



# GAELIC FOOTBALL & HURLING ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALASIA Inc.

## Pregnancy in Sport Policy & Procedures – Gaelic Games

### Overview

The Gaelic Football & Hurling Association of Australasia (GFHAA) aims to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all its members, including pregnant athletes. GFHAA encourages all pregnant athletes to discuss their decision to continue playing during their pregnancy with their medical practitioner. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that practices and procedures are in place that protect pregnant athletes from any situations that may cause harm to them or their foetus.

This policy is to be read in-conjunction with the following documents:

- GFHAA Member Protection Policy
- GFHAA Complaints, Dispute & Discipline Policy
- Sports Medicine Australia's Pregnancy Statement and Pregnancy and Exercise Fact Sheet
- SportNZ Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Policy

### Background

According to Sports Medicine Australia (SMA), “all women without contraindications should be encouraged to participate in aerobic and strength-conditioning exercises as part of a healthy lifestyle during their pregnancy. Reasonable goals of aerobic conditioning in pregnancy should be to maintain a good fitness level throughout pregnancy without trying to reach peak fitness...Women active before pregnancy can continue with their regular exercise / sport as long as associated risks and recommended modifications are considered”

There are many positive outcomes from continuing physical activity during and after pregnancy, however as maternal and foetal responses to exercise can vary with pre-gestational maternal fitness levels, co-existing medical conditions and / or pregnancy complications, **all women are encouraged to seek individual medical advice before participating.** Modifications to programs may need to be considered.

SMA advises that women participating in activities that require rapid changes in direction should consult with their doctor before participating and that elite athletes who continue to train throughout pregnancy require supervision by an obstetric care provider who has “knowledge of the impact of strenuous exercise on maternal and foetal outcomes”.

In Australasia, legislation exists in relation to discrimination. This antidiscrimination legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against a female on the basis of pregnancy, subject to specific exemptions.

### Policy Application

1. This policy applies to all GFHAA members and all other people including affiliates which by agreement or otherwise, are bound to comply with this policy
2. This policy applies to behaviour and practices occurring during the course of GFHAA activities including competitions, training and events

## 2.

### **Responsibilities**

GFHAA's and affiliates roles and contributions in making this policy work are to:

1. Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that everyone in the association knows:
  - a) What the policy is
  - b) Their roles and responsibilities
2. This will be achieved by:
  - a) Distributing the Policy to all Affiliated States and Clubs
  - b) Including a copy of the policy on the GFHAA website
  - c) Reviewing the policy and updating as required every 12 months

Clubs / Associations roles and member's contributions are to:

1. Comply with this policy and ensure information is made available
2. Ensure all significant personnel are familiar with the policy at each level of the GFHAA network
- 3 Report any areas of concern to the GFHAA/State association within a timely manner

**Policy Statement:** GFHAA and State Associations will take all breaches of the policy seriously and will ensure they are dealt with promptly, sensitively and confidentially. Disciplinary action may be taken against a person who is found in breach of this policy, in accordance with the Complaints, Disputes and Resolution Procedures.

# Pregnancy in Sport Procedure – Gaelic Games

Pregnant athletes are recommended to:

- **Place their own health and the well-being of their unborn child as the utmost importance in their decision about whether to continue playing Gaelic Games**
- Obtain expert medical advice as to the risks associated with playing Gaelic Games when pregnant.
- Have regular antenatal reviews with their doctor, including ongoing review of their exercise participation.
- Take into account their changed physical condition, use common sense and not take unnecessary risks
- Understand that the ultimate decision to participate in Gaelic Games will always be theirs, whilst having regard to all the circumstances.

## Administrators

An Administrator should:

- Develop protocols and procedures to communicate with athletes regarding participation in Gaelic Games during pregnancy, including: providing athletes with the opportunity to advise of their pregnancy in any medical declaration; and adding pregnancy advice and risk information to any registration forms
- Be aware of State, Territory, NZ anti-discrimination legislation and its application in Gaelic Games
- Seek professional advice (including medical and/or legal) if a situation arises where it is not clear what steps should be taken in a given circumstance.
- Ensure that the any insurance (including public liability and athlete injury insurance) is up to date and that it provides appropriate cover.
- Apply the rules governing Gaelic Games equally and fairly to all participants.

## Coaches

A Coach should:

- Create a playing environment that is reasonably safe for all athletes
- Be aware of the professional medical advice “**SMA Statement - The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy**”, in relation to exercise and pregnancy and the implications of participation in Gaelic Games during pregnancy.
- Take reasonable measures to ensure that all athletes are aware of the issues related to participation in Gaelic Games during pregnancy.
- Respect and support the athlete’s right to make their own decisions in relation to their participation or non-participation in Gaelic Games whilst pregnant.

## 2.

- Seek a consultative approach with the athlete and medical expert. Coaches, trainers and others who give pregnant athletes advice on how to train during their pregnancy must be very careful that they are not placing themselves in the position of medical experts. They should not speak outside their scope of knowledge as they could face legal action for negligent advice.

### **Other Athletes**

Other Athletes should:

- Respect and support a pregnant athlete in the same way as they would any other participant.

**Date of Issue: 20 June 2023**