



Code of Practice for Children In Taekwon-Do (2010)

Section 1: Introduction, Policy & Principles

1.1 Background

The purpose of this document is to set out the overall ethos, policy & procedures adopted by the Galway Taekwon-Do School in order to safeguard the well being of its junior members (i.e. all members under 18 years of age).

The document has been prepared and set out based on the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* published by the Irish Sports Council.

All instructors/assistants, as well as parents of junior members, and adult members should read and familiarise themselves with the content of this document.



1.2 Policy Statement

The Galway Taekwon-Do School (*referred to in this document as 'school'*) is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every individual in the Galway Taekwon-Do School should, at all times, show respect and understanding for their rights, safety and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles & tenets of Taekwon-Do (TKD) and the guidelines contained in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*.

1.3 Principles

*Children have a lot to gain from sport. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in positive sporting environments. Taekwon-Do, in particular, provides an excellent opportunity for children to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. These benefits will increase through a positive and progressive approach to the involvement of children in sport that places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second. **Competition is an optional element of Taekwon-Do and is never forced on members, particularly children.***

A child centred approach to children's involvement in Taekwon-Do will return many benefits in terms of the health and well being of our future adult population.

The organisation of sport for children should be guided by a set of core values that provide the foundation for all practice:

1.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD

The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in Taekwon-Do. The right to happiness within childhood should be recognised and enhanced at all levels of the art.

1.3.2 NEEDS OF THE CHILD

All children's sport experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people. The stages of development and ability of children should guide the types of activity provided within Taekwon-Do.

1.3.3 INTEGRITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Adults interacting with children in Taekwon-Do (referred to as Instructors/Assistants in this document) are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of young people is enhanced. All adult actions in Taekwon-Do should be guided by what is best for the child and carried out in the context of respectful and open relationships. Physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect of any kind or threat of such abuse is totally unacceptable within sport, as in society in general.

1.3.4 FAIR PLAY

All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland and the UK have adopted and are committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics which defines fair play as: *much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving.*

It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.

(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics. Council of Europe, 1993)

The principles of fair play are always emphasised, and instructors should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour. The importance of participation for each child, best effort and enjoyment rather than winning should be stressed.

1.3.5 QUALITY ATMOSPHERE AND ETHOS

Children's sport should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. Standards of behaviour for instructors/assistants and children in Taekwon-Do should be as important as the standards set for sports performance. Standards of excellence should extend to personal conduct.

1.3.6 COMPETITION

Competition is an optional element of Taekwon-Do and should be encouraged in an age appropriate manner. A child centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to children's development while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Through such competition children learn respect for opponents, officials and rules of Taekwon-Do.

Too often in sport, competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This is one of a number of factors, which contribute to high levels of dropout from sport. It should always be kept in mind that the welfare of children comes first and competitive standards come second.

As adults we need to strike a balance between a young person's desire to win and a young person's right to participate, irrespective of ability. **Remember that success is not the same as winning and failure is not the same as losing.**

1.3.7 EQUALITY

Consistent with the spirit of Taekwon-Do, all children are to be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children, irrespective of ability or disability should be involved in Taekwon-Do activities in an integrated and inclusive way, whenever possible, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children. Instructors should be aware of and seek to gain competence in addressing the needs of young people with disabilities or any other additional needs.

Section 2: Guidelines for Instructors, Parents & Children

2.1 GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTORS/ASSISTANTS

Instructors/assistants have a vital role to play in promoting good practice in Taekwon-Do. They should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of the art. The Instructors/assistants' success will not be evaluated by performance or results of competition. They should enjoy a sense of achievement and pleasure through their work with young people. After undertaking appropriate education and training, Instructors/assistants will be well prepared to operate in a safe environment with a knowledge and understanding of their role and responsibilities. They should be supported in their work by the school/association and parents/guardians.

Instructors/assistants are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with young participants. Instructors/assistants should operate to the TKD school's agreed code of conduct, which emphasises enjoyment, equality, fair play and the general well being of young people. This model of good practice should help children to demonstrate an awareness of equality, fair play and respect for Instructors/assistants, other members of their group and the rules of Taekwon-Do. The school and parents/guardians should afford Instructors/assistants the respect they deserve and make them aware of any special needs of the child.

