A QUICK GUIDE TO DEVELOPING AN ILLEGAL DRUGS POLICY
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We’re here to help.
If you need any clarification on any of the information in this guide, don’t hesitate to contact Good Sports. Get in touch using the online contact form:
goodsports.com.au/contact-us
HOW A POLICY ON ILLEGAL DRUGS BENEFITS YOUR CLUB

Having an illegal drugs policy shows that your club is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment and demonstrates that your club cares about the health and wellbeing of its members. Your club will benefit from having a plan in place to tackle illegal drugs, as it will help your club meet its duty of care obligations and ensure your members interact in a safe and healthy environment. Illegal drug use (either at or associated with the club) cannot be ignored and needs to be managed appropriately to make sure your club is acting in the best interests of all its members.

The value of a policy is that it:
- sets clear standards for expected behaviour.
- acts as a positive influence on members.
- helps to prepare your club if there is an incident.
- provides you with clear guidelines on how to respond to the issue of illegal drugs in a fair and proper manner that benefits all members and the wider community.

The five steps for success.
This guide takes you through the steps involved in developing a policy. It provides clear points of action, information and advice – to plan, develop and implement a policy in your club.

It’s important to remember that a policy will only drive behaviour if it is supported, accepted, understood and upheld by all of those who are governed by it. Through implementing an illegal drugs policy your club will:
- increase members’ knowledge about the harms associated with illegal drug use.
- identify where they can get support from local services.
- clarify how the club will respond to health and safety issues because of illegal drug issues and incidents.

This is an abridged version of ‘A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition’. Use this resource as an overview for developing an illegal drugs policy and refer to ‘A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition’ for more detailed information and guidance on:
- legal issues
- basic information on illegal drugs
- incident recording
- illegal drug policy template
- tackling illegal drugs scenarios
- glossary of words and phrases
- information and further support

‘A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition’ is available to all clubs via the club portal. If you have trouble accessing your club portal, please contact your Good Sports representative.

Resources
- Why is the Tackling Illegal Drugs Program important for your club
- Your checklist for developing an illegal drugs policy
**STEP 1: TALK ABOUT IT**

**GET SUPPORT FROM YOUR CLUB COMMUNITY**

The aims of Step 1 are to get the committee and club members on board as well as developing a plan for creating the club’s illegal drugs policy.

**Get committee support by:**

- Inviting local health services and police to speak to the committee about risks and harms associated with drug use and the legal implications should your club’s duty of care obligations not be met.
- Taking the committee members through *A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition* and the *Illegal Drugs Policy template* to discuss how your club could develop a policy.
- Making sure the policy is added to committee meeting agendas as a standing item while it is in development.

Once the committee is on board, it’s time to let your members know that you plan to develop a policy and involve them in the process.

Find out if there are any members who are passionate about creating a safe and supportive club environment, who could champion the cause.

You might have members who are able to provide expert knowledge on the effects of alcohol and other drugs, types of drug use, how to start a conversation with someone about their health and wellbeing, and how best to support someone who is experiencing mental or physical ill health.

If you do not have people in your club with alcohol and other drugs knowledge and/or counselling skills, that’s ok. Following Step 1 will provide you with information about how to connect with your local experts.

**What, when, why, how and who**

To involve your members in the process, start by explaining what activities will be undertaken to develop the policy, when they will occur, why (the purpose), how (the mechanisms, e.g. club meeting) and who will be involved (e.g. players, coaches, parents, police, health services).

**Things to consider including in your policy development plan are:**

- Form a sub-committee (group of champions) to plan and guide the development of the policy.
- Talk about the development of the policy in your newsletter and promote the development process and activities through your club’s social media (Facebook, Twitter).
- Hold a meeting to promote the benefits and discuss concerns (this is similar to the discussion you will have with the committee members).
- Encourage coaches, team managers and others to talk about the policy development at the start of training or after games.
- Let your members know how they can contribute feedback.

The local community is full of experts who can help your club demonstrate to your club members the importance of developing a policy.

