



SafeSport Training

Overview of key points

June 2019





Differences Between Laws & Policies

Criminal Law

- Vary by jurisdiction
- Require proof beyond a reasonable doubt
- Include mandatory child abuse reporting (which varies by state/province)

U.S. Center for SafeSport

- Must be followed by organizations and individuals whose National Governing Body (NGB) is recognized by the U.S. Olympic Committee
- Prohibit behavior that is not considered criminal
- Include procedures for investigating & responding to claims of abuse/misconduct
- Do not carry any criminal consequences

Organizational Policies

- Set standards for behavior
- Prohibit behavior not considered criminal
- Have more requirements than the law
- Set standards for discipline



Sexual Misconduct

Includes a wide range of behaviors and actions involving behaviors of an intimate or sexual nature

Sexual Conduct

- Contact behavior: one player fondles another player's breast
- No-contact behavior: an athlete sends a teammate a photo of his genitals

Sexual Harassment

- Men's team captains frequently "rate" athletes on a women's team and comment on their appearance within their earshot

Stalking

- After she has rebuffed his numerous sexual advances, a former friend begins texting a female athlete constantly, making it clear he knows her whereabouts and personal habits and has been following her

Exploitation

- Taking a video of a fellow athlete changing in the locker room, without consent, and then air dropping it to the entire team

Power Imbalance

- A coach with the authority to evaluate athletes and select them for a team

Intimate relationship (sport context)

- A 30 year-old soccer coach dating her 18-year-old athlete

Child sexual abuse

- A coach sends nude photos of himself to a 12-year-old athlete



Consent

- Consent is active, not passive
- Consent isn't permanent
- **To give consent**, one **MUST** be of legal age (which varies by state/province)
- **Without consent** means an act was committed against a person either by force or without the person's agreement or permission

A person is incapable of giving consent if they are unconscious, unaware or asleep during any part of the act.



Child sexual abuse

Under the SafeSport Code:

Sexual conduct between an adult and minor is sexual misconduct, regardless of any purported consent:

- Sexual conduct between an adult and minor (where the age difference is 3+ years)
- Intimate relationships between an adult & minor (where age difference is 3+ years) and a power imbalance exists
- Child sexual abuse, as defined by state/provincial/territorial and federal laws
- Peer-to-peer sexual offenses, which may or may not be defined as abuse, depending on the ages of the athletes involved

Each jurisdiction defines sexual abuse against children within its own criminal code and determines the age of consent for sexual activity.



Grooming

The complex process whereby a person engages in a series of patterned behaviors with a goal of sexually abusing a child

- Initiated when an offender seeks out a vulnerable child who has emotional, familial or social voids in their life
- Offender earns trust of child (and potentially their family) by filling the voids. This isolates child from family & friends
- Offender then sexually abuses the child and engages in behavior to maintain control over child



Grooming
can occur
through
direct
in-person
contact
OR
online.



Child sexual abuse

Signs & Symptoms

- Persistent mood changes
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Sleeplessness
- Inconsistency in performance
- Performance decrease
- Increased anxiety
- Loses enthusiasm for sport, even competition
- Changes from outgoing to reserved, depressed & withdrawn

Why victims might not disclose abuse

- Victims don't have to tell – it's on their timeframe only
- Young children often don't appreciate that it is wrong
- Confusion and shame
- Victims fear they will get in trouble for what happened
- Fear of jeopardizing their athletic career



Reporting child abuse

- You don't have to be certain that abuse is/was occurring to make a report
- When you have a reasonable suspicion or belief that abuse is occurring/occurred, you are legally required to report to authorities within 24 hours
- It doesn't matter how long ago the suspicious behavior occurred
- Concerning behavior that isn't criminal should still be reported to your organization (i.e., USAC)
- Leave the investigating and questioning to the authorities – report what you know/suspect

Reporting abuse allows the abused athlete to get help, contributes to keeping other athletes in your program safe and maintains the integrity and reputation of your sport organization.



