

# IMMAF

## IMMAF SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES





## Building our future on Safe MMA

### Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the actions we take to ensure children and vulnerable adults are safe from harm when involved in sport.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, children and young people are the foundation and the future of sport.

The International Mixed Martial Arts Federation 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.



## 01 | Key Definitions

**Children:** The UNCRC defines a child as anyone under the age of 18.

**Safeguarding:** Processes to ensure that a child and any other person participating in IMMAF events remains safe whilst participating in these events.

**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.

**Child Protection:** The processes involved in responding to concerns about a child.

**Abuse:** A violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which may result in significant harm.

## 02 | Types of Abuse

**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.

**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.

**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/and 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.

**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.

**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.

## 03 | Roles & Responsibility

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Will serve as the primary contact for any concerns or reports. The DSL will be responsible for educating event staff, volunteers, and the operational team on IMMAF safeguarding standards. The DSL contact will be in the IMMAF Safeguarding Event Handbook and could change every IMMAF event.

**Safeguarding Liaison:** Responsible for ensuring that all coaches and team leaders at youth events complete the necessary safeguarding requirements to receive their accreditation, including the police criminal record check and the Declaration of Honor form. Ensure that all staff and volunteers for all IMMAF events have completed the Declaration of Honor form. Coordinate the safeguarding team with the event staff and volunteers. Implement safeguarding standards throughout the operational event flow. The IMMAF Safeguarding Liaison is Sophie Mueller, and you can contact her via [sophie.mueller@immaf.org](mailto:sophie.mueller@immaf.org).

**Staff and Volunteers:** Must be familiar with the IMMAF Safeguarding Policy and adhere to all IMMAF safeguarding standards. They should also be aware of the event's safeguarding team and promptly contact them if any safeguarding concerns arise. All staff and volunteers must complete the declaration of honor before the event starts, the link to the form has been sent to you by your head of department or/and is available in the IMMAF Safeguarding Event Handbook for staff.

## 04 | Code of Conduct

### **Behavioural Expectations for all IMMAF staff and volunteers**

#### **Professional Boundaries:**

- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with children.
- Avoid any behaviour that could be misinterpreted as favoritism or inappropriate.

#### **Safety and Supervision:**

- Ensure the safety and well-being of children by providing adequate supervision.
- Follow all safety protocols and procedures, including emergency procedures.

#### **Confidentiality:**

- Respect the confidentiality of personal information about children and their families.
- Share information only with authorized personnel and on a need-to-know basis

#### **Appropriate Physical Contact:**

- Use physical contact only when necessary and appropriate, such as to ensure their safety.
  - Youth: During the pat-down only touch necessary areas of the body (elbows, knees).
- Avoid any physical contact that could be misinterpreted or make a child feel uncomfortable.

#### **Positive Role Modeling:**

- Serve as a positive role model in behavior, language, and attitude.
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and respect in all interactions.

### **Communication:**

- Communicate effectively and appropriately with children
- Acknowledge the Child's Voice. Always listen carefully and acknowledge the child's refusal without attempting to override or dismiss their response.
- Respect Boundaries: Do not force the child to participate in any activity they are uncomfortable with. Respect their boundaries immediately.

### **Reporting Concerns:**

- Be vigilant and report any concerns or suspicions of abuse or neglect to the designated safeguarding lead immediately

### **Training and Development:**

- Engage in ongoing training and development to stay informed about best practices in child safeguarding.
- Be familiar with and adhere to the IMMAF safeguarding policies and procedures.

By adhering to these behavioural expectations, staff can create a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment for children, fostering their growth and well-being.

## **05 | Managing and Mitigating Risks**

### **Safeguarding Risks**

Safeguarding during sporting events is crucial to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants, particularly children and vulnerable adults. Here are key safeguarding risks to be aware of during a sporting event:

#### **Physical Risks**

##### **Injuries and Accidents:**

- Inadequate supervision or insufficient safety measures can lead to accidents.
- Poorly maintained equipment or facilities can cause injuries.