School procedures support the Instructors/assistants' model of good practice, thus ensuring protection for both the Instructor and the participant. In so doing, Instructors/assistants should feel able to make a complaint in an appropriate manner and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure. They should be able to appeal any decision through an effective appeals procedure.

2.1.1 In order to act as a role model and to promote their safety and the safety of young people Instructors/assistants should:

- Be positive, praise and encourage effort as well as results
- Put the welfare of young people first, strike a balance between this and winning
- Encourage fair play and treat participants equally
- Have the relevant knowledge and experience to work with young people
- Understand developmental needs of young people
- Complete Code of Ethics Awareness Course, and where appropriate, Childrens' Officer Course

2.1.2 Where possible, and for their own safety, Instructors/assistants should avoid:

- spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others
- taking sessions alone
- taking children on journeys alone in their car
- the use of alcohol during events and on trips with young people

2.1.3 Instructors/assistants should not:

- use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a child
- take children to the their home
- exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child
- take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult
- undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children
- use alcohol before taking a class.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adult's. The adult will probably use appropriate contact when the aim is to assist in development of the skill or activity or for safety reasons, e.g. to prevent or treat an injury. This should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant.

In general

- Contact should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant - Don't do something that a child can do for themselves
- Never engage in inappropriate touching such as touching of groin, genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment

2.2 GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for the care and welfare of their children within sport. Parents/guardians should encourage their children to participate in sport for fun and enjoyment and should ensure that their child's experience of sport is a positive one. Lessons learned in children's sport will shape values and attitudes in adult life. They should always remember that children play sport for their own enjoyment not that of the parents/guardians. Parents/guardians have a duty to ensure that the context in which their child is participating is appropriate.

Parents/guardians and Instructors will ideally work in partnership to promote good practice in children's sport and to support all efforts to protect against neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse in sporting activities. To do so, parents/guardians should ensure that TKD Schools treat their children with fairness, respect and understanding, and that the School is fulfilling its responsibility to safeguard children.

They should encourage their children to tell them about anyone causing them harm. They should become aware of school procedures and policies, in particular where changes are made that effect

them or their children, and be informed of all matters relating to ethics and good practice. They should check that the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* has been adopted and implemented in the TKD School.

Parents/guardians should remember that children learn best by example.

2.2.1 To assist in the promotion of good practice with the club or organisation they should:

- be aware of the relevant Instructors/assistants and their role within the club
- show appreciation of and respect for Instructors/assistants and their decisions
- encourage their child to play by the rules
- behave responsibly at events and competitions
- focus on their child's efforts rather than performance
- focus on the fun and participation of the child in the activity
- liaise with the Instructors/assistants in relation to the times/locations of training sessions, medical conditions of their children and any requirement for their child's safety

2.2.2 To promote the procedures of good practice parents/guardians should be:

- encouraged to become members of the school, where feasible, and take an active interest in the running of the school or any sporting activities in which their children take part
- willing to assist in the running of the school
- informed of the training and/or competitive programmes and be satisfied with the general environment that is created for their children
- informed if their child sustained an injury during sporting activities
- informed of problems or concerns relating to their children.
- informed in advance and have their consent sought in relation to matters regarding away trips, camps or specially organised activities

Comments and suggestions by parents/guardians will always be considered and their complaints acknowledged and dealt with as they arise through an effective and confidential complaints procedure.

2.2.3 Parents/guardians should not:

- ignore or dismiss complaints or concerns expressed by a child which relate to his/her involvement in sport
- ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing at a tournament
- put undue pressure on their child to please or perform well, including forcing a child to participate when ill
- take safety for granted
- treat the school as a child-minding service

2.3 GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN

Children have a great deal to gain from sport in terms of their personal development and enjoyment. The promotion of good practice in sport will depend on the co-operation of all involved, including child members of sports clubs/organisations. Children must be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other children and Instructors/Assistants with fairness and respect.

2.3.1 Children in sport are entitled to:

- be listened to
- be believed
- be safe and to feel safe
- participate in sporting activities on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development
- be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- be happy, have fun and enjoy Taekwon-Do
- experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable and the desire to win as a positive and healthy outcome for striving for best performance
- comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner
- make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure
- be afforded appropriate confidentiality

- be represented at decision making bodies/meetings within their school
- approach the Children's Officer/Designated Person with any questions or concerns they may have.

