunteers working with children, and from children themselves. The standard must always remind them to use individual accounts authorised by the organisation to communicate with children, use safety settings, turn on privacy settings, use an organisation device to communicate with children and ensure all communication is relevant to the project, organisation or the children you work with.

11. Electronic Communication:

The IMMAF recognises the utilisation of technology and electronic communication between adults and children in order to foster the development of the children and a sense of belonging in a team / organisation. This form of communication has been made available through the advent of developments in technology and the IMMAF is committed to adapt to the dynamic changes in technologies while advising on best practice.

‘Electronic Communication’ refers to, but is not limited to modes of communication via the internet and electronic devices such as emails, text messages, social media platforms, websites and messaging systems.

With regards to electronic communication, the IMMAF provides the following guidelines:

- a) Adults shall never communicate with children on a one-on-one basis through any form of electronic communication. All communication must include a copy to a third party like the Safeguarding Officer or the parent / guardian of the child;
- b) An adult in a position of trust cannot communicate with a child / young person by social media, telephone, SMS and / or electronic email without the consent of their parents / guardians.
- c) Should an adult require to communicate with a child using electronic communication, the topic of discussion but be limited to and solely focused on MMA and event related matters only;

- d) Adults are recommended to send messages on electronic communication platforms in the form of group messages rather than individual messages. Group messages / emails shall also have a Safeguarding Officer / parent / guardian copied in;
- e) Prior to any electronic communication, parental / guardian consent must be obtained.
- f) Adults must never utilise electronic communication to abuse or criticise a child, the IMMAF, or associated organisations. This action will be considered a breach of the Policy and will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.
- g) Communications with children or young people shall only be done when necessary.

IMMAF members and persons in a position of trust must avoid communication with children through their personal social media accounts and must ensure that all electronic communication on social media is done through the relevant organisation / event account. The use of the organisational / event account for official communication must be expressly stated on the account profile. Such an account must have privacy settings configured to ensure persons not related to the event / organisation do not have access to communicating with the children.

Adults in a position of trust cannot have children as friends / followers / fans on their personal social media sites.

Should a child disclose any electronic communication that is considered inappropriate to an adult, the adult must inform the Safeguarding Officer of the same. Should the Safeguarding officer discover that an adult in a position of trust has not complied with the above mentioned guidelines on electronic communication, they may consider taking the necessary action to suspend the individual and file a report as provided herein.

12. Video, Film & Photography:

The filming of children must be controlled and only carried out for a proper purpose and with the correct authority. Such activity should never be carried out within changing rooms, even under a permit. It is critical that parental consent is also obtained prior to the filming or photography of children.

All professional photographers must have the appropriate registration with the tournament organisers and with the IMMAF prior to the event. The event organiser must issue an identification label to all registered photographers. This label shall serve as the authorisation for the individual to film / photograph during the event. When events are held on a regular basis, the identification labels must be changed regularly and distinguishable so as to avoid unofficial replications. Individuals without the appropriate identification label shall strictly not be allowed to film / photograph during the event.

Event organisers must ensure that specific details regarding photographic / video and filming equipment registration must be, where possible, clearly visible and published prominently in the event programs / brochures. The same must also be announced over a public address system prior to the start of the event.

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The IMMAF does not advocate the banning of photography and / or the use of videos of children but recommends that appropriate safeguards should be in place to ensure a safe sporting environment.

Video recording is acknowledged as a legitimate coaching aid. However, if it is to be used, the user must ensure that written parental consent has been obtained. Such films must be stored securely and handed to the child or parent or destroyed once their use is no longer justified, according to the pertinent regulations. The use of video recording for the purpose of coaching must only be done when necessary and the coach must conduct a risk assessment to determine the same.

Prior to taking photos and videos, the consent of the child or parent / guardian must be obtained to do so. Subsequently, consent must be obtained to publish such a photo or video online.

When publishing images or videos online, choose images that present the activity in a positive light rather than have focus on the child, choose images of children in appropriate clothing, avoid content that can be misused by others or may be prone to misinterpretation, do not supply the full names of the children and personal information of the children, disguise any identifying information. Parents / guardians must also be advised on the same when publishing content of their children.

Organisations must take steps to ensure that unauthorised use of images or videos does not take place, this can be done by storing the content in a secure location, encryption of content, and only using devices belonging to the organisation. National laws and regulations shall be followed in this regard.

