

Code of Conduct to Protect Children in Sport

Whitecourt Minor Soccer Association



Effective Date: May 7, 2026

1. Scope

This policy applies to all Whitecourt Minor Soccer Association (WMSA) members, teams, coaches, and volunteers.

2. Key Definitions

- **Child / Children:** Any individual under the age of 18 years old participating in or involved with WMSA programs. This includes individuals under 18 who serve in a leadership, coaching, refereeing, or volunteer role. While these youth leaders are expected to model appropriate boundaries with younger participants under Adult supervision, they are legally considered a "Child" under this policy and are entitled to all associated protections.
- **Coach/Volunteers (Adult):** Any individual aged 18 or older who interacts with children within WMSA, including but not limited to coaches, managers, board members, and parent volunteers.
- **Position of Trust:** A relationship characterized by a power imbalance where an adult has authority, power, or influence over a child, and the child is dependent on the adult's knowledge, training, or guidance.
- **Boundary Violation:** When an adult crosses established physical, emotional, or social limits, placing their own needs above the needs of the child.
- **Inappropriate Behaviour:** Conduct that breaches reasonable boundaries, makes a child feel uncomfortable, or violates WMSA policies (e.g., inappropriate communication, unwarranted contact, favouritism), even if the behaviour is not illegal.
- **Potentially Illegal Behaviour:** Actions that may violate criminal law, such as child sexual abuse or physical abuse, which trigger an independent legal duty to report directly to police and/or child welfare.

3. Introduction

The Whitecourt Minor Soccer Association (WMSA) has developed the following Child Protection Code of Conduct to guide our coaches and volunteers in their interactions with children. The safety, rights and well-being of children we serve are at the core of our daily programs. We nurture supportive relationships with children while balancing and encouraging appropriate boundaries.

Why a Child Protection Code of Conduct is important?

The WMSA is committed to ensuring all children are protected and safe. A Code of Conduct is an important part of creating safe environments for children. The safety, rights and well-being of children participating in our programs is a priority in our daily operations.

The intent of the Code of Conduct is to guide our coaches/managers/volunteers in developing healthy relationships with the children involved in sport programs delivered by our organization and to model appropriate boundaries for children.

4. Treating Children With Dignity and Maintaining Boundaries

All Coaches/Volunteers must:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity
- Establish, respect, and maintain appropriate boundaries with all children and families involved in activities or programs delivered by the organization

It is important to monitor your own behaviour towards children, and pay close attention to the behaviour of your peers to ensure that behaviour is appropriate and respectful, and will be perceived as such by others.

All of your interactions and activities with children (including electronic communication):

- should be known to, and approved by the board, where applicable, and the parents of the child (Transparent)
- open to observation by parents and peers (Accountable)
- tied to your duties, and
- designed to develop the child's skills in the sport program, in response to meeting the child's needs, and not the adult's.

Always consider the child's reaction to any activities, conversations, behaviour or other interactions. If at any time you are in doubt about the appropriateness of your own behaviour or the behaviour of others, you should discuss it with the designated person within your organization.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour toward a child:

- embarrassing
- shaming
- blaming
- humiliating
- putting them down
- intimidating

5. General Rules of Behaviour

Coaches/volunteers of the organization must not:

- Engage in any sort of physical contact with a child that may make the child or a reasonable observer feel uncomfortable, or that may be seen by a reasonable observer to be violating reasonable boundaries.
- Engage in any communication with a child within or outside of duties with the child, that may make the child uncomfortable or that may be seen by a reasonable observer to be violating reasonable boundaries.
- Engage in any behaviour that goes against (or appears to go against) the organization's mandate, policies, or Code of Conduct to Protect Children, regardless of whether or not they are serving the organization at that moment.
- Conduct their own investigation into allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour - it is a Coaches/Volunteer's duty to report the matter to the designated person, Child Welfare Agency, or law enforcement, not to investigate.