2.3.2 Children should undertake to:

- play fairly, do their best and have fun
- shake hands before and after the event, whoever wins - and mean it
- respect officials and accept their decisions with grace, not a grudge
- respect fellow team members; give them full support both when they do well and when things go wrong
- respect opponents, they are not enemies, they are partners in a sporting event
- give opponents a hand if they are injured or have problems with equipment
- accept apologies from opponents when they are offered
- exercise self-control and tolerance for others, even if others do not
- be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat
- show appropriate loyalty to their sport and all its participants
- make high standards of fair play the example others want to follow

2.3.3 Children should not:

- cheat
- use violence, using physical contact only when it is allowed within the rules
- shout at, or argue with, the referee, officials, team mates or opponents
- take banned substances to improve performance
- bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another player
- use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage
- harm team mates, opponents or their property
- tell lies about adults or other children
- spread rumours
- keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm

Section 3: Supervision And General Guidelines

3.1 TRANSPORT

There is an extra responsibility on adults and instructors/assistants when they transport young people to events, for example, tournaments.

Adults should

- Ensure there is adequate insurance on their car and that they follow the rules of the road, including the legal use of seat belts
- Ensure they do not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Avoid being alone with one passenger, put passengers in the back seat, have central drop off locations or seek parental permission when transporting on a regular basis. Parents should check with young people about the plans, listen to what the young people are saying, be sure they are happy with the transport arrangements.

3.2 GENERAL SUPERVISION

- Ensure adequate Adult: Child ratios. Good practice dictates that a leader should try to ensure that more than one adult is present. This will help to ensure the safety of the children as well as protect adults
- Adult:Child ratios will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group; our general guideline is 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for over 12 years of age
- There should be at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties.
- Away trips will need higher rates of supervision and these should be checked out with the organiser, children and young people should be supervised at all times.
- Avoid adults being left alone with young participants, if a instructors/assistants needs to talk separately to a participant this should be done in an open environment, in view of others
- Respect the privacy of young people while changing, instructors/assistants may only need to enter changing rooms where the participants are very young or require special assistance. When necessary, instructors/assistants should supervise in pairs or seek assistance, it is the safety and

welfare of the participants that is of paramount importance. (**Important Note for Parents:** *As we train in the Renmore Centre, which is a facility open to the public, it is recommended that young students arrive to the hall already changed into their TKD uniform or tracksuit, as we cannot control who uses the changing rooms*).

- Instructors/assistants should not be left alone with young people at the end of a training session.
- If a child suffers an injury or accident the parents/guardians will be informed.

IMPORTANT: Parents/Guardians should ensure that the instructors/assistants are present when dropping off children for class, and if not, to wait for the Instructors to arrive. Parents should collect children on time after class. If late collections occur instructors/assistants should remain in pairs until participants have left. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to make arrangements for collection of young people - the Galway Taekwon-Do School is responsible for only TKD activities.

3.3 DISCIPLINE IN CHILDREN'S SPORT

Discipline in sport should always be positive in focus, providing the structure and rules that allow participants to learn to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage young people to become more responsible for themselves and therefore more independent.

Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within sport, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between playing fairly and unfairly. There is no place for fighting, over-aggressive or dangerous behaviour in Taekwon-Do.

3.4 THE USE OF SANCTIONS

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. The age and developmental stage of the child should be taken into consideration when using sanctions. Sanctions should be fair and consistent and in the case of persistent offence, should be progressively applied. They should never be used to retaliate or to make the Instructor/assistant feel better. The following steps are suggested and should always be used in conjunction with the code of conduct for young people:

- rules should be stated clearly and agreed
- a warning should be given if a rule is broken
- a sanction (for example, use of time out) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time. The use of green, yellow and red cards are encouraged, irrespective of the sport
- if a rule is broken for the third time the child should be spoken to, and if necessary, the parents/guardians may be involved
- sanctions should not be applied if an Instructor/assistant is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised right away, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as possible
- a child should not be sanctioned for making errors when s/he is participating in Taekwon-Do
- physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push-ups) are not to be used as a sanction. To do so only causes a child to resent physical activity, something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life
- sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant sanctioning and criticism can cause a child to turn away from sport
- once sanctions have been imposed, it is important to make the young person feel s/he is a valued member of the group again
- where relevant some sanctions may need to be recorded and parents informed

3.5 POLICY ON THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC AND MOBILE EQUIPMENT

The Galway Taekwon-Do School's policy in relation to the use of images of members on their websites and other publications is set out below. . Adults and instructors need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause harm to young people from doing so. Remember having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents from taking pictures, it is to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so.