13. Anti-Bullying:

The IMMAF is committed to the prevention and effective management of bullying relating to children. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable within MMA and should not be tolerated. The IMMAF provides the following guidelines to handle bullying matters and it is expected that all organisations in MMA consider the same:

- Respond appropriately and effectively to incidents of bullying.
- Listen and respond to children;s concerns and take appropriate action.
- Take parents / guardians' concerns seriously and respond effectively.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers and members of the children's workforce are suitably trained to deal with bullying incidents.

In order to achieve this, the IMMAF shall:

- i. Raise Awareness - All individuals in MMA must be aware of bullying behaviours, including adults and children. This should be done by creating anti-bullying policies

and distributing copies of the same, displaying them prominently on notice boards throughout events. Children must know their rights and know that they can talk to someone if they are worried.

- ii. Good practice - Ensure that codes of conduct and policies clearly state what behaviour constitutes bullying and that all members of the Children's Workforce are aware of the same.
- iii. Reporting Concerns - All incidents of bullying should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer who will record the details of the same in the Incident Form and follow the reporting procedure.
- iv. Managing Concerns - Once a concern is raised, the parents / guardians shall be informed, police / statutory authorities may be consulted if necessary and an attempt will be made to rectify the matter. Should the matter not be resolved through mediation, training or mentoring, the Safeguarding Officer may manage the situation by following the disciplinary procedures.

The IMMAF shall encourage members of the children's workforce to be active, vigilant and observant at all times. If incidents of bullying are witnessed, the observer is encouraged to report the same to the Safeguarding Officer without hesitation or delay.

14. Challenging behaviour

Children and young athletes may show challenging behaviour towards the IMMAF staff and volunteers.

It is of vital importance for IMMAF staff and volunteers are educated on how to react in these kinds of situations as these can be a manifestation of a medical or psychological condition. If an IMMAF staff member or volunteer is facing this problem, he / she shall act at his / her earliest opportunity, the response shall be adequately explained to the parents or guardians and it shall be proportionate to the actions.

Where a risk is identified, staff, volunteers, parents and young people shall discuss potential strategies to manage these risks in advance of the event.

A person dealing with challenging behaviour may consider one of the following options to respond in an adequate manner:

- Talking peacefully to the child / young person in order to make them understand their behaviour.
- Reaching agreement with the child / young person in order to improve his / her attitude.
- Requesting the child / young person to repair / amend their actions.
- Requesting the child / young person to give something back.
- Apply adequate consequences for the child / young person's behaviour (e.g. time out from the activity, group and / or individual work or other sanctions). On the other hand,

if the child / young person shows a good attitude, he / she shall be rewarded for the good behaviour.

- Seeking additional support, including one of specialists.
- Increase the supervision of the child / young person.
- Exclude the child / young person temporarily or permanently.

On the other hand, the IMMAF may apply disciplinary measures and inform the competent authorities in the event that a staff member and / or volunteer:

- Applies physical punishment or threatens to apply such a measure; or
- Refuses to speak to and / or interact with the child or young person; or
- Deprives children / young people from food, water, access to changing facilities or toilets; or
- Verbally intimidates, ridicules or humiliates a child or young person.

15. Recognition of Poor Practice:

Child abuse can and does occur in multiple settings, either within or outside the family. Even for those experienced in child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation wherein abuse may occur or has already taken place. The staff and volunteers in the IMMAF and MMA events, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition.

However, there is still a responsibility to act if they have concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult and / or another child) towards a child and to follow the procedures outlined within this Policy.

In order to help recognise abuse, there are certain signs of abuse that one can look out for. These are signs or indicators that a child is being abused. Possible signs may include but are not limited to:

- a) The child says he / she has been abused or asks a question or makes a comment which gives rise to that inference;
- b) There is no reasonable and / or consistent explanation for a child's injury, the injury is unusual in kind or location or there have been a number of injuries and there is a pattern to the injuries. Whilst injuries might be a relatively common occurrence in MMA athletes, one must consider the number, pattern, timing, and location of the injury to determine if it is of a training nature or abusive nature;
- c) The child's behaviour stands out from the group as either being extreme model behaviour, extremely challenging behaviour and / or there is a sudden or significant change in the child's behaviour;

- d) The child's development is delayed, the child loses or gains weight and / or there is deterioration in the child's general well-being;
- e) The child appears neglected (e.g. dirty, hungry, inadequately clothed);
- f) The child is reluctant to go home and / or has been openly rejected by his / her parents or carers; and
- g) Inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of the club and / or any other person working with children, for example, inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role or responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images.

