

Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking Action Through Community Sport

People get involved in sport – whether as a leader, manager, player, club member, official or volunteer – because it is a meaningful experience that connects them to something bigger than themselves.

Preventing violence against women is focused on the whole community and it is important we bring everyone on the journey. One way to do this is by celebrating and normalising gender equality in every aspect of our lives.

The more people get involved and see the value of gender equity and respectful relationships in their social lives and their sport, the more they will pass this on to others and do their bit to bring about change in their families and broader community.

Violence against women is preventable and the Victorian Government is committed to stopping it before it starts. Gender inequality is at the heart of violence against women, and gender equality is at the core of the solution.

By challenging gender inequality in community sport, we can create inclusive, equitable, healthy and safe environments for women, men, girls, boys and gender diverse people. This helps to prevent violence against women.

Sport settings are places where people gather as players, coaches, administrators, officials, spectators and volunteers, so they provide a platform for cultural change. Sport is an important setting where gender inequality can be challenged, and equality championed.

Sporting clubs are often at the heart of the local community and are influential leaders, especially in regional and rural areas, and provide a valuable point of connection and belonging. They are well placed to influence the attitudes and beliefs we have around gender.

The Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking Action Through Community Sport have been created for the community sport sector as we move towards a Victoria free from violence. These Guidelines can be implemented by a range of people or organisations connected to the community sport sector, including State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies, local councils, Women's Health Services and community health organisations.

This document provides an overview of the Guidelines, which can be accessed on the Sport and Recreation Victoria website. The Guidelines provide information on approaches to prevent violence against women and provide direction on where you can learn more about how to build sporting cultures that are safe and respectful.



They have not been designed to be prescriptive as each organisation, sport and club is different, with diverse histories and cultures. There is no one-size-fits-all model. However, the Guidelines provide an evidence base and range of ideas and suggestions from across the sector on how to practically embed gender equity in community sports and, in doing so, prevent violence against women.

The full Guidelines contain a range of helpful resources, case studies, and an explanation of key terms including equality, equity, unconscious bias and intersectionality and how they relate to sport.

The Guidelines support compliance with the Change Our Game suite of initiatives and the *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)*, and support sports clubs and organisations to act, as leaders in their communities, to prevent violence against women.

The full document also contains a Club Gender Audit template that can be adapted to your sport or the club you're working with, and a Club Gender Equity Action Plan template.

The full Guidelines document has been split into two sections that complement each other and overlap because cultural change is never linear, and organisations will need to move forwards and backwards and revisit steps over time. The sections are:

- **Project planning and governance**, which relates to work you should do to ensure your organisation is in the best position to work directly with community sport clubs to support them to undertake cultural change and embed gender equity
- **Taking action through community sport – implementation**, which provides advice and guidance for project workers and organisations working directly with sporting clubs. It provides practical examples and advice for working with clubs.

Access the full Guidelines on the Sport and Recreation Victoria website for case studies and helpful resources.



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Project planning and governance

1. Establish a case for change

Putting together a case for establishing an equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive environment in your sport will help to articulate a clear argument about the benefits it will bring to the sport and club.

There are numerous benefits of gender equality in community sports:

- women's, girls' and gender diverse people's lives will improve
- healthier clubs and organisations
- diverse skills and leadership
- breaking free from masculine stereotypes will support men's wellbeing
- sustainability of clubs
- keeping in line with community expectations
- preventing violence against women.

2. Commit to adopting a whole-of-sport approach and secure support from leadership in your organisation

Gender equity should become 'business as usual' and not a standalone piece of work. Sporting organisations need to do internal work to ensure they 'walk the talk', putting a gender lens on all their practices, policies and processes.

To achieve your goal of preventing violence against women through embedding gender equity in community sport, you will need to work to influence change on a number of levels. This will ensure all areas of sport and their community partners are working towards the same goals. For whole-of-sport, change projects can work with a variety of partners and address gender equity on a range of different levels. These include:

- national sports governing bodies
- national and state governments
- state and regional sports governing bodies
- local councils
- local sports clubs

- individuals (including players, volunteers, parents, fans and spectators) and their relationships.

3. Planning, governance and partnerships

This work can be led by a range of organisations that have different roles to play in supporting community level sport – State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies, local councils, women's health services and community health organisations. It is recommended that there be a partnership approach to this work.

Strong planning and governance are crucial for gender equity initiatives.

Partnering with local services and groups shares the workload, expands the reach of projects and provides a range of expertise. Allow enough time in the planning process to make sure as many people as possible have a chance to contribute. Many local government, health and education services are already working to promote gender equity. Partnerships not only provide you with access to expertise, they can give you access to a wider community working towards preventing violence against women.

4. Evaluation

One of the strengths of sport is that continuous improvement in the game is a goal. This is the same goal of evaluation. Evaluation is an essential part of the planning process. Evaluation is the process by which we judge the worth or value of something. It is more than measuring success or failure. It should involve asking questions and reflecting on the answers.

