



U.S. CENTER FOR  
**SAFESPORT**

# Parent TOOLKIT



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# Introduction

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On February 14, 2018, a new law went into effect, S.534, the “Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and SafeSport Authorization Act of 2017.” The Act designates the U.S. Center for SafeSport (The Center) as the independent national safe sport organization responsible for delivering education and resolving allegations of misconduct within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements; additionally, the law requires the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and U.S. Olympic national governing bodies (NGBs) to report child sexual abuse to law enforcement.

If your child participates in a sport organization that is a member of a national governing body recognized by the **U.S. Olympic Committee**, the **U.S. Center for SafeSport Code** and definitions apply. Sexual misconduct should be reported directly to the Center, and other forms of misconduct should be reported to the NGB.

If your child participates in a sport organization that is unaffiliated with a NGB, request the policies and procedures from your child’s sport organization for reporting abuse. This toolkit for parents is designed to highlight a parent’s role in prevention and help determine when a report should be made.

High-profile cases of child abuse often represent extremes and should not deter parents from encouraging participation in youth sports. Children who have positive experiences in sports from a young age benefit in many ways. While a small percentage of youth go on to compete with elite or professional status, a successful foundation in childhood helps promote self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, and the ability to function as part of a team, while also promoting a healthy, lifelong interest in athletics. By helping promote strong and healthy relationships between team members and coaches, and spotting signs of potential problems before they become serious, a parent can help ensure the maximum benefits for their child.

*Acknowledgements:*

*Leslie Mitchel Bond, M. Ed; Janet Rosenzweig PhD, MPA, The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children*



# WHAT IS **Child Abuse**?

Child abuse is a complex issue. The term may evoke a strong emotional response and can create confusion as people try to agree on what is and is not abuse. Child abuse includes many forms, including physical, sexual and emotional harm.

The complexity is caused in part because individual families and communities have many different values about how to treat children. Further, child abuse is defined differently by the criminal justice system, the civil court system, and clinicians.

The **criminal** justice system defines child abuse according to the criminal laws in each state, and most often interact with child abuse charges when severe physical injury or sexual abuse is alleged. Each state has its own way of defining sex crimes, with degrees of severity of the charge based on the age of the victim and the exact act alleged. Charges of this nature will generally involve police, a district attorney/prosecutor, and the criminal courts.

The **civil** justice system, known in some states as Family Court, is involved if the charge involves abuse of a child by someone who is charged with the care and/or custody of the child. In most states, a parent, teacher, or coach falls into this category. Child Protective Services (CPS), known in some states as Human Services or Family Services, investigates these charges. Civil charges generally are held to a lower standard of evidence than criminal charges, making it possible for a case to be ‘founded’ or ‘substantiated’ by CPS, but no criminal charges filed by law enforcement. However, **many sport leagues have policies and protocols for reporting suspicions through your child’s league. If your child’s sport organization is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport (which responds to reports of sexual misconduct within the 49 national governing bodies of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Movements), the Center conducts investigations.**

The **clinical standard** is the one of primary importance to this discussion, and it simply is ‘does a child feel as if they have been abused?’ Many acts rise neither to the level of civil nor criminal charges, but leave a child feeling awful. Sharp observation by parents and coaches, and open communication between parents and children, can help identify when language or behavior has crossed a painful boundary for a specific child, and swift, compassionate intervention is called for.



**The *clinical standard* is the one of primary importance to this discussion, and it simply is ‘does a child feel as if they have been abused?’ When a child tells you they have been abused, report it. Tips on responding and reporting are available in the response section of this toolkit.**

# WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT **Child Sexual Abuse**

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Sexual **abuse** encompasses a variety of events or experiences that can lead to a wide range of behavioral and emotional responses. While the legal definition of child sexual abuse varies from state to state, sexual abuse is commonly defined as sexual exploitation involving anal, genital, oral, or breast contact between a child and another person and/or exposing a child to language or images of a sexual nature.

Too often parents think of abusers as strangers, when the reality is that sexual abuse or exploitation is most often committed by teachers, coaches, extended family members, and even other youth your children know.

Sexual **exploitation** implies sexual activity taking place in a relationship where there is inequality of power between the child and the abuser, based on age, physical size, and/or the nature of the emotional relationship. Athletic programs can provide opportunities for mutual exploitation between youth and for unscrupulous adults to exploit vulnerable children.

Pedophiles primarily have a sexual attraction to children. They often develop relationships with children based on friendship and affection that lead to sexual abuse disguised as sex play. Most pedophiles have learned to identify children who really enjoy or even need attention from adults; *they are particularly interested in the children less likely to be supervised by parents or other adults.*



A process of '*grooming*,' where an individual with predatory behavior slowly and carefully develops a relationship with a victim, gradually gaining their trust while gradually initiating more intimate contact, is often involved. The abuse may be camouflaged as a supportive intervention of some sort; cuddling after a defeat, showering or massaging after a hard practice, or as recently exposed, an invasive medical examination. These individuals are generally older, experienced, and very charming or helpful to the adults in the child victim's life.

**Situational abuse** occurs when a perpetrator, sometimes an adolescent, finds the opportunity for their own sexual gratification at the expense of a child victim and acts quickly and thoughtlessly. Sex abuse may also occur when teams have rites of initiation, forcing new or younger players to endure acts involving their intimate anatomy. Reports of these acts are much more common among male athletes than female, but occur in some form with girls as well. Some children can feel frightened, confused or victimized when exposed to aggressively sexualized language. Vulgar name calling with sexual undertones used as a means of intimidation can be experienced as sexual abuse by a child or teen.

## WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT **Peer-to-Peer Sexual Abuse**

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While many parents are initially focused on adult-child perpetration, it is important to not ignore the prevalence and severity of peer-to-peer sexual abuse. Approximately one third of sexual abuse of children is committed by minors. In a sport setting, these minors are most likely to be older children the younger athlete comes into contact with or teammates. Recognizing the warning signs of peer-to-peer sexual abuse will allow parents to intervene and provide both child victims and children with problematic sexual behaviors with the help they need.

## WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

# Physical Abuse

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Physical abuse is considered any non-accidental physical harm inflicted by a person responsible for a child's care that may or may not cause physical injury to that child. Physical abuse can take on many forms, including: hitting, kicking, punching, biting, burning, slapping, shaking, pulling hair, or pulling ears. Each state develops its own specific definition of physical abuse, but they must meet certain federal standards.

Physical abuse in sports might occur when the demands of training and competition go beyond athletes' developing strength and bodies, or when coaches force a team member to practice or play when injuries require rest and healing. Physical abuse also occurs when coaches provide or suggest the use of performance enhancing drugs.

With no single cause, it is hard to predict who will or will not become an abuser. Contributing factors might include characteristics of the youth, the family, the coach, or the team. Other risk factors include: a coach with a history of physical abuse to other youngsters, hostility or aggressiveness, or a current struggle with depression or substance abuse.



# WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

## Emotional Abuse

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Emotional abuse, also known as psychological maltreatment, is considered the most common type of maltreatment, but the least reported. Psychological maltreatment is defined as “a repeated pattern or [severe] incident(s)...that thwart the child’s basic psychological needs...and convey that a child is worthless, defective, or damaged goods [whose value is] primarily...meeting another’s needs.”\* Victims of emotional abuse are left to feel expendable, which is the exact opposite of the message a child needs to develop healthy self-esteem.

### FORMS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Forms of emotional abuse may include verbal acts, non-contact physical acts, and acts that deny attention or support. The following list describes major categories of emotional abuse, and examples of how they might play out in youth sports:

- **Verbal:**
  - Use of degrading or shaming nicknames
  - Repeatedly telling a child they are not good enough to be on the team
  - Repeatedly mocking a child for poor performance
  - Repeatedly calling out a child for their differences (e.g. race, ethnicity, disability)
  - Threats of frightening and inappropriate repercussions from a coach
- **Acts that deny attention and support:**
  - Acts or words that reject and degrade a child
  - Consistently excluding a child from playing time, even in practice
  - Singling out a child to consistently have the least favorable position or assignment
  - Consistently having the same child sit alone
  - Consistently giving a child a job or chore that removes them from the rest of the team

\* Adapted from the Investigation and Determination of Suspected Psychological Maltreatment of Children and Adolescents, APSAC 2017.

While federal law requires that state Child Protective Services Systems identify and respond to allegations of emotional abuse, legal definitions vary by state. If you believe emotional abuse has occurred and you seek intervention, contact CPS officials in your community to determine if they will respond. Unlike other types of abuse, emotional abuse is not defined in criminal law and will rarely warrant a law enforcement response. The [Center for SafeSport Code](#) requires that emotional abuse be treated seriously. If emotional abuse is suspected, follow the reporting guidelines shared by your national governing body, league, or club.

An isolated incident of inappropriate behavior may occur when an adult is under stress and makes a reactive comment. Some parents become uncomfortable reading these definitions for the first time, remembering that they may have behaved or spoken like this to their child on occasion. A healthy adult recognizes their mistakes and offers the child a sincere apology. A key factor in the definition of emotional abuse is the ongoing and repeated exposure to these painful and negative behaviors. The good news is that the negative effects of emotional abuse can be buffered by the ongoing support from a nurturing loving parent or caretaker, but a parent must become aware of the abuse to help.

- **Aiding and Abetting** is defined as any act taken with the purpose of facilitating, promoting, or encouraging the commission of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. This includes:
  - Exploiting/corrupting – acts or words that encourage a child to develop inappropriate attitudes or behaviors, such as:
  - Empowering one or more children to bully or belittle other team members into performing better
  - Encouraging a child to break rules, including use of performance enhancing drugs.

## DISTINGUISHING DISCIPLINE FROM ABUSE

- **Discipline:**
  - Removing participants from the starting line-up or game with a clear explanation of why. Removal for inappropriate behavior is different from removal for poor performance, and coaches need to be able to communicate that distinction clearly to team members.
  - Requiring athletes to arrive early for the next practice to help set-up equipment. Teaching an athlete to respect the coach's time and that of others is discipline.
- **Crossing the Line From Discipline to Abuse:**
  - Instructing team members to run excessive laps following poor performance when they are already fatigued, particularly if temperatures are extreme. Over-exertion may cause physical harm to the young athlete's developing body.
  - Refusing to allow water breaks. In addition to negatively impacting performance, dehydration causes muscle cramps, forces the heart to work harder, raises the pulse and leads to faster breathing.
  - Ordering players to re-enter games when they show signs of injury. Your athlete's physical health and well-being take precedence over winning games.

PARENTS OF  
**Preschool**  
CHILDREN



**TALKING TO YOUR  
PRESCHOOL CHILD ABOUT  
SEXUAL ABUSE**

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Open communication about the body, including sexual and reproductive anatomy, is important at all ages. Let your children know that you are always there to talk about anything; that it's okay to come to you when they are happy, sad, or scared.

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## PRIVACY AND SECRECY

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Begin by explaining the difference between privacy and secrecy. A private act is one that children can do by themselves, but you know about it. A secret act is one that no one else knows about. Tell them you will give them privacy as they earn it by showing they can keep themselves safe and they don't keep secrets from you, or hide important feelings from you because you will always be there to support them.

