

## 2007 NSW Health Awards Entry Template

<b>Entry Title (50 characters or less)</b>
SafeClub – a risk management program improving community sports safety
<b>Abstract (120 Words)</b>
Despite risk management being recognised as the ‘best-buy’ in sports injury prevention, community sports clubs are yet to embrace it. In this context, the ‘SafeClub’ program was developed to help community sports clubs implement their own user friendly risk management framework. The SafeClub program was evaluated over two years through a prospective controlled trial involving 76 soccer clubs (approximately 38 000 players). The trial revealed a statistically significant increase in safety activities amongst clubs that received the SafeClub program. This improvement was even more pronounced one year-post training, suggesting that SafeClub is a sustainable sports injury prevention strategy. The public health implications of SafeClub are considerable, as each community sports club participating in the program delivers safety benefits to an estimated 1000 Australians each weekend.
<b>Aim (30 Words)</b>
SafeClub aims to improve the safety activities of community sports clubs, particularly the foundations and processes for good risk management practice, in a sustainable way.
<b>Nature of the Problem (100 words)</b>
Sporting injury is a public health priority that incurs a significant personal, social and economic cost (Finch and Cassell, 2006). The application of risk management principles to sports safety has been widely advocated (NIPAC, 1999), however the available evidence suggests that community sports clubs need help in adopting risk management (Department of Health and Aging, 2004). In addition, there is no information in the peer-reviewed literature about the development, adoption, evaluation or dissemination of currently available sports safety-related risk management training programs or resources.
<b>Extent of the problem (150 words)</b>
Each year approximately 500,000 Australians require hospital treatment as a result of sports injuries. A further 540,000 visit their GP, costing the Australian community an estimated \$1.65 billion a year (Orchard and Finch, 2002). To address the lack of information available about the existing sports safety activities of community sports clubs, Northern Beaches Health Promotion developed a valid and reliable Sports Safety Audit Tool (Donaldson et al, 2003). Subsequent research using the Sports Safety Audit Tool with 163 local community sports clubs indicated that very few clubs have risk management plans, nor the capacity to implement them (Donaldson et al, 2004).
<b>Strategic importance (100 words)</b>
SafeClub is the first rigorously evaluated risk management training program for community sports clubs in the reviewed literature. While previous sports injury prevention research has focused on the aetiology and mechanisms of injury (Chalmers, 2002), SafeClub is the first to demonstrate how evidence can be translated into best practice in the real-world. In using research to drive innovation and change in sports injury prevention, The SafeClub program is directly aligned with the NSW Health Strategic Direction of being ‘ready for new risks and opportunities’. The program creates a culture of continuous learning and improvement within community sports clubs, whereby they are able to respond to the changing environment. SafeClub is also aligned with NSW Health’s strategic directions of making prevention everyone’s business, making smart choices about the costs and benefits of health services, and building partnerships for health.

### **Planning and implementing solutions (300 words)**

In response to the need identified by the initial research (described above), the SafeClub program was developed by Northern Beaches Health Promotion (NSCCAHS) in partnership with Youthsafe. SafeClub is a user-friendly risk management training program designed for community sports club administrators. The training helps clubs to identify and prioritise their own safety issues, and teaches clubs how to address these issues using a basic risk-management approach. The program consists of three training sessions of 2 hours each session. At the end of the training, participants have a working and sustainable sports safety plan that they have designed specifically for their own club.

SafeClub was piloted with a small group of community soccer club administrators in Ryde between March and June 2003. The pilot was well received, with participating clubs developing and implementing sports safety action plans and other risk management strategies. Northern Beaches Health Promotion and Youthsafe were invited to deliver a modified version of SafeClub at the 2003 Australian Conference of Science and Medicine in Sport, and both Youthsafe and Lindfield Soccer Club won gold medals at the 2003 NSW Sports Safety awards based on their involvement in the SafeClub pilot.

