

Safeguarding and Welfare (L1a)

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Introduction to Safeguarding



Everyone who participates in Triathlon is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment and to be given the chance to experience the feelings of joy, challenge and achievement that are inherent in our sport.

In addition, all young people are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse. Abuse can occur **anywhere**, at home, at school, in the park and in sport. Sadly, some people will seek to be in the company of children simply in order to abuse them. This means taking action to safeguard children and to report any concerns about their welfare to an appropriate person(s). It is not your responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place; this is the domain of child protection professionals; the children's social care services and the police.

All coaches should ensure that:

- They know the limit of their own skills and capabilities when it comes to welfare issues, and seek appropriate support as soon as possible.
- The welfare of young people (and vulnerable adults) is paramount and children have the right to protection from abuse.
- All young people who take part in triathlon should be able to participate in a fun and safe environment.
- All reasonable practical steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and respects their rights, wishes and feelings should be in place.
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- High standards of behaviour and practice are demanded through compliance with the ITU Triathlon Coaches' Codes of Conduct.
- Everyone knows and accepts their responsibilities and works together to achieve this common goal of protecting children: parents, triathletes, coaches, team managers, volunteers and professional staff.
- They are aware of and follow the [ITU Safeguarding Policy](#).

Good Practice, Poor Practice



To provide young people with the best possible experience and opportunities in Triathlon, it is imperative that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour. This not only ensures that Triathlon makes a positive contribution to the development of young people and safeguards their welfare, but also protects all personnel from allegations of abuse or poor practice.

It is not always easy to differentiate poor practice from abuse. It is not, therefore, the responsibility of coaches in Triathlon to determine whether or not abuse is taking place. It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have concerns about the welfare of a child.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good and poor practice and some of the indications of possible abuse. Guidance is provided on what to do if you are concerned about poor practice or possible abuse.

Good Practice



The following principles should be adhered to by all personnel:

- Ensure experience of Triathlon is fun and enjoyable; promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited substances.
- Be an excellent role model, do not drink alcohol or smoke when working with young people.
- Treat all young people and vulnerable adults equally; this means giving both the more and less talented in a group similar attention, time, respect and dignity.
- Respect the developmental stage of each young person and place their welfare before winning, club or personal achievements. This means ensuring that the training intensity is appropriate to the physical, social and emotional developmental stage of the triathlete and that all guidelines for training intensity and competition distances are followed.
- Ensure training and competition schedules are based on the needs and interests of the child, not those of the parents, coaches, club, sponsors or the Home Nation. It is imperative that these coaches monitor the overall training intensity and recovery times.
- It is strongly recommended that where single discipline coaches are responsible for devising training schedules for a triathlete, a lead coach is nominated to take with responsibility for monitoring the overall training intensity and liaising with the other assistant coaches.

Poor Practice

The following is a list of actions which should be avoided by all personnel, undertaking any of these activities would be deemed to constitute poor practice:

- Never spend excessive amounts of time alone with one child away from the others.
- Never take children to your home where they will be alone with you.
- Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Never share a room with a child.
- Never allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Never allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child.
- Never reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Never do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.
- Never invite or allow children to stay with you at your home.

If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the person in charge, your Home Nation or the child's parents. If any of the following incidents should occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague, make a written note of the event and inform parents of the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a triathlete.
- If a child seems distressed in any manner, whilst in your care.
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Good Practice Continued...



- Conduct all coaching and meetings in an **open environment**; avoid one-to-one coaching in unobserved situations.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with athletes; it is inappropriate to have an intimate relationship with a young person.
- Adults should never share a room with young people. It is unacceptable that a number of young people and adults share a common sleeping area.
- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect in which young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and decision-making. Avoid situations in which the coach or team manager uses their position and power to dictate what the triathlete should and should not do.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people; contact can only be made for safety reasons and where there is no other way of coaching the technique. Contact should be neither intrusive nor disturbing and the athlete's permission must be sought.
- Contact should be led by the child not the adult, for example when a child is distressed or celebrating a success.
- Ensure separate changing facilities are available for junior and senior triathletes. Where supervision is required, involve parents wherever possible and ensure that adults work in pairs.
- Communicate regularly with parents and involve them in decision-making and gain written consent for travel arrangements. Secure their consent in writing if the need arises

to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.