## BODY PARTS

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Just as your children learn some body parts by playing the game “head, shoulders, knees, and toes,” it is important that they learn the real names for their genitals. When children learn the medically accurate names at a young age and use them when necessary, they will feel comfortable talking about them as they grow up. To help you as a parent feel more comfortable, consider role playing with a friend or partner, with each of you taking turns asking and answering questions. Research tells us that Moms are most likely to take this on, but Dads should be encouraged to join the discussions.



- Introduce the medically accurate words for genitals. Use them when you are bathing your child or helping them get dressed. If your family is more comfortable using pet names for genitals, ensure your child knows “what a doctor would call them.” “We call it a wee-wee, but a doctor calls it a penis.”
- Recognize that even little ones can experience genital stimulation; the penises of little boys get erect and little girls can experience pleasurable sensations in their vulva. If children, particularly



boys, seem confused by this autonomic response, making an analogy to getting goose bumps can help. “Your penis getting bigger like that is something a normal healthy body does when you have certain private feelings. This is a special feeling and means your body works just right! Always feel free to talk to your parents about this, but it’s a private feeling we don’t share with others.” This conversation helps your child know it’s okay to talk to you about these kinds of feeling and experiences.

- If children ask about puppies and babies and where they come from, reply with short, accurate answers, then ask if they have any more questions. If you avoid questions or make the topic seem taboo, children might be reluctant to come to you when they have an experience that leaves them confused or feels wrong.
- Explain that their genitals are their special and private parts (in large part because of the very special feelings that can happen, even at an early age) and that no one is allowed to touch them. You can explain that it’s okay when the doctor examines their body, including occasional touches to their genitals because it’s the doctor’s job to make sure all parts of their body are healthy and growing.
- Before a medical exam, ask the medical provider exactly what the exam will involve. Speak with your child, and help them prepare; acknowledge that some parts may be less comfortable, like getting a shot, or having their genitals examined. Assure them you will be with them during the exam and if something doesn’t feel right, they should tell you.
- Help teach children the difference between privacy and secrecy. Privacy means they do something that you don’t see, but you know about it – like going to the bathroom! Secrecy means the parents don’t know about it.
- Talk to your child about the difference between good secrets and bad secrets. Good secrets don’t last forever. Keeping your dad’s birthday present a secret is a “good secret,” but when an adult says for example, “don’t ever tell anyone or you won’t be able to be on the team/play in the game,” it is a “bad secret.”

# TALKING TO YOUNG CHILDREN ABOUT PEER-TO-PEER SEXUAL ABUSE

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Children are curious by nature and learn by exploration.

Sexual development begins in infancy,  
and it is commonplace for children to be curious  
about their bodies and the bodies of others.

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According to the National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth (NCSBY), sexual play among children of similar age, size and ability, who know and play with each other regularly, is a normal aspect of childhood development. Very often, normal child sex play is not discovered by parents. If it is, it is suggested that parents use the situation as an opportunity to teach children about appropriate touch and personal space and answer any questions they might have about their bodies.

A child's sexual behaviors become cause for concern when they present one or more of the following characteristics\*:

- Behavior in question occurs frequently, and detracts from other interests
- The behavior concerns children of widely differing ages or between children of different mental or physical abilities
- Behavior is initiated in response to strong, upset feelings, such as anger, anxiety, or fear
- Behavior causes harm or potential harm (physical or emotional) to any child
- The child does not respond to discipline or other typical parenting strategies
- Involve coercion, force, or aggression of any kind.

*\* For more examples of normative and problematic sexual behaviors in children and adolescents, see the National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth's webpage [here](#).*



- Set boundaries with your child about who should be touching them and when; “it’s okay that Mommy or Daddy help you get undressed after school, but nobody at soccer camp should be doing that.”
- Keep open lines of communication with your child’s coaches and parents of children on their sports team. Reach out if you see or hear anything that makes you or your child uncomfortable.
- Reiterate to your children that nobody should be asking them to touch their private parts, not even their friends.
- Be wary of older children taking special interest in your child and monitor the relationship to ensure grooming is not taking place.





## HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR PRESCHOOL CHILD ABOUT PHYSICAL ABUSE

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When enrolling your child in a sports activity, talk to them about the role of the coach who, like the parents, wants to help the child learn and develop skills. You as a parent would never want to hurt your child and know that should be true for a coach, too.

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- Before your child attends their first class/practice, talk to them about physical boundaries between themselves, other players, and their coach.
- Review your rules for discipline at home and what your family considers safe ways to teach and promote positive behaviors.
- Discuss discipline that you as a parent do not consider appropriate or safe and would want to know if another adult used those techniques on your child. Your goal is not to scare your child, rather to make sure they will feel comfortable coming to you when something feels wrong.
- Talk to your child about other adults in their world that they consider “safe.” For some families, these may be aunts, uncles, or grandparents. For others, a trusted adult might be a best friend’s



parent, a teacher, caregiver, or pediatrician. Your goal is to expand the circle of those they trust. If something happens at a class or practice and you are unavailable, you want to make sure your child feels comfortable sharing a concern with another “safe” adult.

- Make sure your child understands that even adults they trust might make mistakes. The most important lesson is that you, their parent(s) will always be there to listen and support them.
- Help your child understand that making *behavior mistakes* (not following rules) is different from making *skill related mistakes*, and that they should not be punished for trying and learning new skills. **SAFE coaches** understand the difference.
- Tell your child that you value their safety first. If something a coach does hurts them or makes them feel uncomfortable when you’re not there, they should tell another adult they trust. If the other adult does not listen to them or refuses to believe them, they should tell another adult until they find one who listens and believes them. And, of course, they should tell you as soon as they can.
- Take the time to **LISTEN** to any worries or stories they want to share. Most parents want to respond immediately and try to “fix” children’s problems, sometimes before the whole problem has even been described! ASK open-ended questions like “how did that make you feel” and “please tell me more.” Listen to all that they have to say.



**Many survivors have shared that if just ONE adult had really listened, further abuse could have been prevented.**

## TALKING TO YOUR PRESCHOOL CHILD ABOUT EMOTIONAL ABUSE

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For many years, young children repeated the refrain “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me.”

Today, we know that words can hurt, and sometimes, no words – meaning no attention at all, also hurts.

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Because the scars from emotional abuse are invisible, it is easy for the pain to go undetected and last a lifetime. As a parent, your role is to make sure your child is cared for, safe, and feels worthwhile. The more they feel valued at home, the less likely a coach’s words can do long-term damage to their self-worth.

Younger children may have a difficult time differentiating between strong coaching and language that crosses into abuse. When working with the youngest athletes, most coaches are focusing on basic skill building and team building, so harsh language is generally not warranted.

Kids of any age can understand that verbal assaults can sometimes hurt as much – or more – than physical assaults. It can be much more difficult for a child to understand why sometimes a coach’s words make them want to work harder and sometimes the words just hurt.





- Provide your child with a firm foundation by speaking directly about your family's values: "in our family, we prefer to use helping words;" "in our family, we don't call people names."
- Spend time with your children and tell them you love them often.
- Talk to your child about the difference between *helping words* such as "you can do it," "great job trying," and *hurting words* such as "you're stupid," and "why can't you do anything right?" Tell them that adults should only use helping words and they should let you know if a coach uses *hurting words* when they talk to them.
- Apologize for your mistakes. When parents feel pressured, tired, or angry, they can say things they don't mean. Let your child know that you are frustrated but should never have taken it out on them. "I am sorry I yelled at you for spilling the milk. I had a bad day at work and I should not have said *hurting words* to you for an accident. I love you."
- When your child does something wrong, make sure they understand you think the behavior is bad, not them.
- Praise your child's talents, efforts, and special gifts so they feel valued. "Wow, look how far you kicked that ball." Or, "I am so proud of how hard you are trying to stay up on those skates." "Thank you for helping clean up all the equipment. You are so helpful."
- Avoid comments like "be a big boy/girl," which can be experienced by your child as being dismissive.

If you witness inappropriate behavior or language, you might say to your child, “Coach seems to be having a hard time knowing the difference between helping you be a better player and making you feel bad. That makes me sad, because I want you to keep on loving soccer!” Process your child’s response and follow up with the coach.

Continue talking to your child about how they feel both physically and emotionally after a game or practice. These conversations provide a strong foundation for young children to learn to recognize and act on their feelings and share them with you.

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## LISTENING DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS

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When your four-year-old daughter says, “The coach never puts me in the game at the end of class. He always picks the boys and does not even pay attention to me.”

- ✓ Do tell your daughter that you are glad she told you, sharing that you’re sorry she feels frustrated because you want her to love her sport!
- ✓ Do reflect on your experiences observing games and practices, and remember that one game with little playing time can feel like ‘never’ to a four-year-old.
- ✓ Do try and get more first-hand information on playing time by observing games and practices, or asking for observations from other parents. If your child continues to be excluded, calmly talk to the coach privately to express your expectations and raise your concern.
- ✓ Do spend quality time with your child and play games with her.
- ✓ Do show her she is important.
- ✗ Don’t tell your daughter that she probably needs to improve to play with the boys.
- ✗ Don’t yell at the coach in front of the team: that serves as a bad role model for the children and will embarrass you and your daughter.

When your four-year-old son says, “I don’t want to go back to soccer camp. It’s too hard. We just run the whole time with no breaks. It’s no fun. I just want to play at the park.”

- ✓ *Do* empathize with him and share that you signed him up for the program because he likes soccer and it sounded fun.
- ✓ *Do* ask him to describe what they do at camp. Listen to the responses.
- ✓ *Do* check in daily for a few days and see if the concerns are repeated.
- ✓ *Do* let him know that you want to make sure he has fun and is safe while learning some new skills.
- ✓ *Do* consider speaking to program officials to determine if you agree with their balance on skill building to fun.
- ✗ *Don’t* overlook his unhappiness.

When your four year-old-son says, “camp was so fun today. We got to go to the water park. My counselor gave me a special treat in the locker room.” Later you hear, “I saw his penis when we took off our suits.”

- ✓ *Do* remain calm.
- ✓ *Do* ask him to tell you a little more about the special treat and what happened in the locker room when he received it.
- ✓ *Do* tell him you are so happy he likes swimming.
- ✓ *Do* make sure you know the rules about adults and children changing together and determine if the counselor broke the rules.
- ✓ *Do* remember that males often see each other’s penis while using a urinal.
- ✓ *Do* praise him for sharing with you and remind him that his penis is a private part.
- ✓ *Do* consider calling the camp and calmly report to the program director what you learned, without offering any conclusions.
- ✗ *Don’t* call the camp insisting on a full blown legal investigation until there is more information.
- ✗ *Don’t* jump to conclusions without more information.



- ✗ *Don't* lose your temper and yell at him for looking at the counselor's penis.
- ✗ *Don't* make him feel as if he is guilty for doing something bad.

When your four year-old-daughter says, “Coach gave me a nickname – ‘Slug’ and now that’s what everyone is calling me. I don’t know if that’s a good or bad word, but I don’t like it.”