Anyone concerned about photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the children's officer/ designated person / or event organiser and ask them to deal with the matter.

The purpose is to reduce the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport. Group photographs where the school is identified rather than individuals are good for publicity without creating a risk to those in the photographs.

As a guide try to remember the following:-

- If the student is named, avoid using their photograph.
 - If a photograph is used, avoid naming the student.
 - Ask for the student's permission to use their image to ensure that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
 - Ask for parental permission to use the student's image to ensure that parents are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. (This is included on our membership application form)
 - To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, only use images of students in suitable dress (e.g. Taekwon-Do uniform, tracksuit etc). The content of the photograph should focus on the activity, not on a particular child
 - Talk to children's officer/designated person if you are worried about use of images
- Photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the children's officer, event organiser or leader of session.

3.6 MOBILE PHONE POLICY

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to distribute information about TKD events and announcements.

However such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young people. Therefore, there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people.

As a young person remember

- If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent or children's officer/designated person within the club.
- Be careful about who you give your phone number to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers
- Change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment
- Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms
- Treat your phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft

As an Instructor/assistant, remember

- If you use group texts for communication among members, inform parents of this in advance.
- It is not appropriate to have constant communication with individual members
- Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms

3.7 SAFETY POLICY

The safety of our members is paramount. All training sessions/classes should be conducted in a safe manner with particular regard to junior members. Class content & activities should be age appropriate, and students encouraged to practice responsibly and safely. Fingernails & toenails should be kept short to avoid cuts. Watches, jewellery etc may not be worn while training. Any breach of safety, for example, hard contact or over-aggressiveness in sparring, should be dealt with by sanction (e.g. time out).

For free sparring practice, the following safety equipment is **compulsory**:

- Gum Shield (all)
- Groin Guard (males)

Recommended:

- Hand & Foot Pads
- Head Gear

Members are not to be permitted to participate in free sparring without the required safety equipment – no exceptions. All training & safety equipment must be fit for purpose and not damaged or defective. Any accidents or injuries must be recorded in an accident report, and the child's parents/guardians notified.

Section 4: Protection

A central goal for all involved in children's sport is to provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment where children can develop and enhance their physical and social skills. Promoting a child-centred ethos should go hand in hand with identifying and eliminating practices that impact negatively on safe and enjoyable participation in children's sport.

4.1 AREAS OF RISK FOR CHILDREN IN SPORT

Awareness of risk to children's happiness and welfare in sport should be seen as central to protection against harm. Such risk could include the following:

- children suffering significant harm by being deprived of proper supervision and safety
- Instructors/Assistants, parents/guardians subjecting children to constant criticism, sarcasm, rejection, threatening behaviour or pressure to perform at unrealistic levels
- the infliction of any form of non-accidental injury or other forms of child abuse

4.2 SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN SPORT

- the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco should be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity
- the use of alcohol before teaching classes is not permitted, and should be avoided at events and on away trips.
- under-age clubs and teams should be encouraged to organise receptions and celebrations in a nonalcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned. Adults should act as role models for appropriate behaviour and refrain from drinking alcohol at such functions
- Instructors/assistants should promote fair competition through the development of sound training practice and should actively discourage the use of any substance that is perceived to offer short cuts to improved performances or to by-pass the commitment and hard work required to achieve success
- it is the responsibility of all Instructors/assistants to educate and inform those in their care as to the short and long-term effects of substances taken to enhance performances. Officials should also ensure that those in their charge are aware of the harmful side effects or the illegality of proscribed drugs or other banned performance-enhancing substances
- Instructors/assistants in children's sport should refrain from seeking sponsorship from the alcohol and tobacco industries

4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS, BURNOUT AND DROPOUT OF CHILDREN IN SPORT

Burnout may be defined as a process resulting from an activity that was once a source of fun and personal satisfaction, but later becomes associated with progressive physical and psychological distress.

There is a range of factors, which may cause this change, some of which are not associated with the child's sporting activities. Burnout itself may result from a combination of the number of hours involved in physical training with high expectations and pressure from Instructors/assistants and parents/guardians. It represents a loss of energy and enthusiasm for sport and is characterised by anxiety and stress. The child no longer has fun and becomes overwhelmed by the demands of competition and training. S/he may wish to drop out of sport.