If a child is shown to be displaying these signs, or these are recognised by an adult, they must immediately take the responsibility of addressing the same according to the procedures outlined within this Policy.

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS & REPORTING PROCEDURE

It is important to always remember that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. This means that everyone in MMA has a responsibility to respond to any concerns that they or others may have about a child or the behaviour of an adult. This is related to concerns which arise both within the MMA environment and outside of the MMA environment.

Any concerns identified must always be reported according to the procedures outside herein. It is not the responsibility of the individuals to determine whether abuse has taken place, but it is their responsibility to follow the procedures outlined to report concerns.

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Concerns regarding a child's safety can come from numerous sources, such as, but not limited to: personal observations of changes in behaviour, observation of an incident, reports from the children themselves or someone else about a concern or allegations made about staff, volunteers, parent/guardians or other athletes/youth athletes.

1. How to Respond to a Disclosure from a Child / Youth Athlete:

If a child informs you directly that he / she / they, or another child, is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them (this action is deemed to be a "disclosure"), the person receiving the information should respond accordingly:

- a) React in a calm and composed manner so as to not frighten or deter them;
- b) Tell them that they are not to blame and that they were right to inform you;
- c) Take what they say seriously, recognise the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a person who may have a speech disability or a difference in language;
- d) Listen carefully to everything that is being said;
- e) Ensure that you do not portray disgust, disbelief or upset at what is being said;
- f) Keep any questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what is being said;
- g) Reassure them, but be honest and explain to them that you cannot keep what they are saying a secret and never promise to do so;
- h) Keep an open mind, do not make any judgements or assumptions;
- i) Reassure them that you will take their concerns seriously and tell them the actions that you will or will not be taking;
- j) Write down what has been said as soon as possible when appropriate. The Incident Form attached within this Policy can be used to record information;
- k) Sign and date the form and any other paperwork regarding the concern as this may be used at a later date in criminal or care proceedings;
- l) Report the concern to the appropriate authority at the IMMAF, as well as the police and other relevant authorities.

It may not be that all children / youth athletes are able to express themselves verbally and communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for them to complain or be understood. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the signs of abuse from the symptoms of some disabilities or conditions, in relation to the nature of an individual's impairment. However, record what has been observed in detail and follow the procedures as detailed herein.

2. Possible Abuse Situations:

The following checklist/guidelines aims to assist staff to ensure that vital evidence is not destroyed and proper care is taken to ensure the safeguarding of children in different scenarios:

- a) In situations of Physical / Sexual Assault:

- Do not touch what you do not have to, leave things as they are wherever possible.
 - Do not clean up, wash anything and / or in any way remove fibres, blood, etc. Keep any handling of the scene to a minimum in order to preserve evidence.
 - Save / retain anything that has been used to comfort the abused person, such as a blanket.
 - Secure the room or space in which the alleged offence has taken place and deny entry to anyone until police have arrived.
- b) Prior to the arrival of Police and Medical Officers:
- Ensure that no one has physical contact with the abused person and the alleged perpetrator as cross-contamination can destroy evidence.
 - It is acknowledged that the staff may have to comfort the person in these situations, but they must do so whilst being mindful that cross contamination can easily occur.
 - Preserve any bloodied items.
 - Encourage the victim not to shower or change clothing, as all items must be preserved for evidence.
- c) Method of Preservation:
- Use a clean brown paper bag, if available, or a clean envelope.
 - Avoid using plastic bags as they can produce moisture.
 - For liquids, use clean glassware.
 - Do not handle items unnecessarily to move and make safe, if latex gloves are available then they must be used.

It is acknowledged that the completion and adherence to these guidelines may not be possible in a traumatic situation, however it is urged that persons do the best they can.