- ✓ *Do* thank your daughter for telling you.
- ✓ *Do* ask your daughter if kids call others by nicknames, as well.
- ✓ *Do* role play with your daughter how to ask the kids to call her by her given name.
- ✓ *Do* consider contacting the coach and sharing your concerns that your child not be singled out.
- ✗ *Don't* shrug it off as ‘kids will be kids.’
- ✗ *Don't* tell your child to be a ‘big girl’ and play along.

# School-Age

## CHILDREN



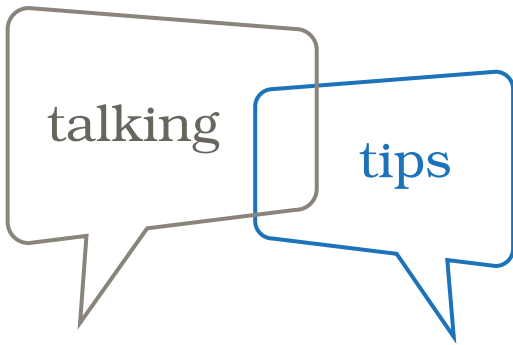
### TALKING TO YOUR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

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School-age children may be considered at a higher risk for sexual abuse at this stage of development because all things sexual are very far from their thoughts.

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- Continue to make discussing sexual topics a normal part of your home environment. You can introduce local news stories to generate a dinner table or carpool discussion about safety and reinforce that no one is allowed to speak to them or touch them in a sexual manner.
- Reinforce the concept that genital arousal is nothing more than an autonomic response to a thought or feeling, and is private.
- Make sure children understand that they should not touch anyone else's private parts, even if a child or adult asks them to and says it's okay.
- Remind your children that just as they tell you when their head hurts or their throat is sore, they should also tell you if it hurts to pee or poop, or something is uncomfortable in their genital area.
- On average, children get their first cell phone at age 10, so establish rules for cell phone usage early. Given that most phones have cameras, make sure that your children understand that no one is allowed to take photos or videos of their private parts and no one should show them pictures of other people's private parts. Contact your phone service provider to take advantage of parental controls and consider disabling the camera on your child's phone and computer and ensure that the team enforces strong rules prohibiting cell phones in changing areas.
- Set guidelines for games and practices where travel is required. Make sure you know who is driving, how many other children are in the vehicle, and how many coaches or other adults will be chaperones.
- Carpools to and from athletic practice, lessons, or competitions also offer great opportunities to learn about coach and team



dynamics. You might hear something in a conversation between the children that gives you an opportunity to ask your child more specific questions later in private.

- Learn details for team-related overnight travel, including transportation, sleeping arrangements, room checks, and number and names of chaperones. Review these with your child and be sure they are comfortable with everything. Check in with your child after the trip, determine their comfort level in the vehicle and overnight, and confirm that arrangements were carried out as planned.



# TALKING TO YOUNG CHILDREN ABOUT PEER-TO-PEER SEXUAL ABUSE

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Children are curious by nature and learn by exploring.

Sexual development begins in infancy,  
and it is commonplace for children to be curious about  
their bodies and the bodies of others.

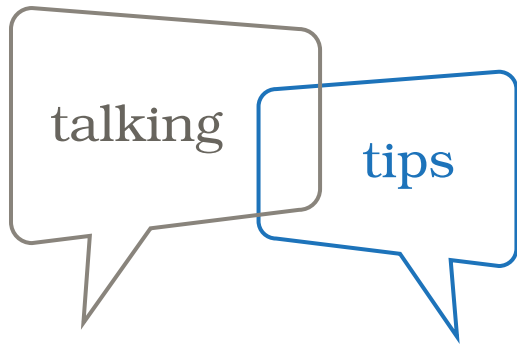
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According to the National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth (NCSBY), sexual play among children of similar age, size and ability, who know and play with each other regularly, is a normal aspect of childhood development. Very often, normal child sex play is not discovered by parents. If it is, it is suggested that parents use the situation as an opportunity to teach children about appropriate touch and personal space and answer any questions they might have about their bodies.

A child's sexual behaviors become cause for concern when they present one or more of the following characteristics:\*

- Behavior in question occurs frequently, and detracts from other interests
- The behavior concerns children of widely differing ages or between children of different mental or physical abilities
- Behavior is initiated in response to strong, upset feelings, such as anger, anxiety, or fear
- Behavior causes harm or potential harm (physical or emotional) to any child
- The child does not respond to discipline or other typical parenting strategies
- Involve coercion, force, or aggression of any kind

*\* For more examples of normative and problematic sexual behaviors in children and adolescents, see the National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth's webpage [here](#).*



- Set boundaries with your child about who should be touching them and when: “it’s okay that Mommy or Daddy help you get undressed after school, but nobody at soccer camp should be doing that.”
- Keep open lines of communication with your child’s coaches and parents of children on their sports team. Reach out if you see or hear anything that makes you or your child uncomfortable.
- Reiterate to your children that nobody should be asking them to touch their private parts; not even their friends.
- Monitor any electronic communications with peers and check for sexual exploitation or other inappropriate camera phone usage.
- Be wary of older children taking special interest in your child and monitor the relationship to ensure grooming is not taking place.



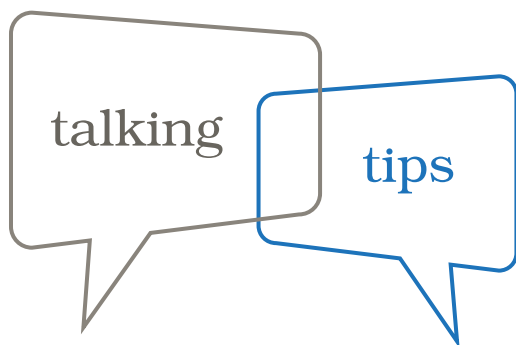
## HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD ABOUT PHYSICAL ABUSE

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As your children reach school-age, sporting programs transition from equal participation to development and competition. Team sports host tryouts for their leagues with colors or names representing the “better” athletes and individual sports require mastering specific competencies before moving up to a higher level. This enhanced competition may provide an opportunity for a child to accept inappropriate behaviors believing it will improve their chances for success. Model the behavior you expect to see in your child’s coach.

Show them that, win or lose, you love to watch them play.

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- Review your family discipline rules. Children who develop relationships with their coaches/trainers, believing that these adults have their best interests at heart, may have a hard time recognizing when discipline has crossed the line to abuse. They also may be reluctant to report abusive behaviors if they have



been misled to believe they “deserved it” or for fear that their participation will be negatively impacted. The more you review the discipline rules in your home and at their school, the more they will understand when a grown-up’s behavior breaks the rules.

- Check in regularly after practices and games. Put down your phone, make eye contact with the coaches and players, and let your child know that you really are interested.
- Ask open-ended questions that typically result in longer answers. The question, “how was practice?” will most likely be responded to with “fine,” but the question, “what was your favorite/least favorite part of practice?” might lead to a much longer description of “...nothing, the coach made us...” or, “at the end, when we all got to....”
- Pay attention to your child’s cues so you can distinguish whether a frustration or concern is over their own performance, lack of interest in a sport, or related to how they were treated by a coach or teammate.
- Revisit the conversation about keeping secrets. Children with a strong sense of empathy may be concerned about the way a coach is treating a teammate. If the teammate told your child not to say anything, then he/she may be afraid to share with you.
- Listen to the conversations in your child’s carpool. If you hear something concerning, discuss with your child after you drop off the other children to determine whether you should follow-up with other parents or league officials.

Even though parents cannot protect children from all harm, you can reassure them that if someone has hurt them, it **WAS NOT THEIR FAULT**. Remind them that no child deserves to be abused for any reason. Unconditional support from you can significantly mitigate the harmful effects of abuse.

## TALKING TO YOUR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD ABOUT EMOTIONAL ABUSE

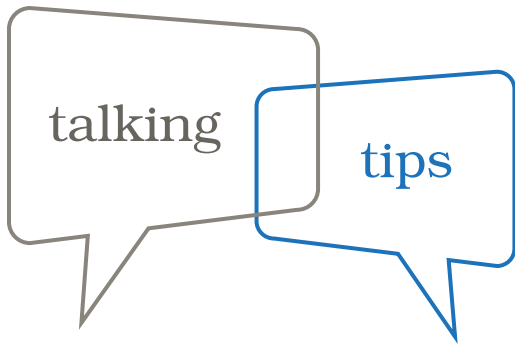
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School-age children spend a lot of time playing games indoors and outdoors. As they choose their friends, they also exclude those with whom they don't want to play. At this age, many children focus on rules. Just as there are rules for how to play games, there are rules for how they choose the words they use when talking to their peers/teammates, and there are rules adults should choose for when they talk to children. Remind them that words can hurt.

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School-age children are in the concrete operational stage of intellectual development and as such, things can seem black or white with little ability to process subtleties. Harmful coaching can be very difficult for a child of this age to process, and lacking subtlety or nuance, may too easily result in a child deciding that they do not belong in the sport. It is particularly important for parents of school-age children to observe occasional interactions and help the child determine that the coach's behavior was meant to be supportive.

Children can be taught to understand that a coach may criticize a specific behavior – a kick, a catch, a run, but should never criticize the child personally. Parents often explain to their children that they always love them, while not always loving all of their behaviors; similarly, a coach HAS to focus on their behaviors – that's how they can help them be a better player.



- Remind your child of your family's values of being fair and respectful.
- Ask them to think about how they would feel if they were the only one not picked for a team or no one ever threw the ball to them. Encourage them to include their peers or teammates and to let you know if a coach continually isolates them or another child.
- Ask them questions specific to their sport such as their favorite position to play, stroke to swim or apparatus in gymnastics, rather than questions about their performance. Show them you are engaged in their enjoyment of the sport, as that is what you expect from their coach.
- After observing a practice where a coach yells, follow-up with your child to see if that is the norm or not. If it happens to your child, explain to him/her that you want to calmly talk to the coach. You might say to the coach something like, "I appreciate all the time and effort you put into coaching and I recognize it can be stressful managing all these children, but when you yell at my son, it makes him lose confidence and focus. I know you want him to improve, and as his parent just wanted to let you know that he responds better with encouragement."
- And, after practice where a coach praises and supports the players, thank the coach and tell them how that seems helpful.

It is also possible that a child is participating in a specific sport because a parent or other significant person wanted them to have the experience. A child who was less than enthusiastic about a sport in the first place may have an even lower tolerance for harsh coaching.

Of course, if a coach is denigrating the kids personally, it's time to intervene.



## LISTENING DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PARENTS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

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When your ten-year-old son says, “Coach yelled at me in front of everyone and told me he wished I was not on his team.”

- ✓ *Do* calmly ask your child what was happening in practice before the coach yelled at him. Perhaps the coach was frustrated that he was not paying attention and meant to say, “I have had a really hard day and have little patience left so I need you to listen.”
- ✓ *Do* empathize with your son and let him know you understand how he must have felt and that adults should never speak to children that way.
- ✓ *Do* encourage him to come to you again if the coach continues to use hurtful words.
- ✓ *Do* reach out to the coach and ask if he might try offering a word of encouragement or hope, reminding him that encouragement may be sufficient and more effective in building confidence.
- ✗ *Don't* call the coach immediately and yell at him.
- ✗ *Don't* let your child think he deserved it because he was not paying attention.

