



Republic of Ireland Taekwon-Do Association (R.I.T.A.)

Child Protection Policy

Code of Practice

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents.

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Taekwon-Do Council, 2000.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 2011

Children First Bill 2014

Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002

Republic of Ireland Taekwon-Do Association (R.I.T.A.) Schools Mission Statement

The work of **R.I.T.A.** is based on the following principles that will guide the development of Taekwon-Do for young people in this school. Children and young person's experience of Taekwon-Do should be guided by what is best for the child or young person. The stages of development and the ability of the child should guide the types of activity provided within the school. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

Integrity in relationships:

Adults interacting with young people in Taekwon-Do should do so with integrity and respect for the child. All adult actions in Taekwon-Do should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within Taekwon-Do.

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Taekwon-Do for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Too often unhealthy competitive demands are placed on children too early and results in excessive levels of pressure on them and as a consequence, high levels of dropout from sport.

Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disability should be involved in Taekwon-Do activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Competition

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Instructors\Assistants should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement

Introduction.

The R.I.T.A. is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people who participate in Taekwon-Do. This Policy document clearly demonstrates the importance placed by R.I.T.A. on the protection and safety of children and young people who participate in Taekwon-Do.

All children and young people who participate in Taekwon-Do should be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. While doing so they should be protected from any form of abuse, be it physical, emotional, sexual, neglect or bullying. The responsibility for protecting children lies with all adults involved in this school and in Taekwon-Do in general.

- Children are defined in Irish Law as being any person under 18 years of age.

The R.I.T.A. recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.

These clear policies, practices and procedures in addition to relevant training programmes will ensure that everybody in R.I.T.A. knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within Taekwon-Do.

It is vital that children and young people who participate in R.I.T.A. activities are able to do so in a safe, enjoyable and quality environment.

In pursuit of this goal the R.I.T.A. will:

- Advise all members of the R.I.T.A. (Instructors, students, parents and spectators) of their responsibilities in relation to the welfare and protection of children and young people who participate in Taekwon-Do.
- Operate within the recommended Republic of Ireland Taekwon-Do Association codes of conduct and best practice guidelines.
- Appoint a School Children's Officer in line with Republic of Ireland Taekwon-Do Association requirements.
- Provide a child protection and welfare module in staff induction and development programmes

The aims of the R.I.T.A. Child Protection Policy are:

- To develop a positive and pro-active position in order to best protect all children and young people who participate in Taekwon-Do, in order for them to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment.
- To provide appropriate guidance and advice to all school members (students, Instructors, volunteers, spectators and parents) in all matters concerning child welfare and protection.
- To demonstrate best practice in the area of child welfare and protection.
- To promote ethics and best practice standards throughout Taekwon-Do.

The key principles underpinning this Policy are that:

- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
- All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse/poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. It is essential that we work in partnership with children and young people and their parents/carers. The HSE has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and Grandmaster Howard's Schools is committed to cooperating fully with them in accordance with procedures as outlined in "Children First" National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.
- All R.I.T.A. Schools will cooperate fully with the Republic of Ireland Taekwon-Do Association National Children's Officer, Gardaí and HSE in any investigation of child abuse in Taekwon-Do.

The following rules are adhered to in the R.I.T.A.

THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

(a) In line with legislation and Government Guidelines (The Child Care Act 1991 and the Protection for Persons Reporting Abuse Act 1998) in relation to child protection and welfare, it is mandatory that all participants, schools, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies shall be bound by the Grandmaster Howard's Schools codes of conduct and best practice guidelines

(b) Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings Taekwon-Do into disrepute.

(c) Breaches shall become a disciplinary offence. Any member issued with a ban from Taekwon-Do activity shall have their name notified to the R.I.T.A. The notification shall state the name of the individual and the fact

a ban has been issued.

(d) Any participant who is the subject of a Statutory Inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all Taekwon-Do activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

(e) Any member convicted of an offence by the Irish Courts or Courts of any other jurisdiction involving the welfare of children shall be automatically banned from the R.I.T.A. For the avoidance of doubt no disciplinary or other hearing shall be necessary in order to implement this automatic ban.

RULE 95. PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

1. All instructors, assistants, members and students shall be bound by the R.I.T.A. rules, codes of conduct and guidelines governing the protection and welfare of children, and breaches of such rules, codes and guidelines shall be subject to disciplinary sanction.

2. The disciplinary body may impose any sanction it deems appropriate.

3. Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute.

4. Any participant who is the subject of a statutory inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all Taekwon-Do activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

The R.I.T.A. through confirming this policy document has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that children and young people can participate in all Taekwon-Do activities with their safety and welfare being of paramount importance.

It is essential that this document represents a process of continual improvement in the area of child protection and welfare in Taekwon-Do.

It is the responsibility of all adults involved in Taekwon-Do to actively promote safe and best practice standards whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities to children and young people in their care.

Republic of Ireland Taekwon-Do Schools Child Protection Procedures

Procedure for dealing with Child Abuse Concerns or Allegations

It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities (Gardaí, HSE) and should not be undertaken by Children's Officers. All allegations of child abuse **must** be referred to the Statutory Authorities.

