



HOKITIKA GYMNASTICS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RATIONALE:

The Hokitika Gymnastics Child Protection Policy has been developed to ensure that coaches, committee, members and any authoritative body are aware of Hokitika Gymnastics duty of care and systems to support all members of our community in line with the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 and the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

PURPOSE:

This policy provides clear guidelines to employees, club members, parents and other relevant parties on the following:

- Staff Training
- Prevention
- Early Intervention
- Reporting
- Responding
- Obligations of Staff
- Staff Behaviour
- Duty of Care
- Police Vetting

Coach Training

All Coaches will receive training and instruction in "Recognising and Responding to suspected child abuse". Training will include signs of potential abuse, being aware of the procedures to follow if confronted with allegations or evidence of child abuse and knowing the roles of agencies involved in child abuse preventions. Child Protection training will be held annually.

Prevention

Coaches will take practical steps to protect children while they are in the programme. Coaches will be aware of where children are and what they are doing, and will be similarly aware of what other coaches are doing.

Sound supervision procedures are in place to protect children. These include ensuring that:

- Children are in designated areas where supervision can easily occur.
- That one-to-one contact or discussion with a child does not occur behind closed doors.
- Visitors will be monitored and will not have unsupervised interaction with children. Visitors are not to enter the gymnasium floor space, without the express permission of the supervising coach.

Early Intervention

The Induction and training provides for Coaches to be trained to understand early warning signs for abuse or neglect, and are encouraged to listen to children carefully about their concerns. All coaches are encouraged to discuss any concerns with a committee member immediately who will determine:

- If advice will be sought from Oranga Tamariki.
- If a report of concern will be made to Oranga Tamariki or the Police
- If any other action will be taken

If abuse or neglect is suspected, or a child discloses abuse, coaches will record incidents, observations and/or what the child says.

If abuse or neglect is suspected, or a child discloses abuse, a report of concern should be made to Oranga Tamariki or the Police. Clear policies and procedures should be in place to guide reporting.

Reporting concerns to a statutory agency

All cases of suspected Child Abuse will be responded to in a manner which best ensures children's immediate and future safety.

Step One

Record when a child tells you a safety issue. A member of the committee should be consulted immediately.

Step Two

Believe the child. DO NOT investigate the child yourself. DO NOT question or counsel the alleged offender. DO NOT make decisions alone. If your suspicions have not been confirmed as significant, continue to monitor the situation closely in consultation with others. If concerns are confirmed, report.

Step Three

A member of the committee, in consultation with the coaches, is to seek advice from Oranga Tamariki or the Police – this will determine what steps should be taken.

Step Four

After consultation with Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police direction will be given as to who is responsible for informing the parents of the child.

Step Five

Hokitika Gymnastics Gymnastic Sports will provide support outside of the organisation for coaches if there is a need.

NOTE:

The Children's Act 2014, requires us — along with other State services and organisations providing government-funded services to children and families — to have a Child Protection Policy (CPP). The Act requires our policy to: contain, at a minimum, how we identify and report child abuse and neglect.

The wellbeing and safety of the child will be the primary concern when any decision or action is taken regarding concerns about a child's wellbeing. Staff and the committee are not required to seek parental permission to report their concerns.

Coaches at Hokitika Gymnastics are recommended to seek advice from the committee immediately if they have any concerns so that an informed decision is made prior to any action being taken.

Responding to suspicions and allegations against a coach, parent, or member of the public.

An initial report of any incident must be written down in full as soon as possible.

- Where appropriate the committee of Hokitika Gymnastics will discuss the incident as soon as practical with the coach and other possible witnesses. The coach's version of the incident(s) will be investigated before any decision is made. Where the investigation takes more than one day, the coach may be asked to carry out alternative duties or suspended until a full investigation can be completed. Appropriate support will be accessed for the coach.
- Where there is some substantive evidence that an instance of child abuse may have taken place, advice will be sought from Oranga Tamariki by a member of the committee. Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that an instance of child abuse has taken place, that coach shall be suspended whilst an investigation occurs.
- Management will take into account the advice of Oranga Tamariki or other support agency as to whether Police will be advised unless it is clear that a criminal offence has taken place, in which case a member of the committee will advise the Police directly. Staff will be advised of their rights to seek independent legal advice.
- The Parent of the child (or children) affected will be advised as directed by Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police.