##### **Overexertion:**

- Pushing athletes beyond their physical limits can result in exhaustion, dehydration, or heatstroke.

##### **Inappropriate Physical Contact:**

- Unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact by coaches, staff, or other participants.

## **Emotional and Psychological Risks**

### **Bullying and Harassment:**

- Verbal, physical, or online bullying by peers, coaches, or spectators.
- Discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, ability, or other factors.

### **Pressure and Stress:**

- Excessive pressure to perform from coaches, parents, or peers can cause significant stress and anxiety.

## **Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**

### **Inappropriate Relationships:**

- Exploitative relationships between coaches, staff, or older participants and younger or vulnerable athletes.

### **Grooming:**

- Adults or older participants building trust with the intention of exploiting a child or vulnerable adult sexually.

## **Neglect**

### **Lack of Supervision:**

- Inadequate supervision during events, especially in changing areas, travel to and from the venue, and during activities.

### **Insufficient Medical Care:**

- Failing to provide appropriate medical attention for injuries or illnesses.

## **Online Risks**

### **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:**

- Bullying or harassment via social media or other online platforms related to the event.

### **Inappropriate Sharing of Information:**

- Sharing personal information or images of participants without consent, leading to privacy breaches or exploitation.

## Environmental Risks

### **Unsafe Facilities:**

- Poorly maintained or unsafe venues, including inadequate emergency exits, lighting, or security.

### Weather Conditions:

- Not properly planning for extreme weather conditions, leading to risks like heatstroke or hypothermia.

## Organizational and Logistical Risks

### **Poor Communication:**

- Lack of clear communication channels for reporting concerns or incidents.

## Transportation Risks

### **Travel Arrangements:**

- Unsafe or poorly coordinated travel arrangements to and from the event, including lack of supervision during transit.

# 06 Recognizing Abuse and Neglect

## Signs and Symptoms

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse involves causing physical harm to a child. It can result from punching, beating, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or otherwise harming a child not in the context of our sport.

### **Signs and Symptoms:**

- **Unexplained Injuries:** Bruises, burns, bite marks, fractures, or cuts without a clear explanation.
- **Patterned Injuries:** Marks or bruises that form a pattern, such as from a hand or belt.
- **Fearful Behaviour:** Flinching, cowering, or showing fear in the presence of adults.
- **Behavioural Changes:** Aggression, withdrawal, or hyperactivity that is out of character.



## **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse involves persistently harming a child's emotional development. This can include constant criticism, threats, rejection, or withholding love, support, or guidance.

### **Signs and Symptoms:**

- **Developmental Delays:** Delays in physical or emotional development.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** Lack of confidence, self-worth, or self-criticism.
- **Behavioural Extremes:** Overly compliant, passive, or aggressive.
- **Inappropriate Emotional Responses:** Lack of reaction, overly dramatic reactions, or incongruent emotions.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities, including non-contact activities like exposure to pornography.

### **Signs and Symptoms:**

- **Knowledge or Behaviour:** Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour for their age.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Pain, itching, bleeding, or bruises.
- **Psychological Symptoms:** Depression, anxiety, or sudden changes in behaviour.
- **Fear of Certain Individuals:** Reluctance or fear to be alone with certain people.
- **Regressive:** age-inappropriate behaviours.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, education, and medical care.

### **Signs and Symptoms:**

- **Poor Hygiene:** Persistent body odor, dirty clothing, or unwashed appearance.
- **Inadequate Clothing:** Clothes that are ill-fitting, inappropriate for the weather, or in poor condition.
- **Untreated Medical Issues:** Unaddressed medical or dental problems.