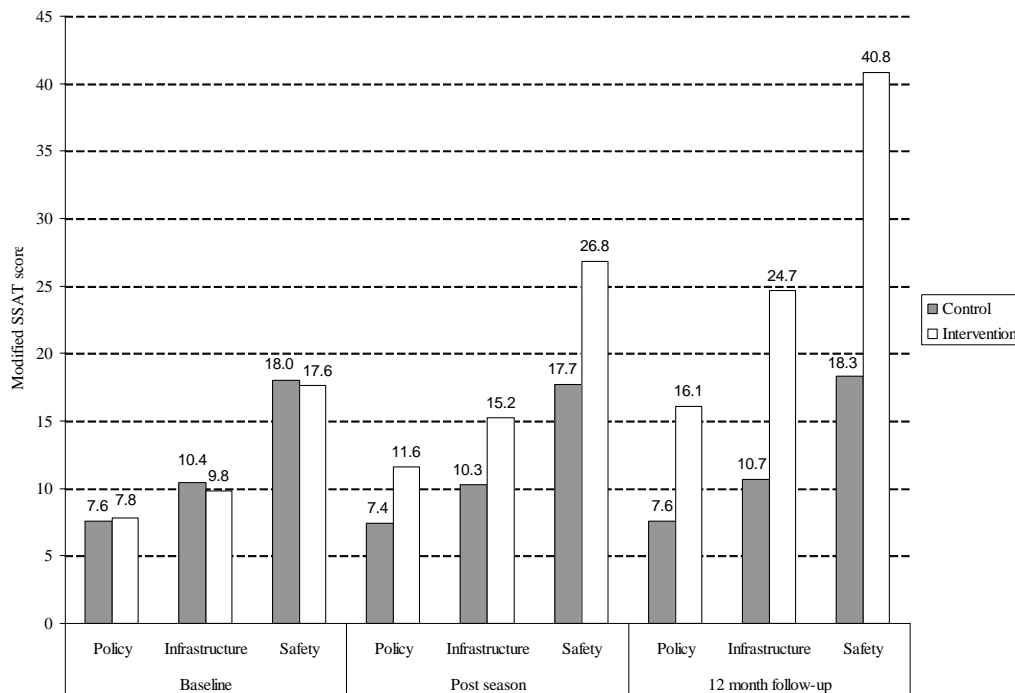
The SafeClub program was modified prior to a large scale evaluation over 2005 and 2006. Feedback from the pilot indicated that a level of anxiety existed amongst volunteer sports club administrators about the term 'risk management', due to the perceived workload and legal implications. To address this anxiety over 'risk management', an interactive video was developed for use at the beginning of the SafeClub program. The innovative video uses a simple injury scenario and a dose of humour to demonstrate that risk management is usually already being conducted within clubs without them being aware of it (DVD available upon request).

### **Outcomes and Evaluation (200 words)**

The SafeClub program was evaluated over two years through a prospective controlled trial. Soccer NSW assisted in recruiting 76 soccer clubs (representing 38 000 players), who were allocated to either an intervention group (receiving SafeClub program) or a control group (no SafeClub), through a matching process. A modified version of the Sports Safety Audit Tool was used to measure sports safety activities, providing safety scores at baseline and post-season. The Injury Risk Management Research Centre (UNSW) assisted with the study design and data analysis.

Results of the SafeClub Evaluation are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure1. Mean policy, infrastructure and overall safety scores for control and intervention clubs at baseline, post season and 12 month follow-up



At baseline there was no significant difference in the safety scores of intervention and control clubs. At post-season and 12 month follow-up, intervention clubs achieved significantly higher safety scores than control clubs. These results suggest that SafeClub effectively assists clubs to improve their sports safety activities, particularly the foundations and processes for good risk management practice, in a sustainable way.

The SafeClub program won gold medals at the 2006 Australian Risk Management Awards and the 2006 NSW Sports Safety Awards, while Hazelbrook and Avalon soccer clubs won gold and bronze respectively at the 2005 NSW Sports Safety awards based on their involvement with SafeClub. A scientific paper on The SafeClub Evaluation was submitted in June 2007 for publication in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

#### Sustaining change (100 words)

The SafeClub program is an innovation in safety training for community sports clubs. Other attempts at sports safety training have been historically poorly attended and unsustainable, due to a 'one-size fits all' approach where training needs are decided without consulting clubs. SafeClub however requires participants to identify their own club's safety priorities, and to actively incorporate their new risk management tools into existing club operations. This is sustained through the provision of a safety manual in which clubs develop their own safety action-plan, policies and relevant sports safety resources. Participants commit to updating their safety plans at least annually, making risk management part of their club's culture. The above evaluation results at one year follow-up confirm that SafeClub is particularly effective in sustaining sports safety improvements.

#### Future Scope (100 words)

The SafeClub program was developed and implemented entirely within the NSW Health strategic framework. SafeClub embraces the principles of involving communities and valuing people, learning and innovation. SafeClub has built a solid evidence base, enabling it to address NSW Health priorities of promoting health and preventing injury using a population health approach (Population Health Division, 2007). This approach aligns SafeClub with a

number of NSW Health Strategic Directions, particularly being 'ready for new risks and opportunities'. SafeClub's adherence to the NSW Health strategic framework suggests that it's approach can be readily transferred to other population health settings.