When your 11-year-old daughter says, “Sorry I’m late, coach made me stay after to help with my dismount. I finally got it, but I was kind of uncomfortable with how she would hold me each time.”

- ✓ *Do* remain calm.
- ✓ *Do* tell her you are so glad that she shared this with you.
- ✓ *Do* ask her what made her uncomfortable – where she was touched, how she was touched, how often etc.
- ✓ *Do* talk about the difference between safely spotting and inappropriate touching.
- ✓ *Do* observe practices, including randomly dropping in when unexpected.

- ✗ *Don't* think it's no big deal because she's only 11.
- ✗ *Don't* assume that sexual abuse only happens between people of different genders.
- ✗ *Don't* assume it won't happen again because she got the dismount.
- ✗ *Don't* let her stay after practice alone again.

When your 9-year-old son says, "I think I broke two fingers. Coach was deciding between me and Jason to catch for the next game, so he kept pitching harder and harder balls to see who would miss."

- ✓ *Do* stay calm.
- ✓ *Do* look at his hand and take him to the emergency room right away if it is hot, swollen or tender to touch.
- ✓ *Do* ask him if any of the other children can throw that hard. Do ask him if Jason hurt his hand too.
- ✓ *Do* follow the procedure for reporting possible physical abuse.
- ✗ *Don't* ask if he earned the position.

When your 9-year-old daughter says, "This is the third practice in a row that no one would be my partner in drills. I think it's because they all think I'm weird."

- ✓ *Do* thank her for confiding in you.
- ✓ *Do* ask her if anyone else is in the same position—is there an 'in-crowd' only wanting to practice with their friends?
- ✓ *Do* acknowledge that it can be hard being with a group of kids with different values and personalities.
- ✓ *Do* assure her that there is nothing weird about her at all!
- ✓ *Do* try to watch a practice to see how your daughter is being treated and how the coach handles it.
- ✗ *Don't* immediately call the coach and demand remediation.
- ✗ *Don't* chalk this up to 'kids will be kids'; it could be an indicator of peer to peer abuse, or bullying.



# Middle School

## YOUTH

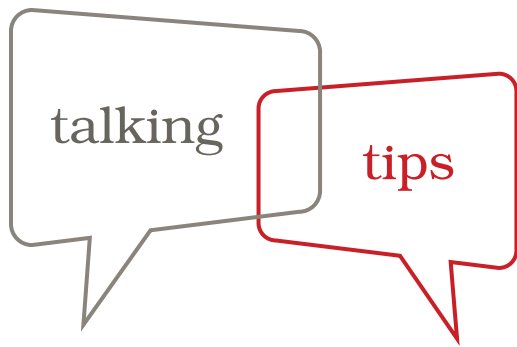


### TALKING TO YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

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By this age, children are noticing romantic relationships, may be developing attractions or crushes on peers or young adults, and may be more aware of sexual arousal in themselves and others.

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- Keep the lines of communication open. By middle school your children will be spending more and more time with their peers and coaches, so you want to make sure you allow plenty of time in car rides and at meals to learn what is going on in their lives.
- Revisit the talk about the difference between privacy and secrecy that you had when they were younger. Remind them that they will never get in trouble for telling you a secret that will keep them or a friend safe. Assure them that you will honor their privacy and that you always want to make sure they are safe.
- Expand their circle of safe adults. As open as you are with your child, they still may feel shame telling you about something they feel that they should have prevented. Help them think of other adults they would feel comfortable talking to. Ask them if they can identify another relative, teacher or family friend in whom they might confide.
- Create a code word that your children should use if they call or text you if they need help. Perhaps something has happened at practice or a game and they cannot have a private conversation. Whenever you get a text with the code word, you will know they would like you to show up immediately, no questions asked.
- Discuss feelings about uniforms. Traditional uniforms for certain sports often include design elements that would not be part of a child's wardrobe, such as the tight shorts worn in volleyball, leotards and tennis skirts. It is never appropriate for coaches and other adults to comment on children's appearance in their uniforms – positive or negative. Their comments should only focus on children's efforts and performance.
- Use specific examples to role-play action steps for your children. "What if your coach asks you to model leotards he is thinking of ordering? How would that make you feel? How do you think you should respond?"

# TALKING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH ABOUT PEER-TO-PEER SEXUAL ABUSE

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It can be easy to think of adolescent children as young adults who have a developed sense of right and wrong, impulse control, and decision-making skills. The truth, however, is that these are still children who need guidance and support from the adults in their lives.

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It is also important to understand that the overwhelming majority of adolescents with problematic sexual behavior will not grow up to be an adult sexual offender with proper education and treatment.

Concerning adolescent sexual behavior includes\*:

- An interest in much younger children
- Public masturbation
- Spending time on sexualized websites.

*\* According to research by the NCSBY – see their web resources for parents [here](#).*





- Encourage your child to keep open lines of communication with you concerning their sexual history and any questions they may have on sex.
- Speak with your child about teens who sexually abuse other teens. Discuss that this can be as subtle as a person who keeps touching them after being told to stop, to forced sexual acts.
- Continue to be vigilant of their sports teams, relationships with teammates, and social media use.

The number one treatment factor related to stopping further problematic sexual behavior is caregiver involvement. Having the tools to recognize these signs will go a long way in the treatment of a child and the protection of the children around them.\*

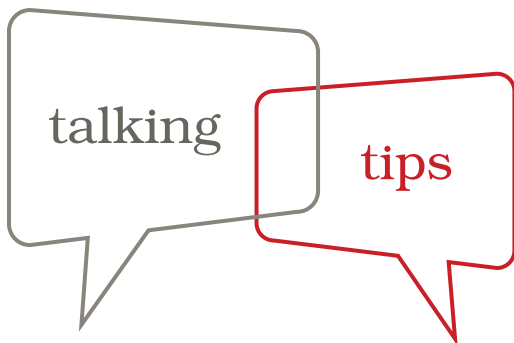
\* Suggested in research by the NCSBY which can be found [here](#).

## HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH ABOUT PHYSICAL ABUSE

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Feeling pressure to make their high school teams, many middle school athletes are focused on excelling on their feeder teams. They are also at an age when the need for peer approval is dominant. Middle school youth are less likely to call out another athlete for bullying behavior if it will impact their relationships with other teammates. They are also less likely to call out coaches for physically abusive behavior because these coaches determine their athletic fate.

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- Review your family discipline rules. Children who develop relationships with their coaches/trainers, believing that these adults have their best interests at heart, may have a hard time recognizing when discipline has crossed the line to abuse. They also may be reluctant to report abusive behaviors if they have been misled to believe they “deserved it” or for fear that their participation will be negatively impacted. The more you review the discipline rules in your home and at their school, the more they will understand when a grown-up’s behavior breaks the rules.





- As with younger children, keep open communication a priority. Car rides, meal times, even texting offers informal ways to check in without the appearance of an interrogation.
- Check in regularly after practices and games. Put down your phone, make eye contact with the coaches and players, and let your child know that you really are interested.
- Host team dinners or offer to bring snacks to practices and games so you can hear the talk among the players and see if you gain any insight into coaches/players dynamics.
- Pay attention to your middle school athlete's attitude. Do they still look forward to practice and competitions? Have they voiced any vague complaints?
- If you have any concerns, use broad, open-ended questions to get to the bottom of their issues. Remind them that their safety remains your first priority.



## TALKING TO YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH ABOUT EMOTIONAL ABUSE

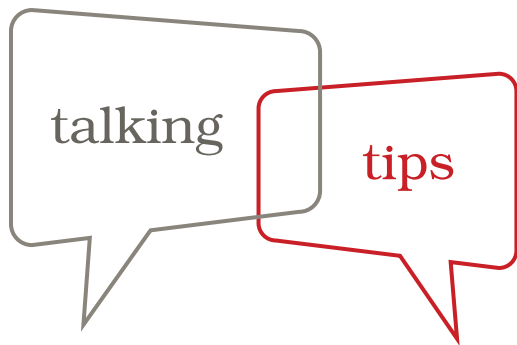
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One of the hallmarks of middle school youth is the onset of puberty, and the vast physical differences in kids of the same age who are at different stages of development. These sometimes-dramatic differences can set the stage for bullying, harassment and potentially emotional abuse by a coach.

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The smallest child may experience rejection; the child who is still awkwardly learning to navigate their quickly growing body may experience shaming, and the only eleven-year-old to develop breasts may be susceptible to exploitation. Frank, honest discussions about their own development and differences in the development of others are crucial at this age; this will support your child in developing empathy and help them identify people lacking it.

Young athletes, especially when they reach levels of elite competition, can be trained to ignore their own instincts. While most people respond to feelings like pain and hunger, athletes with a training regimen and weight requirements are trained to power through. We do not want our children powering through any feelings of any nature that make them uncomfortable around their coaches, trainers, or others who have a role in their success.



- Help discourage cruel teasing. “In our family, we do not for any reason single out people to tease because they’re different from us.”
- Help them to understand helping words and hurting words at a deeper level.
- Assume there are both athletes and coaches on the team who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ), perhaps your own, and make sure your children will let you know if they hear any derogatory comments.
- After observing a practice where a coach yells, follow-up with your child to see if that is the norm or not. If it happens to your child, explain to him/her that you want to calmly talk to the coach. You might say to the coach something like: “I appreciate all the time and effort you put into coaching and I recognize it can be stressful managing all these children, but when you yell at my son, it makes him lose confidence and focus. I know you want him to improve, and as his parent just wanted to let you know that he responds better with encouragement.”
- After practice where a coach praises and supports the players, thank the coach and tell them how that seems helpful.
- Make sure your child understands that their teammates weight and body type is not for discussion, and neither coaches nor teammates should shame athletes. Refrain from emphasizing your child’s weight so that they maintain a positive body image.

# LISTENING DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PARENTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH

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*When your 8th grade daughter says, “swim practice was great. Coach told me my form has improved and he loves the way I look in the team bathing suit.”*

- ✓ *Do* tell her that you know she has been working so hard on her form and you are glad the coach has noticed an improvement.
- ✓ *Do* tell her that coaches are supposed to notice changes in skills and compliment you on progress.
- ✓ *Do* remind her that coaches are never supposed to make comments about your body or how you look in your uniform.
- ✓ *Do* encourage her to tell you if the coach or any other adult involved with the program makes similar remarks to her or others in the future.
- ✓ *Do* contact the coach and tell him this made you uncomfortable.
- ✗ *Don't* tell her that she is lucky she has a good body that people notice.

*When your 7th grade son says, “the coach pulled me out of the game, swore at me in front of the whole team, and told me we lost because I didn't block a goal.”*

- ✓ *Do* thank him for sharing his experience with you and ask him to describe what happened. Try and determine if this was a single outburst or a pattern of how the coach treats your son and/or other children.
- ✓ *Do* find an opportunity to share with the coach that shaming your son immediately shuts him down.
- ✓ *Do* ask the coach to consider giving your child another chance next time so that he can learn from his mistakes.
- ✗ *Don't* doubt your child or ask if he cost the team the game. Indeed, your child might have made a mistake and let in the winning goal. Mistakes are okay. Coaches swearing at children are not okay.

