

ATHLETICS COOK ISLANDS

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

June 2026



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FOREWORD

Kia Orana tatou katoatoa,

Athletics Cook Islands is a federation dedicated to the protection and care of our athletes. We want to ensure our athletes are safeguarded from abuse, harassment, exploitation and unsafe situations when they are training and competing in their sports. Safeguarding our athletes is the responsibility of our federation and all our community who are involved in the development and growth of athletics in the Cook Islands.

Having a written policy is important because it;

- Sets expectations
- Defines roles and responsibilities
- Provides each of us confidence and trust that there are structures and processes in place to report safeguarding abuse.

Athletics Cook Islands is aligned with World Athletics and we give the assurance that ‘we will listen and we will act at every level in our sport.’

Safeguarding is the action that Athletics Cook Islands as a federation of World Athletics, but more importantly a community—will take in our responsibility to promote the welfare of our athletes, especially our children, to ensure they are protected from harm, abuse, harassment, exploitation and unsafe situations and environments.

Safeguarding is for all our community involved— children and adults. When our athletics club or school or community sports environments are safe and happy places for those in our sport, we will be much better placed to retain our athletes and attract new athletes to our sport.

To achieve this, we need a clear set of guidelines.

Athletics Cook Islands has aligned its safeguarding policy to that of World Athletics as our governing body. This helps us to ensure we are implementing best practice procedures and keeping our protocols and policies consistent with what the world standard is.

As a community we are committed to ensuring the safety and protection of our athletes. We will do our best to promote, police and act immediately when issues that go against our safeguarding policies and expectations of reasonable conduct are breached.

We need action – individually and collectively. We owe this to our athletes competing both now and in the future.

Meitaki for doing your part to protect our sport and support our athletes.

Simone Fe’ao

President

Athletics Cook Islands

1. Introduction

This safeguarding policy is issued by Athletics Cook Islands (“ACI”) and is part of the mission of ACI to develop the people of the Cook Islands through more participation in athletics.

Part of the responsibility of ACI is to ensure the utmost precaution is taken to protect the welfare of all athletes so that they can participate without fear of discrimination, ill treatment, abuse, harassment and exploitation.

To help achieve this goal, ACI is committed to ensuring that persons in positions of authority or “ACI Leaders” adopt practices aimed at identifying and eliminating abuse, harassment and exploitation and that they lead by example. ACI takes its responsibility and the duty of care over athletes seriously.

This safeguarding policy is a guide.

It is expected that athletes, coaches, officials, athletics executive board members, families and friends of those involved in athletics and sports all remember that we are here to support and take care of one another.

We have a safeguarding policy in place to protect not only athletes but ourselves. It offers guidelines for decision making and responding to certain issues and situations.

To ensure fair and reasonable approaches to how we behave towards one another in athletics, how we travel with one another, how we protect one another and how we support one another—it is imperative that we have a safeguarding policy in place so that no one is unsure of what is and isn’t acceptable behaviour and treatment of those working, competing and supporting those in athletics.

2. Cultural values

The culture of the Cook Islands reflects the closeness of our people to family, faith and heritage. In respect to these values, our safeguarding policy must also be flexible enough to understand these aspects of our culture which makes us unique.

To ensure a consistent approach to how we manage and deal with issues around cultural values, the following explanation and guidelines are documented.

Faith

Many of our community have a religious faith. It is common practice in our culture for our events and competitions to open with a prayer.

Athletes may engage in prayer before competition, events and training. It is culturally responsible to acknowledge and allow our athletes and ACI members to practice their faith based protocols in preparation for their sport. It is reasonably acceptable to allow time for prayer before competition for example.

There will be instances where recognition of individual religious practices should be taken into consideration for athletes, families, coaches, officials of ACI etc and allow those times to happen.

This will also mean that scheduling should be done to include time for moments of prayer to take place.

ACI support these values and encourage those in athletics to hold strong to their faith and beliefs. Reasonable practices of saying prayer or advising coaches or ACI executive that you do not wish to participate in sporting events on Sundays (for example) is not unreasonable. However clear and transparent communications about any wishes or changes to programs should be shared with coaches or athletes or those involved as soon as this decision comes to hand.