3. Recording the Concern:

The IMMAF provides an Incident Form (provided in the IMMAF Website Safeguarding Booklet <https://immaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/IMMAF-Safeguarding-Booklet-3.pdf>, and also attached herewith as an Annexure) that may be used to record information. This can be found attached to this Policy as an appendix. While the submission of the Incident Form when making a complaint / disclosure is not mandatory, it is encouraged / preferable in order to ensure the Safeguarding Officer has all the relevant information regarding the matter.

Ideally, your report should include the following:

- Name, address, and date of birth of the child.
- Name, address, and date of birth of the parent/guardian.
- Whether the parent/guardian is aware of the disclosure?
- Full details of the disclosure (e.g. time, location, detailed description). Ensure the details are recorded verbatim (i.e. always use the own words of the disclosure).

- Details of who the disclosure / allegation is about. If possible, their full name, date of birth, address, relationship with the concerned person and their relationship / position with the organisation (if any).
- Details of any injuries, marks or bruising on the child that is visible to you. A body map template can be used.
- Details of any witnesses present.
- Any other relevant information.
- Your contact details, signature and date of the report.

4. Reporting the Incident / Concern:

The IMMAF Safeguarding Reporting Procedure shall commence in the event that an allegation of breach of any principle contained in this policy is breached under the control, custody and / or supervision of the IMMAF or its employees and / or volunteers.

It is the duty of everyone involved in our sport to report child safeguarding concerns in order to protect children, however, it is only for the professionals to decide whether or not abuse has taken place.

Advice and guidance should always be taken from safeguarding officers, organisations and / or by contacting the police directly. Parents and guardians of the child must be advised of the actions taken only if they are not themselves implicated / involved in the concern. Kindly note that a parent / guardian cannot make the decision as to whether a safeguarding concern is disclosed to a statutory authority.

If the child is not considered to be at immediate risk of harm, contact should be made with the Safeguarding Officer with full details of the concern as soon as possible. The Safeguarding Officer will hold a record of every concern securely, and must always be informed of an incident or concern regardless of the situation.

Disclosure of the incident to the parent / guardian of the child should be done upon consideration of the child's consent to do so and the presence of their mental capacity. Should it be determined that the child lacks the mental capacity to make an informed decision regarding disclosure to their parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must be informed of the incident. The presence of such mental capacity must be determined by the person to whom the concern is being raised to the best of their ability.

In an emergency situation, when the child is believed to have been harmed or may be at immediate risk or harm, immediate contact should be made with the police, social services, available helplines and / or other appropriate agencies. One must record the name and contact details of the person with whom one has spoken to about the incident and the reference number (if applicable) so that one has a record. Subsequently, the Incident Form must be filled and the Safeguarding Officer must be informed of the incident as soon as possible.

In urgent and serious cases, if you do not want and / or you are barred from reporting to IMMAF, you shall contact the police, the children's social care services and / or other relevant statutory authorities. All these agencies are experienced in such matters and you can be confident that the concerns will be addressed in a professional way.

5. Duty of the Safeguarding Officer once a Concern is raised:

The Safeguarding Officer must take the following steps when a concern has been raised regarding a safeguarding incident/issue:

a) Ensure any immediate actions necessary to safeguard anyone at risk have been taken:

If the risk is said to be due to the behaviour of an employee or other person involved with the organisation / activities, use the relevant procedures (e.g.: breach of code of conduct, breach of contract, disciplinary or grievance procedures) available to prevent that person from making any contact with the child being harmed. This may require the suspension of the involved person and / or people from activity within the IMMAF and / or the relevant organisation whilst the matter is being investigated and the risk is being assessed. This could potentially also result in a suspension across all MMA activity sanctioned by the IMMAF.

b) Check all the details of an Incident Form before and after submitting it

Check that you can understand all the details of what is written and all the necessary parts have been duly filled in.

If you are being contacted directly by a member of staff or a volunteer, request that they complete an Incident Form if they have not already done so as soon as possible.

c) Inform, reassure, and advise the person making the report:

Inform the person what to do / what not to do even if they are not requiring your assistance, and explain what will happen next. Reinforce the need for confidentiality. Ensure all the individuals that are relevant to the case are aware of the process and what will happen next.

d) Consult and Decide:

In the first instance, the Safeguarding Officer will look at the case themselves. If required, consultation with the local authority / police can be undertaken to decide the necessary following actions that need to be taken. The potential actions could be:

- Contacting the police (where a crime took place);
- Making a referral / report to a statutory authority;
- Using policies and procedures to stop harm within the organisation;
- Disciplinary actions decided by the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee.

e) Maintain Records:

The Safeguarding Lead must maintain written records of all their decisions so as to ensure transparency and actions agreed are followed. The records must be safely and securely stored. The Safeguarding Lead must collate monitoring information, including feedback from the person who was at risk of harm and must be able to provide the same to the relevant authority when requested.

