5 TIPS FOR PARENTS

KEEPING KIDS SAFE IN YOUTH SPORTS

USA SWIMMING SAFE SPORT

USA Swimming is working to increase awareness and reduce the risk of abuse in swimming through its Safe Sport program. With all youth sports, creating a safe environment is the responsibility of all adults who work with kids.

1 GET EDUCATED

Education is the most important tool for combatting misconduct. Look for resources that can help you understand how abuse occurs and what you can do about it. You should be able to recognize signs of grooming behavior and boundary violations and what to do when you suspect a child's safety is at risk.

2 CREATE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

It's important to establish healthy boundaries between athletes and coaches and have clear expectations about the coach's role. A coach can often serve as a teacher, a mentor, or a role model for a young person. A coach is not an athlete's friend, peer, or romantic partner. Teams and youth sport organizations should spell out prohibited behaviors to ensure strong and safe boundaries between adults and athletes.

USA SWIMMING

SAFE SPORT

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IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS HIGH RISK AREAS

For misconduct to take place, an offender needs privacy, access, and control. One way to reduce the risk for abuse is to design strategies for addressing these high-risk areas, which include travel, locker rooms, and electronic communications. Teams should adopt policies that spell out expectations and create boundaries.

4

SPEAK UP

If you recognize questionable behaviors, say something! Your youth sports organization should designate someone—a coach, the team administration, or a parent advocate—who is there to hear your concerns or take a report of inappropriate behavior. Make sure that everyone knows that person.

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TALK TO YOUR KIDS!

Physical and sexual misconduct can be a hard topic for parents to talk about with their children. Having these conversations is extremely important in helping prevent your child from becoming a victim of abuse. Having ongoing and open conversations with children about their bodies and appropriate boundaries will make it easier for them to talk to you if anyone is making them feel uncomfortable.

Resources: www.usaswimming.org/protect, safesport@usaswimming.org

usaswimming.org/protect

Best Practice Guidelines

The following Best Practice Guidelines are strongly recommended for all USA Swimming members.

1. Parents should be encouraged to appropriately support their children's swimming experience.

2. All swimming practices should be open to observation by parents.

3. Two-deep Leadership: One coach member and at least one other adult who is not in the water should be present at all practices and other sanctioned club activities whenever at least one athlete is present. Clubs and coaches should evaluate their seasonal plans and map out how to best accomplish this strongly recommended guideline.

4. Open and Observable Environment: An open and observable environment should be maintained for all interactions between adults and athletes. Private, or one-on-one situations, should be avoided unless they are open and observable. Common sense should be used to move a meeting to an open and observable location if the meeting inadvertently begins in private.

5. Coaches should not invite or have an athlete(s) to their home without the permission of the athlete's parents (or legal guardian).

6. During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings and/or other activities, two-deep leadership and open and observable environments should be maintained.

7. Athletes should not ride in a coach's vehicle without another adult present who is the same gender as the athlete, unless prior parental permission is obtained.

8. During overnight team travel, if athletes are paired with other athletes they shall be of the same gender and should be a similar age. Where athletes are age 13 & Over, chaperones and/or team managers would ideally stay in nearby rooms. When athletes are age 12 & Under, chaperones and/or team managers may stay with athletes. Where chaperones/team managers are staying in a room with athletes, they should be the same gender as the athlete and written consent should be given by athlete's parents (or legal guardian).

9. When only one athlete and one coach travel to a competition, at the competition the coach and athlete should attempt to establish a "buddy" club to associate with during the competition and when away from the venue.

10. Communications between non-athlete adult members and athletes should not include any topic or language that is sexual or inappropriate in nature.

11. Non-athlete adult members should respect the privacy of athletes in situations such as changing of clothes, showering, etc. Non-athlete adult members should protect their own privacy in similar situations.

12. Relationships of a peer-to-peer nature with any athletes should be avoided. For example, coaches should avoid sharing their own personal problems with athletes.

13. Coaches and other non-athlete adult members should avoid horseplay and roughhousing with athletes.

14. When a coach touches an athlete as part of instruction, the coach should do so in direct view of others and inform the athlete of what he/she is doing prior to the initial contact. Touching athletes should be minimized outside the boundaries of what is considered normal instruction. Appropriate interaction would include high fives, fist bumps, side-to-side hugs and handshakes.

15. Coaches should not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for athletes outside club programs and activities.

16. Coaches should not engage in sexual intimacies with a former athlete for at least two years after the cessation or termination of professional services.

    Because sexual intimacies with a former athlete are frequently harmful to the athlete, and because such intimacies undermine public confidence in the coaching profession and thereby deter the public's use of needed services, coaches should not engage in sexual intimacies with former athletes even after a two-year interval except in the most unusual circumstances. The coach who engages in such activity after the two years following cessation or termination of the coach-athlete relationship bears the burden of demonstrating that there has been no exploitation, in light of all relevant factors, including:

    1. The amount of time that has passed since the coach-athlete relationship terminated;
    2. The circumstances of termination;
    3. The athlete's personal history;
    4. The athlete's current mental status;
    5. The likelihood of adverse impact on the athlete and others; and
    6. Any statements or actions made by the coach during the course of the athlete-coach relationship suggesting or inviting the possibility of a post-termination sexual or romantic relationship with the athlete or coach.
    7. Both the athlete and the coach must be 18 years of age or older.

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