



WESTERN PROVINCE ATHLETICS

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Policy commitment

Western Province Athletics (WPA) is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, inclusive and supportive sporting environment in which everyone can participate free from harassment, abuse, bullying, discrimination, violence, exploitation and neglect.

The welfare, dignity and well-being of all participants are central to WPA's activities. Every participant has the right to be treated with respect, protected from harm and supported when concerns arise.

WPA adopts a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and abuse in athletics and is committed to preventing harm, responding appropriately to reported concerns and holding those responsible accountable.

1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this policy is to protect everyone involved in athletics and ensure that participation takes place in a safe environment.

WPA aims to:

- Establish clear standards of behaviour and confirm that harassment and abuse in any form are unacceptable.
- Protect athletes and all other participants, with particular attention to children and vulnerable adults.
- Provide safe, accessible channels for reporting suspected or actual abuse without fear of victimisation or retaliation.
- Ensure concerns and allegations are addressed promptly, fairly and appropriately.
- Implement preventative measures to reduce safeguarding risks.
- Promote awareness, education and appropriate training for athletes, coaches, officials, administrators, staff and volunteers.
- Take reasonable steps during the recruitment and appointment of staff and volunteers to assess their suitability to work with athletes, particularly children and vulnerable persons.
- Cooperate with relevant authorities and sporting organisations to strengthen safeguarding in athletics.

2. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

This policy is informed by the principles of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, including the rights to human dignity, equality, freedom, bodily and psychological integrity, and protection from violence and unfair discrimination.

It also recognises the importance of:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The National Sport and Recreation Act, 1998, as amended.
- The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended.
- The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007, as amended.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011.
- Applicable sporting regulations, safeguarding standards and good-governance principles.

WPA will apply this policy consistently with applicable South African law and its constitution, rules and disciplinary procedures.

The best interests of a child are of paramount importance in every matter concerning that child.

3. WHO IS PROTECTED?

This policy applies to all people participating in, working for, representing or providing services to WPA, irrespective of age, gender, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, athletic ability, social or economic circumstances, or any other protected characteristic.

It includes, but is not limited to:

- Competitive and recreational athletes.
- Children and young people under 18 years of age.
- Coaches, trainers and technical officials.
- Medical and allied health personnel.
- Team managers and athlete support personnel.
- WPA board members, administrators, employees and affiliated representatives.
- Club officials, volunteers and event personnel.
- Contractors, service providers and other persons acting on behalf of WPA.

The policy applies to WPA activities, training sessions, competitions, road races, meetings, camps, travel, accommodation and other activities connected with participation in or representation of WPA. It also applies to relevant conduct occurring outside organised activities where it falls within WPA's authority or jurisdiction.

Where employment-related conduct is also a safeguarding concern, applicable employment procedures may operate alongside safeguarding and disciplinary processes, subject to the relevant rules and law.

4. VULNERABILITY AND PROTECTION

Although anyone can experience harassment or abuse, some participants may face increased risks or barriers to reporting. These may include:

- Children and young people.
- Athletes with physical, intellectual, sensory or psychosocial disabilities.
- Women and girls.
- Older persons.
- Elite and competitive athletes.
- People who depend on others for care, support, selection, funding or sporting opportunities.
- Other adults who may be vulnerable because of their circumstances.

WPA recognises that differences in authority, status, experience or dependency can create opportunities for exploitation and abuse. Appropriate safeguards must be implemented to reduce these risks.

5. FORMS OF HARM AND ABUSE

Safeguarding concerns may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Physical abuse: Deliberately causing physical injury or subjecting an athlete to harmful physical treatment. This may include inappropriate forced training, training through injury or pain, dangerous training loads, forced alcohol consumption or systematic doping practices.

Sexual abuse: Any sexual act or conduct where consent is absent, cannot be given, or is obtained through coercion, manipulation or exploitation. This includes contact and non-contact abuse.

Sexual harassment: Unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal, written, electronic or physical.

Psychological or emotional abuse: Repeated or deliberate conduct that causes, or is likely to cause, psychological harm. Examples include intimidation, humiliation, threats, manipulation, degradation and controlling behaviour.

Bullying and cyberbullying: Unwanted, repeated and aggressive behaviour involving a real or perceived imbalance of power. This may include threats, spreading rumours, verbal or physical attacks, deliberate exclusion and abuse through digital platforms.

Hazing: Humiliating, degrading or dangerous initiation practices imposed on athletes or team members.

Neglect: Failure by a person responsible for an athlete's care to meet reasonable physical or emotional needs or to protect the athlete from danger, abuse or exploitation.

Negligence: Failure by a person with a duty of care to provide an appropriate standard of care, resulting in harm or exposing a participant to an imminent risk of harm.

Discrimination and harassment: Unfair or harmful treatment, intimidation or exclusion based on personal characteristics or protected grounds.

