**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SWIMMING CLUBS FOR THE HANDICAPPED**

**CHILD AND VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION POLICY**

NASCH recognises its legal duty to work with other agencies in protecting children and vulnerable people from harm and abuse. Incidences of physical and emotional abuse occur across all socio-economic groups. Protection is a matter of great importance and Clubs should play an important role in overseeing the welfare, health and safety of members. Clubs need to be well prepared to carry out their responsibilities for child and vulnerable person protection. It is necessary to have clear procedures in place to address situations where the Club Committee has concerns for a child or vulnerable person's welfare, or disclosures are made by a child or vulnerable person.

In order to promote the safety and protection of children and vulnerable people in the Club and to comply with current regulations, the Club Committee will refer any concerns about the well being of its membersto Social Services.

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

I. All children and vulnerable people have the right to be protected from abuse.

2. The interests and safety of the child and vulnerable person are of prime concern at all times. In instances where there is a conflict of interest between the child and vulnerable person and anyone in loco parentis i.e. the Club Committee during Club activities, the interest of the child and vulnerable person must be paramount. The Children’s Act, 1989, Section 3(5) states that:-

'A person who does not have parental responsibility for a particular child but has care of the child, may (subject to the provisions of the Act) do what is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child’s welfare’.

3. A child or vulnerable person is considered to be abused, or at risk of abuse, when his/her basic needs are not being met, through avoidable acts or omissions. This includes neglect and physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

4.Once child or vulnerable person abuse is suspected, the aim should be to minimise damage to the child or vulnerable person and promote recovery.

1. All Clubs shall appoint a Child and Vulnerable Person Protection Officer who shall be

 appointed as a member of the Club Committee and be made known to all Club Members.

**GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES MADE BY CHILD AND VULNERABLE PERSONS**

Under no circumstances should a child or vulnerable person be questioned if they have disclosed information, which raises concerns. When information is offered in confidence, the recipient will need to display tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The CPO will need to reassure the child or vulnerable person, retain his/her trust and explain the need for action, which will involve other adults being informed. If a child or vulnerable person discloses abuse, the child or vulnerable person should not have to repeat the information to different people.

The CPO who receives information from a child or vulnerable person alleging abuse mustnot ask questions or proffer alternative explanations for the child or vulnerable person's concerns. The child or vulnerable person's report must be listened to carefully and recorded accurately, in the language used by the child or vulnerable person, at the earliest opportunity following its receipt. Any discussions with the child or vulnerable person should adhere to the following basic principles:

Listen to the child or vulnerable person, rather than directly question him/her.

Never stop a child or vulnerable person who is recalling significant events.

Make a note of the discussion, taking care to record the timing,setting and personnel present, as well as what was said.

Record all subsequent disclosures/events.

1.Inthe event of a child or vulnerable person disclosing, information which causes concern, the CPO should discuss this with the Social Services at the earliest opportunity. All such information should be treated as confidential.

2. Written concerns or reports of disclosures should be handed to the CPO and placed in a named, sealed envelope marked 'confidential'.

3. The CPO will ensure that all information relating to Child and Vulnerable Person Protection is retained in a secure filing system. Such information will not be released to unauthorised persons.

Approved by NASCH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 18 September 2004

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