*When your 8th grade son says, “Coach spiked a ball really hard into my arm today, and now I can barely move it. He said it was the only way I’d learn to stand in the right position.”*

- ✓ *Do* take a close look at his arm to assess whether he needs medical attention.
- ✓ *Do* talk about other ways the coach could have demonstrated proper positioning. Do ask if the coach has ever done anything like this before, to him or any other team member.
- ✓ *Do* document the incident and consider reporting to league authorities, and watching subsequent games and practices for evidence of a pattern.
- ✗ *Don’t* ignore his complaint and tell him, “You’re exaggerating; I am sure it does not hurt that much.”
- ✗ *Don’t* model inappropriate behavior by going to the next practice and screaming at the coach in front of your son and the other players.

*When your 7th grade daughter says, “There’s a sleepover at the team captain’s house this weekend and I’m the only one on the team she didn’t invite.”*

- ✓ *Do* thank her for sharing this with you.
- ✓ *Do* acknowledge that this must feel bad.
- ✓ *Do* ask if she’s sure that the entire team was invited except her – it could be that the captain just invited her close friends.
- ✓ *Do* ask if the other girls on the team do anything else that make her feel left out and how often these things happen.
- ✓ *Do* check her social media account(s) to see if anyone is posting negative comments about her.
- ✓ *Do* brainstorm ways she might be more accepted on the team.
- ✗ *Don’t* ignore her feelings and tell her ‘you don’t need those girls as friends anyway.’ If they are her teammates, she does want to be their friend.
- ✗ *Don’t* rush and call the parent of the team captain; often insensitive children have insensitive parents.

# High School Aged

## ADOLESCENTS



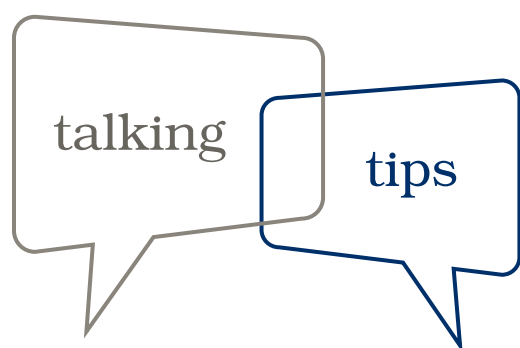
### TALKING TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AGED ADOLESCENT ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

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Many young people are sexually active to some extent by the time they reach high school. Research suggests that young people in the United States have sexual intercourse for the first time at about age 17, and other intimate sexual behaviors precede intercourse.

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With older teens who don't understand sexual arousal as an autonomic response, there is the risk of confusing attraction/arousal for emotional attachment. Devious adults play on this innocence, convincing a victimized youth that their arousal means they were a willing participant. A key message for teens is that arousal does not mean consent, or even real interest.



- Make it part of your routine to check in on your adolescent's relationship with his/her coach. Listen for any behaviors that sound alarms (either positive or negative), particularly being singled out for special treatment.
- Continue expanding their circle of safe adults. As open as you are with your child, they still may feel shame telling you about something they feel that they should have prevented. Help them think of other adults they would feel comfortable talking to. Ask them if they can identify another relative, teacher, or family friend in whom they might confide.
- Stay in touch with the parents of your child's friends. You might learn information from them that you can raise with your adolescent. Occasionally you might need to confirm facts and rules with your teen, as they may have heard conflicting information from their peers.



- Given the frequency of overnight trips and team bonding events, develop a plan with your teen for how they can manage situations where alcohol and drugs might be present unexpectedly. Face-saving excuses, such as “I have an allergy” or “I’m on medication so I can’t drink” provide teens with a way to respond to peer pressure.
- Monitor your child’s social media feeds. Communications with coaches and other staff should be limited to authorized resources, like a team web page or group text, and content should be restricted to team business such as communicating changes in practice, or game schedules or locations, lineups for matches or games, as well as weather delays or cancellations. Encourage your athletes to share texts with you if:
  - i. they ever receive a personal text from a coach or trainer asking them to meet alone in their office or another location;
  - ii. a coach or trainer offers to drive them separately from the team.



# TALKING TO HIGH SCHOOL AGED ADOLESCENTS ABOUT PEER-TO-PEER SEXUAL ABUSE

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The truth, however, is that these are still children who need guidance and support from the adults in their lives. It is also important to understand that the overwhelming majority of adolescents with problematic sexual behavior will not grow up to be an adult sexual offender with proper education and treatment.

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## HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AGED ADOLESCENT ABOUT PHYSICAL ABUSE

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Before the season starts, talk to your teen about how you believe coaches should interact with athletes. During the high school years, many adolescents are focused on playing at the varsity level, achieving elite status, and even pursuing collegiate athletics.

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For your teen, pleasing their coaches – both with their attitude and performance – becomes their priority. Your teenager should never have to compromise their safety to earn a coach’s praise.

- Keep the lines of communication open at this time when their fears of making the team or playing time might take precedence over their voicing any safety concerns they might have.

The transition from recreational play that children experienced at younger ages, to the more competitive leagues common in high school necessitates a change in coaching style. As the commitment to sports becomes more physically demanding through increased strength and cardio training, and more emotionally demanding due to increased goals and expectations, teenagers will respond differently. Some may be energized by the increased expectations, eager to put in the time and hard work. Others may question the value and decide that academics or other pursuits are more valuable to them.



During the often emotionally fragile time of adolescence, a parent’s empathic ear can make all the difference. Teenagers may become very frustrated with themselves for their own lack of improvement or skills in comparison to their peers; or, the frustration may result from coaches who have crossed the lines from nurturing to abusive.

- “You seem upset after practice. What’s up?” If your teen is upset about the fact that their friend is starting in the game or has a spot in the next meet and they do not, you have a chance to talk about the things they might do to improve. If your teen mentions something a coach did to him or someone else, this opens the door for you to probe further.

To determine if abuse is occurring, talk with your child to get to the root of their concerns or anxiety. Many teenagers struggle as they try to figure out their own strengths and goals and those they perceive you and/or their coaches have for them. Some questions to consider:

- Has your child been playing the same sport for so long that he/she has burned out?
- Does he/she have a new coach that is a bad match for his/her personality style?
- Is he/she having trouble with other athletes on the team?
- If you were a star high school athlete, is your child trying to live up to your real or perceived expectations?
- Does your child’s athletic future impact your family’s finances?

## TALKING TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AGED ADOLESCENT ABOUT EMOTIONAL ABUSE

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While continuing to have the occasional emotional check-in and reinforcing that a coach's job is to help change a player's behaviors to improve their skills, we face additional parenting challenges as our children become teens.

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It is a normal developmental phase for the frame of reference to shift from family to peers. Your child's friends will seem to have more influence on them than you. We face the double challenge that teens are exquisitely sensitive to criticism (especially when delivered in front of their peers), and many are less likely to talk to their parents than they were at younger ages.

Between practice and competition, high school athletes spend a significant amount of their non-school time devoted to their sport. In fact, they may be spending more time with their coaches and trainers than with you, their parents. While their coaches may be experts at a specific sport, they may not be parents and may have inappropriate expectations about your child's capabilities. And yet, the stronger the relationship any adult has with your adolescent, the greater the power they have to hurt them.



- Continue to check-in with your child to get a sense of how they perceive their relationship with their coach or trainer. Remind them that they should always come to you if any of these adults verbally assault them.
- Occasionally, a well-meaning coach may lose patience and say something emotionally abusive without realizing it. That coach can receive feedback to help prevent this from happening again. If your child feels comfortable doing so, they should consider approaching the coach at a quiet time and share the impact of their hurtful remarks. If the behavior is repeated, it should be reported to league authorities as emotional abuse.
- Make sure to document any emotionally abusive behaviors your child shares, so that if a pattern develops you can report all the incidents.
- Continue to validate their worth, their efforts and their gifts. If you build up your child's self-esteem inside your home, it will be more challenging for outsiders to tear it down.

# LISTENING DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PARENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES

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*When your teenage daughter says, “I’m quitting the team. The coach didn’t even speak to me after the game. I already felt bad I missed the winning free throw; even the rest of the team consoled me.”*

- ✓ *Do* remind her that games are not won or lost by one person’s actions. She plays a team sport and if the whole team had played better, the game would not have been that close.
- ✓ *Do* comfort her.
- ✓ *Do* encourage her to wait and make her decision when she is less upset.
- ✗ *Don’t* say, “Good! She’s a jerk anyway and we’ll get you on a different team.”
- ✗ *Don’t* assume your daughter really wants to quit the team and isn’t saying that out of frustration.
- ✗ *Don’t* follow the coach’s poor practice and ignore her when you see her at a game; model good behavior and speak to the coach whenever possible.



*When your high school son* says, “Coach told us we had to practice until we got it right AND, he did not let us get water for 2 hours.”

- ✓ *Do* thank him for sharing his experience with you.
- ✓ *Do* make sure he drinks plenty of fluids while you are reviewing what happened.
- ✓ *Do* confirm with others on the team.
- ✗ *Don't* doubt the truth of his statement.
- ✗ *Don't* question whether the team “deserved” such a punishment.

Most importantly,

- ✗ *Don't* keep this information to yourself. If you speak up now by following the league’s protocol for reporting suspected abuse, you can prevent this from happening again and avoid medical consequences.

*When your adolescent daughter* says, “The coach told me I’ve improved so much, he wants to take me to a special tournament and it won’t cost us anything because he already has rooms reserved.”

- ✓ *Do* tell your daughter how proud you are that she is working so hard at her sport and has improved.
- ✓ *Do* ask questions about the tournament date, and if the coach plans to take other teammates.
- ✓ *Do* be uneasy over any kind of “special treatment” reserved only for your teen; abusers often create opportunities by giving targeted children special privileges.
- ✓ *Do* check in about the overnight lodging to confirm sleeping arrangements.
- ✓ *Do* advise the coach of the impropriety of the invitation.
- ✗ *Don't* let your child go on a trip alone with a coach.
- ✗ *Don't* let your child stay in a hotel room or adjoining room with a coach or other staff member.
- ✗ *Don't* hesitate to talk to league officials; let them determine if there was a verifiable reason for the invitation.





*When your high school son says, “Pick me up early; I don’t want to be in the locker room just with the guys after the coach leaves.”*

- ✓ *Do* ask him what happens in the locker room that he wants to avoid, and how many times it has happened in the past.
- ✓ *Do* tell him that you’ll do whatever you can to ensure his safety.
- ✓ *Do* try to determine if he is singled out, or other boys are targeted in the locker room.
- ✓ *Do* ask if there are rules prohibiting cell phones in the locker room and if the rules are enforced.
- ✓ *Do* consider checking his social media account to see if the people targeting him in the locker room are targeting him online.
- ✗ *Don’t* hesitate to contact league officials if the answers you get from your son indicate a pattern of abuse or bullying.

## What to ask your child's sport organization

Prior to enrolling your child in sporting clubs, teams or summer sport camps, there are several questions you should ask to ensure you understand the policies and procedures in place to protect the safety of your child. (For examples, consult the Safe Star system in Tennessee, the first state to develop a safety rating system for youth sports.)

If there are multiple youth sports programs in your community, take the time to evaluate which program best fits your family's goals and values. Before enrolling your child in any program, reach out to other parents to learn about their experiences.