Exploitation and other non-accidental harm: Any conduct that takes advantage of a participant, breaches their dignity or safety, or exposes them to physical, psychological, sexual or other harm.

Harassment and abuse may occur in person, online, during sporting activities or outside them. The absence of visible injury does not mean that abuse has not occurred.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

WPA leadership is responsible for promoting a safeguarding culture, supporting implementation of this policy and ensuring that reported concerns are addressed through appropriate procedures.

Clubs and affiliated organisations are expected to support safeguarding measures, communicate this policy to their members and cooperate with designated safeguarding personnel.

Coaches, officials, employees and volunteers must act professionally, respect appropriate boundaries, protect participants from foreseeable harm and report safeguarding concerns.

Athletes and other participants are expected to treat others with dignity, respect personal boundaries, refrain from abusive or discriminatory conduct and raise concerns when they witness or experience inappropriate behaviour.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to support children's safety, communicate concerns and cooperate with appropriate safeguarding processes.

Anyone entrusted with responsibility for a child or vulnerable adult must take reasonable steps to protect that person from harm.

7. PREVENTION AND SAFEGUARDING MEASURES

WPA will promote preventative measures appropriate to its activities and resources, including:

- Communicating safeguarding expectations and acceptable standards of behaviour.
- Providing appropriate safeguarding education and awareness.
- Encouraging safe and professional relationships between athletes and those in positions of authority.
- Taking reasonable steps to assess the suitability of staff, coaches and volunteers, including relevant screening where appropriate and legally permitted.
- Identifying and managing risks associated with training, competitions, travel, accommodation and other athletics activities.
- Promoting accessible and confidential reporting arrangements.

- Working with relevant authorities and sporting bodies where specialist support or intervention is required.

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility and must be integrated into the planning and delivery of athletics activities.

8. REPORTING CONCERNS

Any person who experiences, witnesses or reasonably suspects harassment, abuse, neglect, exploitation or another safeguarding violation is encouraged to report the concern promptly to WPA through its designated safeguarding contact or another appropriate WPA representative.

Reports should be handled sensitively, respectfully and as confidentially as reasonably possible. Information will be shared only with those who need it to assess the concern, protect participants or meet legal obligations.

WPA will take reports seriously and ensure that concerns are assessed and referred through appropriate procedures. A report does not require the reporting person to prove that abuse has occurred.

No person should be threatened, disadvantaged or victimised for raising a safeguarding concern in good faith or participating in an investigation.

Where a person is in immediate danger, contact the South African Police Service or emergency services. Suspected abuse involving a child must be referred to the relevant child-protection authorities in accordance with applicable law. Concerns involving vulnerable adults must also be referred to the appropriate authorities where required.

Internal reporting does not replace any legal obligation to report suspected abuse to the relevant authorities.

9. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

WPA will respond to safeguarding allegations promptly, impartially and sensitively, taking into account the safety, dignity and well-being of those involved.

Depending on the circumstances, action may include:

- Assessing immediate risks and taking reasonable steps to protect participants.
- Referring matters to the police, child-protection services or other relevant authorities.
- Initiating an appropriate internal investigation or disciplinary process.
- Taking interim protective measures where necessary and lawful.
- Providing information about appropriate support services.
- Maintaining suitable records and protecting confidential information.

All parties must be treated fairly. Allegations will be handled in accordance with applicable law and WPA's governing and disciplinary procedures. Appropriate action may be taken where misconduct is established.

10. CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

WPA recognises its particular responsibility to protect children and participants who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, exploitation or significant harm.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is a person under 18 years of age, subject to applicable law.

The child's best interests must remain paramount in decisions affecting them. Concerns must be handled in a manner that prioritises safety, respects dignity and avoids unnecessary distress.

Any suspected abuse of a child must be reported to the appropriate authorities in accordance with applicable legislation. WPA will cooperate with lawful investigations and take appropriate measures within its authority to protect affected participants.

11. COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

Compliance with this policy is expected of WPA's employees, officials, members, volunteers and all other persons to whom it applies.

Clubs and organisations affiliated with WPA are expected to support and implement appropriate safeguarding measures and ensure that those responsible for their activities understand their duty of care.

Breaches of this policy may result in appropriate action under applicable disciplinary, employment, membership or other procedures, without limiting any legal action that may be taken by the relevant authorities.

WPA will review this policy periodically and when necessary to reflect changes in legislation, safeguarding standards, sporting regulations or organisational requirements.

12. OUR COMMITMENT

Western Province Athletics is committed to protecting the dignity, safety and well-being of everyone involved in athletics.

A safe sporting environment depends on awareness, accountability, appropriate action and the willingness to speak up when something is wrong. WPA expects everyone involved in the sport to contribute to an athletics community where abuse is not tolerated and every participant is treated with respect.

Western Province Athletics: Safeguarding every participant.