6. Anonymous Reporting:

There may be scenarios wherein an individual would choose to suffer in silence rather than make a report, despite promised confidentiality, due to multiple factors. As such, the IMMAF has in place the procedures herein for filing an anonymous report. Anonymous reporting is a crucial aspect of safeguarding and when an anonymous report is made, the reporter is not known to anyone.

Anonymous reporting pathways encourage reporting and disclosures. Especially with sexual abuse, along with other forms of abuse, children can be threatened, either implicitly or explicitly, to keep the abuse a secret. A child may worry that filing a report will cause trouble and result in them potentially believing they are at fault. For this reason, anonymous pathways are crucial to build confidence to disclose. The same applies to staff members and other adults, who may fear retribution for reporting their concerns.

Anonymous reports or complaints shall not be ignored and will be dealt with with the same attention and focus as any other complaint or disclosure.

A. How to make an anonymous report:

i) Anonymisation of Incident Form - Should an individual wish to anonymise their report to the Safeguarding Officer when submitting the Incident Form, they may inform the Safeguarding Officer of the same and the Officer shall ensure to anonymise the form and ensure the personal details of the reporter are not known to anyone else.

An individual may submit the report / complaint to the Safeguarding Officer through anonymised email, phone call (the details of which are available herein), messaging platforms, or directly to their physical mailbox should those details be known to the reporter. Through these methods, should the reporter wish to stay anonymous to the Safeguarding Officer as well, they may do so.

ii) Online Reporting - Individuals can submit their reports anonymously through the available resources in their specific jurisdiction. For example, persons in Switzerland can utilise the online reporting service clickandstop.ch to report cases of abuse anonymously. For the United Kingdom, individuals can use the [NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk) resources, like the NSPCC Helpline by calling 0808

800 5000, emailing help@NSPCC.org.uk or [completing the report abuse form](#) available online. Should an individual wish to make their report anonymous, the NSPCC shall respect those wishes. For global resources, individuals may refer to Child Helpline International, Child Safe Movement, End Violence Child Helpline and many more.

B. Handling of Anonymous Reports:

Upon receipt of an anonymous report, the Safeguarding Officer shall review and assess the information provided. All anonymous reports shall be dealt with with the utmost seriousness and confidentiality.

The Safeguarding Officer shall then assess the report to determine the credibility of the same and the urgency of the reported concern. In addition, the Officer may gather additional information if necessary, while maintaining the anonymity of the reporter.

Every report shall be provided to the Safeguarding Committee of IMMAF (or equivalent). Should the report be deemed credible by the Safeguarding Committee, they shall take the appropriate actions and steps necessary to address the reported concern, following the procedures herein. If an investigation is necessary, the Officer shall ensure the anonymity of the reporter is maintained throughout the investigation process. If required by law or policy, or due to the severity of the complaint, to report the concern to the relevant authorities, the Safeguarding Officer shall do so while respecting the anonymity of the reporter to the extent possible.

The Officer shall provide updates on the progress of the investigation and progress on the handling of the complaint to the extent possible, and take necessary measures to prevent any retaliation against the reporter, if applicable.

As provided herein, the Officer shall maintain records of all anonymised reports received, and store them securely.

Anonymous reporting is a vital mechanism for safeguarding children and maintaining a safe environment. Through fostering an environment wherein concerns can be raised anonymously and addressed seriously, the IMMAF commits itself to the protection of the well-being of children to the best of its ability.

7. Whistleblowing:

The whistle blowing proceeding shall only be initiated in the event that the standard reporting process cannot be followed.

Any concerns for the welfare of any child arising from the abuse or harassment by a coach, volunteer or child should be reported immediately. The welfare of the child must always be of

paramount importance and, you should ensure someone takes immediate steps to remove the child or young person from a position of harm or potential harm.