Within a sporting context the following practices are harmful to children's health and welfare:

- pressuring a child to perform at a level which is beyond his/her capacity based on age or maturation level
- over-training or the making of demands on a child that lead to burnout
- knowingly permitting an injured child to participate in a sporting activity
- failure to take adequate precautions to protect a child from environmental hazards
- failure to take account of known ailments or relevant weaknesses of a child

Psychological stress within the sporting context can be caused by:

- over-emphasis on winning
- age-inappropriate expectations
- excessive criticism
- inappropriate use of sanctions/discipline
- rejection
- disapproval of skill/performance ability
- failure to provide support and encouragement for effort and achievement
- failure to involve a child/children as fully as possible in the activity

- the use of coarse, inappropriate language

4.3.1 Signs of psychological stress and burnout

- sleep disturbance
- irritability
- tension
- lack of energy
- sadness/depression
- frequent illness
- loss of interest and enthusiasm
- absenteeism, arriving late, leaving early
- no pleasurable anticipation of participation in sporting events

4.3.2 Combating psychological stress and burnout

Children who show an early aptitude for sport are very often asked to participate in a range of team sports or across a range of age groups. This can put them at risk of stress and burnout.

Stress and burnout can be prevented and dropout rates reduced by measures such as:

- listening to and respecting children's views about participation
- parents/guardians and Instructors/Assistants de-emphasising the importance of winning and encouraging the development of individual skills and effort instead
- attaining an appropriate match between the individual child's ability and the activity in which s/he is participating
- ensuring that the physical or sporting abilities of the child are not viewed by the child as indications of his/her self worth
- ensuring that children have fun and enjoy activities in which they are involved

4.4 BULLYING

The risk of bullying and harassment by adults and by children should be anticipated by taking active steps to prevent it occurring. A prompt and decisive response should be made to any indications that it is taking place.

4.4.1 What is Bullying?

Bullying is *repeated* aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour, which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools, sports clubs and other organisations working with children. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more children against a victim. It is the responsibility of Assistants/Instructors to deal with bullying that may take place in the school.

Incidents of bullying will be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances.

Many children are reluctant to tell adults that they are being bullied. Older children are even more reluctant. This underlines the need for constant vigilance and encouragement to report bullying.

4.4.2 Combating Bullying

The Galway Taekwon-Do School will take the following steps to combat bullying:

- raising awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour
- creating a school ethos which encourages children, Assistants/Instructors and parents/guardians to report bullying and to use the procedures of the school to address this problem
- providing comprehensive supervision of children at all sporting activities
- providing a supportive environment for victims of bullying
- obtaining the co-operation of parents/guardians to counter bullying

4.5 CHILD ABUSE

A sports club/organisation, like any other organisation that includes children among its members, is vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. This possibility should be openly acknowledged and addressed in its formal policies and procedures. An environment, in which awareness of what constitutes abusive behaviour and a willingness to tackle the issue head on, is the most likely to contribute to the implementation of effective child protection measures.

4.6 CHILD PROTECTION IN SPORT

The prevention and detection of child abuse depends on the collaborative effort of everyone concerned.

The following factors are central to effective child protection in sport:

- acceptance by all involved with children that abuse, whether physical, emotional, neglect or sexual is wrong, severely damages children and must be confronted
- awareness of the behavioural and physical indicators of various forms of abuse
- knowledge of the appropriate response and action to be taken where abuse is revealed or suspected
- vigilance, and avoidance of all situations conducive to risk
- open, trusting and co-operative relationships within the club/organisation, and with parents/guardians and others concerned with children's progress or welfare
- willingness to co-operate with the Statutory Authorities (police authorities, health services executives or social services), in relation to sharing information about child protection concerns at any time

4.7 HARM

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by his/her health and the development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age, (Children First or Children (NI) Order Article 66 3.2.2).

4.8 CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

All Assistants/Instructors should be familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse.

Though a child may be subjected to more than one type of harm, abuse is normally categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. For detailed definitions of abuse, refer to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (R.O.I.) (see link to website in Section 5).

The categories of abuse may be briefly summarised as follows:

1. Child Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs for supervision and safety met. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/guardian.

