

COVID-19 Coach Guidance

Introduction

In March 2020, the World Health Organisation characterised Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as a pandemic. A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect people and can spread widely between people. Cases have been detected in most countries worldwide.

Subsequently, schools in all ChildFund Pass It Back countries have closed and governments are imposing restrictions on community activities and movements to slow or stop the spread of the disease. This has resulted in a suspension of all ChildFund Pass It Back activities until further instruction is provided by governments in each country and project planning can be reassessed with partners.

While ChildFund Pass It Back Coaches are not able to meet their players and conduct training sessions during this time, Coaches are still respected community leaders for young people in their communities during this time and the ChildFund Pass It Back focus on child safeguarding commitments remains a core component for Coach-player communications. This document provides an overview of some ways Coaches can support young people and their community during this challenging time.

Increased Risks for Young People

Due to the uncertainty of the global situation and the ongoing changes in young people's lives from COVID-19, there may be some increased risks for our players arising from or during the current situation. Some examples of these potential risks include:

- Loss of routine and habit;
 - *Losing a routine like going to school or to ChildFund Pass It Back training sessions may negatively affect children who depend on the regularity of their daily life and each part of their day. Some children depend on and benefit from engaging in activities which provide mental stimulation, such as education or sports and/or spending time away from the family home.*
- Isolation from friends and support network;
 - *Without friends to talk to, have fun with or share concerns or happiness with, this could mean some children will feel alone or experience sadness or negative thoughts. Without a support network to find help, this will only make children's negative emotions more intense.*
- Boredom, anxiety and/or depression;
 - *Children may experience feelings of anxiety or depression with no normality and the regular outlets for support being taken away. In addition, lack of clarity about when the current situation will end may also cause feelings of uncertainty for children.*
- Increased risk of abuse at home
 - *Some children may already live in abusive homes but with parents/caregivers required to stay at home rather than going out to work, confined space at home and a combination of loss of routine, work opportunities and regular income, this is highly likely to increase the rates of violence in the home.*

Communications with Your Players

During this period, Coaches should try to maintain regular contact with players and teams to provide an emotional support network through online discussion. Checking in with players from time to time can be a good way to make sure our community can stay positive and that our players are safe and healthy.

However, be aware that when communicating with your players online through social media channels, your words and actions are not always visible to others as they would usually be in a public space during a training session.

Coaches are encouraged to communicate with players and their teams in appropriate ways online. Both members of a Coach pair should be included in any chat groups with teams and players to avoid one-on-one communications between a Coach and player. This will provide assurance that both Coaches will always be accountable for their words and actions with players.

The ChildFund Pass It Back child safeguarding principles of engaging with your players remain the same whether online or in person. You should always act with the best interests of a child at the centre of your actions and decisions.

Some key principles to remember and keep in mind when engaging with players (and other Coaches) are as follows:

1. All children have the right to participate, develop and learn;
2. All children have the right to remain free from abuse, harm or neglect;
3. **Everyone** is responsible to keep children safe.

Services/Support Available

Although there are no training sessions or formal activities at this time, ChildFund Pass It Back is committed to keeping children safe in the communities where we work. Reporting concerns about a child's safety through the program's child safeguarding reporting system is still allowed and Coaches are encouraged to do so if anyone recognises any risk or harm to their players or community members!

It will likely be challenging to access local services but where we can, ChildFund Pass It Back and our partners will do our best to provide advice and support to any player or Coach who is reported at risk in order to keep everyone safe.

Coaches also have access to a 'Community Social Services' handout and are encouraged to refer to it and share with their players so young people can access National Helplines and other resources available in your community to help anyone experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence.