



## Preventing Child Abuse in Youth Sport Information Sheet

(Coach/Manager/Board Member Copy)

### SAFE SPORT ACT

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the President signed a Sexual Assault Bill aimed at protecting amateur athletes from sexual abuse. The Safe Sport Act has a three pronged approach. The first, any adult interacting with amateur athletes in the program have a duty to report abuse and or suspected abuse within a 24 hour period. EVERY adult is a mandatory reported. Next, the statute of limitations is extended for up to 10 years after a victim realizes he or she was abused. Lastly, the act limits an athlete under the age of 18 from being alone with an adult who is not their parent.

### ABUSE TOLERANCE

There is a zero tolerance for abuse in all youth soccer teams, programs or activities. It is the responsibility of every coach and volunteer to participate in the effort to create a safe environment for all soccer participants.

### BULLYING

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at any event, and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to the victim. We are committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all participants. If bullying does occur, incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Any minor athlete who is aware of bullying behavior is expected to tell a coach, volunteer, team official, or league official.

### REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Given the zero tolerance for abuse, we encourage a culture of communication regarding matters that place athletes at risk. We support and encourage a culture of communication related to abuse or suspected abuse of athletes. If you see or suspect inappropriate interaction with or between athletes, it is your responsibility to report the inappropriate interaction to a coach, supervisor, team official, league official, Risk Management Chair for the state association, or other designated state soccer association representative. Because sexual abusers 'groom' athletes for abuse, it is possible that a coach or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Coaches and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor, team official, or league official. All reports of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported to state law, to law enforcement, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

### WHAT IS THE GROOMING PROCESS?

The grooming process is an abuser's process of choosing his victims. Here is an overview of the abuser's grooming process

- Gaining Access: To children within the abuser's age range and gender of preference, through a program serving children of that age and gender
- Selecting A Child: often a child easily isolated from the group (elite skill, single parent home)
- Introducing Nudity and Sexual Touch: abuser engaging in 'barrier testing and erosion'
- Keeping the Victim Silent: subtle or direct threats, shame, embarrassment, access to team

### WHAT IS APPROPRIATE CONTACT?

Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact Physical contact with minor athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration –has multiple criteria that make it both safe and appropriate. These include:

1. The physical contact takes place in public;
2. There is no potential for (or actual) physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact;
3. The physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult.

### Safety

The safety of minor athletes is paramount, and in many instances the athletic activity is made safer through appropriate physical contact. Examples include:

1. Spotting an athlete so that he or she will not be injured by a fall or piece of equipment;

2. Positioning an athlete's body so that he or she more quickly acquires an athletic skill, gets a better sense of where his or her body is in space, or improves balance and coordination;
3. Making athletes aware that he or she may be in harm's way due to other practicing athletes, or equipment use;
4. Releasing muscle cramps.

**Celebration**

Sports are physical by definition. We recognize that participants often express a joy of participation, competition, achievement and victory through physical acts. We encourage these public expressions of celebration, which include:

1. Greeting gestures such as high-fives, fist bumps, and brief hugs;
2. Congratulatory gestures such as celebratory hugs, "jump-arounds" and pats on the back for any form of athletic or personal accomplishment.

**Consolation**

It may be appropriate to console an emotionally distressed athlete (e.g., an athlete who has been injured or has just lost a competition). Appropriate consolation includes, publicly:

1. Embracing a crying athlete—in a public place or circumstance;
2. Putting an arm around an athlete while verbally engaging them in an effort to calm them down ("side hugs");
3. Lifting a fallen athlete off the playing surface and "dusting them off" to encourage them to continue competition.

**PROHIBITED PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Prohibited forms of physical contact include, without limitation:

1. Asking or having a minor athlete sit in the lap of a coach or volunteer;
2. Lingering or repeated embrace of a minor athlete that goes beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact;
3. Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other physical contact meant to discipline, punish or achieve compliance from a minor athlete;
4. "Cuddling" or maintaining prolonged physical contact of a minor athlete during any aspect of training, travel or overnight stay;
5. Playful, yet inappropriate contact that is not a part of regular training, (e.g., butt-pats, tickling or wrestling-type "horseplay");
6. Continued physical contact that makes a minor athlete obviously uncomfortable, whether expressed or not;
7. Any contact that is contrary to a previously expressed personal desire by the minor athlete for decreased or no physical contact, where such decreased contact is feasible in a competitive training environment.

Coach/Manager/Board member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Coach/Manager/Board member Print name \_\_\_\_\_