

## Pre-Season Parent Orientation: Safe Sport

*“Safety and security don’t just happen; they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.”*

*Nelson Mandela*

USA Swimming is committed to fostering a fun, healthy, and safe sport environment for all its members. We all must recognize that the safety of swimmers lies with all those involved in the sport and is not the sole responsibility of any one person at the club, LSC, or national level. This means that everyone—national office, coaches, officials, parents, and athletes—is essential to creating a culture where all forms of misconduct are intolerable and eliminated as soon as possible.

**The Safe Sport program has a wealth of resources, policies, best practices, tools, and procedures to help empower you to create and maintain a healthy and safe environment for your athletes. The program follows six guiding principles:**

1. USA Swimming believes that every member should have a safe, healthy, and fun sport environment.
2. USA Swimming believes that every young person should be protected from abuse and safe from harm.
3. USA Swimming believes that all non-athlete members share a collective responsibility to protect our membership.
4. USA Swimming will make available training for all members to increase awareness and understanding of athlete protection policies and best practices. USA Swimming will provide a process for members to recognize and respond to any Safe Sport issues that arise.
5. USA Swimming will provide resources, information, and guidance on Safe Sport related issues to all members, including coaches, parents, and athletes.
6. USA Swimming will treat all allegations of abuse or concerns regarding athlete safety seriously and will respond appropriately and as prescribed by USA Swimming Rules and Regulations.

**The Safe Sport program offers:**

- Best practice guidelines (see reverse side)
- Online trainings for parents, athletes, coaches, and officials
- In-person training opportunities for LSCs and clubs, including parents, athletes, coaches, and officials
- Model policies for electronic communication, team travel, anti-bullying, and locker room monitoring
- Several ways to report Code of Conduct violations and inappropriate behavior: phone, email, and an online reporting form
- A designated LSC Safe Sport Chair to attend to the local Safe Sport needs of the clubs in your region
- Educational resources on topics such as healthy personal boundaries, bullying, appropriate social media activity, and managing peer-to-peer conflict

USA Swimming Safe Sport encourages you, as parents, to support your child’s swimming experience by attending practices and meets, celebrating your child’s accomplishments, and enjoying your child’s growth. If you ever have a concern, don’t suffer or stew in silence. Talk with your child’s coach, the club board of directors, or LSC leadership, or contact us at that national office. Safe Sport is here to ensure that you and your child have the best experience possible, but they can’t do it alone. Your involvement is important!

[www.usaswimming.org/protect](http://www.usaswimming.org/protect)

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### **USA Swimming Best Practice Guidelines**

1. Parents should be encouraged to appropriately support their child'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 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 ages 13 and over, chaperones and/or team managers would ideally stay in nearby rooms. When athletes are age 12 and 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 the athlete's parents or legal guardians.
9. When only one athlete and one coach travel to a competition, the coach and athlete should 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 by adults. 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 (2) years after the cessation of 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 two (2) 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:
  - a. The amount of time that has passed since the coach-athlete relationship terminated;
  - b. The circumstances of termination;
  - c. The athlete's personal history
  - d. The athlete's current mental status;
  - e. The likelihood of adverse impact on the athlete and others; and
  - f. 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.
  - g. Both the athlete and coach must be 18 years of age or older.