

# Child Sports Abuse Prevention Policy

The purpose of this policy is to protect our participants from verbal, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. We believe that the likelihood of child sports abuse can be reduced by creating a culture of awareness through education, screening programs, and policy and program implementation. We believe that providing our children, parents, coaches, volunteers, and administrators with guidelines that will prevent inappropriate communication and compromising situations. Establishing guidelines for safe interactions between coaches and players is necessary, both on and off the field. Parents must be aware of these guidelines to understand expectations. Age appropriate education with players will also be helpful to foster healthy relationship with coaches.

## Program

- The purpose of this program is to reduce the liability, risk, and related negative publicity, expense, and trauma to the Club and its participants during the course of implementing its mission and goals.
- The likelihood of child sports abuse/molestation can be reduced by making the environment unsuitable for the sexual predator and/or abuser.
- The program will focus on the base essentials of education, volunteer screening, policies, and administration.
- The intent of this program is not to be all encompassing, but instead, to provide the framework of basic workable program that is more likely to be implemented by a group of volunteers with limited resources and time.
- The simple framework of this program will not address all contingencies that are likely to be encountered. Therefore, these materials should be available and consulted frequently.
- This program shall apply to Volunteers-Citizens who perform the various functions entailed in the running of a club without pay including league officers and directors, coaches, coordinators, referees, scorekeepers, concession workers, etc.
- Sports abuse may take many forms and may be the result of actions of other participants, and on-club personnel during games or club functions. Club volunteers should be alert and immediately report such actions to their territory director and/or local police where applicable.

## **Club Policies on Child Abuse/Molestation**

We hope that coaches and players have healthy relationships and do not intend for this policy to take away from the development of healthy relationships. Expectations of a healthy coach and player relationship include:

### **Limit one on one contact:**

- Adhere to a Three (3) Person Rule that all coaches and team volunteers shall ever be alone with a single youth player that is not a relation or family member. For example, there must always be two (2) youth players present with one (1) adult or two (2) adults present with an unrelated youth. This will always apply when unrelated youth players are present with an adult making a minimum total of three (3) individuals in situations as:
  - Before/after team games and practices
  - Transportation and travel to and/or from games and practices.
  - Any social interactions outside of scheduled practices and games.

### **Communication:**

This includes texting, email, instant messaging, Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat, and all other forms of social media/communication. All communication with players should be professional and team oriented. A parent/guardian or other responsible adult must be copied on **all** coach or player initiated messaging. All social media posts must be public and related to team activities. See attached Social Media Policy for more specific rules regarding communication.

### **Touch Policy:**

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

### **Child Abuse Prohibition:**

- All forms of sports abuse contained in this program such as sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse are prohibited.
- Furthermore, no club volunteer will be allowed to participate if they have been convicted of an assault, molestation, indecency with a minor, athlete abuse, etc.

Policy requires implementation to be effective. Expectations to assist with implementing this policy include:

## **Coaches:**

- Yearly background checks through appropriate Tigers facilities.
- Written acknowledgement of this policy yearly.
- All coaches will abide by the duty of the mandatory reporting. This includes a duty to disclose and report any or all abuse or neglect to your club board of administrators.

## **Administrators:**

- The Club will ensure all policies regarding abuse prevention are posted and accessible via the website.
- All Administrators are expected to report any abuse or neglect.

## **Types of Sports Abuse-Definitions, Examples**

Abuse of children participating can have different approaches.

- Verbal abuse is recognized as negative communications that ridicule or put down another. Coaches are expected to conduct practices and games without engaging in verbally abusive language. Parents and players are also expected to abide with this.
- Emotional abuse is broadly defined as behavior that attacks a child's self-worth. This includes statements that purposely hurt feelings, or make fun of others.
- Physical Abuse are physical actions that hurts someone that is not a part of the sport. This may include, but is not limited to, hitting, shaking, or kicking a participant.
- Sexual Abuse is either unwanted physical contact, offensive verbal communication, sexualized attention or sexual contact with a minor.