- Be aware of any medical conditions, existing injuries and medicines being taken. Keep a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of any treatment given. Ensure you are qualified and up-to-date in first aid or that there is someone with a first aid qualification in attendance.
- Keep up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance issues in Triathlon.

Code of Ethics

The ITU's Coaches' Codes of Conduct is based on adherence to the principles of good practice embodied in the preceding sections, requiring all coaches and organisations involved with caring for young people or vulnerable adults to protect them against sexual activity within relationships of trust.

Photography and images

It is not uncommon for some people to have used sporting events, such as swimming events and triathlon as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sports people in vulnerable positions. If you intend on taking photographs of children, it is strongly recommended that you **seek permission in advance, from parents, event organisers or facility managers**. It is considered best practice to get this approval in writing.

Abuse and Bullying

Abuse is a violation of a person's human rights or dignity by someone else. There are many kinds of abuse; some are listed below:

Type of abuse	Description
Physical	Including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
Sexual	Including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, could not consent or was pressured into consenting.
Psychological	Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
Financial or material	Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, the misuse or

	misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
Neglect or acts of omission	Including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health care, social care, education services or misuse of medication, adequate nutrition or heating.
Discriminatory	Including racist, sexist behaviour and harassment based on a person's ethnicity, race, culture, sexual orientation, age or disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
Institutional abuse	This can sometimes happen in residential homes, nursing homes or hospitals when people are mistreated because of poor or inadequate care, neglect and poor practice that affect the whole of that service.

Any of these forms of abuse can be either deliberate or be the result of ignorance, or lack of training, knowledge or understanding. Often if a person is being abused in one way they are also being abused in other ways.

Indicators of Abuse

Abuse is a violation of a person's human rights or dignity by someone else. There are many kinds, some of which are listed below, along with signs you should look for:

General:

- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.

Emotional:

- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety, changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy.
- Obsessions or phobias.
- Sudden underachievement or lack of concentration.
- Seeking adult attention and not mixing well with other children.
- Negative statements about self.
- Highly aggressive or cruel to others.
- Extreme shyness or passivity.

Physical:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries to places in the body not normally exposed to falls or rough games.
- Injuries that have not received medical attention.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in sport.
- Bruises, bites, burns and fractures, for example, which do not have an accidental explanation.
- The child gives inconsistent accounts for the cause of injuries.

Psychological:

- Including emotional abuse.
- Threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact.
- Humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Sexual:

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- Child has excessive preoccupation with sexual matters, and inappropriate knowledge of sexual behaviour for their age.
- Sexual explicit activity through words, play or drawing.
- Child is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.

Financial:

- Includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions.
- Misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect:

- Dirty skin, body smells, unwashed, uncombed hair and untreated lice.
- Clothing that is dirty, too big or small, or inappropriate for weather conditions.
- Frequent tiredness.
- Untreated illnesses, infected cuts or physical complaints which the carer does not respond to.
- Frequently hungry, loss of weight for no apparent reason.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Overeating 'junk' food.

Discrimination:

- Including racist, sexist behaviour and harassment based on a person's ethnicity, race, culture, sexual orientation, age or disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Institutional:

- Can sometimes happen in residential homes, nursing homes or hospitals when people are mistreated because of poor or inadequate care, neglect and poor practice that affect the whole of that service.

Bullying:

- Behavioural changes, e.g. reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctant to go to school, training or sports club.
- A drop off in performance in school or standard in sport.
- Physical signs, e.g. stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example of food, cigarettes and alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

Indicators of Bullying



Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons (e.g. being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture). Although bullying often takes place in schools, it can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision (e.g. on the way to and from training, in the changing rooms).

The competitive nature of Triathlon provides a potentially ideal environment for a bully to gain power over others. The bully might be:

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy.
- A triathlete who intimidates others inappropriately.
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

Signs of bullying include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to training or competitions.
- An unexplained drop-off in performance.
- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

Anti-Bullying

Bullying is defined as the repeated harassment of others through emotional, physical, verbal or psychological abuse. We emphasise that the victim is never responsible for being the target of bullying.