If as a member of staff, a coach or other volunteer, you become aware that a member of staff, a coach and / or other volunteer has or may abuse a child / children, you **MUST** inform an appropriate person, in confidence if necessary. All information received and discussed will be treated in confidence and only shared with those individuals who will be able to manage and resolve the situation. When a meeting is needed to be arranged with the individual, if they so wish, they may be accompanied by a friend and / or family member that shall not be related to the investigated matters nor the people involved in it.

All communications shall be addressed to the IMMAF Safeguarding officer via email (xxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx) including the terms 'Private and Confidential' in the subject line.

Individuals shall include information regarding the background of the concern, names, dates and locations of the events, where possible and indicate the reason of their concerns.

The individual is not expected to prove the veracity of the allegations, but is required to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for their concern. If the allegations were made in good faith, but cannot be confirmed, no actions will be taken against the individual. Nonetheless, if it is determined that the report has been made in bad faith, disciplinary actions may be taken against the individual and the competent authorities may be informed.

The individual shall be properly informed about the outcome of the investigation and the actions taken against those whose actions caused concern, subject to legal constraints. Also, if appropriate, what policy changes are to be made to minimise the possibility of a similar concern being raised in the future.

In urgent and serious cases, if you do not want and / or you are unable to report to IMMAF, you shall contact the police, the children's social care services and / or other relevant statutory authorities. All these agencies are experienced in such matters and you can be confident that the concerns will be addressed in a professional way.

8. Confidentiality & Information Sharing:

Confidentiality should be paramount when dealing with safeguarding matters. Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis.

The management of confidential information is an important element of the work of the IMMAF. Such information should be handled in a professional, sensitive and respectful way. Disclosure of information should be on a '*need to know*' basis and delivered in a sensitive and careful way. No guarantees of confidentiality can be made as the welfare of the child supersedes all other considerations.

In cases of doubt as to the veracity of a disclosure and whether the disclosure is poor practice or child abuse, the Safeguarding Officer should be consulted in the first instance. Anonymous complaints, while notoriously difficult to deal with, should not be ignored. Regardless of whether such complaints refer to a member of the club / organisation (either victim or accused) the matter must be reported to the Safeguarding Lead. This type of allegation should be addressed immediately and confidentially and dealt with appropriately if abuse or poor practice is discovered.

9. Disciplinary Procedures:

Breaches of this policy and complaints / disclosures made against individuals shall be subject to disciplinary procedures.

The IMMAF will take the necessary actions against any person(s) or organisation(s) within its jurisdiction whose conduct is found to have harmed a child in MMA or whose conduct (both within MMA and outside) poses, or may pose a risk of harm to children in MMA. The IMMAF may also refer the matter back to a club / organisation for a resolution at the club / organisation level where appropriate.

Should the need arise, the Safeguarding Officer shall prepare a disciplinary file and submit the same to the Ethics Commission of the IMMAF and there may be a subsequent disciplinary hearing / inquiry that will take place.

The Ethics Commission of the IMMAF shall render a decision based on the facts and circumstances surrounding each individual case, notify the parties involved of the process and finally, communicate their decision.

10. Reinstatement and Aftermath:

An assessment by the IMMAF and the relevant concerned organisation must take place in order to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.

This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the IMMAF and the concerned organisation must reach a decision based upon available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true.