This is best achieved by:

- Inviting the police, local health workers or alcohol and other drug services to present to your club about the issue. Usually, these types of organisations will offer this service for free and will also provide free factsheets and other resources for you to display at your club.
- Talk to your Good Sports staff member if you have any questions.

**Resources**

Share this with your club committee and members.

- Why do we need an illegal drugs policy?
STEP 2: WRITING THE POLICY

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR POLICY

This step is all about continuing the conversation with members of the community to help tailor a policy that suits your club’s needs and systems.

Summary of what a typical illegal drugs policy will include:
- an introductory statement about your policy
- the purpose of the policy
- extent of the policy
- when the policy applies and whom it applies to
- responsibilities of both the club and its members
- responses to an illegal drug incident
- non-compliance with the policy


What you need to consider when shaping your policy

COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY
Writing your club’s policy is a great opportunity to work as a team with the committee, members, local community and the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF). Understanding the opinions of local experts (police, health and alcohol and other drug services) and club members will strengthen your policy and ensure the support of these groups in the long run.

SHAPING YOUR CLUB’S RESPONSE
Drug-related incidents are diverse and require sensitivity and understanding. Taking the time to discuss various scenarios and the right response for your club will prepare the club if a situation or incident arises.

We recommend that you read the case scenarios for guidance. You can find the case scenarios in A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd Edition (see appendix D).

WHY DO PEOPLE USE DRUGS?
People use drugs for many reasons; to relax, for enjoyment, to be part of a group, out of curiosity, as a coping mechanism or to minimise physical and/or psychological pain and trauma.

People use drugs for the benefits (perceived and/or experienced), not for the potential harm.

This applies to both legal and illegal drugs.

HOW CAN I TELL IF SOMEONE IS USING ILLEGAL DRUGS?
Unless drug use is observed, or the person confides in using drugs, the club cannot assume drug use and therefore the focus needs to be on the person’s wellbeing.

Common signs associated with drug use such as tiredness, poor concentration, excitement and withdrawal can also be symptoms of illness, a bad reaction to prescription medication, ‘adolescence’ or unrelated medical conditions.

Instead of accusing a club member of using drugs, try expressing your concern about how they’re acting and/or changes in their appearance. The aim is to create the opportunity for them to talk to you about whatever is going on in their life.

It is important to always see the person, not the drug.

YOUR CLUB CODE OF CONDUCT
Most sporting organisations require their clubs to develop and promote a code of conduct. Where required, your club should also implement a code of conduct to promote appropriate behaviour for children and young people aged under 18 years old.

The codes will clearly describe professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and unacceptable behaviour, e.g. use of illegal substances on club premises.


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STEP 2: WRITING THE POLICY

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR POLICY

IMPORTANCE OF PRIVACY AND DISCRETION
As far as possible, privacy and discretion should be maintained when working through any incident at your club, whether drugs are involved or not. Incidents will often involve personal circumstances that must remain confidential.

Only the relevant and appropriate people involved should be informed, all confidential paperwork should be stored securely, and never raise the issue in a public space.

If you already have one, your club’s existing privacy policy should be followed. A privacy policy statement is provided in the Good Sports Illegal Drugs Policy template7 for you to consider. See Appendix A, in A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition.8

USE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS BY UNDER 18S
• If there is a concern that an under 18-year-old member is involved with illegal drugs, the first step should be to discuss these concerns with the young person and, if they are comfortable with you doing so, notify their parents or guardian (unless it is unsafe to do so).
• You must discuss contacting the under 18-year-old’s parents before doing so, in case contacting their parents could put them at risk.
• You and the young person may also come up with other ways of dealing with the situation that does not need to involve their parents.

RESPONDING TO FEEDBACK
Inform people that the policy is happening and encourage collaboration, this will inspire members to contribute feedback. It’s important to make sure that collaboration is openly communicated and easily accessible.

Writing your policy
The Illegal Drugs Policy Template8 is an example you can refer to when writing your policy. See Appendix A, in A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition.9

EXTENT OF THE POLICY
This defines how you classify illegal drugs as it applies to your club’s illegal drugs policy. The ADF has provided a suggested statement, which you can find in Step 2 of A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition.