Responding to a disclosure of abuse

- It's not your job to investigate
- Person simply needs to be listened to and the information progressed to the correct person for further help and assistance
- Your job as a mandated reporter is to report the information you have received to the correct person
- Don't provide feedback
- Don't ask a lot of questions
 - Only ask open-ended questions
 - No leading questions

LISTEN!



Physical Misconduct

Any intentional contact or non-contact behavior that causes, or reasonably threatens to cause, physical harm to another person

- **Contact Violations:** punching, beating, biting; encouraging or knowingly permitting an Athlete to return to play prematurely following a serious injury (e.g., a concussion) and without the clearance of a medical professional
- **Non-Contact Violations:** isolating a person in a confined space; withholding, recommending against or denying proper hydration; providing alcohol to person below legal drinking age
- **Criminal Conduct:** any act or conduct described as physical abuse or misconduct under federal or state law (e.g., child abuse, neglect, assault)



Bullying

repeated and/or severe aggressive behavior among minors (under age 18) that is intended or likely to hurt, control or diminish another person emotionally, physically or sexually



24/7 connections to social media and text messaging makes **cyberbullying** pervasive.

Key Features:

- Imbalance of power
- Repetition
- A history of conflict
- Four types of bullying:
 - Verbal
 - Physical
 - Social
 - Damage of property



Bullying can have real consequences for athletes' physical (physiological) & mental (psychological) health – both immediately & long-term.



Hazing

any conduct that subjects another person – physically, mentally, emotionally or psychologically – to anything that may endanger, abuse, humiliate, degrade or intimidate the person as a condition of joining or being socially accepted by a group, team or organization

- Similar to bullying, but while bullying seeks to **exclude** someone, hazing seeks to **include/unite** via a shared negative experience
- Hazing used to be considered a rite of passage in many groups – now it is recognized for what it is: a dangerous form of abuse

Many states also have laws against hazing, so if athletes participate in hazing behavior, they not only risk a spot on the team, they could be charged with a crime.



Harassment

Repeated and/or severe conduct that causes fear, humiliation or annoyance; offends or degrades; creates a hostile environment; or reflects discriminatory bias in an attempt to establish dominance, superiority or power over an individual athlete or group based on age, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, national origin, or mental or physical disability.

- Meant to degrade an individual and create a hostile environment
- Includes an element of bias or discrimination
- Anything that can be perceived as making an athlete “different” can also make them a target for harassment

Acknowledging differences can go a long way towards making everyone feel comfortable with them and suggests your sport program is a welcoming place.



Emotional Misconduct

Repeated and/or severe non-contact behavior involving verbal acts, physical acts, and/or acts that deny attention or support

Types

- Verbal acts
 - Physical acts
 - Acts that deny attention or support
- It's not one incident that's the problem - it's the repeated exposure to mistreatment that is
 - A culture of disrespect invites mistreatment to be perpetuated
 - Children will model adults (i.e., athletes model coaches)



Resources

- SafeSport: <https://safesport.org>
- SafeSport Code: <https://safesport-trained.azurewebsites.net/Content/Assets/Files/Safesport%20Code.pdf>
- State Reporting Requirements: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>
- Federal Reporting Requirements: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/534>
- Federal Reporting Requirements Covered Individuals: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/534/text#HF1B9DF35CDEC4DD9910451570DCB4F99>
- Preventing Bullying: What Great Coaches Need to Know: <https://safesport-trained.azurewebsites.net/Content/Assets/Files/coacheshandbookFINAL926%20MODS.pdf>
- Supporting a Victim of Abuse: <https://safesport-trained.azurewebsites.net/Content/Assets/Files/Supporting%20a%20victim%20REV.pdf>
- US Age of Consent Laws: <https://apps.rainn.org/policy/compare/consent-laws.cfm>
- US Sexual Abuse Laws by Jurisdiction: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/>
- USA Cycling SafeSport: <https://www.usacycling.org/resources/safesport>