It is unreasonable and unprofessional to expect to change a scheduled practice for a Sunday or Saturday (for example) last minute or after the schedule has been put out. Vice versa, it is reasonable for an athlete to decline a certain regime that they have not been part of the planning for.

Travelling and staying with Family

Family is a big part of our Cook Islands culture. This safeguarding policy does its best to align all individuals to be guided by one defined approach for the safety and security of all.

Best intentions may not be the best practice when it comes to the welfare and wellbeing of our athletes.

A family of athletes and a coach may not necessarily be sharing the same accommodation. Irrespective of family ties, it is important to understand that all cases of travel will be assessed and determined on a case by case basis and where applicable—well before booking accommodation.

For instance; immediate family (parents and children) may be able to share accommodation, however this will need to be determined and agreed upon with ACI executive **prior** to travel.

The general rule for travelling with athletics is that **male coaches and officials of athletics will look after and be accommodated with male athletes.**

Female coaches and officials for athletics will look after and be accommodated with female athletes. This will remain the standard protocol.

Any arrangements outside of this must be considered, discussed and agreed upon by those involved and an appropriate representative of ACI.

Safeguarding in this respect is to ensure that there is no confusion with what is reasonable when it comes to travel and accommodation arrangements.

Meals and nutrition

It is expected that during competition athletes will only eat with their athletics party that they have travelled with. To ensure the athletes remain in peak physical condition, the coach or nutritionists eating plan must remain in place during the full duration of the competition.

Athletes are not to eat with families outside of the routine defined by their coach or nutritionist. Athletes may spend time with family and eat with family only after competition if time allows.

It is important for all athletes to remember their commitment to their sport includes commitment to the training regiment and nutrition plan as established and defined by their coach.

Safeguarding means putting in place the best possible plan for our athletes while they are in competition mode. This will include overseeing and managing meals during any travel away from home for athletics competition and training.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to ACI, Pa Enua (Outer Island) Federations, athletes, staff, officials, coaches, volunteers and any other person affiliated with athletics in the Cook Islands through ACI. All parties listed are required to comply with this Policy and any other policies related to safeguarding in athletics and to take all steps required by ACI to ensure that everyone associated with athletics is protected from abuse, harassment

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is important to raise awareness of the subject across the sport through education and training. By raising awareness everyone will be able to recognise and respond appropriately to concerns of abuse, harassment and exploitation that they may witness or have reported to them.

Consultation with children, athletes and other stakeholders about safeguarding policies is encouraged to ensure all voices are heard and to build confidence in the value and strength of safeguarding policies and procedures developed by ACI. Engagement will help build commitment to safeguarding in the wider athletics community.

4. What is Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the process of protecting vulnerable persons, children and adults from abuse, harassment and exploitation. Creating a safe and welcoming environment, where everyone is respected and valued, is at the heart of safeguarding.

Everyone involved with athletics has a role to play in making sure they actively prevent abuse, harassment or exploitation, listen to accounts from children and adults of their experiences and respond safely and fully if there is a problem.

5. Principles of Safeguarding

- **Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be free from discrimination whether it is based on sex, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation or gender identity, beliefs, religious or political affiliation.**
- **Everyone has the right to participate, enjoy and develop personally through athletics in a safe, inclusive environment free from all forms of abuse, harassment or exploitation.**
- **Everyone, both children and adults, has the right to have their voices heard particularly if raising a concern about their own or another person's welfare. Everyone should know who to ask for help when they have a concern about an individual's behaviour.**
- **Everyone is responsible for the care and protection of children, making decisions in their best interests as their welfare is paramount.**

6. World Athletics Integrity Code of Conduct

As a federation under World Athletics, ACI adopts this section direct from World Athletics' own Safeguarding Policy.

World Athletics' Integrity Code of Conduct at Rule 3 requires all Applicable Persons, as defined in the Code, to meet the standards, one of which is:

"Dignity: to safeguard the dignity of individuals and not to engage, (directly or indirectly) in any form of harassment or abuse, whether physical, verbal, mental, sexual or otherwise."

It is essential for all those who are subject to the Integrity Code of Conduct to behave in ways that meet the highest ethical standards.