2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. For children with disabilities it may include over-protection or conversely failure to acknowledge or understand a child's disability.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- (a) Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- (b) Where the level of care is conditional on his or her behaviour;
- (c) Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or unrealistic expectations of a child;
- (d) Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;

- (e) Over or under protection of the child;
- (f) Failure to provide opportunities for the child's education and development;
- (g) Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- (h) Exposure to domestic violence.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/guardian.

3. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- (a) Shaking, hitting or throwing
- (b) Use of excessive force in handling;
- (c) Deliberate poisoning;
- (d) Suffocation or drowning
- (e) Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents/guardians fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness);
- (f) Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child;
- (g) For children with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour
- (h) Burning or scalding

4. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal,

or for that of others, For example:

- (a) Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- (b) Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- (c) Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation;
- (d) Sexual intercourse with the child.
- (e) Sexual exploitation of a child;
- (f) It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

4.9 SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. A cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Indicators should be noted. It is important, however, to realise that all of these indicators can occur in other situations where abuse has not been a factor, and that the list is not exhaustive.

Some examples of indicators under the 4 categories include:-

PHYSICAL Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas or aggressive

Bites, burns and scalds Reluctance to change clothing

EMOTIONAL Drop in performance Regressive behaviour

Crying Excessive clinginess

NEGLECT Weight loss Changes in attendance

Untreated fractures Reluctance to go home

SEXUAL Torn or bloodstained clothing Distrustful of adults

Inappropriate sexual awareness, Sudden drop in performance behaviour or language

4.10 GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

Consider the possibility of child abuse if there are reasonable grounds for concern. Reasonable grounds for concern exist when there is:

- a specific indication from a child that s/he has been abused
- an account by a person who saw the child being abused
- evidence, *such as an injury or behaviour* which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way

- an injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;
- consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

4.11 PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998 (IRL)

The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to the Health Board (*now Health Services Executives*) or the Gardai. This means that, even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

This Act came into operation on 23rd January, 1999. The main provisions of the Act are:

(1) the provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of Health Boards (*now HSE*) or any member of An Garda Síochána;

(2) the provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal;

(3) the creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”.

This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

This law does not exist in Northern Ireland, but an individual who reports a concern in ‘good faith’ is not deliberately attempting to slander another person’s name. In Northern Ireland there is legislation, the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 which places the responsibility on everybody to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasising the,

‘duty of every other person, who knows or believes,

a) that the offence or some other arrestable offences has been committed; and

b) that he has information which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence.’

4.12 RECOGNISING AND REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person’s willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible, and may not be clearly observable. If a Sports Leader or a parent/guardian is uneasy or suspicious about a child’s safety or welfare the following response should be made:

4.12.1 Reporting Child Abuse

The following steps should be followed in reporting child abuse to the Statutory Authorities:

(a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information;

(b) Report the matter as soon as possible to the designated person. If there are reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the statutory authorities who have statutory responsibility to investigate, assess and validate suspected or actual child abuse;

(c) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact a duty social worker the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities;

(d) If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist or not, s/he should informally consult with the local duty social worker. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report;

(e) A Designated Person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, **unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation;**

(f) A report should be given by the Designated Person to the Statutory Authorities in person or by phone, and in writing; without delay

(g) It is best to report child abuse concerns by making personal contact with the relevant personnel in

the Statutory Authorities and follow up in writing

(h) In those cases where the school finds that it does not have reasonable grounds for reporting a concern to the Statutory Authorities, the member who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement by the designated person of the reasons why the school is not taking action. The member should be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with, or report to, the Statutory Authorities in their area.

4.12.2 Response to a child reporting any form of abuse

The following points should be taken into consideration:

- (a) The child should understand in an age appropriate way that it is not possible that any information will be kept a secret;
- (b) It is important to deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened;
- (c) It is important to stay calm and not to show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously;
- (d) It should be understood that the child has decided to tell about something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation;
- (e) No judgmental statement should be made against the person against whom the allegation is made;
- (f) The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions can be used if necessary such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that". Try to let the child tell their story, use their words
- (g) The child should be given some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, health board or social services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.

4.13 INFORMAL CONSULTATION

Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the duty social worker in the local health services executive or social services department where they will receive advice.