## How to Respond

- **Stay Calm:** Maintain a calm demeanour to provide a sense of safety.
- **Listen and Reassure:** Allow the child to talk without interruption and reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- **Do Not Promise Confidentiality:** Be honest about the need to report the information to the appropriate people/authorities.
- **Document Concerns:** Write down what the child has told you, using their own words as much as possible.
- **Report:** Report the concerns to the designated safeguarding lead.

Being able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect is essential for protecting children. Awareness and vigilance can help in identifying and addressing issues early, ensuring the safety and well-being of children in your care.

## 07 | Event Risk Factors

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| <b>Media</b> | <p>Only the people who are accredited as media may act as journalists, reporters or in any other media capacity while they are at the IMMAF event.</p> <p>It is only permitted to film or photograph in authorized and unrestricted areas at Youth Events; and permission from the relevant authority is essential if filming/ photographing an under-18-year-old (i.e., from the National Team Head Coach or parent, as well as subject, or formal permission from IMMAF.)</p> <p><b>It is not permitted to film or photograph at weigh-ins, changing rooms and warm up area.</b></p> <p>Fore more information: <a href="#">Social Media Safeguarding Guidelines</a></p> |
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| <p><b>Youth Clothing</b></p>                                     | <p>If youth athletes choose to wear their own clothing in the warm-up area, please ensure it meets the following guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorts and skirts should be of a modest length when standing straight with arms at their sides, the athlete’s fingertips should not extend beyond the length of their shorts.</li> <li>• Athletes must be fully clothed. Sports bras alone are not considered appropriate tops.</li> <li>• Clothing should be free of inappropriate logos, slogans, political messages or images. Messages should be positive and age appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>More guidelines can be found in the IMMAF Safeguarding Event Handbook.</p>   |
| <p><b>Changing rooms/<br/>Showers<br/>&amp; Warm up Area</b></p> | <p>Adults and children must never use the same changing or washroom facilities at a venue to shower or change at the same time.</p> <p>Adults must only enter children’s changing rooms by themselves when necessary due to poor behavior, injury or illness, or in an emergency and when waiting for another adult could harm a child.</p> <p>If children need supervision in changing rooms, or coaches or IMMAF staff need to carry out a range of tasks in that environment this must involve two individuals of the same gender as the children.</p> <p><b>All youth athletes are not permitted to change their clothes in the warm-up area, and they are not allowed to warm up/train in their underwear. If they want to change their clothes, they must use the allocated changing rooms.</b></p> |

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| <p><b>Security</b></p>  | <p>The security of the arena should ensure that only people with accreditation and authorization can enter the warm-up area/back area. Security must be in place to monitor.</p>   |
| <p><b>Arena</b></p>     | <p>The arena flow of the event must be outlined and informed to all IMMAF staff before the start of the event. The flow must ensure that there will be no potential security issues at any point.</p>  |
| <p><b>Weigh-ins</b></p> | <p>At latest, the day before the event starts, ensure there is a separate room available in the allocated weigh-in area for the women. All weigh in processes are clear for everyone involved and the weigh in room is set up according to IMMAF rules and standards.</p> <p>There must be dividers or a big cloth available for the weigh ins if men want to completely undress.</p> <p>All youth athletes must weigh in on the official competition scale with the official IMMAF apparel.</p> <p>Youth contestants are not permitted to strip above or below the waist to underwear or bare torso. To facilitate this all contestants at all official weigh ins shall be granted an additional 1lb [454gr] allowance over and above their designated weight category.</p> |



# 08 | Police Criminal Record Check & Declaration of Honour

All coaches and team leaders attending any IMMAF Youth Championships will be required to complete an official police criminal record check or national equivalent, to be approved for event credentials, along side a completed declaration of honour form.

Documents must be delivered online only to the Safeguarding Commission Liaison, **Sophie Mueller: [sophie.mueller@immaf.org](mailto:sophie.mueller@immaf.org)**, who will be your point of contact for questions or support on safeguarding requirements.