WHEN DOES THE CLUB POLICY APPLY?
At a minimum, this should include:
• Club facilities, events and activities organised by the club and anywhere an individual is wearing a club uniform which would identify them as being a representative of the club.

WHO DOES IT APPLY TO?
For example:
• Club committee, coaches, players, officials, members and visitors to club facilities and events.


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STEP 2: WRITING THE POLICY

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR POLICY

RESPONSIBILITIES
Your policy will need to include responsibilities for both the club and its members. You can find a list of responsibilities to include in *A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition* (see step 2).¹²

- For clubs:
  This could include that the club will implement the policy, promote it, provide behavioural standards, appoint and train mentors and manage drug-related concerns.
- For individuals (members):
  Members would be required to comply with the policy, behave as role models, alert club officials to any drug-related concerns and honour the club’s commitment to looking after the safety and welfare of all its members.

RESPONSE
When crafting your club’s approach to potential illegal drug-related incidents, make sure that your policy considers three key stages: initial response, follow-up (post-incident) and taking action (when non-compliance occurs).

Step 2 in *A Guide to Developing an Illegal Drugs Policy 3rd edition*¹³ provides suggestions for how your club can approach the following:

- initial response to suspected drug use
- initial response to dealing and distribution
- general procedures for handling suspected illegal drugs
- how to follow-up after the incident
- taking action (when non-compliance occurs).

Resources
- Tackling illegal drugs policy template

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STEP 3: SIGN IT OFF

PUT YOUR POLICY IN PLACE

Step 3 is about ensuring the committee is willing to accept and endorse the policy.

Putting it in place

Use these tips to help put your policy in place:

• Present the policy at your next committee meeting.
• Accept and endorse the policy by signing off the ‘policy activated’ section of the template.
• Provide additional support to coaches, team managers and other leaders [mentors] at the club to help them effectively communicate and uphold the policy. Learn more in Step 4.
• Give existing members a copy of the policy and have them read it and sign it. Follow your usual club policy implementation procedures.
• Add the policy to your Memorandum and Articles of Association, or By-Laws, and include it in your club’s Code of Conduct. Also refer to it on any new membership forms.

Supporting club leaders

Other club leaders such as Coaches, Team Managers and members of the Committee should be on board with the policy as well. Make sure that club leaders are spreading the right messages by providing them with training about the policy and the contact details of the President and local service providers.

Tip
Add this to your club’s committee meeting agenda, to ensure you have time to share.
STEP 4: PROMOTE THE POLICY

LET YOUR MEMBERS KNOW

Your policy will only be effective if all your members are aware of it. Once the policy has been accepted by the committee, let members and visitors know that the policy exists and what it contains.

Sample message template
Our club [club name] is a safe, healthy and supportive club for our members and community. That’s why we joined the Good Sports program. As part of our commitment to protect the health and wellbeing of our members, we have adopted a policy for illegal drugs management.

Our illegal drugs policy states:
• [list key policy items]

This policy is available at [link to policy on website or which noticeboard it’s pinned on].

If you have any questions or comments, please speak to the president or club official. For general enquiries about illegal drugs issue, contact the Alcohol and Drug Foundation’s DrugInfo line on 1300 85 85 84 or browse the ADF’s online drug information.

Please help us in maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our club by supporting our policy.

Resources
Use the following resources to promote your policy:
• Social media template
• Poster
STEP 5: REVIEW IT

KEEP YOUR POLICY UP-TO-DATE

The fifth and final step is to keep your policy up-to-date. Like any other club document or procedure, a regular review of your policy will help to keep it relevant and front of mind for existing and new members.

- Commit to reviewing your policy every 12 months.
- Regularly remind members about the policy, informing them when it is being reviewed.

Use these tips to help keep your policy up-to-date:

- Include the review of a policy in any action plans and strategies of your club.
- Talk about the policy at the club annual general meeting, particularly if there are new members to inform.
- Ensure that the policy and its implications are promoted to all new members.
- Check all your local alcohol and other drug treatment service provider contact details are up-to-date.

Resources

- Responding to illegal drugs at your club
- Alcohol and other drugs support services