

5 TIPS FOR PARENTS

KEEPING KIDS SAFE IN YOUTH SPORTS



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.