What Constitutes Inappropriate Behaviour

Inappropriate behaviour includes:

1. Inappropriate Communication. Communication with a child or his/her family outside of the context of duties for the organization, regardless of who initiated the exchange. For example:
 - Personal phone calls not tied to duties with the child
 - Electronic communications (email, text message, instant message, online chats, social networking including "friending", etc.) not tied to duties with the child
 - Personal letters not tied to duties with the child
 - Excessive communications (online or offline)
 - Confiding or sharing overly personal information with a child, or asking children to keep secrets.
2. Inappropriate Contact. Spending unauthorized time with a child outside of designated duties with the organization. This also includes inappropriate touching of children (e.g., massaging, stroking, caressing, roughhousing, tickling).
3. Favouritism. Singling out a child or certain children and providing special privileges and attention (for example, paying a lot of attention to, giving or sending personalized gifts, or allowing privileges that are excessive, unwarranted or inappropriate).
4. Taking Personal Photos/Videos. Using a personal cell phone, camera or video to take pictures of a child, taking pictures in change rooms, or allowing any other person to do so, as well as uploading or copying any pictures you may have taken of a child to the Internet or any personal storage device. Pictures taken as part of your job duties are acceptable, however, the pictures are to remain with the organization and not be used by you in a personal capacity.

Inappropriate behaviour also includes:

5. Telling sexual jokes to a child, or making comments to a child that are or is in any way suggestive, explicit, flirtatious, or personal.
6. Showing a child material that is sexual in nature, including, signs, cartoons, graphic novels, calendars, literature, photographs, screen savers, or displaying such material in plain view of a child, or making such material available to a child.
7. Intimidating or threatening a child.
8. Making fun of a child.

Inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated, especially as it relates to the well-being of the children involved in activities or programs delivered by the sport organization. Whether or not a particular behavior or action constitutes inappropriate behaviour will be a matter determined by the organization having regard to all of the circumstances, including past behaviour, and allegations or suspicions related to such behaviour.

6. Reporting Requirements

All Coaches and volunteers must report suspected child sexual abuse, inappropriate behaviour or incidents that they become aware of, whether the behaviour or incidents were personally witnessed or not.

Where to report:

1. All allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour (for example, child sexual abuse) that a Coach's/volunteer witnesses first-hand, must be promptly reported to **police and/or child welfare**.
2. To ensure the protection of all children in our care, all allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour that a Coach/Volunteer learns of must also be promptly reported to **police and/or child welfare**. Police and/or child welfare will make the determination as to whether the allegation or suspicion requires further investigation.
3. All allegations or suspicions of inappropriate behaviour (see above examples), that a Coach/Volunteer learns of or witnesses first-hand, must be reported to the **Coach's Director or the President of the Whitecourt Minor Soccer Association**.

Keep in mind that you may learn of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour through the child or some other third party, or you may witness it first-hand. Examples of the type of behaviour you may learn of or witness and that you must report as set out above includes:

- a. Potentially Illegal behaviour by a Coach/Volunteer of the organization
- b. Potential Illegal behaviour by a third party, such as a Parent, Teacher, Babysitter,
Coach

If you are not sure whether the issue you have witnessed or heard about involves potentially illegal behaviour or inappropriate behaviour, discuss the issue with your coach coordinator who

will support you through the process. Remember: You have an independent duty to report all suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour directly to police and/or child welfare.

Follow up on Reporting

When an allegation or suspicion of potentially illegal behaviour is reported, police and/or a child welfare agency will be notified. The sport organization will follow up internally as appropriate.

When an allegation or suspicion of inappropriate behaviour is made, the sport organization will follow up on the matter to gather information about what happened and determine what, if any, formal or other disciplinary action is required.

In the case of inappropriate behaviour, if:

- multiple behaviours were reported
- inappropriate behaviour is recurring, or
- the reported behaviour is of serious concern

The Whitecourt Minor Soccer Association may refer the matter to a child welfare agency or police.

Parents and Coaches Play a Role

It can be difficult to respond to a situation where you notice a coach and athlete relationship that appears inappropriate. Reporting inappropriate behaviour creates accountability so proper action can be taken and expectations can be re-established. Parents or coaches who have concerns should speak with that coach's director.

Parents and coaches should also have regular age-appropriate conversations with children about personal safety and boundary-breaking behaviour. Some topics to talk with children about are the qualities of healthy relationships, importance of personal boundaries, and how to get help/where to bring concerns.

I agree to comply with the Code of Conduct to Protect Children for the Whitecourt Minor Soccer Association (WMSA).

Coach/Manager/Volunteer's printed name: _____

Coach/Manager/Volunteer's signature: _____

Date: _____