

Parent's Guide to Child Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program

Our sports organization has adopted a Child Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program. Certain elements of this program are being communicated to parents in this Parent's Guide in order to enhance education and to help to create an environment that is hostile to abusers. The basic elements of this program are outlined below:

1. **Background:** Child abuse/molestation has become a growing concern in recent years on a national level as the topic has received much attention in the media surrounding abuses in churches, schools and sports programs. Any form of child abuse/molestation is despicable and goes against everything for which our sports organization stands.
2. **Purpose:** The purpose of this new risk management program is to reduce the liability risk and related negative publicity, expense, and trauma to the local sports organization and of course the children that we serve. The program will educate all league administrators and staff on examples of child abuse/molestation, warning signs, policies that can be implemented to reduce the risk, volunteer screening, and how to deal with allegations of child abuse/molestation

3. **Definitions:**

Child Abuse: Verbal abuse (ridicule or put-downs), physical abuse (any hurting touching or excessive exercise used as punishment), emotional abuse (threats to perform unreasonable tasks), and sexual abuse.

Sexual Abuse: Refers to a wide spectrum of interactions including rape, physical assault, sexual battery, unwanted physical sexual contact, unwelcome sexually explicit or offensive verbal communication, coercive or expletive sexual contact, verbal sexual harassment, and/or sexualized attention or contact with a minor.

Conduct Official: Single person within the league who is appointed by the board to administer the Simplified Child Abuse/Molestation Risk Management Program. The Conduct Official is responsible for education, reviewing Volunteer Applications, checking references, conducting criminal background checks, handling appeals from disqualified candidates, conducting investigations on allegations of abuse, acting as liaison to local law enforcement, etc.

4. **Policies On Child Abuse/Molestation**

Limit One On One Contact: It is this organization's policy that no activities should take place involving one on one contact between a single, non-related league volunteer and a child, if such activities can be practically avoided. Instead, a "buddy system" is encouraged where two (2) adults should always be present during practices, games, carpooling, and special events.

Prohibition of Sleepovers: All sports organization sanctioned team or league sleepover activities should be prohibited whether overnight parties or traveling to away games. Exception: Teams traveling to far away tournaments can have sleepovers if each child is either accompanied by his/her parent or is being supervised by two (2) adults who are in each other's presence at all times.

Touch Policy: Touch is acceptable only if it is “respectful and appropriate”. Some experts have adopted a no touch policy, but most experts believe that “no touch” is an over-reaction and is ultimately damaging in itself and not practical.

Verbal Conduct Policy: Inappropriate comments of a sexual nature and suggestive jokes are prohibited.

Take Home/Pick-Up: Take home/pick-up of athletes by league personnel is strongly discouraged because of the difficulty in limiting one on one contact between adult and child (remember the Buddy System). Parent(s) should provide transportation for their own children to and from scheduled events. The league will clearly outline the expected start and end time for all events and communicate this with all parent(s). Parent(s) should be instructed to make back-up plans in the event they can't provide transportation. If parent(s) can't provide transportation they must communicate to the sports organization the name of the person(s) who are authorized to pick up the child. Such policy will help to protect against potential abductions or being thrust into the middle of any custody dispute.

Child Abuse Prohibition: All forms of sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse are prohibited.

Name Distribution: The distribution of directories/rosters with names, phone numbers, addresses, and pictures should be limited to persons on a “need to know” basis.

5. Examples of Abuse/molestation

Emotional Abuse: Yelling or making the following statements:

- *You're stupid;*
- *You're an idiot;*
- *You're an embarrassment;*
- *You're not worth the uniform you play in; etc.*

Physical Abuse: Besides the obvious examples of a coach hitting, kicking, throwing equipment, or shaking a player, watch out for the following:

- Behaviors seem violent versus disciplinary;
- Training practices become abusive
- Fighting is encouraged or ignored;
- Illegal moves, often associated with injuries are encouraged;
- Coaches teach improper techniques or encourage conduct which violates safety rules;
- Coaches allow athlete(s) to become physically or verbally abusive;
- Behaviors result in injuries to athlete(s); etc.

Sexual Abuse: An adult may not improperly sexualize touch by fondling instead of hugging (with permission), kissing, or seductive stroking of various body parts. On the other hand appropriate touching can be used when a young child needs comfort, reassurance, and support. Appropriate touch is respectful of a person's personal boundaries and comfort level, public (done in front of others and not secretly), and nurturing (not sexualized).

- Misuse of power and authority;
- Misuse of love and affection;
- Manipulation or tricks:
 - *This is love;*
 - *This is what you need to be a part of the team;*
 - *This is what we do for initiation*
- Grooming: desensitization that begins with appropriate touch, then the touch change.
Examples:
 - *You liked the touch before;*
 - *What's wrong? Don't you trust me?; or*

- *courting (gifts, time, attention);*
- *romancing (talking of love or attraction);*
- *line (you're special, I don't usually do this sort of thing, you're so mature, you're so attractive); or*
- *secrets (this is our special secret, others wouldn't understand, you or I would get in trouble)*

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6. Allegations of Abuse/Molestation And Other Policy Violations

Point of Contact: The Conduct Official is the appropriate person to whom all reports of child abuse/molestation should be reported. In the event that the Conduct Official is the alleged abuser/molester, the report should be made to the President of the sports organization.

7. Volunteer Screening

All volunteers who have repeated access to children should be required to complete a Volunteer Application and a Criminal Background Check should be conducted on each.

The Conduct Official should review the Volunteer Applications and should disqualify any candidate with a conviction involving crimes against a minor. In addition, other charges and convictions may be an indication of an unfit volunteer and may result in disqualification.

Thank you for taking the time to better understand the risk management program that is being implemented by our sports organization. Your concern and vigilance is not only appreciated, but also is an essential element of this program.