



# Child Protection

for PADI International  
Resorts and Retailers



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## Overview

As we all are aware, child abuse is becoming more visible and acute throughout society, on an international basis. With increased levels and channels of communication and increased numbers of activities that may put strangers into contact, it is generally considered that the opportunities for abuse to occur are naturally increasing.

The definition of “child” is typically anyone under legal age; in most countries this is age 18. Because this age group is actively involved in scuba and snorkeling activities, PADI Members are wise to consider good practices with regard to children involved in their business’ activities.

For organizations whose activities may become implicated in this overall process, it is becoming ever more important that they implement carefully-considered policies and procedures designed to provide reasonable protections and precautions against abuse occurring during the organizations’ activities. Beyond the prime issue of providing protection for those potentially at risk, the organizations also have a real need to protect themselves from both the legal liability and the loss of public trust that can result when abuse occurs in any way connected to or associated with their organizational activities.

## PADI’s Role in Protection

PADI’s training and ethical standards address the protection of children by pre-screening potential members; by follow up through the Quality Management process on any reports of abuse (including swift change to Nonteaching status for PADI Members when warranted) and by providing a code of practice for PADI Members. PADI also provides education to its membership on the importance of implementing and following protection guidelines in dive businesses and schools, and disseminating accepted good practice information along with sources of further information. Further, PADI provides education to the instructor, dive center and parent in its handbook “Children and Scuba Diving: A Resource Guide for Instructors and Parents” (see Chapter VI, Professional Conduct in Child Interactions).

### **PADI Ethical Standard (from PADI *Instructor Manual*, General Standards and Procedures):**

**As a PADI Individual or Dive Center Member (owner or shareholder of the business) you must:**

- **Not have, either during or prior to your membership with PADI, any criminal conviction involving abuse of a minor. The existence of any such criminal conviction on your part will be automatic grounds for denial or termination of PADI Membership.** This Ethical Standard neither diminishes nor alters the effects or use of any other Ethical Standard by PADI within its Quality Management or membership review processes.

PADI screens out those with prior convictions on PADI individual Membership Applications:

*“I understand and agree that any criminal conviction on my part involving abuse of a minor occurring either during or prior to my membership with PADI, will be automatic grounds for denial or termination of my PADI Membership.”*

And on IRRA Member applications:

*“I understand and agree that any criminal conviction on the part of any owner or shareholder of the business involving abuse of a minor occurring either during or prior to the business’ membership with PADI, will be automatic grounds for denial or termination of the business’ PADI Membership.”*

### **PADI Code of Conduct (from PADI Instructor Manual, General Standards and Procedures)**

The worldwide PADI organization believes the health, safety and welfare of children is paramount and should never be compromised regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin and religion. The PADI organization takes precautions to ensure this when children participate in scuba and skin diving activities with you. All suspicions and allegations of abuse are taken seriously, investigated immediately and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

### **Youth Leader’s Commitment**

Working with children is both a privilege and a responsibility. **Therefore, in all instructional activities involving children, PADI Members will:**

- **Look after the child’s health, safety and welfare.**
- **Ensure appropriate supervision during all instructional activities.**
- **Whenever possible, meet the child’s parents or guardians and share program goals and objectives.**
- **Strive to keep parents or guardians involved and informed through verbal reports and updates as often as possible.**
- **Treat children, parents or guardians with respect regardless of age, race, gender and religious affiliation.**
- **Honor all commitments made to children.**
- **Discuss disciplinary problems with parents or guardians.**
- **Not engage in inappropriate contact with children.**
- **Respect a child’s right to privacy and intrude only when health and safety demand.**
- **Whenever possible, ensure two adults are with children at all times.**

If you suspect a child may have been abused, check with your local authorities and determine the appropriate course of action.

### **Your Role in Protection**

It’s essential for PADI Professionals to consider their own practices to ensure that the safety and welfare of all students and customers—whatever age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin and religion – is paramount. You are in positions of considerable influence, especially when teaching and supervising children; and, therefore, have a profound responsibility to demonstrate high ethical standards.

Those who work with children on a regular basis may be able to provide an important link in identifying a child who has been or is at risk of being harmed.

Find out if there are codes of behavior in your country or region that help you not only recognize signs and symptoms of abuse, but also to know how to take appropriate action in your area if you recognize such signs. To help prevent abuse of children, each operation should have a policy and internal procedures which ensure that students and customers are protected and kept safe from harm. Everyone on staff should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where procedures are kept. This Guidelines document can be adapted to your dive operation's individual needs to fulfill this.

It's most important to find out if your country or region has specific regulations and legislation that applies to working with children, and if so, that you abide by these. For example for the United Kingdom, further information can be obtained from the Child Protection in Sport Unit at [www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk); in Australia several states and territories have related legislation in place; details are available through the Australian Sports Commission web site [www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/legischild.asp](http://www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/legischild.asp). Where there isn't specific legislation, there are useful guidelines for working with children that can be easily adopted at the following sites: [www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check/intro.html](http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check/intro.html) and [www.childcomm.qld.gov.au](http://www.childcomm.qld.gov.au).