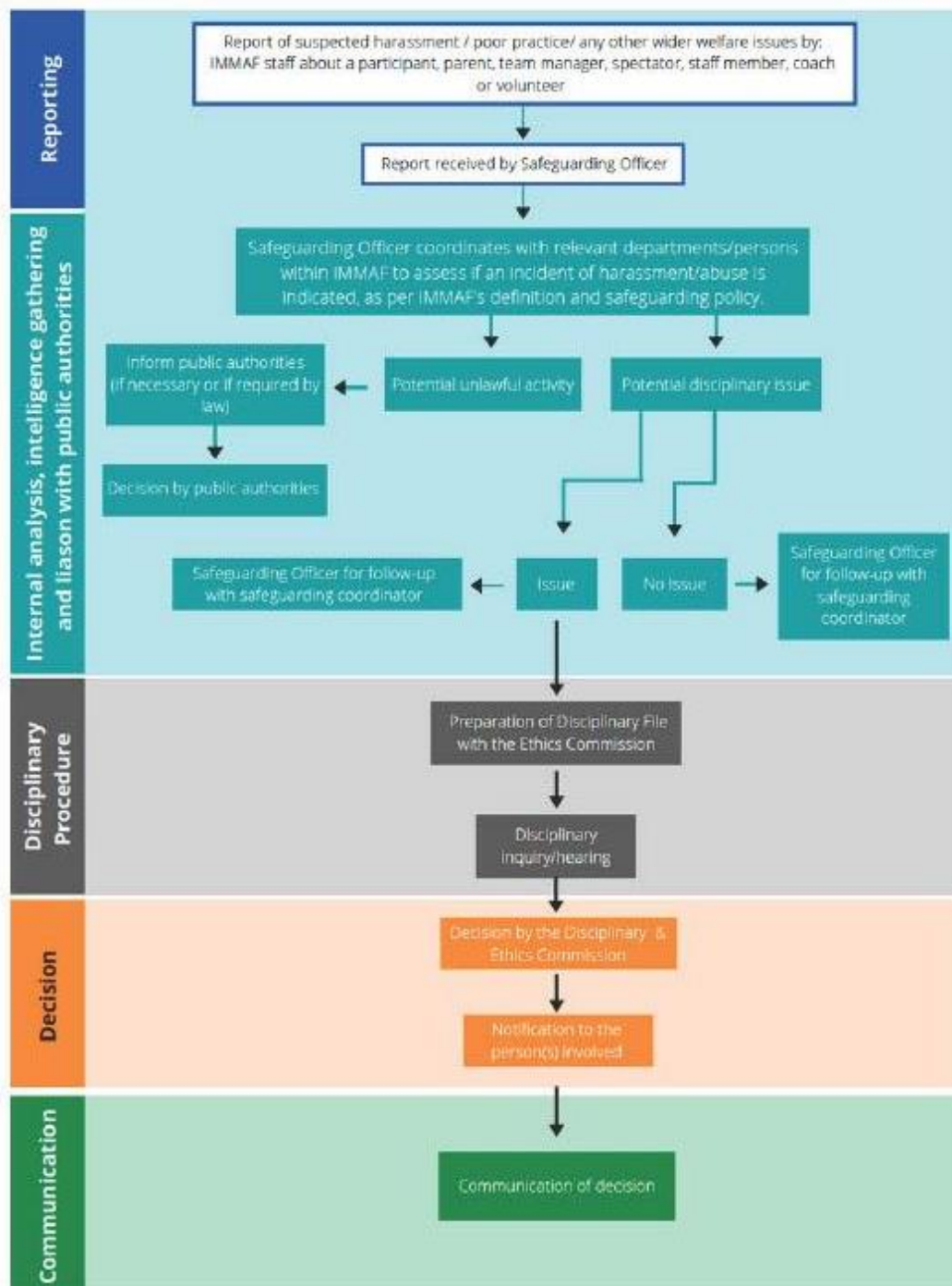
No person can be reinstated during ongoing proceedings. Any reinstatement, approved by the IMMAF or the concerned organisation can only be made once the final decision has been rendered on the relevant proceedings.

The welfare of children should always remain paramount.

In the aftermath, consider what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help with the healing process. The same must be considered as to what would be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of organisations that provide these resources are the NAPAC, Swiss Solidarity, ChildSafe Movement, Child Helpline International etc.

ANNEXURE A – INCIDENT REPORTING FLOWCHART

The reporting flowchart determines how reports of concern, of harassment and abuse may be reported, who receives reports and provides support to concerned persons. Importantly, confidentiality is essential, to protect those who bring forward concerns and to assess low-level concerns and action potential disciplinary and or unlawful activities. There are five phases, most importantly the appropriate local authorities following the local law in the host country.



ANNEXURE B – INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Your information				
Name				
Address				
Contact number(s)				
Email				
Event		Your role		

Personal information – young person				
Name			Date of birth	
Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	Non-binary <input type="checkbox"/>	Another description (please state) <input type="checkbox"/>
Is there any information about the child that would be useful to consider?				