Obligations to Staff

- Whilst the protection of the child shall be paramount and the next obligation of the committee shall be to carry out a full and fair investigation, the impact on coaches shall not be forgotten. Care will be taken to ensure that the presumption of innocence of those accused or implicated will be maintained until investigations are complete. Counselling and time off will be offered to coaches that have been accused wrongly.

- All observations, after an investigation has been notified, shall be kept in writing in a confidential manner.

Staff Behaviour

All coaches and volunteers at Hokitika Gymnastics are required to understand and sign the Code of Conduct on acceptance of their position.

Hokitika Gymnastics expects all coaches to be supportive, non-abusive and to present themselves as a positive role model. Many children have affectionate natures and express themselves freely, regardless of the situation and the child's culture and nature, coaches must avoid inappropriate physical contact.

The Hokitika Gymnastics Code of Conduct applies at all times. The following directives also apply:

- In making physical contact with children, adults should be guided by the principle that they will do so solely in order to meet the child's physical or emotional needs.
- Touching should not be initiated to gratify the adult's needs. Children should not be asked to take care of adult physical or emotional needs.
- If any child initiates physical contact in the seeking of affection, reassurance or comfort it is appropriate to respond in a manner suitable for that child's development stage and needs. It is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection or touching on a child.
- The physical contact of children during changing or personal cleaning should be undertaken by the parent in the first instance if they are on site. If no parent is available, the physical contact must be for the purpose of that task only and not to be more than is necessary for that job. Children should be encouraged to take care of themselves to the limits of their ability. Staff should AVOID being alone with a child.
- Staff must be aware of where all children are at all times.
- Coaches must ensure volunteers and visitors are supervised when working with a child or group of children.
- Staff must acknowledge their emotional and physical limitations and request support and/or relief when necessary.
- Staff medications must be labelled and stored out of reach of children.
- Children should not be present when coaches use the toilet and bathroom facilities.
- "Adult" topics of conversation are not to take place whilst coaches are working within the programmes delivered at Hokitika Gymnastics. Outside of programme delivery any "adult" conversations should not take place within hearing of the children.
- Staff should maintain a professional relationship with families with respect to confidentiality, objectivity and conflict of interest.

Duty of Care

Coaches and volunteers at Hokitika Gymnastics understand they have a duty of care in respect to the children enrolled in Hokitika Gymnastics programmes. This means they have a duty to use due care towards others in order to protect them from unnecessary risk of harm. All possible care will be taken to ensure children's wellbeing and safety and to act without negligence.

Police Vetting – Employment Process

Hokitika Gymnastics is a registered approved agency of the New Zealand Police Vetting Service. When making recruitment decisions Hokitika Gymnastics Management will assess risk regarding safety to work with children utilising the following processes:

- Interview
- Referee check
- Work history check
- Identity check
- Police vetting check
- Code of conduct understanding and acceptance.

All Employees and Volunteers asked to undergo Police Vetting must give their written consent prior to Hokitika Gymnastics commencing vetting. This consent must be retained by Hokitika Gymnastics until after the vetting has been completed.

Hokitika Gymnastics reserves the right to carry out future Police Vetting on all Administration/Management coaches, Coaching coaches, committee Members and Volunteers. Schools, Pre-schools and other user groups may now require this as part of their own Health & Safety policy and therefore Hokitika Gymnastics will seek police vetting for any coaches working with these user groups.

Exclusions

None unless agreed by the Hokitika Gymnastics Committee.

Date Approved/Reviewed: 10 May 2024

Next review: 2025 AGM