When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the HSE and this decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern. In accordance with requirements of Children First all concerns with relation to suspected child abuse will be passed on to the relevant statutory authorities.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- (i) a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused;
- (ii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;
- (iii) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;
- (iv) a symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is support by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence;
- (v) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

Ref. Children First 2011

Therefore in practice, concerns will be passed on by the Schools designated person to the statutory authorities if we receive:

- (ii) a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused;
- (iii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;

or have evidence in relation to:

- (iii) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;
- (iv) a symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is support by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence;
- (iv) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

Step One

Any allegation of abuse must in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Child Liaison Officer of the School. Should the Child Liaison Officer be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local HSE duty social worker. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

Instructors/assistants may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and appropriate support should be provided for staff/volunteers including counselling where necessary.

Step Two

Should the R.I.T.A. become aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a instructors/assistants during the execution of that Instructors/assistants duties, the Child Liaison Officer will privately inform the instructors/assistants of the following:

- the fact that the allegation has been made against him/her;
- the nature of the allegation.

Step Three

The instructors/assistants should be afforded an opportunity to respond. The Child Liaison Officer will note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the HSE.

The report to the HSE should contain observations, dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Child Liaison Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardaí shall be contacted.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities

Step Four

Our Chairperson, if reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine any statutory investigation.

It should be noted that should a formal notification be made, we are not accusing anyone of child abuse, rather we are passing on concerns for investigation by the appropriate statutory authorities in keeping with the principle that “the welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration”.

Step Five

All subsequent actions following an allegation of abuse against a instructors/assistants will be taken in consultation with the HSE and An Garda Síochana. An immediate meeting will be sought with these two agencies for this purpose.

Step Six

Under the R.I.T.A. rules, any instructors/assistants who are the subject of a statutory investigation into alleged child abuse is required to stand down from all Taekwon-Do activities until the investigation is completed. Therefore the R.I.T.A. National Child Liaison Officer must be informed immediately of any formal notification to the Statutory Authorities.

When a person is asked to stand down it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure in keeping with standard procedures/guidelines and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The instructors/assistants concerned should be advised that the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory requirements. He or she should be treated with respect by the R.I.T.A. and also be assured that all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Step Seven

The School will carefully consider the outcome of the statutory investigation and will then assess if there are any outstanding disciplinary issues in relation to their internal rules or infringements of the R.I.T.A. best practice guidelines/rules of ethics. It must be remembered that the fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

Internal School disciplinary proceedings can only be initiated after the Statutory Authorities have completed theirs.

Schools Children's Officer/s

The appointment of School Children's Officers is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any school. They act as a resource to members with regard to children's issues and also ensure that children have a voice in the running of the school and can freely talk of their experiences.

Government guidelines advise that a children officer should be appointed by all schools and this should be done in accordance with recommended selection and recruitment procedures.

The Schools Children's Officer should:

- Have good communication skills, be approachable and open minded
- Have good knowledge and be familiar with their Child Welfare and Protection Codes and Guidelines Children First 2011
- Have an understanding of relevant child welfare/protection legislation,
- Have undertaken a Garda Vetting application (when available)
- Have attended the relevant awareness training on child welfare and protection and availed of Children's Officer training

The Schools Children's Officer will have the following functions:

- To promote the Code of Ethics & Good Practice
- To influence policy and practice and to prioritise children's needs
- To ensure that children know how and whom they can report their concerns to within the school. Information disclosed by a child should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines "*Children First*"
- To encourage the participation of parents/guardians in school activities
- To co-operate with parents to ensure that each child enjoys his/her participation in Taekwon-Do
- To act as a resource with regard to best practice in children's Taekwon-Do
- To report regularly to the School Executive Committee
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or school transfers by children or Instructors\assistants

School Children's Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the school and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the HSE and Gardaí.

R.I.T.A. Schools Travelling Guidelines

When travelling with young people Instructors/assistants should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Ensure the use of safety belts
- Keep to the rules of the road
- Avoid being alone with one student; if with one student you could: put the passenger in the back seat, drop off at central locations, get parental permission for transporting children on a regular basis, and clearly state times of pick off and drop off.

R.I.T.A. Schools Touching Guidelines

All Instructors/assistants in R.I.T.A. Schools are advised that:

- Any necessary physical contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult
- It should be in an open environment with the permission and full understanding of the student
- It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the student. You should not anything that a child can do for him/herself
- Instructors should not treat injuries out of sight of others. Use a "Two-Deep" (two personnel, or two students) supervision system. Only personnel who are qualified in administering First Aid or treating Taekwon-Do injuries should attempt to treat an injury.
- The comfort level and dignity of the student should always be the priority. Example: Only uncover the injured area, or cover private areas of the athlete's body.
- Any doubts of a medical nature should be passed on to a suitably qualified medical person.
- Injured students should not compete or train

Comforting/congratulating students is an important part of the relationship between Instructors and students.

- Guidelines for this type of touch are:
- Limit touching to "safe" areas, such as hand-to-shoulder. It should not involve touching genital area, buttocks, breasts, or mouths.
- Make your intention to congratulate or comfort clear to the student.
- Get permission from the student before embracing them - remember that personnel are in the position of power.
- Respect a student's discomfort or rejection of physical contact.

- Be sure that touching occurs only when others are present.

Avoid unnecessary physical contact and never engage in inappropriate touching