## **PADI Dive Operation Child Protection Guidelines and Policy**

### **Controlling Access to Children**

As it is impossible to predict just who may have the potential to abuse children in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. The fundamental principle is that those in charge of activities involving children must take all reasonable steps to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of those who are given significant contact to the children in their care. Therefore, dive operations need a vigorous recruitment procedure when employing those who will have direct access to or work with children:

- Within local employment law guidelines, request information about any criminal conviction that has a bearing on the applicant's suitability to work with children
- Ensure that resumes, curriculum vitas and employment applications are complete and that any time lapses in employment history are accounted for.
- Request at least two references, including one regarding previous work with children. Follow up on references.
- If available and appropriate, use criminal record check procedures after receiving consent from the applicant.
- Check and be familiar with local and national laws regarding employee and applicant privacy, the sorts of questions that can legally be asked, etc.

A vigorous recruitment policy must be backed up with ongoing good practice and observation, which ultimately is the most reliable tool for child protection.

### **Staff Liaison**

It's good practice to appoint a suitable management staff member as a child protection/welfare liaison to ensure that dive operation policies are communicated, adhered to and regularly reviewed. This person should be a good communicator

(particularly with children), understand the issues involved, keep abreast of legislative and good practice developments, be able to follow procedures calmly and have the authority to make decisions.

### **Good Practice**

All staff should be encouraged to demonstrate excellent role model behavior to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of good practice:

- Treating all people equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always be public when working with children—avoid situations where you and the child are completely unobserved
- If any form of manual support or manipulation is required, it should be provided openly.
- Where possible, parents should take on the responsibility for their children in changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms, ensure the supervisors work in pairs.
- Encourage an open environment (no secrets)
- Where there are mixed groups away from home, they should always be accompanied by both male and female members of staff
- Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- Never share a room with a child
- Never allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Never ignore allegations made by a child
- Never do things of a personal nature for children they can do for themselves
- Never invite or allow children to stay with you at your home or workplace unsupervised

It may sometimes be necessary for you to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or have disabilities. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a child's reactions—if a child is fully dependent on you, talk with them about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact or lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities.

Do not take children to your home or workplace where they will be alone with you, nor spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others, and avoid taking children alone on car journeys, however short. If these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in your center or the child's parents.

If you accidentally hurt a child, or if a child seems distressed in any manner or seems to misunderstand or misinterpret something you have done, report any such incident as soon as possible to other colleagues and make a brief written note of it. Parents should be informed of the incident.

### **Photography, Filming and Publication**

Be aware of additional responsibilities when conducting photography or videography courses, or taking or sanctioning underwater or topside photographs at dive events in public places or private pools in the presence of children.

- Use a parental permission form to request and record parental permission to use an image.
- Ask for the child's permission to use his or her image
- Avoid using children's names (first name or surname) in photograph captions. If the child is named, avoid using his or her photograph. If the photograph is used, avoid naming the child.
- Only use images of children in suitable dress and context to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. Images within the context of diving and related activities should focus on the overall activity. A child's age is another factor to consider when deciding what is appropriate.
- Be diligent in public places for unauthorized filming or photography of children in your care.
- Ensure all involved (staff, other students, parents, sanctioned photographers, etc) understand the photography policy, know where to direct any complaints and adhere to good practice as defined in the policy.
- Ensure all parties involved (including other parents()) have permission for photographing and filming each other
- Store all images/film safely and securely.

### Training

**Child Protection** – Where possible, make child protection training available to staff so they are aware and sensitive to potentially abusive situations. Training programs may be available from local authorities and can be found online.

**First Aid** – Ensure that you and your staff have current training in Emergency First Response Primary and Secondary Care as well as Care for Children courses. A written record of all injuries (minimally via the PADI Incident Report Form) should be maintained at the dive center and submitted to PADI. A parent or guardian should be informed of all injuries to minors, and what first aid treatment was administered. Medical assistance should be sought for all emergencies, without delay.

### What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. There are four main types of child abuse: Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. The abuser may be a family member, or may be someone the child encounters in the community, including during sports and leisure activities. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or may be responsible for abuse by failing to prevent another person from harming that child.

- **Physical abuse** – where adults or other young people physically hurt or injure children, including by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding or suffocating or drowning.
- **Sexual abuse** – when adults or other young people use children to meet their own sexual needs. Showing children pornography (books, videos, pictures) or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.
- **Emotional abuse** – the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve communicating to a child that the child is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in terms of meeting the needs of another person.

It may feature expectations of children that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted, which may make the child nervous and withdrawn. Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

- **Neglect** – when adults fail to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that it is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development; for example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. Refusal to give children love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

### Signs of Abuse

Some indications that a child may be being abused can include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- Unexplained changes in behavior (e.g. becoming withdrawn or inappropriate sexual awareness)
- Engaging in sexually explicit behavior
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- The child is prevented from socializing with other children
- Variations in eating patterns, including overeating or loss of appetite
- Weight loss for no apparent reason
- The child's appearance becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt

### What to do if you suspect abuse?

Staff should contact dive operation management; management should contact local law enforcement authorities immediately to determine the appropriate course of action. Abuse of any person is a criminal matter, and there should be no delay in seeking out the authorities and following their advice. Secondly, if the abuse involves a PADI Member, file a complete Quality Assurance Report with your PADI Office.