



ASF Child Protection Policy, Guidelines and Code of Conduct

Adopted by Council on 4-January-2020, amended 11-Oct-2020

ASF Child Protection Policy

1. These Policy, Guidelines and Code of Conduct apply to ASF and to all members of ASF in situations where ASF members interact with children in the course of activities of the Federation and member societies.
2. For the purpose of these Policy, Guidelines and Code of Conduct:

an “ASF member” is defined as a person who is a direct member of ASF, or is a corporate organisation which is a member of ASF, or is a person who is a member of such corporate organisation;

a “child” is defined as a person under the age of eighteen years; and

“caving or cave-related activities” include, but are not limited to, caving club meetings and social events, and travel to and from activities, and field practice, and caving trips and camping, and ASF conferences.
3. ASF is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children involved in activities of the Federation and member societies. Consequently, these Policy and Guidelines and Code of Conduct are intended to provide ASF and its members guidance to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all children in the course of activities of the Federation and member societies and to assist ASF members to fulfil their obligations under child protection laws.
4. Child abuse involves conduct which puts children at risk of harm or neglect. Child abuse can be inflicted by adults or other children and can include:
 - a) Physical abuse by hurting a child or a child’s development (e.g. hitting, shaking or other physical harm; giving a child alcohol or drugs; or training that exceeds the child’s development or maturity);
 - b) Sexual abuse by adults or other children where a child is encouraged or forced to watch or engage in sexual activity or where a child is subject to any other inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature (e.g. sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, pornography including child pornography, inappropriate touching, or inappropriate conversations);

- c) Emotional abuse by ill-treating a child (e.g. humiliation, taunting, sarcasm, yelling, negative criticism, name calling, ignoring, or placing unrealistic expectations on a child); and
 - d) Neglect, including medical neglect (e.g. not giving food, water, shelter or clothing, or not protecting a child from danger or foreseeable risk of harm or injury, or not providing access to medical treatment).
5. Child protection laws apply in each state and territory and cover the reporting and investigation of child abuse. The ASF and its members must comply with all applicable child protection laws. (See *Notes* below.)

ASF Child Protection Guidelines

1. If an ASF member reasonably suspects or believes that a child needs protection, they should report immediately to the police or the relevant government agency in their state or territory.
2. ASF members should obey all applicable mandatory reporting laws. Mandatory reporting is a legislative requirement imposed on selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to government authorities. All Australian states and territories have enacted mandatory reporting laws. However, the laws are not the same across all jurisdictions. (See *Notes* below.)
3. ASF members should obey all relevant child protection laws when dealing with a complaint or incidence of child abuse. In particular:
 - a. ASF members should deal with all allegations of child abuse promptly and confidentially and should not disclose information about the child, the accused or details of the complaint except as required by law; and
 - b. ASF members should not try to investigate, mediate or conduct any hearing into any allegation of child abuse.
4. If a caving or cave-related activity takes place in multiple states or territories (e.g. travel from one state to another), ASF members should check the requirements for each state or territory.
5. A child should not be left unattended without making arrangements for the child's care.
6. The child's parent or guardian should be encouraged to attend the activity with the child.
7. ASF corporate members may decide not to allow children to be members, or not to allow children to attend caving or cave-related activities, or only to do so if a parent or guardian is present. If an ASF corporate member allows children on their caving or cave-related activities they should have their own Child Protection Policy, Guidelines and Code of Conduct.

8. ASF members who organise events which include children unaccompanied by their parents, shall comply with the working with children obligations in their state or territory (see *Notes* below). This may involve undertaking a “working with children check” to determine their suitability to work with children.

ASF Child Protection Code of Conduct

General Code of Conduct

1. ASF members shall treat children with respect regardless of race, gender, sexuality, language, religious beliefs, political or other opinions, nationality, ethnicity, social status, disability, or any other characteristic.
2. ASF members shall ensure the child’s parent or guardian or care giver is fully aware of the risks associated with caving or caving-related activities, and is aware of the arrangements for carrying out the activity (e.g. transport, party structure, camping arrangements), and has fully consented to the child’s attendance if the care giver is unable to attend the activity.
3. ASF members shall obey all relevant child protection legislation and mandatory reporting requirements.
4. ASF members shall immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation, or child abuse, or non-compliance with this Code of Conduct.
5. ASF will provide support to the member reporting suspected breaches of this code of conduct where reports are made in good faith.

The following is a guideline and not an exhaustive list. Other behaviours could fall into any of the categories and should be dealt with appropriately.

Concerning Conduct

Conduct which may not require investigation or reporting and can be addressed with the individual directly

1. In the presence of children, ASF members shall not use language that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally inappropriate.
2. ASF members shall not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade a child.
3. ASF members shall avoid situations with children that could be considered compromising.

Misconduct

Conduct which is deemed by the ASF to be unacceptable but may not require reporting to authorities. This would usually be dealt with through internal procedures.

1. ASF members shall, wherever possible, ensure another adult is present when interacting with children.
2. ASF members shall ask permission from the child and their parent or guardian before taking and using photographs of the child. ASF members publishing photographs of children (e.g. in newsletters or social media) shall ensure such permission has been obtained.

Suspected Criminal Conduct

Conduct that is suspected to be criminal should be reported as soon as practicable to the relevant State or Territory authorities

1. ASF members shall not engage children in any form of sexual activity.
2. ASF members who are not a parent or guardian of a child shall not use physical punishment on that child.
3. ASF members shall not develop relationships with a child that could in any way be thought exploitative or abusive, or act in ways that may be abusive, or may place a child at risk of abuse.

Notes

Information about statutory working with children obligations, legislation and mandatory reporting guidelines can be found at:

- QLD: www.bluecard.qld.gov.au
- NSW: www.check.kids.nsw.gov.au
- WA: www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au
- VIC: www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren
- SA: www.families.sa.gov.au/pages/protectingchildren
- TAS: www.police.tas.gov.au
- NT: www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au
- ACT: www.ors.act.gov.au/community/working_with_vulnerable_people_wvvp