**Documents will only be seen by the Safeguarding Commission and will be kept confidential.**

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| 1 | <p><b>POLICE CRIMINAL RECORD</b></p> <p>Police criminal record checks or national equivalent, which specify any convictions or any official warnings, are required for all youth team coaches and team leaders. Completed documents for team coaching staff must be submitted together via the national federation prior to the event.</p>  |
| 2 | <p><b>DOCUMENT DEVLIVERY</b></p> <p>Documents must be delivered online only to the safeguarding Commission Liaison, Sophie Mueller:<br/><b><a href="mailto:sophie.mueller@immaf.org">sophie.mueller@immaf.org</a></b></p>   |
| 3 | <p><b>VALIDITY</b></p> <p>Documents will be valid for IMMAF events until the end of the calendar year in which they were issued.</p>  |
| 4 | <p><b>DECLARATION OF HONOUR FORMS</b></p> <p>Declaration of Honour forms will still be required <u>for all coaches and team leaders, at all youth, senior and junior events.</u> This online form can be completed here in advance:</p> <p><b>DECLARATION OF HONOUR FORM</b><br/><b><a href="https://forms.gle/2KV9rCwvBUrbmuCa6">https://forms.gle/2KV9rCwvBUrbmuCa6</a></b></p>  |

# 09 | Anti-Doping Testing Process for Minors

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:



Minors should be notified for testing by a Doping Control Officer (DCO) of the same gender in the presence of an Athlete Representative (who is not a Minor). This could be a team member, coach, parent, etc.

If the Minor declines a representative, the DCO will ensure another adult is present e.g. another DCO. If an adult is not present, notification will be paused until an adult can be present.



Minors are encouraged to take a representative with them of the same gender if they are notified for testing. This representative can be the same adult present during the notification or a different person. The athlete will be chaperoned by the DCO and an adult to locate the representative.

At no point will the DCO be left alone with an unaccompanied minor following notification.



When an athlete is ready to provide a sample, the DCO watching the athlete provide their sample must always have an observer watching them and their conduct. If present, the athlete's representative shall also accompany the DCO and observe the DCO watching the athlete provide their sample.

Only the DCO is to directly observe the athlete providing their sample. Neither the Second Observer nor the athlete's representative should directly observe the passing of the urine, unless requested by the athlete.

## 09 | Speak Up & Report



### HOW TO REPORT A CONCERN

Report any concern to an IMMAF Safeguarding Officer or email:  
**[safeguardingcommission@immaf.org](mailto:safeguardingcommission@immaf.org)**

