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| **Policy:**  **Guideline for appropriate and Inappropriate interactions with children.** | **Approved Date:**  **November 12,2024** | **Revision:**  **Original** |

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| **Guideline Purpose: Establish common practices and expectations for people of authority interact with children within Parkland Fusion. This policy is to assist in fostering a safe and inclusive football club. This policy will allow the players to have a great experience with many opportunities and have great player coaching relationships. This policy will also keep coaches and volunteers accountable to their actions.** |
| **Guideline Scope:** **This policy applies to all members, coaches and volunteers of Parkland Fusion FC** |

**When interacting with children, it is essential to prioritize their well-being, safety, and development. Below are guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate interactions with children:**

**Appropriate Interactions with Children**

1. **Respect Boundaries:**
   * Always respect a child’s personal space.
   * Understand that children may be shy or uncomfortable with physical touch. Consent is important.
2. **Age-Appropriate Communication:**
   * Tailor your language and communication style to the child’s age and developmental stage.
   * Use simple language and instructions for younger children, and engage in more complex conversations with older children.
3. **Positive Reinforcement:**
   * Offer praise and encouragement for positive behaviors and efforts.
   * Use constructive feedback to help children understand what they could do better.
4. **Active Listening:**
   * Listen attentively to children, acknowledge their feelings, and validate their emotions.
   * Give them space to express themselves without judgment.
5. **Safety First:**
   * Ensure the child is in a safe environment and supervise activities where necessary.
   * Teach children about boundaries, personal safety, and how to express discomfort or say "no" if something feels wrong.
6. **Empathy and Compassion:**
   * Demonstrate empathy for the child's emotions and experiences.
   * Be patient and understanding, recognizing that children are still learning how to manage their feelings and behaviors.
7. **Setting Clear Expectations and Limits:**
   * Be consistent in setting and enforcing rules and expectations.
   * Use calm, clear language to explain limits and consequences.
8. **Engaging Activities:**
   * Encourage activities that promote learning and development, such as reading, drawing, playing games, and outdoor activities.
   * Create a positive and enjoyable environment for exploration and creativity.
9. **Role Modeling:**
   * Children learn by observing adults. Exhibit respectful, kind, and responsible behavior to help model these qualities.
10. **Encouraging Independence:**
    * Encourage children to take on age-appropriate tasks and make decisions, fostering a sense of autonomy and confidence.

**Inappropriate Interactions with Children**

1. **Physical Abuse or Aggression:**
   * Any form of hitting, spanking, or physically hurting a child is not acceptable.
   * Avoid any aggressive or threatening behavior, even in frustration.
2. **Verbal Abuse or Harsh Criticism:**
   * Name-calling, belittling, or using degrading language is harmful to a child’s self-esteem.
   * Shouting or using harsh language should be avoided in favor of calm, constructive communication.
3. **Sexual Inappropriateness:**
   * Never engage in any form of sexual activity or suggestive behavior with a child.
   * Avoid inappropriate conversations, comments, or gestures. Children should never be exposed to sexual content or situations.
4. **Neglect:**
   * Failing to meet a child's basic needs (food, shelter, emotional care, and safety) constitutes neglect.
   * Never leave a child unsupervised in situations that could pose a risk to their safety.
5. **Overstepping Personal Boundaries:**
   * Inappropriate touching or invading a child’s personal space is not acceptable.
   * Understand and respect a child's boundaries, and be mindful of body language that might make them uncomfortable.
6. **Manipulation or Coercion:**
   * Never manipulate a child to get them to do something they don’t want to do, whether through emotional pressure or threats.
   * Coercion to keep secrets (such as asking a child to keep an inappropriate secret) is harmful.
7. **Ignoring or Dismissing Emotions:**
   * Dismissing a child’s feelings or saying things like "stop crying" or "it’s not a big deal" can invalidate their emotions and hinder emotional development.
   * Children need validation and reassurance, even if their concerns may seem minor to adults.
8. **Inappropriate Exposure to Adult Situations:**
   * Children should never be exposed to adult topics such as finances, personal relationship issues, or anything inappropriate for their age.
   * Keep adult stressors and conflicts away from children’s ears and eyes.
9. **Excessive Control or Micro-Managing:**
   * Over-controlling behavior, such as making every decision for the child or denying them any freedom, can limit their ability to develop independence.
   * Allow the child to make choices and learn from mistakes.
10. **Unrealistic Expectations or Pressure:**
    * Pressuring children to excel or achieve beyond their capabilities can cause stress and negatively affect their self-worth.
    * Avoid placing undue academic, social, or athletic pressure on children.
11. **Using Children for Personal Gain:**
    * Using a child to gain attention, manipulate others, or fulfill your emotional needs is unethical and damaging.
    * Children should never be treated as tools or accessories for adult needs.

**Red Flags of Inappropriate Interactions:**

If any of the following behaviors are present, they may be indicators of inappropriate or harmful interactions:

* A child shows signs of fear or anxiety around an adult.
* The adult behaves overly possessively or controlling toward the child.
* A child displays emotional or behavioral distress after interactions with a particular adult.
* The adult exhibits overly sexualized behavior or comments.
* The adult regularly invades the child’s personal space or engages in physical contact that makes the child uncomfortable.

**Reporting Process**

**All Parkland Fusion FC Coaches, Members and volunteers have a legal obligation to report and and all suspected child sexual abuse, inappropriate behavior or incidents that they are aware of or become aware of. This include if they witnessed the incident or just heard about it.**

Where to report:

1. All allegations or suspicions of **potentially illegal behavior** (for example, child sexual abuse) that a staff/volunteer witnesses first-hand, must be promptly reported to police and/or child welfare.
2. To ensure the protection of all children in our care, all allegations or suspicions of **potentially illegal behavior** that a staff/volunteer learns of must also be promptly reported to police and/or child welfare. Police and/or child welfare will make the determination as to whether the allegation or suspicion requires further investigation.
3. All allegations or suspicions of inappropriate behavior that a staff/volunteer learns of or witnesses first-hand, must be reported to Parkland Fusion FC President and/or police and child welfare

If you are not sure whether the issue you have witnessed or heard is illegal in nature it is best to ask the question. If you have any incidents like this, please connect with Parkland Fusion FC President and the decision can be made at that time. **Please remember you have and duty to report all suspicions of potentially illegal behavior directly to police and/or child welfare.**

[**How to help and report child abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation | Alberta.ca**](https://www.alberta.ca/how-to-help-and-report-child-abuse-neglect-and-sexual-exploitation)