- First, ***find out how coaches and other volunteers are screened and hired.*** Does the organization do more than conduct criminal background checks and contact references? Background checks only disclose information on convicted abusers, while comprehensive screening and interviewing sends the message the organization is committed to child protection; this may deter potential abusers seeking easy targets. During screening, league officials can post hypothetical questions related to what a coach would do if he or she witnessed or heard about an abusive situation; the answer offers insight as to how that individual might behave in a real situation. Any suggestion that he or she might keep a disclosure private is a **red flag**.
- Next, determine ***what kind of training is required*** of all coaches. Less than one-third of youth coaches have received training in essential competencies such as sport specific instruction, motivational techniques, and safety/injury prevention.\*
- Has your league received training on abuse prevention and response?
- Does training include bullying prevention and peer-to-peer sexual assault prevention?

Parents should learn ***policies and procedures the organization maintains*** to prevent abuse. All coaches, whether paid or volunteer, should abide by a set of standards designed to protect youth from physical abuse. These include:

- An environment that does not support any abusive behaviors from coaches, trainers, other staff, parents or adults in the stands.

\* Aspen Institute



- An environment that does not condone any bullying behavior from teammates, other athletes or peers in the stands.
- A clear understanding of all personnel, including coaches, trainers and administrators that they are a mandated reporter if they know or suspect child abuse of any type.
- Written reporting rules for injured players, including doctor's permission for when the athlete may return.
- Guidelines regarding proper hydration. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics:
  1. Children should have appropriate fluids available.
  2. Children should consume fluids before, during and after exercise.
  3. Nine to 12-year-old children should replenish with 3 to 8 ounces of fluid every 20 minutes, and adolescents may consume 32 to 48 ounces of fluid every hour.
- Policies prohibiting speedy weight gain/loss protocols for participation in youth athletic competitions
- Policies limiting opportunities for coaches/other staff to be alone with youth.
- *“Two-deep leadership”* assures that when youth are disciplined or examined for potential injuries there are always two adults present.

Abusers, particularly sexual offenders, seek opportunities to isolate youth. The more programs limit private access to youth, the greater the chance they can prevent violations. Limits should include:

- **Locker Room Restrictions** ensuring children and youth have privacy when they are changing and showering. For the youngest children, policies should specify who takes them to the bathroom.
- **Separate Sleeping Accommodations** for games/tournaments requiring youth to travel with their team and coaches. Youth should have other youth as roommates, not coaches or other adults. These requirements should preclude adjoining rooms, as a common door could allow a coach to gain entry when youth are showering or sleeping. If a situation arises where there is a medical necessity for a child to be seen at night, the “two-deep leadership” policy should remain in effect.
- **Private Lessons** should only be initiated by you – the parent. If a coach offers to give your child additional coaching in private, learn the specifics before you allow your child to participate. Will the lesson be in a public place? Can you observe? Will the coach charge a fee? Does the coach offer these lessons for all teammates?
- **Social Media** and electronic communication should be limited to issues about the team with parents copied. Links to personal social media accounts should be strongly discouraged.
- **Appropriate Physical Contact** such as spotting for a new dismount, icing and taping must all be a part of safe sport. **Inappropriate**, private massage that involves touching genitals or other areas not affected by sport is not safe. High fives, pats on the shoulders, and accolades are safe; hugs initiated by a child are **safe**; hugs initiated by a coach may **not** be **safe** and should be discouraged.
- **Disciplinary** procedures for coaches who do not follow policies should be specified and followed.

These standards should be shared with all staff, volunteers, parents and youth at the beginning of the season so that everyone is aware of the rules and the consequences for rule violations. Quality programs seek feedback from parents at the end of each season.

## SAFE ORGANIZATIONS

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creen coaches, volunteers and staff before hiring to ensure understanding of character and philosophy



llow parents and caretakers access to practices and games



oster privacy and respect anywhere children might be changing or sleeping, including bathrooms, locker rooms, vehicles and hotels



ncourage children and family members to speak up when they have questions or concerns, and have a clear policy for families to follow

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## What to ask your child's coach

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At the start of the season, take the time to get to know your athlete's coach(es). You can begin by sharing some information about your child and your goals for him/her, followed by asking some questions that will help you learn more about their experience and reasons for coaching. Your questions might include:

- How did they get involved with coaching?
- How long have they been coaching?
- Do they coach other sports?
- Do they coach multiple genders and ages?
- Did they play this sport as a youth?
- Do they have a child on this team?
- What are their goals for their team? (Be wary of winning at all costs)
- Do they encourage participation in more than one sport?

*Research suggests that athletes who focus on a single sport from a young age, particularly when they train year-round, are at an increased risk for injury. In 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued new recommendations to doctors, suggesting a delay in specialization for the majority of sports until after puberty.*

You know your child best. Even if close friends have given the coach or organization rave reviews, it still might not be the best fit for your child. The coach might not be physically abusive, but his or her style might not be the best fit for your young athlete. With so many options available, seek out the philosophy and personality that is the best match.



## What to look/listen for at a game or practice

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At the beginning of the season, it is quite likely that the coach or “team mom” will ask for volunteers to bring snacks for games. In addition to “snack parent” sign-ups, suggest that your child’s team have a “stands parent.” The stands parent’s job is to observe the practice to make sure the physical, sexual and emotional climate is safe for all team members. Most pedophiles have learned to identify children who really enjoy or even need attention from adults; *they are particularly interested in the children less likely to be supervised by parents or other adults*. As long as parents rotate in this role, children will not feel the pressure of having their parent as the sole monitor or the pressure of their parent observing and measuring their child against all the other teammates.

- Does the coach throw equipment after a bad play or loss?
- Does the coach yank an athlete off the field with physical force, rather than a verbal request?
- Does the coach seem particularly drawn to one child/favor one child?
- Did the coach suggest ignoring doctor’s orders for allowing an injury to heal and instead suggest returning to play sooner than medically recommended?
- Are sufficient water breaks provided?

Physical abuse often occurs in conjunction with emotional abuse, so make sure to observe for these signs as well:

- Is the coach calling players names such as “fatty” or “klutz”?
- Does the coach insult children following mistakes e.g., “you don’t deserve to wear this uniform”?
- Does the coach intimidate players by suggesting they won’t play or will be moved to another team if they do not win?
- Does the organization permit hazing of new players?

Even if your team does not have a “stands parent,” consider other parents your “teammates” in looking out for each other’s children. Most parents cannot attend all their children’s games and as children get older do not typically attend practice, but they can rely on each other to keep an eye on the interactions between coaches and children.

Many athletes and their parents are afraid to speak up when coaches enjoy significant community support and their children want to continue with a sport. It’s difficult to imagine that someone who enjoys so much respect and praise could be hurting your athlete. If abusive coaches are not confronted, the abuse will continue.

## Model the behavior you expect from your child's coaches

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- Praise your child just for participating
- Look for positives and make a big deal out of them
- Stay calm when your children make mistakes, helping them understand that we all make mistakes and that is how we learn
- Have reasonable and realistic expectations
- Treat your children with respect, avoiding put-downs, sarcasm and ridicule
- Remind your children not to get down on themselves
- Remember the old adage, "It's only a game"
- Maintain a "Fun is #1" attitude, with lots of laughter and a sense of humor
- Emphasize teamwork at home so your child thinks "we" instead of "me" at home and on their teams
- Sit in the stands and be a role model of good sportsmanship
- Never comment on any of their teammates' bodies or how they look in their uniforms.

## Volunteering to coach your child's team

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Being both parent and coach offers both opportunities and challenges. You have an opportunity to give back to your community, support the development of young athletes, and gain a shared experience with your child. You can be challenged with showing fair and balanced discipline to your child and their friends, neither appearing too easy or too tough. Additionally, you should set boundaries to keep the 'coach' role from overtaking your job as a parent, remembering that this sport is just one aspect of your child's life at one particular stage in their development. Keep a healthy perspective and balance the coaching relationship with all the other ways you engage with your child; stay tuned in to your child's feelings and reactions.



## Questions to consider before volunteering to coach your child's team

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1. Consider your motivations; are you coaching because you enjoy the sport and want to make a positive difference in children's lives? Are you coaching because you think it's the only way your child will have a chance? Are you coaching to keep a close eye on your child to help ensure their physical and social comfort and safety? These are all valid reasons.
2. Will you be able to treat your child the same as all the children on the team during games and practices?
3. Can you recruit additional coaches so you're not the only one making decisions about what position your child plays or when your child goes in a game?
4. Will your child be able to handle criticism that he/she only gets to play because his/her parent is coaching?
5. If parents accuse you of showing favoritism towards your child, will you be able to calmly and objectively respond?
6. Will you be able to separate yourself from the job when you are home and just be a parent?

## Steps to take if you agree to volunteer as your child's coach

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1. Ask a friend to video your first game so you have a chance to observe your actions and make changes if necessary.
2. If discipline is called for with your child, do it in private and make sure they know you are doing that as their mom or dad, not as their coach.
3. When you drive home after a game, perhaps a loss, remember you are the parent, not the coach.
4. Check in with your child periodically to see how she or he feels about your coaching to make sure it is still a mutually beneficial arrangement. You might enjoy giving back to your community by coaching a sport you enjoy, but if your child is suffering socially or emotionally, everyone might be better served if you coach a different age group.

## Safeguarding your children from technology facilitated abuse

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Your children are being raised in a digital world. As parents, it is critical to teach your child about digital citizenship. Technology has transformed the way parents communicate with children and youth, and in turn, the way children and youth interact with peers, teachers and coaches. Children today are the first generation born with email, texting, social media, and other forms of technology and so consider it a natural, if not essential, part of their life. Schools are increasingly incorporating technology into the classroom and even toddlers are watching videos and playing games on tablets. As a result, Internet safety has become a primary health concern.

