

BULLYING AND SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

AUSSIE GEMS DANCE, GYMNASTICS & CHEERLEADING— BULLYING AND SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

1. Bullying

What is bullying- as defined by stopbullying.gov

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

To be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Warning signs for bullying

Warning signs of bullying include:

1. **Physical and Emotional:** Unexplained injuries, headaches, mood swings, and low self-esteem.
2. **Behavioural:** Avoiding social situations, reluctance to go to school/work, dropping performance, withdrawal.
3. **Personal Changes:** Loss of belongings, changes in eating or routine.
4. **Digital:** Increased secrecy with devices, distress after online interactions.

If these signs persist, a supportive conversation can help.

How we respond

If a child talks to a coach or staff member about bullying, they need to be heard, and their feelings acknowledged, and their issue will be managed respectfully. All bullying should be taken seriously.

- Listen calmly and get the full story
- Reassure the child they are not to blame and that we are here to help

Staff will never ignore or avoid taking action if a child is being bullied, a child is bullying others, or a child has seen bullying

Staff should contact their direct superior, manager or owner so the matter can be looked into and all involved can be contacted.

Confidentiality will always be applied where needed to ensure equality and safety in any situation.

In all instances where the matter is serious, this will be escalated and follow our complaint policies.

2. Child Abuse and our Responsibilities

Child abuse is a severe and often hidden problem, affecting children across all demographics. It includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect, and can have long-lasting, even lifelong, effects on a child's mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

Types of Child Abuse

1. **Physical Abuse:** Deliberate harm to a child's body, often resulting in bruises, burns, or fractures.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent actions that harm a child's self-esteem, such as bullying, rejecting, or isolating.
3. **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual act or behaviour forced upon a child.
4. **Neglect:** Failing to meet a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, medical care, and supervision.

Indicators of Child Abuse

Recognizing abuse can be challenging, as signs vary with each type. Key indicators include:

- Unexplained injuries or frequent hospital visits
- Behavioural changes, like aggression, withdrawal, or extreme fear
- Poor hygiene, malnutrition, or lack of medical care
- Difficulty sleeping, nightmares, or signs of regression in young children

Our Responsibilities

As coaches and staff working closely with children, we have responsibilities to protect children from abuse and act when we see warning signs.

1. **Awareness and Education:** Understanding what constitutes abuse and learning the signs equips us to act. Schools, community organizations, and workplaces often provide training to identify abuse.
2. **Creating a Safe Environment:** Children should feel safe, respected, and valued. This is fostered by listening to them, responding to their needs, and establishing trust.
3. **Reporting Abuse:** There are legal mandates to report suspected abuse to local child protective services or law enforcement. Reporting should be prompt, accurate, and as specific as possible about the child's situation.
4. **Providing Support and Advocacy:** Helping affected families and children access resources like counselling, safe housing, and support services can aid in their recovery and well-being.

The presence of one indicator does not necessarily suggest that a child is the subject of abuse. However, appropriate steps should be taken when abuse is suspected. More details can be found in our Child Safe Reporting Policy.