Evaluation plans should start at the beginning of a program and involve an ongoing process of planning, implementation and review. It should not be an afterthought but linked with the program goals and objectives. Understanding your aims and objectives will help you understand what you are trying to find out in your evaluation.

5. Develop and implement appropriate responses to instances of disrespect and violence towards women and gender diverse people

Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate, disrespectful or aggressive behaviours at all levels of sport, and support community clubs to understand and implement this zero-tolerance approach. Have clear processes for dealing with breaches of the policies and codes of conduct, and do not hesitate to use them. Train organisational staff and club leaders to feel confident to respond respectfully and safely to disclosures of violence as these can arise when undertaking prevention work.

6. Expect and prepare for resistance

Not everyone in your sport may be ready for change but it is possible to bring people along with you by creating an environment where ideas can be discussed, and knowledge and information shared respectfully. Having a strong case for change, a 'key messages' document and whole-of-staff training will assist with any resistance. While resistance is challenging – don't give up! The hard conversations provide a space for change.

7. Engage men but ensure women and gender diverse people are central to the work

Achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women is a whole-of-community effort. Men play a critical role in calling out sexism and disrespect and building gender equality in their everyday lives – with family, friends, teammates and in sporting clubs.

Projects seeking to prevent violence against women should engage men as positive role models and advocates for gender equality from the beginning. However, it is important that women and gender diverse people are still equally consulted, empowered and engaged to challenge gender inequalities.

8. Share knowledge and learn from experts and each other

There are many people working in Victoria with expertise in gender equity and sport. Seek support and advice from experts and listen and learn from your peers. Remember that in this work you are not alone; everyone is learning as they go and people working in the area will be willing to support each other.

Communities of practice can be an excellent way of sharing knowledge and learning from each other. A community of practice is a group of people with a common interest coming together to share ideas and strategies, emphasising that they are all learning together. These groups can be formal or informal. It might be a formal group working on similar projects meeting monthly with a facilitator. Communities of practice can work well for people involved at all levels of the project.



Taking action through community – implementation

9. Work with club leadership first and secure their support

Ensure that people with authority and influence at the club are supportive and advocate for the program. If there is no buy-in from leadership, it is extremely difficult to get the rest of the club or organisation to want to make change. While having leadership support is important, remember that there will be other key club influencers who are not necessarily those in formal leadership roles (e.g. a player's parents may be well known and respected by many people in the club, but not sit on the committee).

10. Build on strengths and identify gaps – ideas for implementation

There is no one way to prevent violence against women in sport. Whatever you do must be practical and relevant for your sport and its members and be flexible enough to respond to the needs of the club you are working with. Projects should have a long-term focus, with short- and medium-term measured goals, as cultural change takes time. The Guidelines contain tips and ideas on how to tailor a plan for the club you are working with, making it relevant to the club's culture and community.

You can utilise these Guidelines to design and deliver practical programs to improve gender equity and prevent violence against women in your organisation and across your sport. Examples of ways the Guidelines can be put into practice include:

- gender equity workshops
- workshops on managing resistance and backlash
- gender audits including facility audits
- focus groups bringing together women and gender diverse people from clubs across the region
- member surveys
- gender equity communities of practice or networking events
- developing gender equity action plans
- Bystander Action Training to support whole-of-organisation change
- advocating to local media to increase the coverage of women's and girls' sports
- supporting decision makers to put a gender lens over game times and ground allocation
- guest speakers and events.



11. Skill development and education for clubs

Providing club members opportunities to learn from each other and from experts is key to developing their skills to drive gender equity changes.

Education for club members does not just come in the form of workshops – training is important but it is only one part of promoting equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive environments in sport.

Education can occur via informal conversations, focus groups, gender audits, guest speakers, sharing via social media and networking sessions.

Peer learning is important. Clubs benefit from being brought together to talk about similar challenges and learn which strategies are working for others. Clubs also benefit from opportunities to hear from the women, girls and gender diverse people in their club about their experiences and ideas.

Educate in short, sharp blocks. Educational conversations can be attached to committee meetings by including gender equity as a standing agenda item, or at training sessions or regular club dinners.

12. Share and celebrate successes

Make sure you celebrate your successes, no matter how great or small. When you have achieved a goal, noticed positive changes or received external recognition for your work, share that with club members and the wider community (via social media or local media). Sharing your successes will enhance the club's and the sport's profile, highlight its strengths and provide ideas and inspiration for others. Some programs host forums or celebration dinners to mark events such as the development of gender equity action plans.

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The Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking Action Through Community Sport were developed by Sport and Recreation Victoria in partnership with the Office for Women.





TOGETHER

— WE CAN —

END

VIOLENCE AGAINST

WOMEN