### What is cyberbullying?

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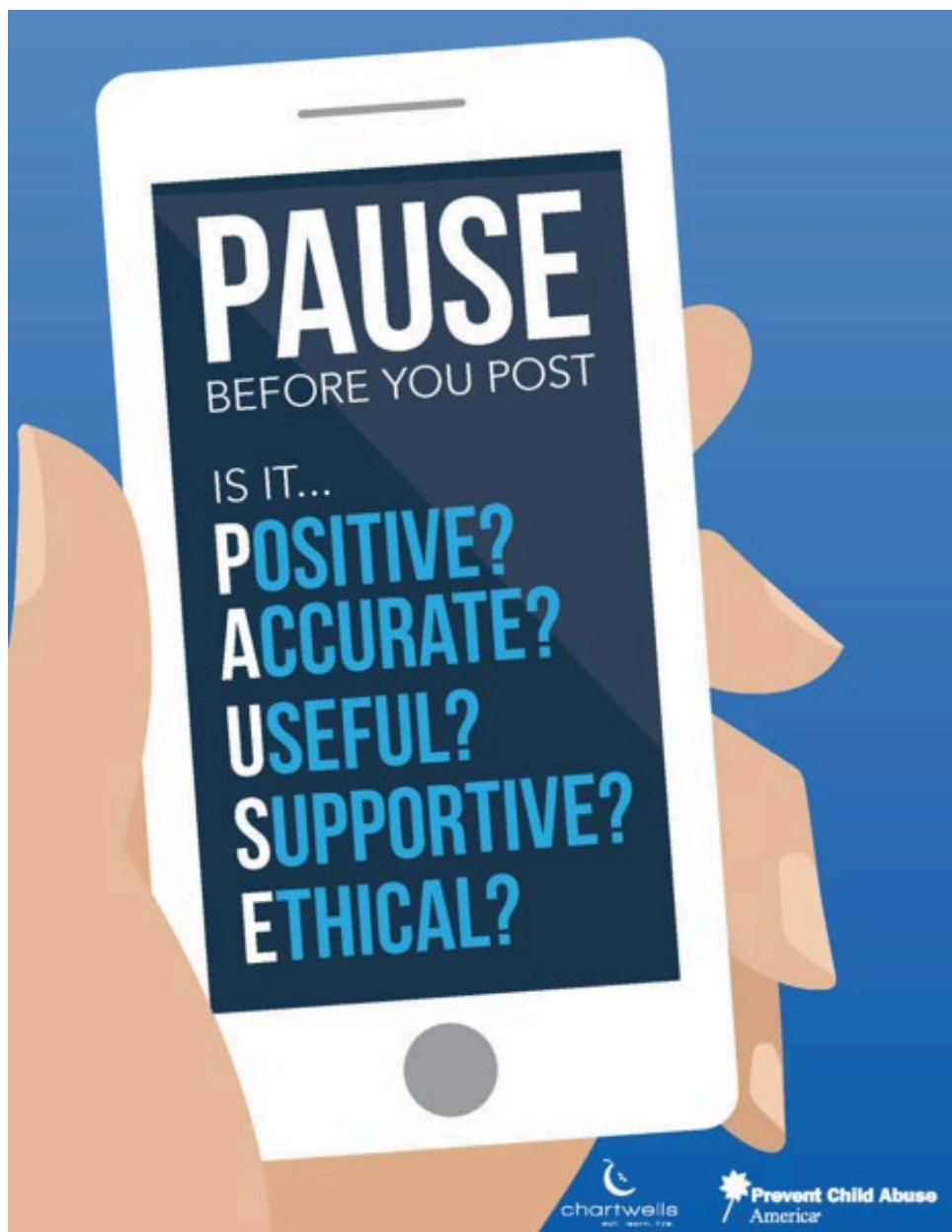
Any form of electronic technology used to harass, harm, or intimidate can be considered cyberbullying. Among the most common methods are:

- Sending negative messages over text, email, or a social media account
- Spreading rumors over the Internet
- Displaying hurtful messages online about another individual
- Stealing account information to post damaging material as another person
- Taking or circulating unwanted pictures of an individual.

Parents should introduce rules designed to safeguard against cyberbullying and other technology-facilitated abuse in sport, either by teammates or coaches. Make rules to protect them from posting information and engaging in online conversations that could turn dangerous.

Well-considered rules can also prevent their peers and coaches from potentially taking advantage of them. Here are five essential rules, as recommended by the [PACER Center](#), for protecting your children online:

- 1) Never share personal information such as passwords, even to friends.
- 2) If someone sends your child mean, hurtful or intimidating messages online, tell him or her to not to respond and instead show an adult.
- 3) Make sure your child never posts anything online that they would not want others to see even in a private setting.
- 4) Encourage your child to talk to you or another trusted adult (coach) if they suspect a teammate is being cyberbullied.
- 5) Remind them not to send messages when they are upset. Teach them the **PAUSE** method:



## Finding out if something is wrong

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Children's reactions to abuse vary widely, so remember that none of these signs alone offer proof that abuse has occurred, but when they appear together or represent a consistent pattern of behavior, they warrant a closer examination. Children exposed to physical or sexual abuse most likely have experienced emotional abuse as well.

### THE CHILD

- Sudden and/or extreme changes in mood or demeanor
- Sudden and/or extreme changes in athletic interest or performance
- Reluctance to go to practice without a specific reason
- Complaints about treatment by coach or teammates or refusal to talk about them
- Physical signs including unexplained bruises, bite marks, cuts or burns, repetitive motion injuries/stress fractures and/or dehydration
- Receives gifts or special treatment unavailable to teammates

### THE COACH OR TRAINER

- Uses severe discipline if athlete is late for practice or does not achieve success during games or practices, such as pulling hair, throwing equipment or requiring the athlete to run excessive laps
- Demands (rather than encourages) athletic success that might be unrealistic
- Demonstrates little concern for athlete's well-being
- Forces athlete to play when there is indication of an injury
- Asks your child to come in early or stay later for practice
- Contacts your child directly using personal communications instead of a team/league communications protocol

## If your child wants to talk with you about issues they (or a teammate) are experiencing with their coach, teammate or older youth helping with the team

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- Stay calm, listen and praise your child for talking to you
- Reassure your child that the abuse is never a child's fault
- Ask them to generally describe their interactions to determine if this is a one-time incident or a recurring pattern of behavior; avoid pushing for specific dates, times or places unless the child offers this level of detail.

## If it does not seem like any children are in immediate danger

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- Listen to any carpool discussion about the coaches
- Talk to a teammate/friend's parents to compare notes
- Make a plan to address all issues and check in frequently to make sure the issues are resolved.

Contact club or league officials and your local authorities if you have a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred. All reports of child abuse of a minor must be reported to local authorities. Reports of abuse not involving a minor may also be reported to local authorities. The *U.S. Center for SafeSport* maintains a 24-hour victim services helpline, operated in partnership with the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN). The Center for SafeSport Helpline provides crisis intervention, referrals and emotional support specifically designed for athletes, staff and other sport participants affected by sexual assault. Through this anonymous and secure service, highly trained specialists provide live, confidential, one-on-one support by phone or online chat. A mobile application is also available for iOS and Android users.

Phone: 866-200-0796

Online chat: [hotline.rainn.org/safesport](https://hotline.rainn.org/safesport)

Website: [safesporthehelpline.org](https://safesporthehelpline.org)

## Responding if you believe abuse has occurred

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Sadly, no prevention effort is 100% guaranteed. Abusers can escape detection from even the most well-informed parents, and there are cases where a spontaneous act of abuse could never have been predicted. Unless you believe that your child, or another child is in immediate risk, take 24 hours to process what you learned, assess the systems in your sports community, and consider all options. If your child tells you that abuse has already occurred, you may respond more quickly than if you have observed signs or behaviors that raise suspicions. If you suspect abuse, remember the 3 C's: stay **CALM**, Put your **CHILD** first, and maintain **CONTROL** of the situation.\*

### STAY **CALM**

Part of staying calm is making sure that the adults in your household present a united front to your child. The thought that your child has been sexually victimized is awful for any loving parent. You might feel anger, rage, or desire for revenge, which is only made worse by the unrealistic sense that you should have done a better job protecting your child. These are powerful, yet normal feelings that must not be shared with your child. Parents may blame themselves (or worse yet - each other!) for any number of reasons; but the calmer you remain following your child's disclosure, the more you will help them begin the healing process. Letting them know they have your unconditional support and you do not blame them for what someone did to them will go a long way towards mitigating the long-term effects of the abuse.

### PUT YOUR **CHILD** FIRST

At a time of potential crisis, a child most needs your reassurance as their parent that everything will be OK. Be the supportive listener; there are others who are trained to ask questions. One of the most difficult instructions for parents to follow is to avoid questioning their child. This sounds counterintuitive, but there are extensive studies on children and language development that tell us that the way a child is questioned will affect their answers. If there is a chance of a criminal charge, a child whose story changes does not make a very good witness. Talk to your child about their feelings, assure them you're there for them, assure them they were right to tell, listen to everything they have to say, but leave the "who - what - where and when" to the professional interviewers. Even if the act will not rise to the level of a criminal investigation, parents would be wise to seek the assistance of a professional forensic interviewer if their child is a pre-teen or younger. Such experts are often found working for [Child Advocacy Centers](#).

\* Rosenzweig, Janet F. *The Sex-Wise Parent*, Skyhorse, NY 2012

## MAINTAIN **CONTROL** OF THE SITUATION

Even as you want to uncover the truth, you want to keep the investigation on your terms. Maintaining control means working to avoid as many disruptions in your child's schedule as possible and keeping the number of interviews to a minimum. Children thrive with the security of routine and you are completely justified in requesting that the adults involved protect those routines. Either law enforcement or Child Protective Services will investigate, and sometimes both do. To maintain control, a call to your local Child Advocacy Center is a great place to start to learn the laws and processes in your community. Also, work to maintain control of information flow. Make a careful decision about what to share with relatives. Other members of the household will sense something is wrong; they deserve an explanation that preserves the privacy of the victimized child, and a stern admonition to keep this information within the family. Encourage your child to keep this information from peers; middle and high school students can be pretty ruthless with gossip, impacting team dynamics and possibly causing other parents to overreact when learning only bits and pieces of the story.

If your child or teen is expressing problematic sexual behavior, or has abused a peer\*:

1. There is no right or wrong initial response.
2. Try to stay calm, even if abuse has occurred. Remember that this is a child, and that they need treatment.
3. Reassure your child that you care about them. It is the behavior that is unacceptable, not the child.
4. Find social, professional, and legal support.
  - a. Find your local Child Advocacy Center [here](#) for professional advice and guidance.
  - b. Consider therapy options for the child, or even family therapy.
  - c. You may want to consult a lawyer in the case of illegal activity.
5. In the case of peer-to-peer abuse concerning members of the same sport club or team, let coaches and administrators know after taking the appropriate legal steps. Adjustments to the team rosters or scheduling may need to take place during an ongoing investigation.

If you suspect or have knowledge of child abuse, or if your child is a victim of peer-to-peer sexual abuse:

1. Call the National Child Abuse Hotline at (1-800) 4-A-Child; (1-800) 422-4453 and other appropriate authorities.
2. If the children in question share a sport club or team, alert coaches and administrators to the situation so that they can take appropriate action.

*\* Adapted from the NCSBY "Tips to Remember" page.*

## Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

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Even if your child is not forthcoming about disclosing abuse, there are some important signs to look for that may indicate abuse. Be on the lookout for these signs not only in your own child, but in others on the team.

### MORE IMMEDIATE SIGNS

- Loses enthusiasm for sport, even for competition
- Doesn't want to practice, or skips out on practice without an explanation
- Stops trying in practice or competition, perhaps in hopes of getting kicked off the team
- Performance declines
- Avoids contact with a particular individual, such as a coach, assistant coach or athletic trainer
- Changes from outgoing to reserved, depressed and withdrawn
- Has a sudden mood change, such as a violent emotional outburst

### LONG-TERM SIGNS

- Poor self-esteem
- Trust issues
- Anxiety
- Feelings of isolation
- Depression
- Self-destruction
- Sexual maladjustment
- Substance abuse

Keep in mind that these behaviors individually do not necessarily indicate a child has been abused. You know your child and his or her behaviors better than anyone. But if several of these behaviors are present, there is probably something going on that is making the child reluctant to participate in their sport.

If you have observed these behaviors in your child, open up a conversation to find out what may be going on.



### Communicating With Your Child About Misconduct

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Misconduct and abuse are difficult for adults to talk about, so imagine how hard it is for a child to bring up this topic, which they may not even fully understand. Here are some techniques to help make your child more comfortable talking about, and reporting, abuse.