Contact information – parent / carer		
Name(s)		
Address		
Contact number(s)		
Email		
Have they been notified of this incident?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Please explain why this decision has been taken
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Please give details of what was said / actions agreed

Incident details*		
Date, location and time of incident		
Please tick one:	<input type="checkbox"/> I am reporting my own concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am responding to concerns raised by someone else – please fill in their details:

Name of person raising concern		Role within the sport or relationship to the child	
Contact number(s)			
Email			
Details of the incident or concerns (include other relevant information, such as description of any injuries and whether you are recording this incident as fact, opinion or hearsay)			

Incident details (continued)			
Person's account of the incident;			
Please provide any witness accounts of the incident;			
Name of witness (and date of birth, if a child)		Role within the sport or relationship to the child	
Address			
Contact number(s)			
Email			
Details of any person involved in this incident or alleged to have caused the incident / injury			
Name (and date of birth, if a child)		Role within the sport or relationship to the child	
Address			
Contact number(s)			
Email			
Please provide details of action taken to date:			
Injury Type:			

Additional Notes:

Declaration	
Your signature	<input type="checkbox"/>
Print name	
Today's date	

Contact your organisation's Designated Safeguarding Officer in line with IMMAF's reporting procedures (only in use if a Safeguarding Officer is provided during an event)	
Safeguarding Officer's name	
Date reported	

ANNEXE C – DECLARATION OF HONOUR

DECLARATION OF HONOUR

Integrity Background Screening and Criminal Record Check

Full name of the undersigned	[enter text]
Full address of the undersigned (Street, city and home country)	[enter text]
Is the undersigned acting as:	<input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> First-aider, medical support staff <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Official <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Is the undersigned currently subject to any legal proceedings? (If yes, please contact IMMAF)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
I, the undersigned,	[enter name]
born in,	[enter place of birth]
on,	[enter date of birth]
ID CARD / Passport No	
Declare on my honour:	<p>a. never having any criminal records relevant to my sport activity, most notably sexual offences, nor having been subject to any criminal investigations or criminal proceedings, warrant or arrest, surrender procedure, nor having been subject to preventative detention, to a prison sentence, to a criminal fine, to any other criminal sanction nor having been subject to any civil / administrative proceedings and disciplinary measures relating to my sporting activities, nor currently being subject to any such investigation, proceedings or measures described above;</p> <p>b. never having been or currently not being subject to investigations, enforcement proceedings or sanctions by a criminal authority or sport governing body (including IMMAF);</p> <p>c. never having been subject to a refusal or a withdrawal of registration, authorisation, membership or licence to</p>

carry out my activity or profession, or to the withdrawal, revocation or termination of registration, authorisation, membership or licence, or expulsion by a regulatory or government body.

Possible remarks or comments of the undersigned (on the items above, if one of the above items cannot be confirmed by the undersigned)

[enter text]

By signing this declaration of honour, the undersigned commits to inform the IMMAF without delay in case one the elements covered by this declaration should change in the future.

By signing this document, you confirm that the information entered on this form is true, updated and accurate.

The undersigned recognises and accepts that if this declaration of honour becomes or is incorrect, his/her professional propriety/repute shall be compromised.

By signing this declaration of honour, the undersigned commits to deal with the IMMAF in an open and cooperative way and to disclose appropriately and in due course any information of which the IMMAF would reasonably expect notice.

Please attach the following mandatory document:

The undersigned criminal record certificate, in date and duly validated according to the national legislation in place, issued by the police or by the appropriate national law enforcement agency, with no adverse information record against the undersigned

Function	[enter text]
Place of signature	[enter text]
Date of signature	[enter text]
Signature ([enter text]

ANNEXURE D - CONTACT INFORMATION

Further safeguarding policies, procedures and supporting information are available on the International Mixed Martial Arts Federation website: <https://immaf.org/integrity/safeguarding/>

Athlete Welfare Board Champion:

Irman Smajic

Safeguarding Officer:

Daniyal Shamkhalov

Local Authority for Safeguarding Children:

Dependant on your locality and the local authority, please use their respective website to find out more information.

Local Police Contact:

Dependant on your locality and the local authority, please use their respective website to find out more information.

Global Safeguarding

<https://globalsafeguarding.com/worried-about-a-child-1>

NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit

0116 366 5580

cpsu@nspcc.org.uk

Child Helpline International

<https://childhelplineinternational.org/>

International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children

<https://www.icmec.org/hotlines-and-helplines/>