7. Purpose

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure everyone involved in athletics as a member of ACI, understands their responsibility when it comes to the principle of safeguarding our athletes. ACI is committed to safeguarding all those associated with athletics from abuse, harassment and exploitation.

Only in safe and positive environments can everyone compete and enjoy the sport with the confidence that ACI is taking its responsibility over athletes welfare and duty of care seriously.

Even outside ACI competitions, training and events, we expect to see ACI members, coaches, athletes and families committed to ensuring the protection and safeguarding of all our athletes competing in whatever sports disciplines we may encounter or support. Protection of our children and our vulnerable adults is the responsibility of everyone in our Cook Islands community.

8. Process components

1. **Implementing and embedding this Policy**
2. **Raising awareness of abuse, harassment and exploitation**
3. **Travelling overseas**
4. **Vetting and recruitment of staff and volunteers in line with acceptable ethical practices**
5. **Supporting victims of abuse, harassment and exploitation**
6. **Responding to concerns raised**
7. **Reporting concerns expeditiously**
8. **Confidentiality**

Implementing and embedding this Policy

ACI leaders such as; the Executive Board, Pa Enua Federations, staff, officials, coaches and any other persons affiliated with athletics in roles of authority must confirm they have read and understand this policy in writing by sending an email confirmation to athleticsci@gmail.com (President of ACI).

All athletes should be given this policy on commencement of their registration with ACI.

For children under 18, this policy will be shared with the parent or guardian as well as the child in the first month of joining ACI and email confirm must be provided by the parent to state that they have read and understand the terms and conditions of this policy.

ACI must go over this policy with athletes prior to travel overseas for competition.

Raising awareness of abuse, harassment and exploitation

ACI shall provide access to educational material and training material for its workforce and direct individuals to appropriate training courses delivered by specialist organisations.

Reasonable doubt and common sense must be at the forefront of determining whether abuse, harassment and exploitation or any treatment and/or behaviour where athletes and/or their accompanying coach or ACI leader

Travelling overseas

Prior to overseas travel for competitions or ACI affiliated experiences, all involved including athletes, parents and/or guardians must have read and understand this safeguarding policy in preparation regardless of if they have read it already. It is the responsibility of ACI leaders to ensure this process consistently happens and is taken seriously.

Minors **travelling overseas** for competition must be accompanied by a coach or parent or supervisor that they know and feel comfortable with.

- Our young athletes will have a coach or ACI leader that is assigned to them and that they know is considered their guardian during the time of travel.
- Female minors must have a female ACI leader, parent or guardian as part of the travelling group.
- Female minors will only share accommodation with other female athletes or female ACI leader, parent or guardian.

- Parents must be consulted and have given their consent in regards to any travel arrangements including accommodation arrangements and who the travelling party is when their child is travelling overseas to represent ACI in any competition or experience – this includes travel to the Pa Enua.

Vetting and recruitment of staff and volunteers in line with acceptable ethical practices

It is the responsibility of ACI to ensure that best practices are adopted when vetting and recruiting volunteers and staff. This means that best practice common sense and duty of care in the recruitment process for both the applicant and the ACI leadership team are at the forefront of the recruitment process.

Supporting those who are victims of abuse, harassment and exploitation

It is the responsibility of the ACI Executive Team to ensure appropriate and adequate support for any victims of negative behaviour or treatment in athletics that is considered as abuse, harassment and exploitation or that impacts negatively on the welfare and wellbeing of ACI athletes is taken seriously. This includes their families especially in the case of our children who are athletes.

Follow up and ongoing support for all those affected by issues that go against the appropriate standards of safeguarding is ACI's responsibility, until those involved have recovered and they have received the care and/or counsel they require and deserve.

Process: Responding to concerns raised

Every concern raised must be given immediate attention and taken seriously.

It is ACI's duty of care to ensure appropriate standards and methods of response to any issues raised are managed with conscientious care and sensitivity to protect those involved.

There is an approved method of response for all concerns raised in regards to safeguarding.