**1. TALK ABOUT IT.**

Talk to your child. Let him or her know that sport is supposed to be a place where they have fun and never feel uncomfortable. Watch educational materials together to help develop a language around abuse.

**2. CREATE A “SAFE WORD.”**

When talking to your child about abuse in sport, establish an unusual “safe” word or phrase that’s easy to remember that they can use to tell you something is wrong—like “jellybean” or “upside down.”

**3. ESTABLISH OPEN COMMUNICATION.**

Let your child know that they can always tell you if something’s wrong, and that you’ll always believe them.

**4. ENCOURAGE THEM TO “JUST TELL.”**

Let your child know that they can tell anyone they’re comfortable with—like a friend’s parent, teacher or coach—if something bad is happening to them and they don’t want to say anything to you.

**5. TELL THEM THEY CAN PLAY SPORT ANYWHERE.**

Sometimes, we think the only way an athlete will be successful is if they train with a particular coach or club, and athletes may even be told this by an abuser. It’s important for them to know that they can train anywhere and be successful. Abuse is not a part of being successful in sport.

## Electronic Communications

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Follow these simple tips for keeping communications between coaches and athletes safe and transparent.

- Ask to see the sport organization’s policy on electronic and mobile communications.
- If your child is under age 18, talk with him or her about the importance of transparent communications between you, the coach and the athlete.
- Ask all coaches to send all electronic and mobile communications to you directly and copy your athlete.
- If your athlete is under age 18, ask him or her to immediately forward you any electronic and mobile communications received by a coach if you were not at least copied on the communication.
- Limit text communication with athletes under the age of 18 to group texts and texts only related to the team or sport. Avoid situations where athletes and coaches text each other individually, particularly about non-sport topics.
- Ask your sport organization to set up email groups to ease broadcasts to parents – and make this group communication a norm for your program.
- If a coach inadvertently sends your child an electronic communication without including you, speak with the coach and let him or her know how important you feel it is to include you in all future communications.
- Do not hesitate to speak with the club administrator if you have any concerns about frequent electronic and mobile communications that either do not include you or make you uncomfortable as a parent.

## Travel

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Travel situations can also be opportunities for misconduct to occur. Here are some ways to keep travel safe, whether you're just getting your child to practice, or traveling overnight for competition.

### LOCAL TRAVEL

- Review and enforce the organization's policy on local travel.
- It is a good idea for coaches who are also parents to pick up their own child first and drop off their own child last to avoid situations where the coach is alone in a car with an unrelated athlete.
- Take full responsibility for your child's travel arrangements to practice and local competitions. Don't depend on others to make arrangements.
- Ask your administrator to create team directories to help parents develop their own car pools.
- Vary your car pool arrangements so that no one adult other than you ever becomes solely responsible for your child's local travel over an extended period of time.
- Ask your administrator to provide an early team social event so that families from the same neighborhood can meet one another and discuss travel arrangements.
- Get the organization's central phone number in case you need to notify coaches or administrators because of an emergency or other personal delay.
- Give the coach your cell phone number as well as a list of back-up contacts for alternative transportation in case practice ends early due to inclement weather, equipment problem, etc.
- Ask coaches to notify you at least two weeks prior to practice schedule changes, if possible, so that you can arrange alternative transportation if needed.
- Notify the organization if your transportation arrangements change.

## Travel

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### OVERNIGHT TRAVEL

- Review the policy on overnight travel and ask the administrator to share the policy with all parents, athletes, coaches, staff members and volunteers.
- Verify all coaches, staff members, volunteers and chaperones receive training on athlete misconduct prevention.
- Attend overnight travel and competitions whenever possible, either as a parent or chaperone.
- Become a trained chaperone and accompany traveling athletes to increase the chances of a safe trip.
- When booking hotels, remind your administrator to ask for blocks of rooms and a separate social area where adults and athletes can congregate. Block pay-per-view channels at the hotel to ensure there are no opportunities to expose athletes to pornography.
- Identify athletes who are inexperienced travelers and ask administrators to help them to make the experience enjoyable and safe.
- For teams with relatively few traveling athletes, ask the administrator to ensure that at least one adult chaperone is present in addition to the coach.
- For teams with boy and girl athletes, consider including both male and female chaperones.
- For teams with larger numbers of traveling athletes, ask the administrator to ensure at least one chaperone for every 5-8 athletes, and maintain this number for both boy and girl groupings.
- With athletes under 14 years of age, communicate to the administrator if you would like a chaperone to stay with athletes in the same room.
- With athletes age 14-18, communicate to the administrator if you prefer chaperones stay in a nearby room but check on the athletes regularly.
- Visit with traveling athletes in the hotel common areas rather than encouraging interactions in the hotel rooms.
- Ask the administrator to establish a curfew and conduct bed checks with adults visiting rooms in mixed-sex pairs.
- Have your child wear their team gear while traveling to ease monitoring.
- Attend team events and social gatherings while you're traveling as a parent.
- Ask your administrator to debrief overnight travel experiences with all athletes and adults to identify problems encountered and potential improvements.

# RESOURCES

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## AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

The American Academy of Pediatrics is dedicated to promoting optimal health and well-being for every child as well as helping to ensure that Academy members practice the highest quality health care and experience professional satisfaction and personal well-being.

## THE AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY ON THE ABUSE OF CHILDREN

[www.apsac.org](http://www.apsac.org)

APSAC is the only multidisciplinary professional society serving pediatricians, social workers, attorneys, clinicians, law enforcement, educators and other professionals serving children and families involved with child maltreatment. APSAC publishes peer reviewed journals and newsletters, offers credentialed professional trainings and convenes national experts to articulate standards for professional practice in many areas.

## CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS

[www.nationalcac.org](http://www.nationalcac.org)

Child Advocacy Centers are established to bring the best possible investigation and follow up services to a child victim of abuse. Child Advocacy Centers employ experts in forensic interviewing and treatment and have expertise on the laws and systems in your community. There are more than 1,000 child advocacy centers in the US. Find one serving your community here: [www.nationalcac.org/find-a-cac/](http://www.nationalcac.org/find-a-cac/)

## COMMON SENSE

[www.common sense media.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit](http://www.common sense media.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit)

Common Sense is the leading independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology. Their goal is to empower parents, teachers, and policymakers by providing unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help them harness the power of media and technology as a positive force in all kids' lives.

# RESOURCES

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## CONNECT SAFELY

<http://www.connectsafely.org/cyberbullying/>

ConnectSafely.org is a Silicon Valley, California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy and security.

Here you'll find research-based safety tips, parents' guidebooks, advice, news and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.

## HEALTHY CHILDREN.ORG

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

HealthyChildren.org is the only parenting website backed by 66,000 pediatricians committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

## IKEEPSAFE

[www.ikeepsafe.org](http://www.ikeepsafe.org)

The iKeepSafe mission is to provide a safe digital landscape for children, schools, and families by supporting the protection of student privacy, while advancing learning in a digital culture. To support this mission, they provide data privacy certifications to technology companies, educational resources to schools, and information to the community.

## NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH SPORTS

[www.nays.org/NationalStandards](http://www.nays.org/NationalStandards)

The mission of the NAYS is to educate, equip and empower youth sports leaders, volunteers and parents so all children can enjoy the lifelong benefits of sports. The 2017 edition of the National Standards for Youth Sports serve as the blueprint for how recreational youth sports providers can meet the needs of all their participants. The National Standards for Youth Sports place in motion guidance for league and program administrators to implement to ensure the best possible youth sports experience for all.

## RESOURCES

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### NATIONAL CENTER ON THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF YOUTH

[www.ncsby.org](http://www.ncsby.org)

The mission of NCSBY is to promote better lives, through better choices by youth, caregivers, and professionals for healthier responses to and prevention of problematic sexual behavior of youth. NCSBY provides national training and technical assistance to improve the accuracy, accessibility, and strategic use of accurate information about the nature, incidence, prevalence, prevention, treatment, and management of youth with problematic sexual behavior.

### PACER'S NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION CENTER

[www.pacer.org/bullying](http://www.pacer.org/bullying)

Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center aims to lead a social change so bullying is no longer accepted as a rite of passage for children. PACER provides children, parents and educators with resources and information on bullying. Its website also contains videos, stories, news, campaigns, and other ways to get involved in anti-bullying efforts.

### PROJECT PLAY

[www.aspenprojectplay.org](http://www.aspenprojectplay.org)

Launched in 2013 by the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program, the initiative develops, shares and applies knowledge that helps build healthy communities through sports. The Project Play Parent Checklists provide 10 simple questions that parents should ask depending on the child's age and activity level with sports.

### STOPBULLYING.GOV

[www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention](http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention)

StopBullying.gov is a federal government website with information on all types of bullying including cyberbullying and who is at risk. StopBullying.gov also offers resources to prevent and respond to bullying for parents, educators, and youth.

## RESOURCES

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### TENNESSEE SAFE STARS INITIATIVE

[www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/vipp/safe-stars-initiative.html](http://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/vipp/safe-stars-initiative.html)

The Safe Stars initiative recognizes youth sports leagues throughout Tennessee for providing the highest level of safety for their young athletes. Safe Stars consists of 3 levels: Gold, silver, and bronze, and involves implementation of policies around topics such as concussion education, weather safety and injury prevention. Safe Stars' goal is to provide resources and opportunities for every youth sports league to enhance their safety standards. The criteria for achieving recognition as a Safe Stars league has been developed by a committee of health professionals dedicated to reducing sports-related injuries among youth.

### RALIANCE

[www.raliance.org](http://www.raliance.org)

Raliance is a national collaborative committed to ending sexual violence in one generation. Comprised of the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV), the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), and California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA)–PreventConnect, Raliance was founded in 2015 through a multimillion-dollar seed investment by the National Football League.

Find resources on prevention at the Raliance Sport + Prevention Center:

[www.raliance.org/sport-prevention-center/](http://www.raliance.org/sport-prevention-center/)

### U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT

[www.safesport.org](http://www.safesport.org)

The Center is the first and only national organization of its kind focused on ending all forms of abuse in sport. As an independent non-profit headquartered in Denver, CO, the Center provides consultation to sport entities on prevention techniques and policies, while developing best practices and educational programs focused on promoting athlete well-being and putting an end to emotional and physical abuse in sports. The Center also provides a safe, professional and confidential place for individuals to report sexual abuse within the US Olympic and Paralympic Movements. The U.S. Center for SafeSport maintains a publicly searchable disciplinary records database of individuals who have been sanctioned for sexual misconduct violations of the Center for SafeSport Code. Additionally, the Center provides online training, as well as consultation.



# RESOURCES

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## YOU CAN PLAY PROJECT

[www.youcanplayproject.org](http://www.youcanplayproject.org)

The You Can Play Project works to ensure the safety and inclusion of everyone in sports, including LGBTQ athletes, coaches, and fans. Visit its website to learn more about its cause, partners, and how to take a stand.



U.S. CENTER FOR  
**SAFESPORT**

**CHAMPION RESPECT. END ABUSE.**

United States Center for SafeSport

SAFESPORT.ORG