4.14 SOURCES OF CHILD ABUSE

It is important to realise that children may be subjected to abuse by parents/guardians or other family members, persons outside their family, other children, or those who have responsibility for their care for one reason or another for short or long periods of time.

4.15 CHILDREN WHO MAY BE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO ABUSE

Children in certain situations may be especially vulnerable to abuse. These include children who, for short or long periods, are separated from parents or other family members and depend on other adults for their care and protection. Children with disabilities may also be more at risk as the nature of their disability sometimes limits communication between themselves and others and they may depend more than most children on a variety of adults to meet their needs, for example, for care and transport. Those from a minority racial background may also be especially vulnerable. This could be due to the difficulty in recognising that racism is inherent in our society, which impacts on a child's ability to seek help from those in positions of authority.

4.16 PEER ABUSE

In some cases of child abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child and it is important that behaviour of this nature is not ignored. Grounds for concern will exist in cases where there is an age difference and/or difference in power, status or intellect between the children involved. However, it is also important to distinguish between normal sexual behaviour and abusive behaviour.

4.17 ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST SPORTS LEADERS

Agreed procedures (as set out in the Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport (Appendix 12) are to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Assistants/Instructors. If such an allegation is made, two steps should be taken:

- (i) The reporting procedure (See 4.12)
- (ii) The procedure for dealing with the Assistant/Instructor

4.17.1 Special Considerations

The following points should be considered

- the safety of the child making the allegation and any others who are/may be at risk should be ensured and this should take precedence over any other consideration. In this regard, the school should take any necessary steps which may be immediately necessary to protect children
- if a Assistant/Instructor is the subject of the concern s/he should be treated with respect and fairness.

4.17.2 Steps to be taken within the TKD School

Where reasonable grounds for concern exist (See 4.10) the following steps should be taken by the school:

- advice should be sought from the local duty social worker with regard to any action by the school deemed necessary to protect the child/children who may be at risk
- the matter should be reported to the local statutory authorities following the standard reporting procedure outlined above
- in the event that the concern is connected to the actions of an Assistant/Instructor in the school, the Assistant/Instructor involved in the concern should be asked to stand aside pending the outcome of any investigation by the Statutory Authorities. It is advisable that this task be undertaken by the Chief Instructor or other senior office holder other than the designated person/children's officer who takes the responsibility for reporting.

When the Assistant/Instructor is being privately informed by the senior officer of a) the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her and b) the nature of the allegation, s/he should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His/her response should be noted and passed on to the statutory authorities.

All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, Assistant/Instructors) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.

Once the criminal process is completed, the School should consider the need to examine whether there are grounds for disciplinary proceedings for misconduct. The fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or has been found not guilty does not mean that such proceedings are not necessary or feasible.

4.18 CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within a school. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.

The following points should be borne in mind:

- a guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations
- all information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know
- information should be conveyed to the parents/guardians of the child about whom there are concerns in a sensitive way
- giving information to others on a "need to know" basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality

4.19 DEALING WITH ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person. This information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

Any such complaints relating to child protection concerns should be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in this Code.

4.20 RUMOURS

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour circulating in the school should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person and checked out without delay. Any ensuing information should be handled confidentially and with sensitivity. If the designated person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child has been abused s/he should refer the matter to the Statutory Authorities, using the standard reporting procedure.

If there is any doubt about the requirement to report the substance of a rumour, advice should be sought from the duty social worker in the local health board or social services department. Children should be encouraged to report problems or concerns directly to their Children's Officer and/or to their parents/guardians, or any trusted adult, regardless of how minor or serious the problem might be. Parents/guardians should also encourage children to inform them of any such problems or concerns.

Open trusting relationships between adults and children will help to ensure that all-important issues are dealt with in a constructive manner.

Section 5: Contact Details & Further Information

5.1 Galway Taekwon-Do School

We will be appointing a dedicated **Children's Officer/Designated Person** for the Galway Taekwon-Do School.

In the interim, the contact person is the **Senior Instructor**, Mr Mark O'Donnell. Telephone (087) 7970646.

5.2 Further Reading

Irish Sports Council Code of Ethics

To download the Code of Ethics, go to:

http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Participation/Code_of_Ethics



Children First : National Guidelines For The Protection And Welfare Of Children

To download this document, go to:

http://www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html



5.3 Training

All instructors/assistants are required to undertake the Code of Ethics Awareness course which is run regularly throughout the year.