Examples of bullying are:

- Emotional: Being deliberately unkind, shunning or excluding another person from a group or tormenting them. For example, forcing another person to be 'left out' of a game or activity, passing notes about others or making fun of another person.
- Physical: Pushing, scratching, spitting, kicking, hitting, biting, taking or damaging belongings, tripping up, punching or using any other sort of violence against another person.
- Verbal: Name-calling, put-downs, ridiculing or using words to attack, threaten or insult. For example, spreading rumours or making fun of another person's appearance.
- Psychological: Behaviour likely to instil a sense of fear or anxiety in another person.

Responses to Bullying Behaviour

Despite all efforts to prevent it, bullying behaviour is likely to occur on occasion and you should recognise this fact. In the event of such incidents, the following principles should be applied:

- All incidents of bullying will be addressed thoroughly and sensitively.
- Children and young people will be encouraged to immediately report any incident of bullying that they witness. They will be reassured that what they say will be taken seriously and handled carefully.
- Anyone involved in Triathlon has a duty to inform the appropriate organisations in your country if they witness an incident of bullying involving children or adults.
- If a child, young person tells someone that they are being bullied, they will be given the best chance to explain what has happened and reassured that they were right to tell. The individual who has been the victim of bullying will be helped and supported by the appropriate authorities.

Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations

As mentioned earlier on, while it is not the responsibility of the coach or other personnel to be experts in investigating abuse and determining whether or not abuse has taken place, but it is their responsibility to report any concerns about the welfare of a child. These concerns may arise because:

- A young person discloses she/he is being abused.
- Of the behaviour of an adult towards a child.
- Of a cluster of indicators observed in a child over a period of time.

A child may ask that any information given is kept confidential (i.e. the coach should not tell anyone), however for the protection of the child the coach should say they have to inform the relevant people and pass on the concerns.

All suspicions and disclosures must be reported appropriately and immediately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases of possible sexual abuse or where there is a misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings, but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Reporting Procedures

Different countries will have different approaches to reporting abuse. The important thing for a coach is to not let abuse continue and they should take action. Some possible approaches to action that can be taken may include:

- Inform your local club's Club Welfare Officer who will refer the matter to the National Federation.
- If in a school, inform the head teacher who will follow their procedures.
- If the concern involves personnel from other sports (e.g. athletics, swimming, cycling), inform your Triathlon federation who should liaise with the other sport's governing body.
- In any other situation where there is no designated person, make direct contact with the International Triathlon Union and raise the issue and seek advice. See [ITU Safeguarding Policy contacts and documents](#) for further information.
- Consider contacting national child protection authorities or the police to report the situation.

Information to record

Information passed to children's social care or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of disclosure/concern. Information should be written in a factual format, avoiding any opinion or hearsay and should include the following:

- The facts about the allegation or observation.

- A description of any visible bruising, other injuries or signs.
- The child's account, if this has been disclosed, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Any witnesses to the incident(s).
- Any times, dates or other relevant information.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

Reporting the matter to the relevant authority should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information, and at most within 24 hours of the disclosure/concern. A note should be made of the name and designation of the children's social care member or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow up is needed.

Informing Parents



Wherever possible, a coach concerned about the welfare of a child should work in partnership with parents. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents to help clarify any initial concerns (e.g. if a child's behaviour has changed, it is important to check if there is a reasonable explanation such as family upset or bereavement).

However, there are circumstances in which a young person might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared (e.g. where a parent may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately).

In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the designated person as soon as possible. Advice and guidance should be sought from the local children social care organisation or Police with respect to consulting with parents.

Travelling with Children



As with many sports, some form of travel to competitions is often required. Unlike team sports often athletes will make their own way to races with their parents. However, travelling as a team can be beneficial socially for the participants, it can reduce tension, as they don't feel on their own, and can actively enjoy the travel time as they are with friends. Some groups / clubs and teams organise transport for the whole team, or try to coordinate the travel arrangements. This section covers some of the issues and potential solutions when this takes place.

The organisers of any trip, must consider and put in place strategies for a range of issues for travelling away including:

- Parental consent obtained.
- Maintaining appropriate communication with parents, before and during the trip.
- Safe travelling practices employed, including selection of appropriate transport and drivers.
- Clear allocation of roles and responsibilities.
- Safe supervision ratios, and selection of appropriate supervisors.
- Appropriate insurance for the group.
- An action plan in case of issue/accident/emergency.
- Risk assessment of the trip.
- Management of overnight stays and selection of appropriate accommodation.

When travelling with young athletes to events coaches should wherever possible avoid travelling in their own vehicles and never be alone with children in a car.