## **Warning Signs of Sports Related Abuse/Molestation**

- **With some forms of PARENTAL child abuse, there may be physical indicators (example: with physical abuse, bruises welts, broken bones) ALONG WITH THE LESS OBVIOUS.**
- **But most often the effects of SPORTS ABUSE are less obvious and volunteers should be aware of and on the alert for the examples and definition of Sports Abuse Types and the following:**

Sudden shifts in behavior or attitudes when outgoing child suddenly builds a protected, closed wall or a generally happy child becomes aggressive and angry or a trusting child becomes fearful may be an indication of abuse. In sports, this can show up as losing interest or wanting to drop out of sports or a sudden decline in ability or functions.

**Please note that no indicators or symptoms are absolute. Many of these could be indicators of problems other than sports abuse. However, if some these things are going on, consider them to be a red flag. One difficulty is that some signs are ambiguous. Children may respond in different ways and some may show no sign at all.**

**Some indicators include:**

- Disclosure by child. Most children won't just come out and say they have been abused, but

instead may hint at it.

- Observations, complaints, concerns, or allegations about club volunteers.
- Attitudes/behaviors expressed on the part of an adult that may be associated with inappropriate or abusive behavior (exist, race, poor sense of athlete development, raging temper, extremely controlling, jealous, hypersensitive, poor sexual boundaries, bullying, intimidating manner, unrealistic or inappropriate training practices and risks, etc.).
- Unexplained/unlikely explanation of injuries.
- Extreme fear or avoidance of a league volunteer.
- Extreme low self-esteem, self-worth.
- A child's attachment to a coach/staff to the point of isolation from others.
- A coach/staff with an interest beyond caring concerns, special interest in a child (time, gifts, attention, obsession, unrealistic expectations).
- A child's desire to drop out without a clear explanation or without one that makes sense.
- A child that misses a lot of practices or games with suspicious explanations or excuses.

## **Allegations of Abuse/Molestation and other Policy Violations**

We believe that we need to be individually responsible in the safety of all children in our community. This includes concerns, complaints, allegations, and disclosures from athletes. All coaches and administrators are considered mandatory reporters regardless of the level of seriousness of the situation. **When sports abuse occurs, or you are made aware of an incident that may be an incident of sports abuse -**

**LISTEN to what the PARTICIPANT is saying.**

**Despite increased sensitivity to abuse, there is still a tendency to not listen to or blame the victim (participant) instead of holding the person(s) accountable who may have committed an act of Sports Abuse.**

**Assess the Seriousness of the Situation:**

Differentiate between:

- **Concern:** When the person just needs to be heard and have some information clarified.
- **Complaint:** When the person needs you to listen and may or may not want action taken if they feel you listened.
- **Allegation:** Clarify if the allegation is
  - Appropriate, but unsolicited act;
  - Inappropriate act, but not illegal act;
  - Illegal act that needs to be reported to law enforcement.
- **Disclosure:** When the person tells you that abuse occurred or based on their actions give you reason to believe abuse has occurred.

## **STEPS**

### **1. Mandatory Reporting by a coach or volunteer:**

- Coaches **will immediately** report an incident, allegation, concern, complaint or disclosure to their head coach and/or territory director.

### **2. Information Gathering by Club Directors:**

- Independent third party, and/or
- Law enforcement.

### **3. Suspension/Termination:**

- **Suspension:** Incidents, allegations, concerns, complaints, or disclosures may result in a suspension. Charges filed in a criminal court relating to violent, abusive, or drug crimes will result in suspension.

- **Termination:** All volunteers who have been adjudicated guilty of a serious crime against person(s) such as, but not limited to, child/sexual abuse will be immediately terminated.

#### 4. **Duty to Disclose:**

- Anyone who supervises an employee, **volunteer**, or contractor who has regular, unsupervised access to children as part of their employment, contract, or **voluntary service** is required to report abuse or neglect.