1. The individual / party concerned raises the issue with an ACI representative such as a member of the executive team or a coach.
2. The ACI representative should assess the issue presented and decide what kind of issue it is and the severity or level of concern of that particular issue;
 - i. An issue that can be resolved immediately through appropriate conversation or rectifying the situation or apology or other appropriate means to resolution where all involved are satisfied with the outcome.
 - ii. An issue that needs further investigation to understand it.
 - iii. A possible criminal offence that should be escalated to Police immediately
3. If the issue at hand is deemed an issue that needs further investigation, the ACI representative should request the individual or parent (if the individual is a minor) put the concern in writing and email or present it to the president and secretary of ACI or representative from the executive team asap.
4. The President and / or secretary call a formal meeting to discuss the issue within 3 days of the issue being received in writing by email or letter.
5. ACI should ensure any matters of concern are documented appropriately and signed off by 2 x executive members including the president to ensure records are maintained to support remedial action to rectify any situations brought to the attention of the ACI executive, coaches, officials and / or other athletes.
6. Multiple meetings or mediation sessions may be needed to resolve an issue depending on the severity of the misconduct or the raised concern. All necessary steps needed to resolve the issue at hand should be exhausted to ensure a resolution is reached.

7. Where ACI policy or mediation do not reach resolution, then the concern must be escalated to engage either Cook Islands National Olympics Committee (CISNOC) or Oceania Athletics Association (OAA) in the first instance, then potentially World Athletics (WA). The ACI Exec will oversee the management of the resolution process and are responsible for escalating procedures in a timely manner ensuring the confidentiality of those involved and the details of the issue are not shared without consent of those involved.
8. Where resolution of any issues raised can not be reached—ACI should seek further guidance from within the Cook Islands legal framework such as Crown Law to access other mediation strategies.
9. Where it is found that serious misconduct of an ACI member has been proven, that individual and any accomplices will be struck off and no longer be allowed to participate in ACI activities. They may also face legal charges and/or fines.

All concerns raised will be dealt with individually as aligned to ACI's approved method of response.

If at any point anyone has a concern about an individual who requires medical support this should be sought in the first instance. If an individual is at immediate risk of harm there should be no delay in reporting a matter to the local emergency services. There are occasions when the consent of the individual to report a matter should be sought, taking into account their age and mental capacity. The capacity for consent of a child under the age of 12 is different from that of a child between the age of 12 and 18 and between a child and an adult. If an individual refuses to give consent the matter may still need to be reported.

Reporting concerns expeditiously

There is a set method of reporting these concerns that must be adhered to by those raising any issues.

Report the concern to the ACI secretary or president or an ACI Executive Board member or coach or official **as soon as is reasonably possible** – immediately if and when possible is always the most helpful way to deal with any concerns expeditiously.

Put the concern in writing—All concerns must be put in writing either via email or handwritten to both the ACI president and secretary in a timely manner.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will always be treated with respect and remain confidential.

Where this value is not upheld, any ACI members found to be behaving contrary to their role of responsibility shall be removed from ACI activities and struck off as a member of ACI.

Disclaimer

World athletics standards and codes of practice shall be adopted or used in conjunction with ACI policy by ACI in all cases to ensure a clear and consistent approach to safeguarding is undertaken.

9. Resources and References

There are numerous useful and interesting resources available, a few of which are set out below from World Athletics.

There are documents, videos and information about education and training all of which relate to creating a safe sporting environment.

- IOC Safeguarding Toolkit and IOC Guidelines for International Federations (IFs) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs) related to creating and implementing a policy to safeguard athletes from harassment and abuse in sport may be found online at the website www.olympic.com
- World Athletics Integrity Code of Conduct can be found at www.worldathletics.org
- International Safeguards for Children in Sport can be found here. www.unicef.org.uk
- Safe Sport website with resources can be found at www.olympics.com
- World Athletics Strategy can be found on their website at www.worldathletics.org

10. Review

This Policy will be reviewed by Athletics Cook Islands annually. At any time this policy can be reviewed however implementation and roll out of a new policy must be made public and accessible to all ACI members of the exec before the new policy is officially adopted.

An executive meeting to discuss new or updated policy roll out should always be held prior to any policy changes.

This document was updated June 2026.

Signed:



Simone Fe'ao

President Athletics Cook Islands