



SQ Policy: Code of Conduct and Ethics to Protect Children

Accreditations: This 'Code of Conduct' is drawn from material from Canada Soccer, Commit to Kids – A Program for Canadian Centre for Child Protection' and other sources

INTRODUCTION

Soccer Quest (SQ) believes that every individual involved in soccer deserves the opportunity to participate safely. Children, in particular, have a right to participate in sport in a safe and enjoyable environment. Soccer Quest's Policies and Procedures, as an element of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, presents information, best practices and principles, guidance and policies to support safe environments and participation.

The SQ Code of Conduct is a set of rules outlining the social norms, responsibilities and proper practices to set a standard for the participants, staff, and stakeholders so that they know what is expected of them in that environment.

The SQ Code of Conduct and related Policies and Ethics apply to all members and stakeholders including coaches, team personnel, volunteers, players, and parents.

Soccer Quest Code of Conduct and Ethics

The purpose of the Soccer Quest Code of Conduct and Ethics is to ensure a safe and positive environment within SQ's Soccer programs, activities, and events by making individuals aware that there is an expectation, at all times, of appropriate behaviour consistent with SQ's core values. SQ supports equal opportunity, prohibits discriminatory practices, and is committed to providing an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect.

This Code applies to Officials, players, staff, and individuals employed or engaged by SQ.

This Code focuses on the conduct of actions on and off the field of play. Any breach of this Code will be addressed as described in the [SQ Disciplinary Code](#).

The Soccer Quest Code of Conduct and Ethics outlines responsibilities of members and stakeholders, Integrity in Sport, Harassment, and Duty of Disclosure, Reporting and Cooperation.

Any behaviour prohibited by the [SQ Code of Conduct and Ethics](#) that is experienced or observed must be reported confidentially and in writing to info@soccerquest.ca.

Soccer as a Safe Place and the Coach as a Trusted Adult

Children have a right to participate in sport in a safe and enjoyable environment. Their rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Research shows that a caring adult is the most important factor to ensuring a quality experience for children¹. For some young players, the soccer field may be one of the few safe places and, after the parent or guardian, a coach is one of the most influential people in a child's life. As such, coaches are in a unique position to be role models and mentors for young participants.

All SQ coaches and individuals who work with children have a “duty of care” to the children with whom they work. A duty of care is a legal obligation which is imposed on an individual requiring adherence to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others. Coaches are required by law to always act in the best interest of the individuals they coach and not act or fail to act in a way that results in harm. This obligation also includes a responsibility to role model appropriate boundaries and professional contact at all times.

In addition, a coach may be in position to be able to detect signs of maltreatment of children in their care. Coaches must be able to recognize signs of maltreatment and know what to do when it is felt that maltreatment has taken place. It is important that coaches know how to respond to a child in danger, and how to share information appropriately with those who can help. It is important to remember that even though a child could be displaying some or all of the signs of maltreatment, this doesn’t necessarily mean that maltreatment is occurring. **As a coach, if you see signs in a child that are worrying, it is not your responsibility to decide if maltreatment is occurring, but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns** and do something about it. Under Canadian child welfare laws, if you know or suspect child maltreatment, you have a **legal obligation** to report it. This is known as the “duty to report”. Every person in Canada has the duty to report known or suspected child maltreatment by law.

There are also some risks to children and young people which are unique to sport such as the increased risks of all forms of abuse to elite young athletes. Many sport development programs are provided to extremely vulnerable children who may be affected by violence and abuse in their daily lives and for whom sport should be a safe haven. We should all seek to ensure that sports provision to these young people takes place in safe environments. A draft set of Standards (now called Safeguards) were developed by a partnership of organizations working together for the Beyond Sport Summit in London, 2012. These were further developed through an extensive piloting phase over the next two years. The finalized version of the Safeguards was launched at Beyond Sport in October 2014. They lay the foundations for a holistic approach to ensuring children’s safety and protection in all sports contexts internationally.

The Safeguards aim to:

- Help create a safe sporting environment for children wherever they participate and at whatever level;
- Provide a benchmark to assist sports providers and funders to make informed decisions;
- Promote good practice and challenge practice that is harmful to children;
- Provide clarity on safeguarding children to all involved in sport; and,

Are based on the following principles:

- All children have the right to participate, enjoy and develop through sport, in a safe and inclusive environment, free from all forms of maltreatment; bullying, abuse, harassment, violence, discrimination, neglect and exploitation
- Children have the right to have their voices heard and listened to. They need to know who they can turn to when they have a concern about their participation in sport
- Everyone, organizations and individuals, service providers and funders, has a responsibility to support the care and protection of young people
- Organizations providing sports activities to children and young people have a legal and moral duty of care for them
- There are certain factors that leave some children more vulnerable to abuse, and steps need to be taken to address this
- Children have a right to be involved in shaping safeguarding policy and practice
- Organizations should always act in the best interests of the child
- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and not be discriminated against based on gender, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, beliefs, religious or political affiliation
- The processes and activities for the creation, development and implementation of safeguarding measures should be inclusive

About 'Commit to Kids'

The material in this policy and other related policies at the SQ has been drawn from material published and owned by 'Commit to Kids' and Canada Soccer.

<https://commit2kids.ca/en/> <https://www.canadasoccer.com/>

Commit to Kids is a program to help child-serving organizations create safe environments for children. Developed by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, a national charitable organization dedicated to the personal safety of all children, Commit to Kids provides policies, strategies, and a step-by-step plan for reducing the risk of child sexual abuse, encouraging organizations to take an active, participatory role in protecting children in their care. Adults are responsible for protecting the children in their care. Commit to Kids teaches organizations how to define appropriate boundaries between adults and children and create safe, respectful environments. SQ is grateful to and has based many of our policies, guidelines and processes on material from the Commit to Kids program.

As such, Soccer Quest as a child-serving organization :

- ✓ Has an ethical and legal obligation to help protect the children they serve from victimization.
- ✓ Is cognisant that we could attract individuals who have a sexual interest in children as well as those with emotional/psychological issues that could result in harm to children.
- ✓ Has a responsibility to protect children from victimization.
- ✓ Has established safeguards in the form of programs, strategies, policies, and protocols in order to prevent or stop abuse that are mandatory and need to be followed by all employees, volunteers, parents and players.
- ✓ Must keep the safety of the children we serve paramount.
- ✓ Is fostering a culture of transparency, where talking about sensitive issues is encouraged and where sensitive topics are open for discussion, creating trust and accountability.
- ✓ Requires standard and enhanced screening tools such as criminal record checks, vulnerable sector screenings, child abuse registry checks, and reference checks.
- ✓ All employees, volunteers, parents and players must stop and intervene as soon as possible if any inappropriate behaviour and abuse is discovered.