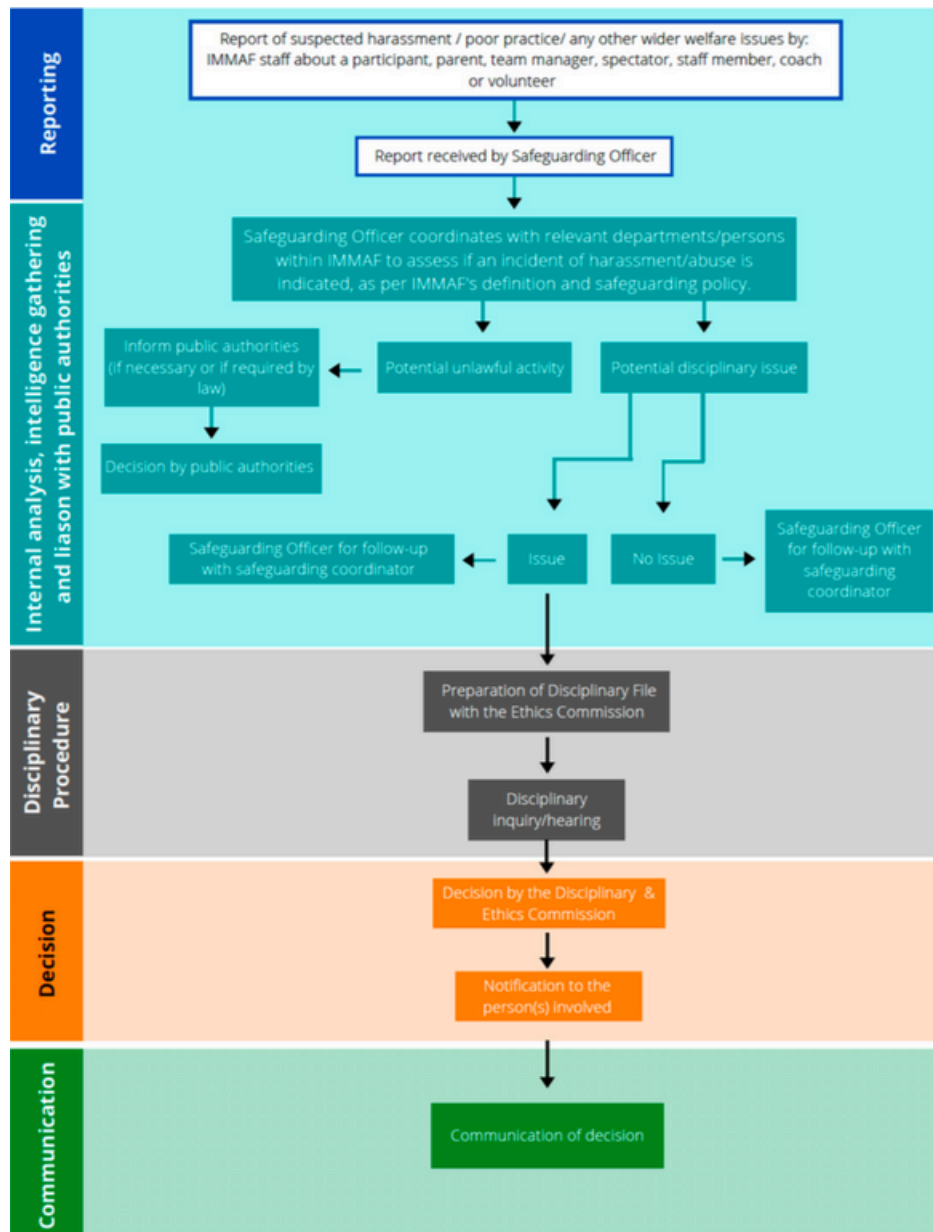
The IMMAF Safeguarding Team details are available in the IMMAF Safeguarding Handbook per event. You can contact the IMMAF Safeguarding Team via email, phone or verbally at any time during the event.

#### Anonymous Reporting

Is available on the IMMAF Safeguarding webpage:  
**<https://immaf.org/report-a-safeguarding-concern/>**

Like any incident or concern reported, it will be kept confidential within the Safeguarding Team and only the people who need to know will be involved.

# 10 Reporting Flowchart



Any safeguarding concern goes through the IMMAF Safeguarding Team to coordinate investigations with the relevant departments. If the safeguarding concern is a potential unlawful activity in the respective country, the public authorities will be informed and the case will be handed over to them. If the safeguarding concern is a potential disciplinary issue, the case and investigation findings will be handed to the compliance officer of the event or the disciplinary committee to continue the disciplinary process.

The disciplinary process documentation can be found on the IMMAF website. More information about the safeguarding reporting and investigation procedures can be found on the IMMAF safeguarding webpage.



# Additional Resources



- [Safeguarding Booklet](#)
- [IMMAF Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- [IMMAF Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#)
- [Social Media Safeguarding Guidelines](#)
- [IMMAF Youth Rules](#)
- [IMMAF Child Safeguarding Policy](#)

## IMPORTANT

**IMMAF takes a zero-tolerance approach to any abuse of athletes, coaches, officials, staff and volunteers.**

**Everyone should feel safe, supported and respected at IMMAF events.**